LONDON LABOUR 40p
BRIEFING
No 36 FEBRUARY 1984

LIVERPOOL LABOUR SAYS:

FOLLOW OUR LEAD

Cllr. Bob Quick.

Liverpool City council is in defiant mood for the forthcoming fight to defend services and jobs. The City has already suffered under government policies which appear intent on de-industrialising the area, and pushing unemployment up to 30%. In May 1983 the electorate of Liverpool responded to a radical manifesto, and on a higher than average turn-out, returned a Labour Council for the first time in 10 years.

The electorate rejected the Liberal/Tory coalition which had caused political stagnation, massive cuts in services, loss of 4000 jobs, and the highest rents outside London. But it soon became clear that to reverse this decline would automatically put the council on a road to financial crisis, and a confrontation with the government.

15,000 to 20,000 joined in the demonstration on November 19th, in support of the City Council. It provided the launching pad for a campaign that will depend on the continued and increasing support from trade unionists, council workers and the wider community.



Labour Party Photo Library.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

It is forecast that there will be a deficit in the City's 1983/4 budget of around £7million. This arises from the differences between the forecast net expenditure and income from the rates and the governments Rate Support Grant (RSG). Built into the assumed income from the RSG is the grant penalties which will apply in 1983/4. The budget for 1983/4 was inherited from the Liberals and Tories, and included an assumed cut of £6½million which the Labour Council will not implement.

(CONTINUED OVER)



Liverpool demonstration 19th November 1983

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

CIVIL DEFENCE IN SOUTHWARK

In the late autumn of 1983 this government imposed upon local authorities new draconian measures on civil defence with harsh legal penalties for non-compliance.

The introduction of them has to be seen as part of the build-up of nuclear weapons and the introduction of cruise missiles. The government is trying to peddle the illusion that with civil defence, human life in Britain will survive after a nuclear holocaust. In Southwark, according to a previous government civil defence exercise ('Square Leg') virtually all the population would die from a nuclear explosion's effects (the blast, fire and radiation).

EXERCISE OF DECEPTION

With these salutary facts in mind Southwark Council has decided not to play a part in this government's exercise of deception. We will not cooperate with war planning or take part in civil defence exercises.

Obviously this council is still fully committed to aid in civil emergencies, such as possible spillages of nuclear waste.

At present, other local authorities are considering ways of opposing the Civil Defence Regulations. Unlike Southwark, certain local authorities consider the best way to oppose them is through 'creative cooperation', in other words, taking the government's money and participating in civil defence in such a way as to show the stupidity of civil defence.

I don't think the general public will understand the 'subtleties' of this form of opposition. They may even criticise the council for taking away council workers from their normal duties, effectively reducing its services, because of civil defence exercises which they do not even believe in!

LEGAL DICTATES

What if individual council workers, because of their consciences, or their trade unions, refuse to cooperate? Will local authorities accept the legal dictates from central government and force council workers to participate? A form of creative coercion!

Southwark fully understands the possible implications of its action. Town Hall unions as well as local CND groups support our action, which will highlight our opposition in the eyes of the general public more effectively.

We accept that Southwark cannot tackle this government alone. But if the 150 or so 'Nuclear Free Zone authorities' stood together as they did against this government's ill-fated 'Hard Rock' civil defence exercise, we can do it again!

Andy Troke,
Councillor, London Borough of Southwark
Accredited Member for Nuclear Free Zone policies

FOLLOW LIVERPOOL'S LEAD (CONTINUED)

The financial implications for 1984/5 are far worse. A 'standstill' budget would result in expenditure of £26m over the governments target of £216m. Added to this the growth proposals (reducing Council house rents, 1000 new jobs, a massive council house building programme, etc.) adds another £13m to this figure bringing the total required expenditure to £255m. The increased RSG penalties which will apply in 1984/5 will reduce the RSG by £80m to £36m. This would mean a possible increase in rates of about 120% (not including the Labour controlled County Council levying an increased precept!) The alternatives of trying to reach the governments targets are equally impossible. To achieve savings of around £30m would require a reduction of about 5000 jobs!

Neither of these two options is an alternative for the council. The campaign against the government had to be launched. This means that the Council, depending on the level of rate set for 84/85, could run out of money in late 1984 or early 1985. The Governments options seem to be threefold.

* Act quickly by passing enabling legislation to allow them to send in Commissioners to run the City (at present the Government only has the power to pay the interest debt). They may want to do this before our campaign gets underway.

* Wait until the Budget for 1984/5 is set, when they can clearly demonstrate what the Council's intentions are.



Liverpool Daily Post & Echo PLC.

*Or let the Council carry on until the financial institutions start to call in their debts, and the money runs out to pay Council wages and contractors — when (they hope) they could pose as the 'saviours' of the City.

At the moment Liverpool is alone. Calls for a co-ordinated campaign, have yet to be put into effect. The gutter-press concentrate on the Militant Tendency, and its control of the local party. They fail to confirm the support given to the council's stand by a wide spectrum of non-Militant party members and councillors.

The present policy, far from being a Kamakazi dive to create chaos, is one of pure neccessity. There is no alternative for any socialist council in the face of such circumstances. For Labour Councils the choice is between the possibility of financial bankruptcy and the certainty of political bankruptcy. How many more Labour led Councils face similar dilemma? How long will it be before others join the campaign initiated by Liverpool City Council?

The message is clear — *don't leave Liverpool on it's own!*

Peckham Labour News

In December, 5 officers of Peckham CLP, including the chair and secretary, resigned their posts. We reproduce below extracts of their statement explaining this move.

We the undersigned officers of Peckham CLP are resigning from our positions with effect from the December General Committee meeting. We do this for the following reasons:

1) Political debate on the GC has been stifled by organisational manoeuvring over the agenda, points of order etc. Recommendations from the officers and/or the EC are consistently rejected, yet no political reasons are given – politics have been evacuated from the meetings.

2) When political decisions are taken, often without any real debate, they are often decisions with which we disagree. Examples of this are: refusing to hear a delegation of LP members from either NALGO or the local squatters' group speak about their respective struggles with the council; refusing to call for an independent inquiry into the incidents at the Hollies Children's Home on 28th October; insisting that the congratulations to Gerry Adams MP on his election as MP for West Belfast be withdrawn, and since then refusing to discuss the issue of Ireland even when mandating our National Conference delegates.

3) The position of the Chair, the first woman Party Chair for many years, has been made impossible by constant attack and opposition to every idea proposed.

POLITICS SINCE THE ELECTION

Underlying these problems are genuine political differences which have increased since the election defeat in June. The majority of the GC delegates accepted the analysis of the new leadership of this defeat, blaming the party support for 'left-wing policies' and 'minority causes'.

We disagree; we think the Labour Party did not have credibility on these issues because many of the spokespeople did not agree with them, nor had the party campaigned at national level in order to win people to them.

We believe the Party should maintain and extend its radical policies, *not drop them in favour of positions closer to the SDP.*

We support the call for unity made at the conference, but want to know *'On what basis?'*

We support unilateral nuclear disarmament, *but including Polaris.*

We support the reunification of Ireland, *but without a loyalist veto and involving Sinn Fein in the process.*

We support withdrawal from the EEC, *but want a timetable set out.*

We support workers in struggle, *but in action not on paper.* The Labour Party leadership response to the NGA dispute confirms our worst fears – they are not prepared to support workers in action against the Tories. They condemn the breaking of anti-trade union laws yet our history shows that no democratic right has ever been won, nor successfully defended except by defiance of the law.

We support Party unity – *but what unity is it when socialists in our Party are being witch-hunted? Manchester Wythenshawe CLP remains suspended and socialists are now being expelled for their views.*

We feel that the unity in this constituency has been broken, not by us but by others. Part of the GC has either opposed proposals made by the officers or refused to give practical support to anything organised by us: for example the special meeting to determine policy on rents and rates was inquorate; the selection meeting for a Euro MP was poorly attended; and recent public meetings on the Police Bill and Grenada were not supported.

While we disagree with some of the political changes that are coming about in the Labour Party at present, we do agree with the need to turn the Party outwards into a mass, campaigning Party, to rebuild its membership and develop its support at grassroots level.

STAYING WITH THE STRUGGLE

We think our record is a good one. However, it is now clear that we will be better able to argue for our political positions from the floor of the GC, where we will not be under constant attack as officers.

These resignations do not therefore mean that we are about to fade away from the struggles facing the Labour Party. On the contrary we intend to work to develop the links we have made with trade unions in struggle, with the most oppressed layers in our society – women and black people – who are facing increasing attacks from this Tory government.

Penny Newell (Chair),
Anstey Rice (Vice-Chair),
Jeremy Hawthorn (Secretary),
Jane Kelly
(Political Education Officer),
Dave Packer (Press Officer),
Peckham CLP

Support the Day of Action

The Day of Action for Londoners to demonstrate their opposition to the Government's plans to curb local government powers by rate-capping and abolishing of the Metropolitan Authorities is set for January 24th.

NALGO members have overwhelmingly supported the call for the action — GLC NALGO by 90% — and all the NUPE branches in County Hall, at time of writing, have followed suit. The largest union in County Hall, the Staff Association, have, to their credit, at least advocated support for the one-day strike. Less to their credit is the fact that they have displayed their usual lack of competence in actually balloting their members. One day after the close of the ballot I spoke to three SA members who had still not received their papers. The SA claim a membership of 17,000 — one can wonder just how many of them actually participated in the ballot, and consequently how effective the action will be.

A further potential stumbling block to the total closure of County Hall on the 24th is the fact that the day chosen by the committee of the Defend Democracy in London Campaign is a council meeting day. And the council are proceeding with their meeting! This means that certain staff will be required to work on that day. A NUPE spokesperson told me they would give a flat 'no' to requests for security men, electicians, and catering staff to work on the 24th, saying 'If they want food they can adjourn and go to a restaurant ... or bring sandwiches!'

The council meeting is scheduled to discuss only the Government's White Paper, but this will require the attendance of some white collar staff, along with the manual workers, such as clerks to Committee sections and staff who are required to answer council questions. Considering the breadth of functions the GLC has responsibility for this could prove to be quite a number of employees. Whether the Committee's choice of the 24th will be a strategic sleight or a tremendous blunder remains to be seen.

LOWER GRADE WHITE COLLAR STAFF

A further hiccup to the plans for a mass display of solidarity behind the Labour GLC is the widespread discontent among many of the lower graded white collar staff, who feel sold out by the new regrading/restructuring proposals, which require the three lowest grades to serve two years in their grade before they are entitled to earn the minimum salary for their grade. An adhoc grouping of clericals has been causing ructions up to the highest levels of union and council alike, and the 'Cs and Es Committee' banner will be present on the day. Look out for us — we promise a colourful presence.

Support the Day of Action — bring banners, balloons, friends and voices. Show the Tories they can't dismantle democracy in the cause of political spite! Assemble Hyde Park at 11am, march to Jubilee Gardens (Peace Gardens?). Support Anti-Racist Year. There will be a rally at the Royal Fetival Hall and a lobby of MPs across the river, children's show, films etc. Make the 24th a day the Tories can't ignore!

Deborah Knight, member GLC NALGO
and Brent East Labour Party.

Labour lose control in

LABOUR FINALLY lost control in Brent on December 15th after two stormy Council meetings following the treacherous defection of Cllr Ambrozine Neil to the Tories. The political balance is now as follows: Labour 31, Tories 31, Liberals 3 – with a by-election pending due to the resignation of Labour Cllr Nerva. While the Tories form the "administration" controlling the Committee Chairs, the Liberals now hold the balance of power in the Council and on all main committees. In effect, a Tory/Liberal coalition has been foisted on the people of Brent.

The events leading up to the Tory/Liberal hijack were traumatic. While Neil had some genuine criticisms of Labour's education policy, nobody quite expected her to actually join the Tory Party. Throughout the Labour movement there was an intense feeling of outrage and betrayal. While some sections of Brent's large black community had sympathy with Neil's ideas on black education, they too were numbed by her treacherous defection. Becoming an independent was one thing, actually joining the open racists of the Tory Party was incomprehensible.



David Hoffman

Facing the chop? Keep-fit classes for the elderly in Brent.

Massive Campaign

As a result, a massive campaign was launched demanding Neil's resignation. Now that she was a Tory, she had no right to represent the people of Manor Ward, Harlesden, who had elected a Labour candidate by a substantial majority in May 1982. Thousands of leaflets were distributed demanding that she resign and fight a by-election to prove her ludicrous and arrogant claim that the people voted for her not the Labour Party.

The public response was overwhelming. On the streets of Harlesden, Willesden and Kilburn nobody, particularly the black community, had a good word to say about Neil. She was a traitor and should resign. In Manor Ward 1,200 voters signed a petition calling for her resignation – more people than had voted for her in May 82. When the Council met on December 8th at a school in Manor Ward 300 people packed the public gallery with 300 more in an overflow room – scores of people were turned away.

"Mob rule by the fascist left", screamed Thatcher in Parliament following the public dissolution of the Tory/Liberal attempt to take control on December 8th. Both Thatcher and Steel called on Kinnock to condemn Brent's "mob rule", and he promptly obliged the next day, stating that such disruptive action "was not in the tradition of the Labour Party".

Invaded the Chamber

In fact the meeting was only disrupted after the Council itself had passed a motion by 32-31, with the Liberals abstaining, calling on Neil to resign. When the Liberals then proceeded to exploit Neil's defection by supporting a Tory takeover, the public was outraged and invaded the chamber. By and large it was a peaceful, if noisy, affair – apart from a badly aimed barrage of eggs, half of which splattered the Labour benches! The Mayor adjourned the meeting until the following week.

Of course democracy in Brent did "break down" on December 8th. It broke down when Neil refused to bow to the wishes of her own electorate and the Council itself that she resign. The Tories knew that if they took the democratic road and fought a by-election in Manor they would be hammered and Labour control would be restored. The Liberals colluded with this fraud. Privately they conceded that she should resign; publicly they were prepared to use her defection to oust Labour.

In the circumstances people felt they had no other recourse than public protest since a democratic, electoral solution had been denied them. They were not prepared to see jobs and services hijacked on such an undemocratic basis without at least putting more pressure on Neil to resign. They were not prepared to accept Kinnock's definition of Labour's tradition, that you lie down and let the Tories trample all over you, especially when they have no mandate to do so. Ironically Kinnock has hailed Brent DHA's "heroic stand against the health cuts", which he no doubt thinks is in Labour's best tradition. This too has involved the public disruption of undemocratic meetings!

Behind the Scenes Manoeuvring

Another aspect of events before and after December 8th was the behind the scenes manoeuvring of the various political parties. In general the Brent Tories belong to the Neanderthal wing of their party. Composed largely of lumpen middle class upstarts looking for self-enhancement many of them are openly racist. To most of them Ambrozine Neil is an anathema – a black, working class, woman who they had become accustomed to abusing as the "looniest member of the loony left". However, under strict instructions from Tory Central Office to take control at all costs, they soon began to change their tune. Suddenly they were deeply committed to the principle of "equal opportunities". Instead of telling black people who protested about NHS cuts to go back to their "own" countries and try the health system there, they discovered that "ethnic minorities are disadvantaged" and need special provision.

The Liberals were also under instructions from the Alliance (particularly Brent SDP) to get Labour out. Since they held the whip hand they were able to extract maximum concessions from the Tories who gladly agreed to a hung, balanced committee system, provided that they had the prestige of forming the "administration".

Labour's position – at least on paper – was unambiguous. The manifesto said there should be no pact with any other political party. The LGC unanimously re-affirmed this position, although it also agreed that talks could take place with the Liberals, at least to find out their plans. LGC members as well as the group leadership took part in these discussions where the general point was made that the Liberals had no right to vote in the Tories and should support a Labour administration until a by-election was held. There were no discussions on policy and no attempt to form a pact.

Understanding with the Liberals

At the same time, however, sections of the Labour right were openly pressing for some sort of understanding with the Liberals under the slogan "stop the Tories at all costs". No doubt informal soundings took place. At the second Council meeting on December 15th, Labour tabled a 'tactical motion' calling for balanced committees with the Chairs to be elected at each meeting. It was clear by then that we had

Brent

Frank Hansen (Brent Councillor)

little chance of retaining control and Labour leader Coleman argued that this strategy would be preferable to Tory 'control' of a hung Council.

Some of us were alarmed that this was a recipe for surreptitious power-sharing with the Liberals. Pact or no pact, such a structure would inevitably lead to deals being done with them. It would certainly be an open invitation to the Labour right to start wheeling and dealing.

Of course there is nothing wrong in trying to divide your opponents. But informal power-sharing would be a disaster for the Labour Party. It would give credibility to a small group of Liberals and totally undermine Labour's manifesto. In the event the plan came to nothing. However, it does underline the strong tendency within Brent's Labour group for a Lab-Lib pact – a strategy they will no doubt continue to pursue.

December 15th

The public turnout on December 15th was as impressive as the previous week – with the Labour Party calling for a massive peaceful demonstration. The general feeling was that we would lose control but should go down protesting. As far as the party was concerned, the road back to power lay not in devious deals with the Liberals, but with an ongoing campaign in the community to consolidate and build support for Labour's policies. Stewards were appointed to ensure that violence did not occur, and the Labour group overwhelmingly passed a motion that the police would not be *invited* into the meeting – although it was recognised that legally they could intervene on their own accord if a breach of the peace took place.

On the other side the Tories, Council officers and the police had made their own plans – probably with some assistance from the Home Secretary. The school was surrounded by coachloads of police and entry and exit was strictly controlled. Scores of Tories were bussed in and issued with tickets to sit at the front of the public gallery. The Council chamber was barricaded off from the public.

If anything, the second meeting was more good-humoured than the first, with the public singing Christmas carols about Neil and the Tories. No missiles were thrown. At one point the meeting was disrupted when twenty or so people managed to vault the barricade of tables and began to chant for Neil's resignation. At no time did they threaten anyone physically. In fact, just as they were retreating back into the main body of the hall, Labour Mayor Peter Pendsay took the criminal and unforgiveable decision to call in the police to clear the gallery.

The police undertook their task with relish – after all they were the trump card in ensuring their friends in the Tory Party gained control. Hundreds of people, including some Councillors who had joined the crowd, were unceremoniously hauled out of the building – most of them had not even participated in the disruption. A group of black women who were resisting eviction were roughed up by the police and the subsequent melee led to the arrest of four comrades.

When the meeting resumed most of the Tory guests, who had been siphoned off into another room, returned to take their seats. A small group of us demanded that Labour supporters be re-admitted but the Mayor refused. In the circumstances we decided to leave the meeting. No way would be complicit with a Labour Mayor unleashing the police on hundreds of his own supporters. Despite the fact that the crowd outside were demanding that Labour Councillors take no further part in the proceedings, the majority decided to stay – in the best traditions of the party no doubt!

The events of December 15th have produced a series of recriminations about "thuggery" and "Mob Rule", not only from the media and the Tories but also from the majority of the Labour Group. The first blow was struck by Tribunite Lawrie Nerva who decided to resign because of the disruption. Without even informing the Party he went to the press and has forced us into a by-election in a crucial marginal ward.

These recriminations have now escalated into a full-blown witch-hunt against the 'hard left' and Brent East Labour Party. It is ironic and hypocritical that those who are now outraged by the disruption on December 15th were the first to applaud the mass turnout on December 8th. Indeed they were instrumental in calling for massive demonstrations. Now they are denouncing and condemning their own supporters – a sure way of ingratiating themselves with Labour's new 'dream ticket' leadership. After all, Kinnock-Hattersley would love nothing more than to stomp on Brent East following last year's bitter re-selection battle.

Of course, the real task facing Brent's Labour Parties is to unite and fight the Tory/Liberal coalition both inside the Council chamber and within the community at large. Already there are signs that the coalition is both unstable and inept. The Liberals, for instance, voted for Brent to remain within the ALA with a Tory leadership! We have until April/May to oust them from power before the crucial budget and Mayor-making. The Tories are aiming for a nil rate rise – a fantasy in terms of Jenkin's penalty system.

However, they are intent on massive cuts, particularly in education against "left-wing teachers – a ruse to enable them to cut jobs. Our first priority must be to halt the witch-hunt and win the crucial St Andrews ward by election. Unfortunately the majority on the Labour group seem more intent on settling old scores and ensuring that they have a stake in "dream ticket" 1988.

Southwark Social Workers Action

THE RESIDENTIAL Social Workers in Southwark have been taking action in pursuance of the national claim since the start of September. In mid-October the workers in the borough voted not to work unsocial hours – which was only fair and logical as they do not get any special allowances for this. The response of Southwark Council was to suspend 32 of these workers. Within 12 hours, and as a result of most of the Branch walking out in support of these members, the workers were reinstated and negotiations for a local settlement commenced.

Since then National Nalgo decided as a result of a national delegate meeting to ballot the national membership as to their willingness to follow the example given by Southwark Nalgo (and some other branches) not to work unsocial hours. Although National Nalgo have not released the actual figures, the result of the ballot showed that the majority were not in favour of such a course of action.

The result of this ballot means that Southwark Nalgo must now negotiate their way back into work.

This means ensuring that the 'Hollies' Children's Homes Complex in Sidcup is reopened; that staff and children return to the homes they were in before the dispute; that the homes retain their previous designated function; that there is no loss of posts, and no loss of workers.

Throughout the entirety of this dispute the Residential Workers have enjoyed a great deal of support from the other members of the branch proving yet again the hoary old socialist cliche of our strength being in our numbers and our unity.

All that remains to be seen is if our employers are the socialists they claim to be or the Tories they seem to be.

DICK LARKIN
Nalgo Social Services Chairperson
Consort Ward, Peckham L P

Brent, black people & L.P.

The defection of Ambrozine Neil has given many within the Party a new excuse for denying black people equality of opportunity. It has increased the doubts of those whose commitment to increased black representation was never more than a grudging acceptance. We are being asked to reconsider our policy of putting forward people who represented a legitimate black interest within the Party and the community.

But Ambrozine Neil's defection was an indictment of no-one and nothing but herself and her over-inflated ego, which grew too large to be contained in the rather volatile Labour Group. Certainly it was no reflection on the Party's policy of positive action to get black councillors elected. There remain ten black Labour councillors whose contribution cannot be underestimated.

This black woman's decision is a betrayal, above all, of one of the most under-represented groups – middle-aged black women. But whilst the black community – almost to a person – condemns her, it is for joining the Tories, *not* for leaving the Labour Party. Had she chosen to sit as an Independent, she would have won the support of many who are still doubtful of the Party's sincerity and commitment to black rights and who are aware of its past history.

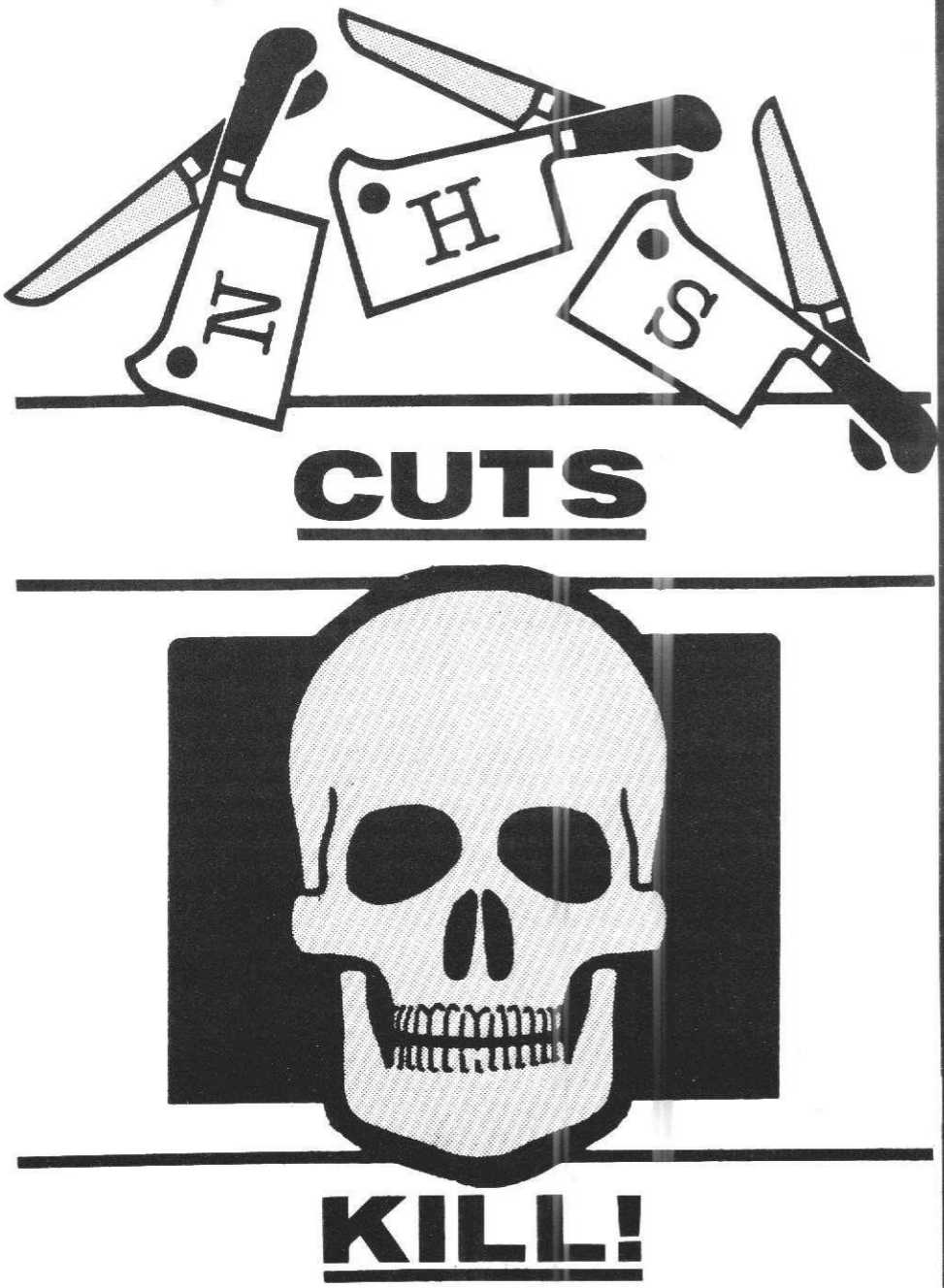
The lesson of Neil's defection is not that positive action is wrong, but that the Labour Party has a hard fight ahead of it. For the only way to effectively cancel out the defection of one black person is to highlight that there are very many who remain, and to show that we are fully committed to the interests of black people. Even in Brent, we have a long way to go.

Councillor Merle Amory

Hospital closures - occupy to win

It has become clear that the only way to stop hospital closures is for the workers in those hospitals to take direct action. In Hillingdon, for example, occupations of the Hayes and Northwood & Pinner Cottage Hospitals have now forced the Health Authority to cancel closure orders hanging over the hospitals and keep them open for at least another year.

The many health campaigns across London should now be gaining support, both amongst the local community and other trade unions in the area, for actions taken by hospital workers. It is rare that local campaigns will be fully successful on their own — but mass demonstrations, all-night vigils, lobbies and petitioning will both raise public awareness (and again publicity) and boost the confidence of the hospital workers. The response from the public to the Hillingdon occupations was tremendous, and kept the workforce in occupation since October. These successes also helped those active trade unionists in more cautious branches to argue that such direct action can indeed be successful. At Guys Hospital in South London, nurses have set up a Nurses Action Group that has proved effective in both involving those directly affected by ward closures and in informing all nurses of what the cuts mean; they now produce a regular newsletter.



PRIVATISATION

Privatisation is rapidly becoming as important an issue as cuts, as the February deadline set for putting out tenders for such services as laundry, cleaning and catering approaches. In Camberwell, mecca boss Eric Morley — better known for his Miss World antics — helped steer through the privatisation of the laundry service. It is clear that Tories and their stooges on District Health Authorities will now be pushing this, whether or not it is supposedly economically more viable. Health trade unions at district and national level should be pressured into providing facts and figures in each district so that members of the public are clearly informed that the Government is pushing privatisation purely on ideological grounds.

As NHS hospitals are closed down, private ones are still being opened (£1.000 a week to stay in the new one at Blackheath). What better chance to persuade the doubters that soon only the rich will have access to decent health care. Those Labour Parties that have already been active in campaigning against the health cuts will know the massive support to be gained over the issue.

TURN INWARDS

There is always a danger that after the initial impetus, campaigns can turn inwards and activity will be replaced with committee work; or that too many meetings will leave just a few activists involved. Speaking to new people — pensioners, union branches and youth groups, with regular public petitioning can help to avoid this. We must ensure that being a broad-based campaign does not mean watering down our aims. Liberal/SDP dominated campaigns will not be able to gain the respect and involvement of hospital unions.

Local Labour Councils have given support in many areas — Camden and Lewisham with public meetings, Greenwhich with staff and contacts, Southwark with funding for a temporary worker. But few Labour groups have put a 'whip' on their nominees on Health Authorities to vote against all cuts. In Hackney, it has been reported that Labour representatives voted *for* cuts. The GLC has provided funding for a London-wide Health Emergency unit, which is now organising a major demonstration in February, with feeder marches from the local campaigns.

Public pressure has helped force the government to give £800,000 back to the NHS — but NONE of this is going to London! If the attacks on the NHS are linked to Government attacks on local democracy (abolition of the GLC) and cuts forced on local councils, widespread opposition to the Tories can be mobilised. Obviously, many people will be looking to Liverpool — success there will provide a real lead for those campaigning in London.

It is up to us to go on the offensive — for Briefing supporters to actively build the 'mass, campaigning party' that is often talked about. If we can't win mass support on the issue of NHS cuts, we won't win on anything!

Kevin Flack
Chair, Lewisham & North Southwark Health Campaign

Barking and Dagenham Briefing

1. School closures threat

Municipal Monetarism in Barking and Dagenham is threatening the future of a third of the town's Comprehensive Schools.

A hundred angry parents, including many Labour Party members, packed the gallery at January's Education Committee meeting to hear leading Councillors demand that the borough's education system 'must bear more resemblance to the economic system that exists outside of it'.

Now a report recommending the closure of Eastbury, Dagenham Priory and Erkenwald Schools is to be 'referred back' for further consideration by the sub-committee who adopted the crazy scheme in the first place.

RADICAL CHANGES

The row over the closures – announced during a debate on the future of 16+ education – could act as a watershed in local Labour Party politics. Constituency members are faced with the choice of, yet again, publicly backing harmful cuts policies and watching the Labour vote crumble in the 1985 local elections, or finally demanding radical changes in the composition of the councillor-dominated Local Government Committee.

Hitherto, this has been best known for its quaint policy of meeting only on the fifth Thursday of each month and axing any resolutions from the GC's dealing with much needed reforms on the grounds of shortage of time. Last year it dumped resolutions demanding that it 'finish of its business' and 'meet more frequently' using this tactic!

DISTRAUGHT

So distraught are Party members that my ward, Parsloes/Manor is calling for Barking Constituency support for a Labour campaign against the Labour council's closure plans. Even the normally sedate branch of the Socialist Education Association, horror struck at the total absence of any consultation before the closure announcements, have added their weight to the protest.

If the council tries to go ahead – despite Party protests – with the school closures then they are likely to face opposition from parents, pupils, teachers on a larger scale even than during the 1982 Barking and Dagenham Teacher's strike.

Former Education Committee Chair, Vic Rusha has already reminded teaching staff that they shouldn't worry about their jobs but on 'what is best for our youth'. The campaign against the closures continues next with a major public meeting organised by Barking and Dagenham Campaign against the Cuts and Barking NUT.

Chris Huculak
Barking CLP

2. Health Service cuts

Life is cheap at the eastern end of the District line, by the Essex border. The all powerful mandarin, who can grant life or death at his whim, amused himself this Christmas by pondering over which limb he could sever from our NHS.

Sidney Shaw, Chairman of Barking, Havering & Brentwood District Health Authority, announced his seasonal sacrifice (one general hospital) to his Imperial master at the Regional Health Authority, Sir Harry Moore. The peasants were their usual revolting selves, and kicked up a stink. But that's of little consequence to the 'decision makers'. Passing the time between the Xmas Pudding and Auld Lang Syne, our mandarin (arsehole?) of the East realised that extra readies could be made by selling the geriatric hospital instead — easier to close and they're going to die anyway. So, that was the Imperial New Year proclamation from the Chair of our DHA.

POLICE CALLED TO EVERY MEETING

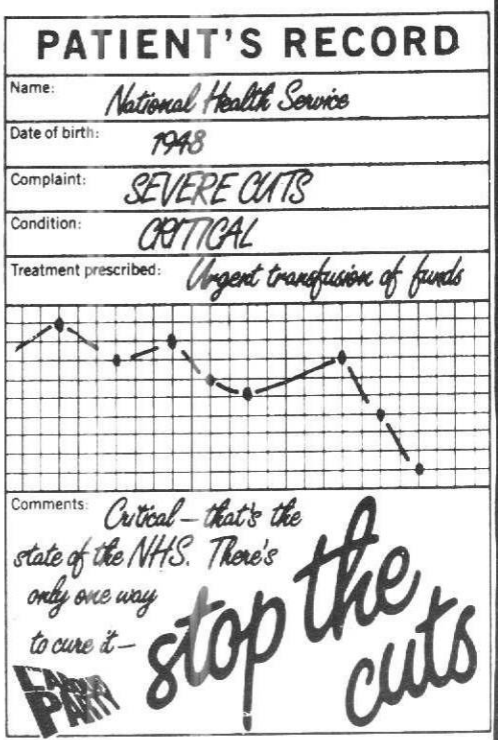
We the peasants (Barking & Dagenham Health Emergency) battle on. The police are called to every meeting, because we are unable to sit silently while the Authority passes its death sentences. Everything is stacked against us, although we do anticipate a little help from our friends at the GLC. Our own Labour Authority representatives have become so used to voting for cuts in the Council Chamber that they were unable to break the habit at the DHA. The solitary official voice raised in defence of our health service was the TUC member.

In this struggle to defend this most basic of human needs, the future — as seen by the Tory government — has become increasingly apparent. There is every indication that they are proposing to convert schools and hospitals which stand idle through lack of funds, into prisons.

The home secretary Leon Britton and the minister in charge of sentencing policy, David Mellor, are known to be behind the idea of so called 'community prisons'. The government will publish consultative documents early this year with the possibility of legislation to set the scheme up in 1985.

The plans to change hospitals and schools into prisons, coupled with the anti-trades union laws and the Police Bill will make our community unrecognisable in ten years time. It doesn't take a great deal of imagination to visualise the future being mapped out for us. If the Rate Capping Bill is successful, democratic local government will cease to exist. Many more institutions will be controlled by specimens such as Sidney Shaw. It leaves us no choice but to fight to put a stop NOW to this hidious government and its policies.

Gill Rogers
Barking CLP and Barking & Dagenham Health Emergency



Lesbianism ~ & »winning back the working class vote«

Sarah Roelofs
Islington South CLP

"If you continue to raise the issue of lesbianism the way you have been you will destroy the Labour Party....The most important thing we have to do is win back the working class vote...."
Margaret Hodge, Leader Islington Council, in discussion with Sarah Roelofs.

"It is this historic evasion by Labour of awkward questions for short-term electoral advantage that was ultimately our undoing in Bermondsey and, indeed, in the general election as well."
The Battle for Bermondsey, by Peter Tatchell, p. 169.



Since the general election, in common with other CLP's, Islington South has had many heart searching debates and discussion on why Labour lost and how we can ensure it never happens again. Unfortunately, within four months, it did happen again in Islington when we lost two out of three council by-elections. The net result is considerable paranoia and backsliding amongst the party and the council leadership particularly in relation to certain controversial issues — notably lesbian and gay rights. This despite our new MP being a gay rights supporter himself.

GAY CENTRE

The rot began during our general election campaign as the extent of electorate hostility to the council became clear. The issue of the Gay Centre became a useful scapegoat for both council and electorate. The Labour Group issued a 'helpful facts' leaflet for canvassers which extremely defensively promised faithfully that no ratepayers' money was involved. The electorate raised many complaints — primary amongst which, in my and others experience, was housing repairs — but which also included anti-gay prejudice, bigotry and plain old ignorance much fed by the gutter press and right wing Labour journalists. But the issue of housing repairs is not nearly as memorable as that of a Gay Centre.

After the general election defeat, Islington Joint Trade Union Committee's Equal Opportunities policy negotiations with the Council experienced a major hiccup over — you've guessed it — equal opportunities for lesbians and gays. Policy was eventually agreed due mostly to the strenuous efforts of the union side. Post by-election defeats, a lesbian and gay rights motion for GLRC provoked the Chief Whip to groan "this is just what we don't need". While the motion was passed as party policy it was defeated as our GLRC motion with our gay rights supporting MP neither speaking nor voting. Many party members might not go as far as the man in my ward who argued that instead of building the new Jerusalem we were building the new Sodom and Gormorah. Much of the prejudice is wrapped up in statements about the issue not being a priority, about too much time being devoted to it (one motion!), about the distress of parents of lesbians and gays, about it not being relevant to working class people.

AT WHAT COST?

Certainly we need to win working class support and consequent votes for Labour. But on what political basis? At what cost? Are we really to believe that there are no working class lesbians and gay men? Are working class women really not interested in sexuality? Will Islington Council really get a good press if it just avoids controversial issues such as Ireland and lesbian and gay rights? Is the way to win back the working class vote to avoid these issues? Our Council leader is fond of calling for discussion rather than confrontation on this issue. Should we likewise recommend to black people that they do not 'confront' racialism but 'discuss' it instead?

Hostility to a radical socialist council whipped up by the capitalist macho men of Fleet St. is well nigh unavoidable. Losing support because of radical policies is not — *provided* the policies are openly and actively campaigned on outside of the Town Hall within the local communities. Open local public meetings with creche facilities should be held frequently *not only* to explain our radical policies but to *mobilise* people on the basis of them. And our explanations and arguments must show how *all* the council's policies go together as a campaign for social justice for everyone. Camden Women's Committee Chair Kate Allen has prioritised such local meetings and campaigns as the only way to circumvent a pernicious media. Islington Council has not. No public meetings have been held to explain why Irish jokes were banned or why money was given to a women's self-defence group or why lesbian rights are crucial to any socialism worthy of the name.

Peter Tatchell's words in his recent book are highly pertinent: *"If the Labour leadership had previously established a strong record of defending gay rights, ...the bigotry stirred up might have found a less receptive audience ...The net result is increased cynicism as more people cease to believe that Labour offers any hope of significantly changing things for the better."*

Goodbye Piccadilly ~ Farewell Leicester Square

The London Transport Bill, which is due to become law in early summer is the first serious step in the government's plans to strip all powers from the GLC and to introduce a blueprint for a privatised system of public transport. That is why is has to be fought now and why the response of the Labour group, the party and the unions has been inadequate in attempting to stem what this bill is ushering in.

The provisions of the bill are firstly, that the London Transport Executive will be taken over by a new body — the London Regional Transport authority and will be **appointed** by government. London Transport will then be divided into subsidiaries ready for privatisation.

CONTROVERSIAL

The financing of the Transport System has been the most controversial aspect of the proposals so far, since the government itself seemed confused as to how much the boroughs would contribute through individual precepts and how much central government would pay. Obviously the more that Central Government pay the more cuts there are likely to be and the less control (if that's possible) local people would have. But for those who see the way forward in picking holes in the governments plans, this kind of confusion does not show up how stupid or inept the government is but on the contrary, how callous and how determined to rush this measure through — in order to inflict a huge blow on the GLCs defence before it's even started.

Where the bill differs significantly from the white paper which came out before it is that it spells out clearly a plan for privatisation — based mainly on the bus section. This will be done by making it easier for private companies to obtain a license (as recently the mini bus firm, AMOS, tried to do), by enabling the LRT to make grants or loans to private companies and by selling shares to the public and to employees.

Of course the idea that those of us who work for London Transport will by this time be able to afford shares is also rather a joke! The government has given no guarentee on jobs and the white paper preceding the bill stated explicitly that 'jobs cannot be guaranteed'. This in turn of course will be underlined by the massive attack on the unions which is steadily being introduced.

CHAOS

The idea that privatisation on this scale will lead to a more efficient and cheaper service is of course a lie. It will be chaos. Once services like this are run for profit rather than need the whole infrastructure breaks down. Many are fearful that concessionary fares will be taken away in some areas as well. The GLC estimate that immediately the new legislation will mean a seventeen per cent increase in fares and a massive reduction in bus miles.



Labour Party Photo Library.

Waiting for privatisation?

Because it is the first in line of attack and because it is perhaps the most closely identified with the GLC, the taking over of London Transport must be fought by an active and visible campaign. Such a campaign would draw on a wide support since the Fares Fair policy of the GLC has attracted a great deal of support.

ALLIANCE WITH THE WET TORIES

Unfortunately, the campaign to date has done nothing to involve the thousands of workers whose jobs are under threat nor the millions of users of the system but appears to have concentrated instead on outmanoueuvrings on the LTE Board and in trying to force Tory opponents to weaken the scheme from within. This strategy is at best inadequate and at worst politically wrong since it relies on some kind of alliance with wet Tories; and although it is good to see thieves fall out, this will not change the government's mind or even dent the Bill's progress.

Many in the Labour Party will beat their chests and argue that industrial action is obviously the way to challenge the Tories and in the same breath point out that this is not forthcoming and therefore nothing can be done.

But it is necessary to take preliminary steps towards mass action through lobbies, picketting, petitioning, mass meetings in the workplaces and amongst the public in order to prepare for this and the Labour Party and the labour group as well as the unions have a responsibility to initiate this.

Support for the GLC's policy on transport has provided a real alternative in the past (despite inadequacies in relation to jobs lost for example). And it can be build in order to challenge the Transport Bill as a first step in challenging the government's overall plan for services run by the Metropolitan councils.

Judith Arkwright
N.U.R. Finsbury Park branch
(in a personal capacity)

NEW LEADERSHIP FOR LEWISHAM

A number of factors have come together to make the coming months leading up to the Lewisham Labour Group AGM in May interesting and important. Andy Hawkins, having been Leader of Lewisham Labour Group for over a decade, has announced that he will definitely not be standing for the post in May. Whoever replaces him could not have faced a more difficult first year.

The Government are steadfastly pushing through Parliament their rate capping proposals. If they become law it will mean that Patrick Jenkins, Environment Secretary, will be able to set the maximum amount that Lewisham can ask its rate payers to pay towards its budget. And if this year's figures are anything to go on the Council could well have to cut its budget by 20% to reach the Government's target. That would mean large scale redundancies both in the statutory and voluntary sectors.

The Labour Group has just agreed to extend the franchise for electing the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Group to the Local Government Committee (BLGC). All members of the Group and BLGC will in future have a vote at a joint meeting for these posts and with their being over 50 non-Group members of the BLGC as against 41 Group members the outside Party will have a major say in who will form the new leadership. A further twist to the situation is that the proposal needs to go to the NEC for ratification and the NEC has turned down any such proposals in the past. The Group have however agreed to a recomendation that the joint meeting should go ahead regardless of the NEC's decision and then it will be up to the Group to ratify the decisions made. Hopefully branches and the Party will exert strong pressure on all Group members to vote down the line with the decision made by the joint meeting.

The names being banded about as possible contenders for the leadership are those of Steve Bullock, Dave Sullivan and Ron Stockbridge. To encourage as open and informed a contest as possible, I would hope that these three together with any others interested in standing would put forward their views and ideas for the coming year and in particular would put forward their proposals for how the Party should deal with rate capping. I would also hope that all those interested in standing would make their intentions known as soon as possible so that the branches have adequate opportunity to discuss the merits of each candidate and also to ensure that the election takes place in the open and not behind closed "pub" doors between members of the Group leaving the rest of the Party out of the discussion.

Martyn Day

The Role of Local Government Committees

THERE CAN be little doubt that Briefing has played a major role in encouraging the development of Socialist policies within London by enabling its pages to be used for debate between councillors from the different Labour-controlled councils since 1982. Now that the Socialist Authorities face their sternest test through the proposed rate-capping legislation I would like to see the area for debate in Briefing widened to include local government committees (LGCs).

If we are to mount any sort of opposition to the Government in this area both before the legislative proposals are enacted and when we face setting our budgets in 1985 there must be a large degree of unity not only between Boroughs but also between the Labour Group and Labour Parties in each Borough. The LGCs are well placed to take on that role of co-ordinating the parties and Group but the question must be asked, "what state are the LGCs in London in?" Despite having been the Secretary of Lewisham's LGC for the past two years I must say that my level of knowledge of what is happening on other LGCs is very limited. I would therefore like to open up the debate by describing what has been going on in Lewisham and where we stand at the present in the hope that it will encourage comrades from other areas to do the same.

Unashamedly Introspective

Since the election in May 1982 when the Left took all the major positions on our LGC, we have been unashamedly introspective in the changes we have pursued. Encouraged by a number of Left comrades who had been elected to the new Labour Group, we saw our main role as closing the immense gulf that existed between the Group and the Parties by encouraging Party members to take a more active interest in local government affairs rather than leaving them entirely to the Councillors and by pushing the Group members to pay greater heed to the wishes of the Parties.

In the time since our election a number of important structural changes have occurred including making Group meetings open to all Labour Party members in Lewisham; having 6 LGC reps on the Group Policy Committee; co-opting LGC reps onto various Council Committees, having joint LGC/Group meetings once a quarter; receiving regular written and verbal reports from every Council Committee Chair. It has also been recently agreed that the LGC reps will attend the Group AGM with full voting rights in the election of all the Committee Chairs, Group Officers and the Leader and Deputy Leader. All this has ensured a greater degree of contact between the Group and the rest of the membership and there can be no doubt that there is now a much higher level of interest in the Council's activities and the Group are much more prepared to listen to our views.

Anti-Cuts Campaign

As the internal position has improved we have very recently been able to put our energies into developing a more external approach for the LGC. The first aspect of that has been the setting up of a LGC/Group working party to co-ordinate the anti-cuts campaign in Lewisham. I understand that there are other LGCs who have gone much further down the line of developing a more campaigning structure and I would be very interested to hear more of their ideas.

One idea that I would like to float is that whilst I have very much welcomed the development of the ALA I think that it would benefit from having in attendance one representative from each of the relevant LGCs.

Martyn Day
(Secretary, Lewisham Local Government Committee)

The Marxes' London and ours

IN 1878 Wilhelm Liebknecht, the German socialist who had spent many years alongside Marx in London as a fellow exile, returned after a gap of 16 years. 'Streets gone, sections disappeared – new streets, new buildings, and the general aspect so changed that in a place where I formerely could have found my way blindfold I had to take refuge in a cab in order to get to my near goal'.

Liebknecht's remarks emphasis the speed with which London's landscape was changing a process that continues today. Marx himself lived in London from 1849 to 1883, and of the four houses and flats in which he lived for any length of time we are relatively fortunate in that half of them have survived.

28 Dean Street now bears a GLC plaque, but the rooms where the family stayed are above an expensive restaurant and therefore rather inaccessible. 9 Grafton Terrace, where the Marxes lived from 1856-64, are still there whereas 1 Modena Villas (1864-1875) are now The Grange flats. Finally, there is 41 Maitland Park Road (1875-1883) which was bombed in the war and subsequently demolished. Other places associated with Marx, such as the British Museum and Hampstead Heath, are of course intact.

Generally, however, it is the monuments, buildings and statues of our rulers which best survive the ravages of time. Think of the furore if a property developer tried to bulldoze Nelson's column, on the other hand places associated with the Chartists, the Owenites and other British labour organisations are continually being destroyed. Future schemes promise more vandalism, such as the closure of Marylebone Station and the Hay's Wharf site project.



Eleanor Marx

'The People's London'

Two points should be made. First of all, the labour movement must do more to commemorate its own history – whether it be leaders, demonstrations, or members of the rank and file. Not in a spirit of antiquarianism but as a reminder of the very different tradition of London history – 'the people's London' – which is all too often forgotten.

Secondly, there is the whole question of the preservation of the past. Within London itself this comes back once again to the present government's proposed abolition of the GLC. As a part of this plan the GLC's Historic Buildings Division is to be disbanded and the responsibility for the capital's historic buildings transferred to the London boroughs. It will also presumably be the end of that prodigious publishing achievement *The Survey of London*, the forty-second volume of which has just been issued.

However, the boroughs will lack the sort of expertise which the Historic Buildings Division has accumulated over the years, and quite probably the power or inclination too to stand up to those interested only in 'A London Fit for Property Developers'.

An integral part of socialism is the desire that we should take control of our own environment, that human need should come before private profit. The government's plans in this area provide another good reason why we must fight against the proposed abolition of the GLC.

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The Marx Memorial Library is housed at 37A Clerkenwell Green in a building which was once a radical workingmen's club and a socialist printing press. The Library has a collection of over 100,000 books, pamphlets and periodicals.

Andrew Davies
(Librarian, Marx Memorial Library)

Squatting:

Showing the homeless an alternative

'NEXT' – 'a door to a new future' is a squat in a disused office-factory just around the corner from the 'Crisis at Christmas' which was this year in a GLC warehouse in Vauxhall.

The building, empty for five years, was opened on 29th Dec. by activists from the former Squat Against Sales Campaign of the London Squatters Union to show the squatting alternative to the thousands of homeless people who are shunted between the street and hostels.

CONTROL!

As soon as Next leaflets were given out people rolled up. It was explained to them that 'Next' was *not* the Sally-Army, *not* a hostel, *not* a place where you had to do what someone else told you but a *squat – CONTROLLED BY US (YOU).* The idea got through. New arrivals gave out lots of leaflets and held meetings to run the building.

CRISIS IN CRISIS

Some individuals from Crisis at Christmas around the corner (which was closing at the end of the Christmas period) were very helpful and provided lots of mattresses and blankets. However the charity group in charge preferred to dump excess food in the river rather than give it to 'NEXT', on the grounds that either 'Next' was not a recognised charity or the food was past its shelf date life (like most food at hostels!)!

LEARNING

Although initially things went quite well some problems developed, which were not surprising given the situation.

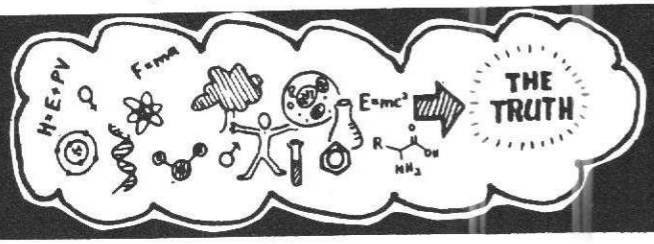
Someone, presumably connected with a scrap-dealers, stole the aluminium floor in the main room and meddled with the electricity; and there were one or two fights.

The venture however is carrying on. Many 'dossers' have now seen there is an alternative to the degradation of hostels and railway arches and a number have moved out to open squats of their own.

Something has been learned, by those who most need to learn.

Piers Corbyn (Bermondsey CLP)

science briefing



Horror of 'NUCLEAR WINTER'

Even a 'limited' nuclear war involving 1% of the world's bombs would generate so much dust and debris from firestorms in forests and cities that the resulting reduction in sunlight would cause a 'nuclear winter' of Siberian severity over the Northern hemisphere.

In these months the noonday sun would be no brighter than the moon and temperatures would stay at $-25^{o}C$ except on narrow coastal strips, according to recent studies. The sea would not freeze so a new ice age would not develop.

EXTINCTION

However considerable cooling of the lower atmosphere – which would extend well into the Southern Hemisphere in the case of a 'standard' (5,000 megaton) war in the Northern hemisphere – would last at least 6 months, or possibly years according to some estimates.

This alone would spell the end through freezing and starvation of most plants, agriculture, animals and human life in the northern hemisphere.

NUCLEAR SUMMER

Worse would come in a ten-year world-wide 'nuclear summer' of intense ultra-violet sunshine which would follow when the dust settles. This would be caused by the destruction of roughly half the ozone layer which at present filters out ultra-violet sunlight. This would be worst in the northern hemisphere where the bombs are assumed to fall but air mixing over years would seriously deplete ozone levels in the south too.

This 'summer' would cause severe sunburn within minutes of exposure and blindness over a larger period. Animals so blinded would die within weeks due to accidents.

The studies by Carl Sagan and others in America and other countries which give these predictions also show that radio-active fallout from a nuclear war would be more severe than hitherto imagined.

The conclusion? A nuclear war would end most species of life on earth including quite possibly the human race – leaving a world of fish, grass and insects.

THE CHOICE

Mankind's historic choice between 'barbarism or socialism', as posed by Trotsky, is now a gross understatement. The choice is world destruction or the creation of a new world without war, a world working in essential harmony with itself – in socialist harmony.



WAR CAUSES BOMBS

This may sound idealistic and difficult to grasp, but it is THE CHOICE. The question is not just one of nuclear weapons because as long as there are wars there will be nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are not the cause of war, war is the cause of nuclear weapons.



The nuclear threat is concentrating people's minds on the possible end of the world. Early 'options' like suicide are seriously contemplated in public by some. Many are beginning to see the real choice before us, but the choice will not be taken unless it is posed. We now have to show people the choice and start to imagine, make and work towards the future we want.

Piers Corbyn
(Bermondsey CLP)

REDS & GREENS UNITE!

During the 200 years of capitalist dominance, and even more so in the last 40 years, there has been an unprecedented assault on all aspects of the human and natural environment. There is therefore a pressing need for cooperation and cross-fertilisation between the labour/socialist and environmentalist movements ("Reds" and "Greens").

So far, examples of successful cooperation are rare. Perhaps the outstanding recent example is the campaign against sea dumping of radioactive waste.

After a long struggle by Greenpeace, involving members risking life and limb to stop sea-dumping, the London Dumping Convention called for a 2-year halt while a scientific review was carried out.

A few months later, the UK Atomic Energy Authority chartered the "Atlantic Fisher" to dump 3,900 tonnes of waste from 11 July 1983. However in June, the NUS, TGWU and ASLEF jointly agreed "not to handle or transport any waste by road, rail or sea scheduled for sea dumping." Within a few days, nine seafarers refused to sign articles on the Atlantic Fisher and sea dumping had stopped.

Working out alternative plans of production for "defence" industries is another example of useful cooperation, but in general, the performance of the trade unions, Labour Party and of the Marxist factions within the labour movement has been pathetic.

TOKENISM

The LP has adopted certain fashionable positions in a token manner, while maintaining wrong, even dangerous, ideas on other issues (e.g. new technology, nuclear power).

Some TU's are doing good work on toxic chemicals (e.g. GMBU) but most display *less* devotion to the health of their members and the welfare of the environment than they do to their members' pay!

Revolutionary socialists have little to say on either working or living environments. The only group which ever did *anything* was IS (SWP). They raised the issue of the hazards of work over 12 years ago and actually brought out a pamphlet on science in 1977. They have done little since.

Socialist scientists are generally active in particular campaigns, and there is actually a group organising socialist environmentalists or "green reds" – SERA (the Socialist Environmental Resources Association).

Last November, SERA held a conference (Socialism and the Green Movement) jointly with Green CND to discuss how Greens and Reds could work together. 100-150 participants attended but there were almost none who were not *already* involved in some environmental activity. Though all the "reds" were "green" quite a few of the "greens" *weren't* "red" (including some Ecology Party members and Young Liberals).

REFORMISM

Disturbingly, many "greens" identified "socialism" with the Labour leadership, nationalisation and unplanned economic growth. To this, the "reds" counterposed *not* the revolutionary critique of capitalism and reformism that Marxists put forward but various milk-and-water solutions, such as "popular planning", decentralisation and workers' co-ops.

Many discussions were disappointing, as articulate hobby-horse riders dominated ill-organised workshops. The rejection of capitalist life-styles did not extend to the rejection of machismo, as sexism prevailed. Some useful results emerged though, with the suggestion that a campaign to stop transport of nuclear waste be pushed forward. The need for a socialist energy policy was also argued.

Overall, though, the conference was testimony to the failure of the *revolutionary* socialist movement to go beyond the confines of socialist activity as defined by *reformist* leaderships.

Les Hearn
(Science Editor of Socialist Organiser)

Science Briefing welcomes contributors, letters and suggestions on any science-related topic you want to air or have demystified.

Contact: Piers Corbyn, Science Briefing, 55 Innis House, East St, London SE17. Tel. 701 5691.

SUPPORT G.L.C. ANTI-RACIST YEAR!

The GLC's Anti-Racist Year has the full and unequivocal support of all our communities. It has been a long time coming. But the fact that it has at last arrived, is an important event that must be made to mark a turning point in our struggle for justice and an end to discrimination born of fear and hatred.

The Labour GLC is mounting a massive publicity campaign to place the central issues of racism in our society at the top of the agenda. It is important that the Labour Party is in the thick of this campaign and is leading rather than tailending a County Hall oriented public relations exercise.

NO NEWS

The campaign must not only be led by the Labour Party but be seen to be led by the party. It must be a campaign too which draws its strength from campaigns which are locally organised by CLPs, Trade Union branches, Women's sections, Young Socialists, Coops, etc. The campaign must not overlook that there are a large number of Afro-Caribbean, Asian and other ethnic organisations which have evolved over the years whose aims, ethos and philosophy is not that different from socialism in the broader definition of the term.

We must ensure too that the jobs issue is kept in the forefront of the campaign. And that the Labour authorities, trade union and co-op organisations examine whether the communities they serve are properly reflected in the composition of their own staff, workforce and administration.

MONITORING UNIT

The Labour Party should have a monitoring unit to check on progress in the sectors we control, or, are supposed to control in the recruitment and advancement of staff from the ethnic communities — whether this be in London Transport, the London Enterprise Board or the many units that have been formed in many of London's Labour controlled Boroughs.

We must keep a careful watch on progress which has been very slow up to now in disinvestment and disassociation from the companies, institutions and banks which give succour to the racist regime of South Africa.

We dare not ignore the central role of the ethnic press in pioneering anti-racism in this country at a great cost to themselves. Both "young" and not "too young" ethnic press have been struggling against the odds, supporting the Labour Party through thick and thin and today expect all the support which they so rightly deserve. We must not let them down.

POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION

But our concern must begin with our own party — the Labour Party. We expect to see the results of positive discrimination in the Labour Party, trade unions and co-ops this year, 1984. We do expect to see black candidates not just on the panels for token and cosmetic effects but rightfully representing the broad spread and support within the party.

The days of **Uncle Toms** and fakes are over. The ethnic communities are here to stay. They expect and demand their equal rights within the party of their choice and the trade unions of their choosing.

The GLC's Anti-Racist campaign can become a beacon of hope for all our communities. We must make sure that the well meaning rhetoric is now translated into action. Time is not on our side. With the threat of abolition of the GLC, our communities must rally round the Labour GLC in its hour of need. Together we must halt this massive assault on Londoner's democratic rights and chase away this Orwellian spectre of 1984!

Vidya Anand, Chair, Ethnic Minorities Working Party, Greater London Labour Party — Ilford South CLP



Dagenham Witch-hunt? What nonsense.

Dear Comrade

DURING my membership of the Dagenham CLP, which includes nearly 25 years as Secretary and Chairman, no member has been expelled from our Party. Even when the NEC was discussing expelling Militant supporters, it was generally accepted (although we strongly disagreed with them) that we would not expel our few, so it is hardly likely that we would start with Charlie Baker.

His comment that we are trying to reduce our membership shows a surprising lack of knowledge of our activities – or part of a deliberate attempt to denigrate the Dagenham Party. For the last 12 months we have been actively canvassing the Constituency. In view of the Election result, it is a good job that we did.

One of our members accused Charlie Baker of an 'uncomradely act'. Inasmuch as he (Charlie) sent a cutting, to a local newspaper, of a letter published in the Hackney Gazette, which attacked the member for alleged activities during the course of his work in Hackney, when employed by the Hackney Borough Council. It is as well to know that the Hackney Gazette published three letters – one against our aggrieved member and two strongly supporting him, but Charlie only sent one – the one against. He did not send the cutting in his official capacity with the 'Cuts Campaign', the cutting had a few words on top, "Can you use this", signed Charlie Baker.

It is true that the note calling the Special Executive Committee meeting to discuss the complaint was not as specific as it should have been, Charlie Baker was well aware of what the meeting was about, as prior to the meeting he had discussed, with some of his friends, tactics to be used when the accusation against him was to be made. In any case, at the meeting, Charlie did not deny sending the cutting. To talk about a 'Kangaroo Court' is laughable, when Charlie, and every other Committee member, participated at length in questions and discussion.

When the two 'antagonists' left the room, a motion to expel was moved, but, on my advice, only two members supported. A further motion was moved that Charlie be *asked* to apologise and that I should *ask* him not to fight his battles in an unfriendly press, but try and keep it within the Party. There was certainly no mention of censoring anything he wrote, by Councillors (what a quaint idea) or by anyone else. That is just a figment of his imagination.

When Charlie returned, I asked him whether he accepted the proposals agreed by the Executive Committee. He said that he did accept (it is true that his accuser did not accept his apology) and that, as far as the Committee was concerned, was the end of the matter. However, to my surprise, Charlie approached me, after the end of the meeting, and handed me a note – "I herewith resign from the Dagenham CLP", signed Charlie Baker. Incidentally, nothing about pending an enquiry, as he stated in his Briefing article.

In view of the various reports and in fairness to the Dagenham CLP, I felt that the facts ought to be made known.

Harry Kay
Chairman, Dagenham CLP

Change of Heart?

Dear Comrade,

MARTYN Day's "Everyday story of the Labour Left" made sad reading: sad because on all the precedents his experience is inevitable. Yet must it always be so?

He wrote of the painful awakening of yet another generation of committed socialist idealists to an absolute and apparently eternal reality – that purity of principle is maintained in full innocence (and usually some arrogance!) only by those without power, while those who have taken power will inevitably see at least some issues at least some of the time through different eyes.

This isn't cynicism, it's fact. "Out-of-touch idealists who don't know what it's all about" have always stood opposite "Corrupted backsliders who've sold out to the establishment" in mutual condemnation.

But isn't it the truth that the way forward doesn't in the end come entirely from one side or the other alone, but through their interaction? Both elements will inevitably exist, and rather than seeking to eliminate each other verbally or tactically, we could more positively recognise and even welcome the tension between them as a creative force for discussion, learning and growth. Convictions may at times be changed, whether by force of argument or by the sharing of a leap of imagination, or sometimes there may be – dread word? – compromise. For some, on some issues, there may never be any resolution, but by and large this is how life in general progresses, enriched by expanded experience and understanding.

This reality makes it essential to look at the ways in which we express political attitudes, particularly in discussion with each other. Our political beliefs are associated with the need to attain power, but should not arise from a desire for power for its own sake. They have a moral basis. Therefore they must reflect, and be reflected in, the way we behave through the whole spectrum of life from the personal to the public. In the context of political discussion, this means open-mindedness and toleration – both listening to unfamiliar ideas and hearing the anxieties which can lie behind their rejection.

As no more than a semi-activist myself, I have nevertheless seen others of my political generation – more prominent and therefore more vulnerable – suffering from slashing attacks on their integrity by some of those who are now experiencing the turning of the wheel themselves. Can we at last break the cycle and speak with each other in a comradely spirit? It would be good if those who presently hold the torch of political inspiration on the sidelines could try to light the way for those with power and practical responsibility, rather than incinerate them in flamethrowing attacks of searing condemnation!

Jane Pepper
(Lewisham East CLP)

DEFENDING IRISH UNITY?

Motion passed by the Greater London Council on December 20, 1983, with the unanimous support of the Labour Group:

"That the sitting be suspended until 2.55pm in order to place on record the deep outrage felt by the Council at the cowardly and unprovoked bombing outside Harrods, as part of the continuing attack upon London and Londoners by the Provisional IRA; the Council's condemnation of the Provisional IRA and their political apologists; the Council's praise for the police and emergency services for their rescue work; and to urge all Londoners to co-operate with the Metropolitan Police in helping to bring the criminals to justcie."

Our pages are open to any GLC Councillor who wishes to explain the Labour Group's support for this motion.

THANKS TO OUR PRINTERS

Many thanks from Briefing to Phyll and Bernie of Wernham Printers for their very generous donation of a bottle of whisky and a bottle of vodka as prizes in our raffle at the Briefing Xmas Social. They were very much appreciated especially by the two winners!

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Next Editorial board meeting:
Monday 20th February 6.30pm
at County Hall

Next issue out on Friday February 17th.
Deadline for articles: Monday 6th February.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

MENTAL ILLNESS BREAKING THE SILENCE

What is mental illness or mental ill health, and what are its causes? Some would say that there is no such thing and that it is a concept used by society to 'normalise' individuals and control social and political dissident behaviour. Others would say that mental illness is not an individual problem but is a product of the type of society we live in. It occurs when people can't 'cope' with the pressures exerted on them by some socially determined force. A third view is that mental illness has a biochemical cause, ie a malfunction or an infection in the brain. The probability is that each of these views has validity in particular cases, since mental ill health is not just *one* illness, but is a symptom of many individual, social and political problems, which are often difficult to distinguish between.

What is certain, is that there are many individuals who at certain points in their lives will have 'special needs' and will require a great deal of care and support, and in some cases medical treatment. At the moment, a large burden of the responsibility for providing this support falls upon the nuclear family, but is that the best structure? In my view, the structure of the nuclear family contributes to mental ill health and that because of the strong emotional ties that exist in the nuclear family, care within that structure can often exacerbate the problem. Also in many cases, the nuclear family cannot cope with providing the support.

At present, for the large majority of people, the only alternative 'care' is within a mental institution. 'Care' in this case usually means control and containment by drugs and ECT, with little prospect of therapy or rehabilitation.

No-one could defend these inhumane institutions and indeed, at the moment, plans are being drawn up to run many of them down and replace them with community care. Unfortunately, however, in a climate of cuts in health service and local government provision many authorities seem to view this as a way of making savings. In fact, real community care will require enormous resources without which the burden will once again be thrown back onto the nuclear family. Community care in this context means little more than dumping people back into the community.

So how should we be providing this care and support? In what ways does society contribute to mental ill health? Despite the fact that almost everyone will experience mental illness, either directly or indirectly, at some point in their life, it is still an issue on which there is a great deal of ignorance and which is treated with shame and embarrassment, not least by the Left. But the reasons for and consequences of mental ill health are political issues. We hope to stimulate a discussion on this issue by printing below some personal experiences and views.

Jane Stockton,

Women-supporting each other for change

1 in 6 women and 1 in 12 men find themselves at some point in their lives in a psychiatric hospital. In other words, experiences like these expressed in these quotes are not unusual, and they clearly have something to do with the position in society of those who have them (the figure for black women is even more telling – it is 1 in 4). But what the significance of 'madness' might be, or how society treats those of us who become 'mad', is still not part of any kind of political debate. The growing interest in all kinds of therapies confines itself to dealing with forms of neurotic contradiction that are well within the bounds of the 'normal'.

Until recently the women's movement shied away from breaking the silence surrounding mental illness, but a group of women have begun to organise to change this. Many women are coming to the conclusion that not only are we more 'at risk' as women and suffer from sexist attitudes embedded in the psychiatric profession, but that the experiences of 'madness' itself has something to teach us and needs to be explored.

CATCH 22

Why are twice as many women as men admitted into mental hospitals? A double standard of mental health imposes a Catch 22 on women. American psychologist Phyllis Chesler in her book 'Women and Madness' remarked: 'Most . . . women who are psychiatrically labelled . . . may be deeply unhappy, self-destructive, economically powerless, and sexually impotent – but as women they're supposed to be.' The characteristics of 'normal' feminity as defined in standard psychological tests are remarkably similar to those of depression – unassertiveness, passivity and introversion. It seems that a tendency to become 'mentally ill' is part of our feminine role. On the other hand, women who show 'masculine' characteristics and step outside that role are quite likely to have the epithet 'crazy' flung at them to

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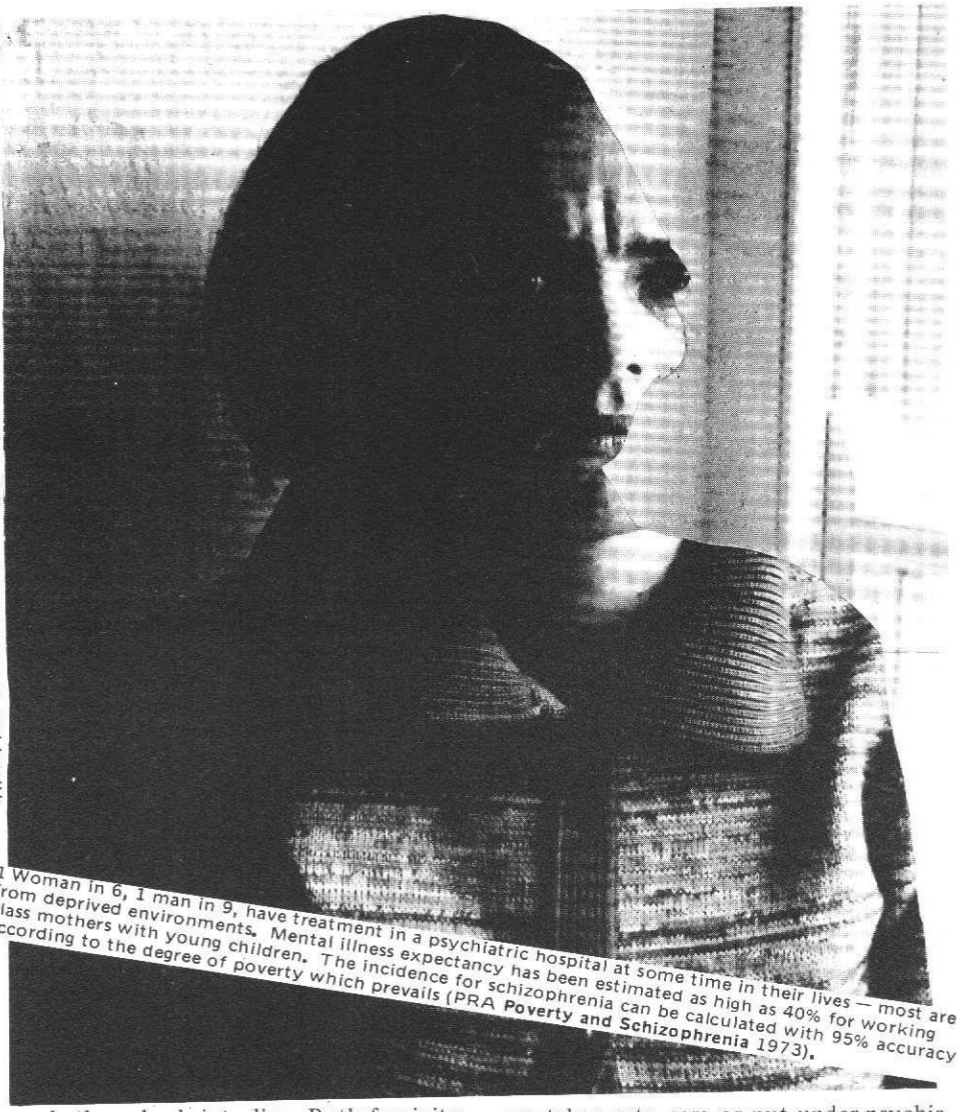
'I lost a stone in four days and looked like a ghost. Part of me was functioning on automatic pilot, but the rest of me was down there desperately fighting for my existence.'

'When I am depressed all my energy goes into just getting through the bare routine essentials. Sometimes I am totally immobilised.'

'For two months I was convinced that everything that went on around me was a joke at my expense. Everyone was in a secret I could not share; I was an exile from the human race.'

Women supporting each other

Continued from previous page



Photomontage by Loraine Leeson from a series of five posters on women and health.

1 Woman in 6, 1 man in 9, have treatment in a psychiatric hospital at some time in their lives — most are from deprived environments. Mental illness expectancy has been estimated as high as 40% for working class mothers with young children. The incidence for schizophrenia can be calculated with 95% accuracy according to the degree of poverty which prevails (PRA **Poverty and Schizophrenia** 1973).

push them back into line. Both feminity and the lack of it are definable as mad according to masculine standards of mental health. Catch 22.

Perfectly healthy behaviour in women, such as lesbianism, assertive heterosexuality, or openly-expressed anger are often defined as 'mad'. Psychiatry at an early stage manufactured labels such as 'hysteria' or 'nymphomania' to explain behaviour which would be quite acceptable in men. The post-war tendency to medicalize emotional problems such as 'depression' has had a particularly destructive effect on women. GPs are far more likely to give a psychological diagnosis for women's complaints than for their male patients, who are more frequently given physiological diagnoses. 'Endogenous' depression – supposedly of an internal, biochemical origin – is diagnosed far more frequently in women than in men. The implication – as in the classic diagnosis of 'hysteria' – is that we are biologically unstable.

'MAD' NOT 'BAD'!

Female criminal behaviour is more likely to be defined as 'mad' than 'bad'; Holloway is at the top of the list of prisons in England for handing out tranquillisers and anti-depressants. Girls who 'act up' are taken into care or put under psychiatric treatment more often than are delinquent boys. (Girls do not really rebel – they are only sick). The fact is that men have a much greater range of acceptable behaviour open to them, either within or outside of their traditional masculine roles.

Mental health legislation leaves women in an extremely vulnerable position. Under Section 136 of the 1959 Mental Health Act, any person who appears to be suffering from a mental disorder in a public place may in certain circumstances be detained by a police officer and taken to a place of safety for a period not exceeding 72 hours. This gives police more powers than social workers (who cannot remove anyone to a hospital without a doctor's permission) and leaves the person picked up with no rights at all. Another section of the Act gives closest relatives – husband, male cohabitee after six months, parents – the power to approach a social worker or doctor to get a woman hospitalised. A woman has no legal protection against her family, husband/cohabitee, social workers, doctors or psychiatrists. She cannot even appoint a friend to be next of kin.

The aura of esoteric knowledge and power surrounding the medical profession and the dependent 'patient' role it engenders is even more dangerous in psychiatric than in physical medicine. Psychiatric treatment still relies almost exclusively on the use of psychotropic drugs and electro-convulsive treatment (ECT). Many women are left with the added problems of conquering drug dependence and coping with the side-effects of these drugs – effects which are sometimes debilitating (one commonly-used anti-depressant can cause Parkinson's disease) but very little understood. The fact that most psychiatrists are men and most patients are women reinforces and reflects our dependent social position; but even outside these ratios, psychiatry as such tends to induce and maintain dependence rather than encourage self-help.

WOMEN ARE ORGANISING

A day school on 'Women and Mental Health' held recently in Sheffield produced four proposals: refuges or crisis centres for women in desperate need of understanding support being set up as an alternative to psychiatric hospitals; women and mental health groups being formed to campaign to increase awareness of the issue and to support one another; the collective writing of a book on our experiences; and the exposure of certain particularly destructive psychiatric practices and practitioners. Two all-London meetings have been held so far to discuss and begin to implement these proposals. Support groups have been set up in all areas of London, there are plans for a newsletter, and the group is approaching several organisations for financial support to set up crisis centres.

The response to the meetings indicates a growing feeling that 'mental illness' is more than a personal, private problem; but our discussions and the fact that this article, for example, is littered with quotation marks, reflects our lack of vocabulary to explore it. It will not be the first time that the women's movement has unearthed and attempted to understand hidden and nameless aspects of our experience. Many of us are unwilling now to bury and hide periods of our lives which, although painful, taught us something of value; others are unwilling to unquestioningly pay the constant price exacted for being 'coping', 'adjusted' women. We know that sanity and insanity are points on a vast and constantly shifting spectrum, that we are vulnerable, and that accepting and understanding times of disorientation, loss of control, and emotional crisis is part of confronting our oppression.

Celia Holt
Women and Mental Health Group

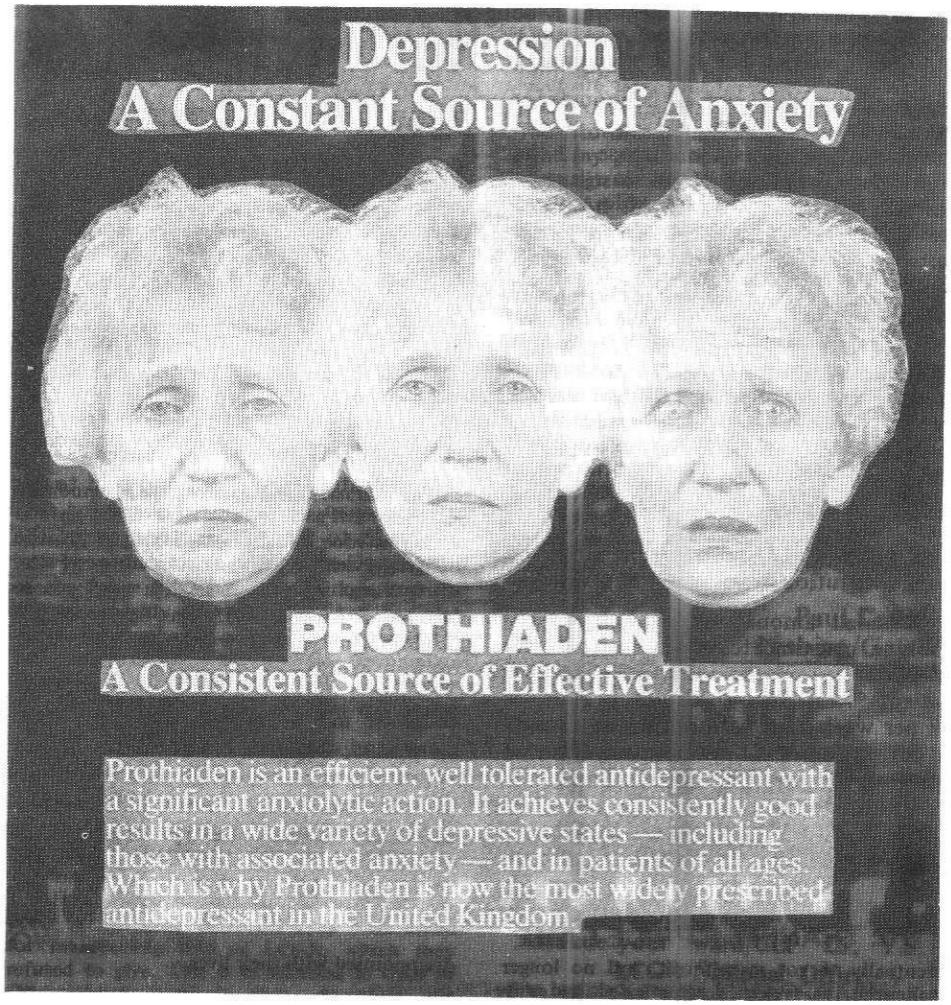
Women and Mental Health can be contacted at Box 21, Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, London N1. Support Groups in North London, Hackney, South London, West London. Also sub-groups on Drugs and Transquilisers, Women and Alcohol, Women and Writing. For details, contact above address.

Donations are welcome and can be paid into National Westminster Bank, A/C number 27409767, branch number 60-22-08.

A SCREAM OF RAGE

Twelve years ago, when I was 22, I spent six months in a mental hospital. Statistically my chances of being there were high, one in six women, compared to 1 in 12 men will spend time in such a place, and the proportion of working class women to do so is far higher than that of middle class women. For Black women it is higher still.

I was there because of an attempted suicide. I took 50 headache pills during a severe depression. I had dropped out of teacher training college, unable to accept the middle class bias of the education system, and unable to cope with relationships. I was withdrawn, anxious, guilt ridden and angry at the injustice of the world. I had tried to express my anger by joining a Trotskyist group, but was soon expelled as an 'anarchist'. There was nowhere else to turn, so I decided to opt out. A failed suicide attempt is usually termed 'a cry for help'. I think it would be better described as 'a scream of rage', but nevertheless, the system feels obliged to offer something. The first 'help' I experienced was to have a length of rubber tubing forced down my throat and water poured down it to wash me out. It is one of the most degrading things that can be done to anyone, and I suspect that it might be possible to find more humane ways to neutralise an overdose, that this primitive and brutal treatment is meant as a deterrent. That was certainly the feeling I got from the staff who carried it out.



ADVERT FROM THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL

EXPERIENCE OF A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Arriving in the psychiatric hospital, I was kept in nightclothes for several weeks, although I was a voluntary patient, until the doctor deemed it was safe to let me get dressed. I was put on Valium and barbiturates, the latter of which I saved up for a second attempt, but took them before I had enough to do any serious harm. I was told on my weekly 15 minute interview with the psychiatrist that I would have E.C.T. treatment. I didn't want it – most psychiatric patients, however depressed, resist the idea of shock treatment – it is too reminiscent of brainwashing. However unhappy you are, you don't want your brain tampered with. But I was told that if I wouldn't accept the treatment, I could go home – despite the fact that I had now attempted suicide twice, and was terrified of being sent out to cope alone.

I gave in eventually and had six treatments of ECT. I still believe, whatever I read about the wonderful mood improvements that are said to result from it, that the effect is somewhat similar to being hit over the head with a ten-pound hammer – it disorientates you, makes you forget, at least temporarily, the problems that brought you there, and makes you more inclined to listen to the experts. It also discourages you from getting inside a mental hospital again. What it cannot do is improve your self-respect, help you to deal with your problems, to understand yourself better, or put you on the road to recovery. It encourages a feeling of helplessness and victimisation. Many women there were returning for their fourth or fifth dose of shock treatment – once out in the world again, still taking the pills, they were no better able to cope than they had been before – but now they knew what to do when the pressure got too much.

A PLACE OF REFUGE?

It says a lot for the misery of a housewife's existence that a mental hospital is seen as a place of refuge. It was a dreary place, ill-provided with financial resources compared to the general hospital next door, so that the food was inferior, the occupational therapy almost non-existent, and the nurses and doctors too busy to spend any time talking to the patients. The only counselling and support we got was from each other – the weekly interview with the consultant was scarcely enough to check on the effects of the treatment and prescribe a new pill. It is a disgrace that, while depression is considered to be an illness like any other, people suffering from it are given treatment far inferior to that in ordinary hospitals. The patients are well aware that they are being treated as 'loonies', who wouldn't notice what they are eating, and don't deserve any better in any case.

(CONTINUED OVER)

PSYCHOTHERAPY

Out of the cuckoo's nest?

Three years ago, being generally depressed and depressed in particular with having a degree and no job, I went as a voluntary patient into what was called a psychotherapeutic unit. Great, I thought! No bars on the windows or locked wards. No drugs which suppress the symptoms without getting to the root causes and often leave those taking them in a zombie-like state. The doctors and patients calling each other by their first names and thus breaking down the barrier between those prescribing and those receiving treatment and, most attractive of all, patients and staff making decisions together about the running of the unit. If nothing else, it would be a chance to rest and reflect in reasonably congenial surroundings.

My disillusionment was swift! The unit was in fact the former nurses home of one of the vast Victorian warehouses for the unwanted which pass as mental hospitals. From this there arose all the problems of living in an institution. Firebells would go off at all hours of the day and night. Staff from other parts of the hospital would wander into peoples' rooms without knocking. The budget for food was hopelessly inadequate, which meant there were only two meals a day and one went without a proper breakfast. A sick social worker was not replaced which meant that those unable to cope with the humiliating hassle got no social security. How people unable to successfully live on their own or in a family were able to bear up under the added pressures of being institutionalised wasn't explained.

A small amount of necessary work cooking, cleaning etc. was considered part of the therapeutic process. For this patients were paid the princely sum of £3 per week. Out of this one was expected to pay back £1 for the provision of extras. These extras included fresh meat!

TREATMENT BASED ON INSULT

It soon became clear that treatment didn't take the form of understanding, care and sound advice on how to deal with the numerous problems which destroy people as human beings in a capitalist society, but was based on insult, making those who felt inadequate feel even more so. Patients were told that they were clueless and lazy, that the unit was a doss house and that it was costing the state £200 a week to keep them there. When I criticised this I was denounced as an infantile utopian socialist and told to get off my soap box. When I suggested that we write to Ken Livingstone about the inadequacies in the functioning of the unit, the chief psychiatrist, a man whose income from the NHS was by no means modest, said that he would like to urinate on Ken Livingstone!

When I expressed my feeling that the cause of my depression was unemployment and poverty I was told that my problem was that I was greedy. I was even informed I had devouring eyes!

All this springs from the accepted psychiatric 'wisdom' that mental illness is the product of organic malfunction or individual failing and has no social or economic causes. On this basis the aim of treatment is to make the individual conform to and function within the prevailing socio-economic conditions. That the social structure itself may be based on an irrational premise (the profit motive) is never considered. Political commitment, particularly socialist political commitment, is seen as symptomatic of mental disorder.

For those who would not conform to this view the sanction was discharge from the unit, i.e. returning him/her to the conditions which brought them there in the first place. However, it was rumoured that the chief psychiatrist kept about his person the papers necessary for the commitment of difficult patients to locked wards.

Continued on next page

A SCREAM OF RAGE (CONTINUED)

Eventually, I got myself out, and no longer challenged the system. I got married, had children, and kept my thoughts well away from danger areas like politics. I couldn't risk getting depressed again. I was forced to lie on my job applications – the only time I told the truth it cost me the job. A whole part of my life was taboo, because people became uncomfortable if I tried to talk about it. I was afraid – I steered a safe middle-course, away from highs or lows of feeling – I couldn't trust myself. Only after years of security and stability in married life, have I been able to begin to try again, to explore the darker regions, to try to become a whole person, with the help of the Women's Therapy Centre, and a therapist at my local Child Guidance Centre. At last I am able to see that I am not alone – that millions of women suffer from being forced into a subservient role, compounded for Black and working class women by their low social status and economic deprivation. It is almost impossible for a working-class woman to build a positive self-image and sense of worth – the key to mental health – when the women she observes as she is growing up – her role models – are oppressed, economically dependent, tired and disappointed with their lives.

WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

The Women and Mental Health campaign, recently set up, aims to link mental health system survivors to campaign for a better understanding of why women are so vulnerable to mental health problems, and to expose the insensitive treatment usually given to women who cannot or will not adjust to the role society has forced them into. We hope to set up Crisis centres where women under stress can receive sympathetic help and understanding, to live through the crisis in their lives and to use it as a time of reassessment. We hope to put together the experiences of women who have suffered under the system into a book, and to show the kind of injustices perpetrated under Section 136, which allows for the police to forcibly admit people to mental hospitals.

This is a whole area which has had little attention, because anyone who has been a mental patient is reluctant to talk about it, for fear of losing credibility. Those who say that the mental health system is inhumane are thought of as paranoid, after all, if they were right in the head, they wouldn't have been in there in the first place. Here is a quote from Nick Heather, Senior Clinical Psychologist for Tayside Area Health Authority:

'. . . *most patients who get ECT are working class and will therefore be unused to exercising their rights and standing up to the medical profession. Particularly powerless are the lower working class, the submerged 10% of the population which provides the psychiatric machine with so much of its human material. To see large groups of these shuffling, bedraggled, listless individuals, stunned and bewildered by ECT being herded unprotestingly along hospital corridors is a painful and unforgettable experience . . . we believe we have made progress, and we shake our heads in outraged wonder at the barbarities of previous ages in response to the poor and wretched. Our progress in this respect is an illusion. We have merely made progress in deceiving ourselves.* **ECT IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY.**'

JAN WALLCRAFT
Hornsey C.L.P.

GAYS FIGHT NEW THREAT

No, you won't have read it in the 'Sun' or the 'News of the World'. In fact you won't have read it at all unless you read selected Gay papers. In the last few months these are but some of the *reported* events, ie those that have come to light:

– In Exeter we *know* of 6 Gay men that have been sent down for charges such as 'Indecency' and 'Attempted buggery', and so on. It was widely believed that prosecutions of Gay men for sex, over the age of 18 had ended (the male Gay 'Age-of-consent' is 21). However this has now been proved not to be so.

– One 33 year old, who had a relationship with an 18 year old was sent to prison for *2 years*. Gays in Exeter are so scared that these events have only come to light through careful reading of local newspapers by Gay men in London.

– In Earls Court, 25 Gay men have been arrested for 'persistently importuning for immoral purposes'. In fact they were entrapped by police 'agent provocateurs', dressed in ripped jeans and leather jackets! Again, due to the very real threat of losing their jobs through adverse publicity, most pleaded guilty, essentially accepting that their *Gayness* is immoral. Since this was reported in the last 'Briefing' a defence campaign has been drawn up and it has managed to extract the admission that the police action *is* illegal.

– In Notting Hill Gate, police are monitoring Gay men using the 'Cottage' (Public Loo) and then arresting them. For many isolated Gay men, and they are in the vast majority, using 'Cottages' is their only way of meeting other Gay men.

Police make a big fuss of how Gays bother other non-Gays. However the amount of resources put in catching these Gay men is ridiculously high compared to the effort put into what is a very real problem – that of sexual *violence* against women.

In Scotland the Edinburgh Gay Centre has been raided by police using the local 'Sex shops Act'. They took away a leather belt, a copy of 'Him', 'Gay Scotland' and a bottle of poppers, and deemed them all pornographic! There is now the very real possibility that the



Edinburgh Gay switchboard, attached to the Centre, will lose its tiny funding from the local council. In addition all the local pubs and clubs have been raided using the Scottish equivalent of the Police Bill, passed a year ago, and the patrons roughly treated. This Act has also led to the number of people being arrested for Gay street offences rising from (incomplete figures) 3 to over 30 in a year. Incomplete information from Glasgow says that very similar things are happening there.

In London, two ex-Labour Campaign for Gay Rights activists were visited in the early hours of the morning by police 'under instructions from the Home Office', investigating the rape of the Brighton boy in the summer, and the murder of the two Scottish girls Maxwell and Hogg. They were told that they were suspects for all these offences. They were asked for membership lists of LCGR, which they refused to give. This is in addition to visits of Gay activists in North Wales, Sheffield, and other places, all by police under similar instructions investigating the Brighton incident.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Every week you hear of some new even more horrendous story, and with the introduction of the Police Bill things will hot up even more. But Lesbian and Gay organisations are not going to collapse under the weight of repression. Gays in Earls Court have formed a defence campaign. Icebreakers, the NCCL and the Gay Youth Movement are taking up the Exeter cases with the Home Office and contacting those sent down. The Scottish Homosexual Rights Group will fight any prosecutions tooth and nail. Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and the newly formed Gays Against the Police Bill will fight all attempts at intimidation and indeed, all abuses of police power.

It is the duty of every socialist to support the slogan 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. You can help by contacting either of the following:

Earls Court Defence Campaign and Gays Against the Police Bill, c/o GALOP, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1 (01-278 6215).

London Labour Campaign for Gay Rights Office, 39 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH (01-286 9692).

National Labour Campaign for Gay Rights Office and membership secretary, c/o 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham (0602 780 124).

Paul Canning
Lesbian/Gay YS

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

Join us! Individuals from £1.
Affiliate your ward/CLP £5, Y.S. £2.
LCGR National Office,
21 Devonshire Promenade Nottingham NG7

Out of the cuckoo's nest?

(Continued from previous page)

In the mind of the hospital administration there was some confusion as to whether patients were villains to be punished or helpless inadequates to be patronised. This latter view was reflected in the fact that the library would never let patients have more than two books per month. (I argued and got four.) For whatever reason patients were not allowed to read text books on psychiatry and psychology. Maybe it was thought they would read Szasz and start to question the whole set-up!

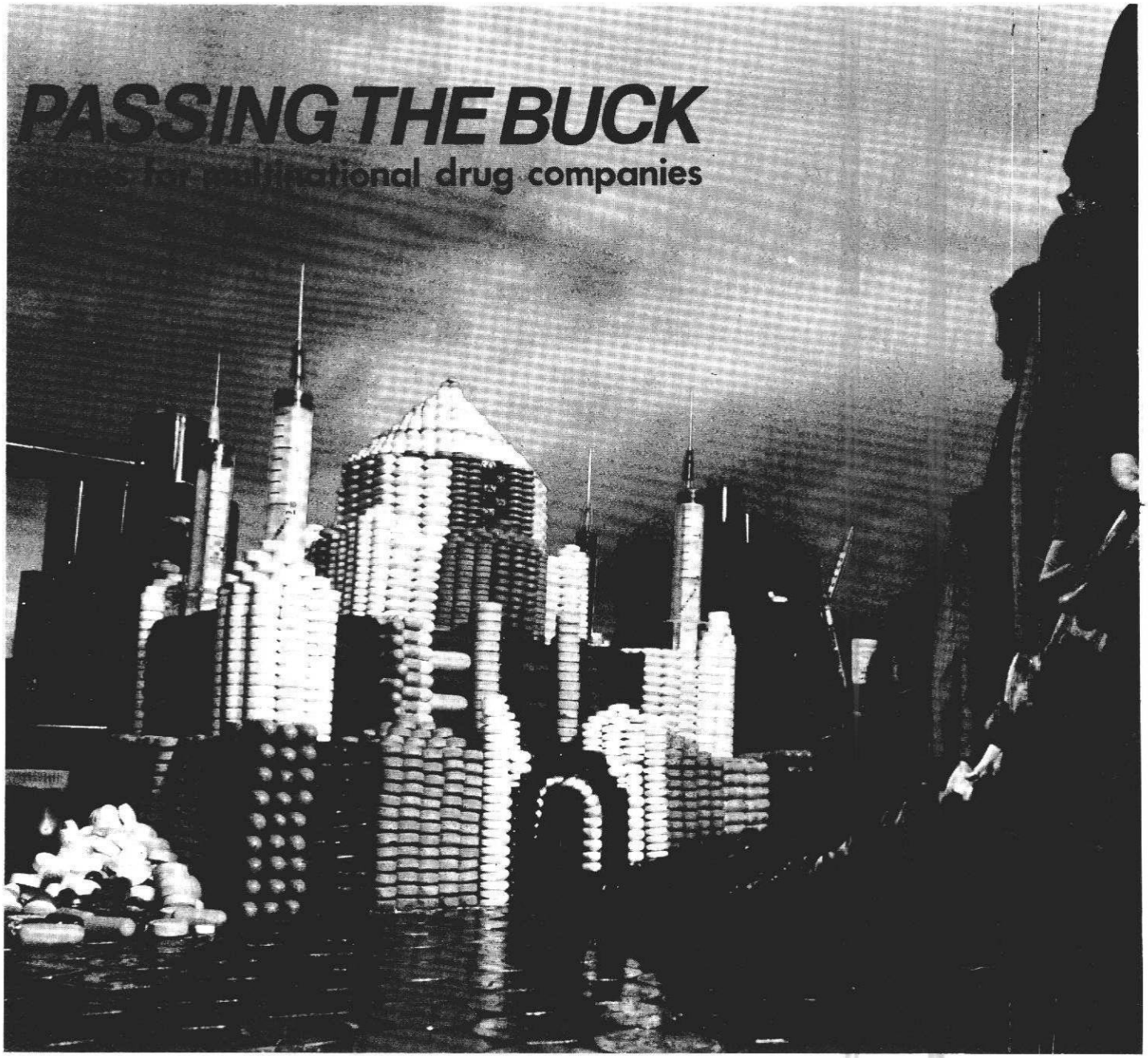
Patients who tried to discharge themselves were often verbally coerced into remaining. I got round this by failing to report back one Monday (we were allowed home at weekends). However, a neighbour who tried to leave one evening had other patients, who believed every word the psychiatrists spoke, clinging to the bonnet of his car to prevent him.

I had hoped for rest and recuperation and perhaps a chance to share and discuss my problems with folk in a similar position. What I got was an affront to my liberty and dignity as a human being!

A SOCIAL PROBLEM

Faced with a threatened and resource-starved health service there is a temptation to merely defend what there is without questioning what it does and why. Yet to me the present NHS psychotherapy is as useless for making unhappy, frightened people whole, happy, self-confident individuals as is the drug and ECT treatment which is also available. In planning for a future socialist health service I would argue that what is called mental illness should be seen as a social not an individual problem and that patients should be seen as subjects, not as objects to be moulded in conformity with the reactionary views of a psychiatric elite.

Terry Liddle,
Woolwich and Eltham Labour Party



THE TRANSFER PRICE GAME

1. Take a product like Valium (original price £20 per kilo)
2. Pass it through your subsidiaries, preferably using tax havens.
3. Raise the price substantially at each transfer.
4. But ensure final transaction shows a 'reasonable profit'
5. Sell your product to the NHS at £370 per kilo
6. Collect 1,850% profit, avoiding DHSS scrutiny on excessive profits.

OBJECT: to prove your firm 'operates and may be expected to operate against the public interest' (Monopolies Commission report on Roche's actvitities)

THE THIRD WORLD GAME

1. Take an untried drug like injectable steroid contraceptives
2. Get 'consent' for testing from illiterate or low income groups
3. Usual test groups: 75% black, 25% coloured – no whites
4. If drug works, sell expensively in developed countries
5. If not, or too many side effects, sell to third world
6. If dangerous, do not release test results – hush it up

OBJECT: to maximise profits at lowest possible outlay whilst maintaining a reputation for high standards of safety

Photomontage by Peter Dunn and Loraine Leeson.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of the Streetlife Supplement will be on the theme of political meetings and political organisation. Is it possible to make meetings interesting? Can we organise politically in a non-hierarchical way? Does the present structure of the Labour Party alienate and prevent many of the groups we are trying to attract such as women, black people and working class people from participating? How can we raise the issue of personal and sexual politics in Labour Party meetings? What alternative ways are there to organise?

Contributions on this theme and on any other issue relevant to personal politics should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1 by Saturday 4th February.

STREETLIFE MEETING

The next Streetlife meeting is on Thursday 16th February, 8pm at County Hall. All Streetlife Supplement supporters are welcome!

Published by London Labour Briefing, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.
Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd [TU], Forster Road, London N17.
Typeset by Bread 'n Roses [TU], 30 Camden Road, NW1, and by Folrose Ltd [TU], 98 Gifford Street, London N1 and by Lithoprint, 329 Upper Street, London N1.

LABOUR
BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 4 February 1984

OUT OF NATO!

by JO RICHARDSON

The Labour Party's position on NATO is quite clear. Annual Conference has so far rejected calls for withdrawal from the organisation. As a Party member, and a member of the National Executive, I accept that decision; but I am entitled as an individual to put forward my personal, long-held unease at Britain's membership.

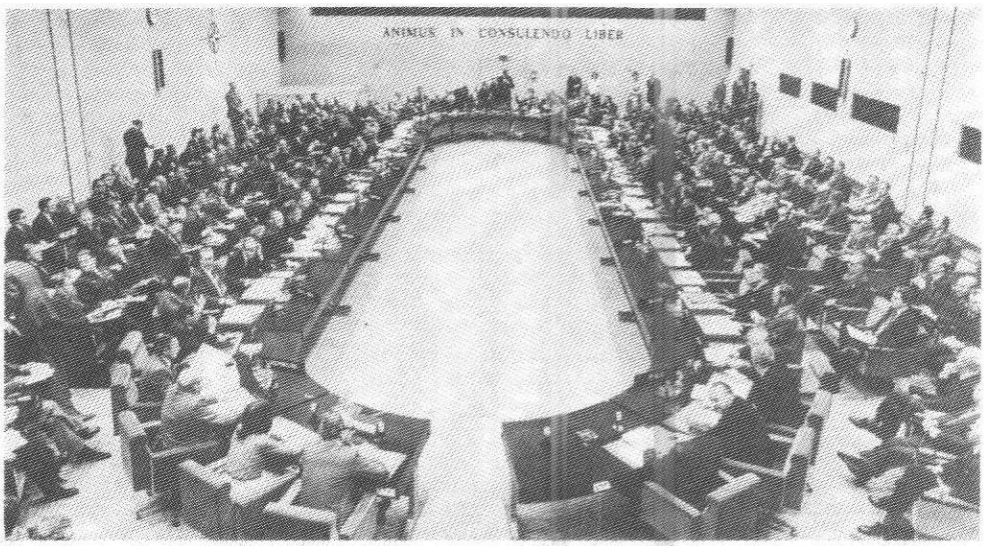
I am not one of those who say you cannot have a non-nuclear policy whilst remaining a member of NATO. It is perfectly possible to remain with a conventional arms policy. Canada does, and there is fast-growing support for a nuclear-free zone in Europe.

My objection is a different and a less technical one, and it is an objection which extends not only to NATO but also to the Warsaw Pact.

Firstly, I do not believe that the Soviet Union is intending to invade Britain — or any other Western country. Their build-up of nuclear weapons is an indefensible as that of the Western nations, but it's based on fear rather than on expansionism.

Secondly, it could well be that the debate about NATO and the Warsaw Pact will become academic, because there has been a growing alienation of the satellite states of both the United States and the Soviet Union from the domination of their leaders. Romania is virtually out of the Warsaw Pact. Poland could hardly be considered a reliable ally. Hungary has been distancing itself for some time from Soviet policy. And Czechoslovakia's adherence to the Soviet Union is threatened by underground opposition. There is dissension even in the German Democratic Republic, long held to be closest to Kremlin policy.

On the Western side, American reliance on NATO and on Europe is threatened by the growth of the peace movements. Although Cruise and Pershing II missiles are now being installed, the US was shocked at the intensity of opposition within a number of NATO countries to the installation of the missiles, and that opposition is growing. Even the West German Government — hitherto always a compliant partner — has not been keen to play along too readily. There is an unwillingness throughout European NATO countries to increase their contributions to the Alliance; and there are growing policy differences between the USA and her European allies — on the Soviet pipeline, on Central America, on Lebanon, and on relations with the Third World.



The December 12, 1979, meeting in Brussels of the ministers of defense and of foreign affairs of NATO member states that decided on a two-track decision to install cruise and Pershing II missiles on West European territory while pursuing arms control agreements with the Soviet Union.

All this could lead to a considerable erosion of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

I want Britain to have a non-nuclear, non-NATO defence policy. Regional military pacts increase the danger of war, and cause confrontation. They also increase the possibility of accident, since there is no clear line of responsibility.

We have always depended, as a nation, too much on the United States and latterly on Reagan, who would use us cynically for his own ends.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Anti-Trident Convention



There can't be anyone left who hasn't heard of the cruise missiles at Greenham Common. But what about Britain's very own Trident nuclear weapons, which are to be based in Scotland?

Trident could be with us sooner than many people think. The massive new complex in which the submarines are to be built is now taking shape in Barrow-in-Furness. The prototype centre section to house the PWR2 reactor (shortly to be tested at Dounreay) is already on the stocks.

£350 million or more may have been spent on Trident by mid-1984. And that doesn't include the spiralling costs of the special new complex at Aldermaston where the warheads are being developed.

One means of stepping up the action will be the anti-Trident Convention in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester (which has now been postponed to Saturday 25th February to avoid a clash with a trade union conference on Trident on 11 February).

The aim of the Convention is to make Trident a major issue for the peace movement throughout Britain, and not just Scotland. In particular, it will seek to develop a discussion about the most effective forms of campaigning to stop these weapons.

A major contribution can be made here by the labour and trade union movement. Already ATC has been using a petition calling on the trade unions and local authorities to boycott firms working on Trident. Rolls-Royce workers at Hillingdon, Glasgow, have successfully refused to handle work connected with Trident.

In particular, it may be possible to get action on Trident from sections of the labour movement that are hostile to unilateralism. Unions such as the EETPU (electricians) or the EIS (Scottish teachers) spring to mind here.

Above all Trident will be a test of the Labour Party's ability to act as a *campaigning* party — something which was not very evident in the build-up to the 22nd October CND demonstration, despite all the fine words at conference.

Trident is not wanted by the vast majority of people in Britain. It will eat huge recources (at least £10 billion) which could otherwise be spent on providing things we really need: jobs, health, education, housing, and so on.

The potential is there — but will the labour movement take up the challenge?

MARTIN METEYARD (Glasgow Pollock CLP; Secretary, Anti-Trident Campaign — in personal capacity)

** For further details of the convention, contact: Anti-Trident Campaign, 420 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G2 (tel. 041-332 3141).*

Options for defence

A conference for all who are interested in the NATO and Non-Nuclear Defence debates

Speakers
Peter Thompson, Bob Cryer, Dr Paul Rogers

Workshops:
NATO: The Case for Withdrawal
Non-Nuclear Defence Options
Campaigning by the Labour Party

SATURDAY JANUARY 28th. 1984
SHEFFIELD TOWN HALL.
SHEFFIELD, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Labour CND

Some vital questions need to be considered at this day school. Is British withdrawal from NATO a positive step towards Nuclear Disarmament? Is it possible to stay in the NATO Alliance and at the same time unilaterally disarm? How does the Labour Party campaign for Composite 40? What alternative Non-Nuclear Defence strategies are practicable for the Labour Party to implement?

This is a day school for Labour Party members and Labour Party cards will be asked for. Briefing readers are welcome as individuals or as CLP or Branch delegates.

SUEING UNCLE SAM

Over 300 telegrams arrived in New York on the morning of 9th November 1983 and were displayed outside the Federal District Court to show the strength of British support for Greenham Women's court case against Reagan. American supporters held a vigil outside the Court House starting the previous evening and coinciding with the installations in Britain.

The plaintiffs in the case are 13 Greenham women, their 17 young children and 2 US Congressmen — Ronald Dellums (California) and Ted Weiss (New York). Our lawyers are from the Center for Constitutional Rights, a non-profit making legal and educational organisation which specialises in cases involving civil rights, constitutional and international law. They have amassed over 400 pages of legal argument and expert evidence from 30 specialist witnesses. In addition, over 150 US, British and European organisations have also filed briefs in support of the case.

STOP DEPLOYMENT

We are asking the court for an injunction to stop the deployment of cruise missiles at Greenham Common. Cruise missiles breach human rights law and the law of war which regulates how wars should be fought. Non-combatants, civilians and neutral countries should be protected from attack. Weapons which cause 'unnecessary suffering' or do irreversable damage to the physical environment are banned (Hague Convention, Geneva Convention, UN Charter etc).

The US Attorney applied to have our case dismissed, arguing that we are dealing with political, not legal questions, and that matters of foreign policy and national security should not be decided by the courts but by Congress. He added that if the court heard our case anyone living near military installations would be able to bring legal action — a dangerous precedent!

HEAR OUR EVIDENCE

We argue that the question of deployment is a question of legality and that the court should hear our evidence. There are several examples where US courts have ruled that a President's action was unconstitutional. In 1952, during the Korean war, President Truman authorised federal officials to seize steel mills threatened by strike action on the grounds that the proposed work stoppage would jeopardise national defence. Not only did the court review the evidence but ruled that the President's action was not within his powers, hence illegal.

We are now waiting for a decision from the court as to whether it will hear our evidence or not. If so, this should begin early in 1984. If the court decides against us, we shall have to appeal. So in either event we expect the case to continue.

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us with this case so far. For more information please contact Greenham Women against Cruise, 5 Leonard Street, London EC2, phone 01 251 8046.



DANGER! CENTRALISATION

That the Labour Party machine was found wanting at the last general election is not in doubt. The need for a radical overhaul was self-evident and was something which featured prominently in Neil Kinnock's campaign for the party leadership. Since October, Labour's new leadership has set about reform as promised. Much of what it has done has been common sense and necessary. At the same time a disturbing trend towards centralisation has also been evident.

The new Campaign Strategy Committee has almost unnoticed become the powerhouse of the party's revamped organisation with a remit so wide it excludes virtually nothing. It is very much the leader's own personal committee. Neil Kinnock chairs it and due to the presence of half a dozen members of the Shadow Cabinet, and four from Trade Unions for Labour Victory, is assured of getting his own way.

What is most disturbing is that he can do so without having to win a majority on the party's National Executive Committee, elected by and accountable to the party's annual conference. NEC members are outnumbered on the new committee and the NEC's own Home Policy committee, for many years Tony Benn's power base and the key committee in drawing up Labour's policies, has been pushed into the background. Its chair, Doug Hoyle, is not even on the Campaign committee.



Andrew Wiard (Report).

Neil Kinnock and team.

VETO OVER POLICIES

At the same time, new proposals for joint policy formulation between the NEC and the Parliamentary Labour Party have also been adopted. While co-operation is to be desired, many in the PLP undoubtedly regard the plan as giving MPs and the Shadow Cabinet in particular a veto over policies adopted by conference which it finds not to its liking.

There are other developments. A committee has been set up to direct by-elections from the centre. A disciplinary committee of senior trade union members of the NEC has been established to deal with enquiries, expulsions and other similar matters.

To date there is no evidence that the new leadership intends to misuse the new machinery it has created to by-pass conference, overturn policy or attack the rights of constituency parties and individual members. Neil Kinnock is unlikely to 'do a Harold Wilson' if he can possibly help it and would much prefer to take conference with him.

POTENTIAL ABUSE

His New Year reaffirmation of the party's defence policy has allayed many doubts and fears. But that is not the point. The cause for concern lies in the *potential* abuse of the new machinery that has been created. In the wrong hands, what has been sold as the 'streamlining' of the party's organisation could represent a far more profound constitutional change than anything brought about by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy over the past five years, enabling a determined leadership to ride roughshod over the party's rank and file.

I do not suggest that is what will inevitably happen. But the very fact that it could should be cause enough for concern.

Nigel Williamson

WHAT PRICE UNITY?

National Labour Briefing, along with a number of groups and papers in the Party, recently received the Labour Co-ordinating Committee's 'Open Letter to Labour's Left', and devoted an important part of its last Editorial meeting to considering its initial response to the '11 point plan for unity in action'.

Briefing's attitude has always been that any proposal to unite the left 'in action' must be taken seriously. In practice this has meant supporting organisations like the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, and particular activities with other groups. Indeed, the National Briefing Supplement was launched at Party Conference with the object of facilitating unity in action amongst the left.

We *welcome* a number of the proposals about turning the Party outwards made in the LCC letter. Many of the points are overwhelmingly accepted on the left, and we look forward to discussing with the LCC how to move away from the generalities of campaigning to get them *implemented*. We would want to start with a campaign to encourage and boost the establishment of workplace branches up and down the country.

On other issues, and in particular on Ireland, we welcome the call for wider discussion.

But alongside this the Editorial Board decided to *reject* the general approach of the letter. Why?

One issue was whether the LCC had really changed its spots, because of their record in damaging and obstructing the left's unity 'in action' in the past (they took the initial and decisive move in breaking up the Rank and File Mobilising Committee, for example). But the decisive point was the LCC's view that the 'prerequisite' for unity was support for the new Kinnock/Hattersley leadership.

The kind of support they mean is clear. The left should give up *in advance* the possibility of using the electoral college to ensure an accountable leadership. If that is not a blank cheque, what is? It is support for a leadership that is already taking the lead in continuing the witch-hunt; that wants to water down and fudge the 'absolute commitment to unilateralism', that support Hobsbawm and his 'coalitionist' ideas.

What 'constructive' attitude is the LCC taking to these issues, so essential to getting a majority Labour Government returned that will fight for the class it represents?

Very few people in the Party can now believe that witch-hunts win elections. They do what we have always said – the opposite.

Will the LCC therefore join with Labour Briefing, Labour Against the Witch-hunt, and other groups in campaigning against the decision of the last NEC, *led by Neil Kinnock*, to expel Tariq Ali because of his ideas?

Of course the serious left will support Kinnock/Hattersley *if they fight the Tories*, but our goal must be more than that. It must involve organising for a working class, socialist alternative to the Tories, and for a labour movement that will *fight* for this. This must be the basis for unity, and the LCC letter will be useful if it provokes discussion on proposals along *these* lines.

The LCC's general approach is different. The unity they want is around the status quo; the slogan is Peace in Kinnock's Time and on Kinnock's Terms. This kind of unity will not bring socialism *any* closer.

DEBATE

Support Reproductive Rights

"Free abortion on demand — A Woman's Right to Choose". What significance does this have for women in the 80's? This was the issue at stake for the group of women active in the National Abortion Campaign who now intend to form a Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign following the split within the NAC at the national conference in October where a debate on Abortion Rights vs. Reproductive Rights took place with no clear consesus for either argument.

We do not intend to stop working around the issue of abortion but we see abortion rights as just one of many reproductive rights which women do not have and of no greater importance than other issues related to our own bodies. We can no longer ignore the justified criticism of being a predominantly white, middle-class campaign and of failing to respond to different women's needs.

With no more restrictive bills on the horizon (why bother to legislate to restrict availability of abortion when the NHS cuts do it for you?) we have been able to examine the shortcomings of the services available to women and have discovered that it is impossible to campaign around abortion in isolation from other aspects of our fertility, all of which are inextricably linked; free abortion on demand is not the 'bottom line' for an Asian woman being shot up with Depo Provera without consent nor adequate information on side effects, nor for the lesbian who is refused Artificial Insemination by Donor, nor for the young woman who is not counselled about any methods of contraception other than the Pill, nor for the young woman who is denied access to the Pill. Further, where is the 'right to choose' for black or working class women encouraged to accept sterilisation as part of the 'package' of having an abortion or for the middle class woman who is refused sterilisation? All these women are victims of judgements made by the medical profession based on the concept of the ideal mother, i.e. white, heterosexual, middle class, fertile, aged 20-30. We reject this concept. Reproductive Rights means the right to decide if, when and how to have children whoever we are and we demand comprehensive facilities on the NHS to enable us to carry out our decisions.

Work on these broader issues has already started, e.g. groups in Leeds, Cardiff and Merseyside (to name but a few) have been working around reproductive rights for years. In London we have received funding to set up a Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre and are currently working on a conference hosted by the NAC London Survey on facilities for women in London. Meetings have already been held on the recent 'Pill scare' in London and Leeds. In January we are holding our first National Conference in Cardiff to launch the campaign with the desire that the campaign will grow out of the issues taken up by local groups. The campaign will be women only but we look forward to the continued support of the labour and trade union movement. The Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign can be contacted through the Women's Reproductive Rights Information Centre at 374, Grays Inn Road.

In Sisterhood,

Sheila Ritchie pp Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign (London)



Labour Party Photo Library.

No Retreat On Abortion

YOUNG women with CND badges marched on the most recent Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child march and protest on June 25th 'to commemorate two million unborn children killed under the Abortion Law.'

Dr Margaret White, speaking at the rally, said: *'So I appeal to the Greenham Women to link arms around the abortion clinics and oppose the holocaust which is taking place in our midst. I appeal to the peace people; if we want peace in the world we must begin with peace in the womb'.*

The new drive of the anti-abortionists is more subtle than before.

They say abortion is a 'sell-out to male values'. They equate the doctor (presumably male) who gives the abortion with a rapist. Just as the rapist claims to be 'giving women what they want, so the abortionist affirms his (sic) right to provide a service for which there is a feminine demand'. (!)

It is in this context, along with back door legal attacks and with the run down of the NHS, that we have to understand the debate taking place today in the National Abortion Campaign. The Trade Union Liaison Committee of NAC maintains that we cannot back down in the face of these attacks on abortion rights and *stop* campaigning on abortion *as a priority*. We were very unhappy to see the London Regional executive vote against our view at the recent National Abortion Campaign conference as we feel that if all the issues had been made clear the London Labour Party would not wish to retreat on this central question.

The anti-abortionists know that abortion is the central political issue. 'Just as the suffragette movement became cohesive and powerful by focusing attention on the single issue of the vote, the new women's liberationists gain cohesion and momentum when all their resources are thrown into overturning abortion law'.

Why is this the case? Because the right to contraception, like the right to vote, has been established in our society. The right for *women* to decide to terminate their pregnancy has only been established in a very *limited* form under the 1967 Act with the 'permission of two doctors' if certain conditions are fulfilled. And that right is severely threatened.

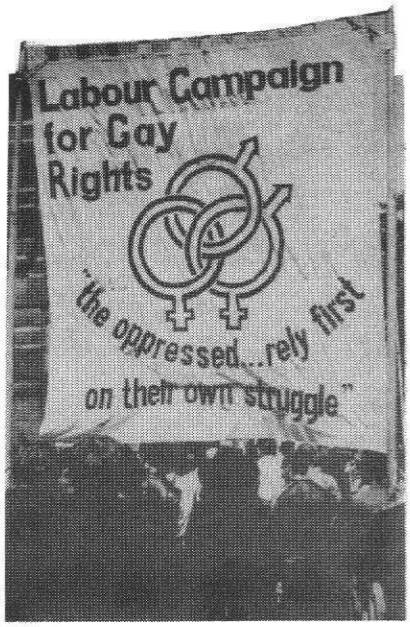
Far from dropping the offensive on abortion rights, it needs to be stepped up. Support a Reproductive Rights campaign if you see these issues as vital but don't *stop* women campaign for the right *not* to reproduce. **Valerie Coultas**

Nottingham conference for lesbians and gay men

Nottingham City Council sponsored a one-day conference for lesbian and gay men on the 3rd December to make plans for establishing a permanent dialogue between Nottingham's lesbian and gay community and the City Council.

Conference proposals included the establishment of a lesbian and gay council-funded centre and a gay awareness training programme for all councillors and staff. The consultative conference is also asking for the creation of a lesbian and gay sub-committee of Equal Opportunities.

These initiatives are but one stage of a struggle to ensure that policies made by the City Council, as an employer and provider of services, reach lesbians and gay men living and working in Nottingham. It all began in October 1982 when the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights published a campaign document, 'A Fair Deal for Gays', and some of LCGR's members successfully sought partial inclusion in the employment, leisure and housing sections of the District Party manifesto.



The City Council is now committed to staffing a fully-operational, 6-person, Equal Opportunities Unit within a year. This will monitor employment and services as they affect women, gays, blacks, the disabled and other disadvantaged groups. Further details from the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham, telephone 0602-780124, (evenings).

Richard McCance

(Richard McCance was elected to the City Council in Nottingham as an openly gay candidate in May 1983).

THE FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE WALES LABOUR PARTY

It's always been said that fashion in Wales lags five years behind London. So it is in the Labour Party. As yet no one councillor has been deselected, let alone an MP replaced. The old guard of the Wales Labour Party with a few notable exceptions continue to reign supreme. The old joke of the socialist who applies to join their Labour Party branch only to be told it is full is sadly only too accurate.

Yet it is the very strength of Labour in its traditional South Wales valley heartlands which has led us to where we are today. The total domination of the party at all levels of local government allowed the party to become an election machine. In many areas, Labour are still elected unopposed. The party became a major career machine for the able and the ambitious. Nomination for a parliamentary seat could mean a meal ticket for life. In this situation, corruption could flourish as control of the party passed to the Labour barons. In Swansea, the Labour council fell when its leader was jailed in a corruption scandal, only to be returned following the similar demise of his ratepayer counterpart.

Changes are coming. Ironically, it's the Tory constituencies in Cardiff where the party has shown the strongest signs of revival. A new wave of members see their job to rebuild the Labour Party. But rebuilding the party goes hand in hand with the fight for democracy. The temptation to just take over and use the machine is strong. Given the strength of the trade unions in the Wales Labour Party the job of democratising the block vote, and involving the members in Labour Party politics will be vital.

Graham Attwell
Cardiff Briefing

Lesbians ignite

By Terry Conway, Islington North CLP

At the end of November a new and rather unique organisation was set up — *Labour Movement Lesbians.* This is the first time that lesbians in Britain have organised to take initiatives and support each other within the labour movement. We come from various different experiences; are active within trade unions, the Labour Party or both. We have too often been in the situation that both gay men and hetorosexual feminists (not to mention other sections of the left) have deprioritised issues that affect lesbians. We recognise the need to make alliances, but on our terms. Organised together as lesbians we will be in the best position to work out how we can support each other in the various initiatives we are already involved in in our CLPs and trade unions and to organise around specific issues. We are as yet a very unformed organisation and have to discuss out the details much further. Our next meeting is January 28th at 2pm at A Womans Place, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2. (Disabled access and creche). Immediately beside Embankment Tube. Further information from Sarah, c/o Feminist Library, address as above. Tel. 01-930-0715.

Lesbian Feminist Writers Conference
Sunday, Feb. 5th. 10.00am
Hampden Community Centre
150 Ossulston St. N.W.1.
nearest tube, Kings X + Euston
Fully accessible, creche, singers, food.
Workshops, discussion, readings, poetry.
Evening — Feminist choir.(Lesbians only)

LABOUR BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

Next issue out on Friday February 17th. Deadline for articles: Monday 6th February.
Next National editorial board meets on Sunday 19th February, 12 noon at Liverpool. For details contact Stuart Marshall Clarke at 051 632 3840.

Welsh bombing trials: NOT GUILTY!

ROBERT GRIFFITHS
ex-defendant and former W.S.R.M. Secretary.

On December 5 last year, at the end of a 10-week trial in Cardiff, myself and three other defendants were found 'Not Guilty' on all nine charges against us of conspiracy, planting bombs and possessing explosives. Another defendant was cleared of conspiracy but convicted of possession. Two other defendants had pleaded 'Guilty' to comparatively minor charges — and nevertheless were sentenced to 2 years and 9 years imprisonment.

At the time of our arrests, between April and July 1982, all of us had been members of the Welsh Socialist Republican Movement — an open and public coalition of socialists, Welsh nationalists and anarchists (an incongruous and ultra-leftist mixture as it turned out). The pretence for our arrests, and for destroying the W.S.R.M., was the bombing campaign carried out between March 1980 and March 1982: the targets included Tory Party offices and Government buildings in Wales, and N.C.B. and Water Authority buildings in England.

Throughout this period the W.S.R.M. did not publish any statements advocating or endorsing the bombings or the use of terrorism generally. Instead, we built up our work of publishing propaganda for a Welsh Socialist Republic, commemorating the history of the working-class in Wales, taking part in industrial and international solidarity work and so on. We also played a leading role in exposing and condemning the mass police raids on political activists in Wales in April 1980 and October 1981 — widescale violations of civil and political liberties that utterly failed to catch any terrorists.

FRAMED FOR THE BOMBINGS

By early 1982 the W.S.R.M. had become, in the eyes of the authorities, ideal candidates to be framed for the bombings, regardless of that minor technicality popularly known as 'evidence'. What has happened since then should be of the utmost concern to socialist, peace campaigners, all radical dissenters, and to anyone who wants to defend civil and political rights in Britain.

Firstly, none of the ten people subsequently charged in connection with the bombings were arrested on the basis of 'evidence' in the hands of the police at the time of their arrest. All of the 'detection' work was done in the police station afterwards, where there were no constraints of any sort on police behaviour. Most of the ten names could have been drawn out of a detective's trilby.

Secondly, what happened to us in police custody is powerful testimony that the Judge's Rules and Home Office 'guidelines' — ostensibly drawn up to protect the rights of suspects — are an elaborate fraud, with more loopholes than a string-vest. Defendants were deprived of food, drink, sleep and exercise, were abused, threatened and in some cases physically assaulted. For days and nights on end we were the property of the South Wales Serious Crimes Squad, the Special Branch and the notorious West Midlands Anti-Terrorist Squad. Most of the 20 or more officers involved were bullies, some were thuggish and sexually-disturbed to the point of serious psychiatric disorder — and every one of them later perjured themselves in court. In the interests of defendants still involved in legal procedures, I can only summarise the cases of five of us:

- DAVID BURNS was charged with planting a bomb and conspiracy and remanded in prison for 9 months. The 'evidence' against him consisted of spoken 'admissions' allegedly made by him to police officers.

- NICK HODGES was charged with planting a bomb and conspiracy and remanded in prison for 9 months. He lost his job as a result. The evidence was two written statements largely concocted by the police signed by him as a result of oppression.

- ADRIAN STONE was charged with planting a bomb and remanded in prison for 7 months — and then the charge was dropped! He was eventually tried for conspiracy and possessing an explosive substance which he claimed — successfully — had been planted in his house by police officers.

- ROBERT GRIFFITHS was charged with aiding and abetting a suspect, planting a bomb and conspiracy. As with Stone, most of the 'evidence' against him consisted of spoken 'admissions' allegedly (i.e. according to the police) made by him to police officers.

These are the four who were found 'Not Guilty' on every count. Half way through the trial the charges were dropped against another defendant. Then there was the scandalous treatment suffered by ...

- DAFYDD UNDERHILL, charged in July 1982 with planting a bomb, and remanded in prison for a month until the charge was dropped. He had been arrested three times in attempts to bribe and bully him into signing a false statement incriminating Burns and Griffiths in the bombing of the Pontypridd Army Recruitment Office. Because he refused, the police carried out their threat — and charged him with the bomb!

During the court case itself, police witnesses were caught out lying on numerous occassions; police pocket-books, notes of alleged 'interviews', records of cell custody etc. were shown to have been forged and falsified on a massive scale. The jury concluded that dozens of police officers from three different forces, from the lowliest uniformed copper up to the rank of Chief Superintendant, had conspired to fabricate evidence and pervert the course of justice. I believe the conspiracy went higher still.

So where do we go from here? The police and the Attorney-General have set up their own suitably-restrictive inquiries into aspects of this whole affair — even though they are the ones who should be in the dock! But the issues are too serious to be abandoned to these frantic cover-ups. They include:

— The use of conspiracy charges to import political and prejudicial matters into the trial;
— The decision to prosecute on the basis of such flimsy and suspect 'evidence';
— The use of arrest and search powers without any supportive evidence or reasonable grounds for suspicion;
— Detention in police custody without charge and without access to a Solicitor;
— The use of 'verbals' (uncorroborated police accounts of alleged interviews) as evidence for charge and trial;
— The need for interrogations to be filmed, taped, or witnessed by a defence solicitor;
— The power of magistrates to remand in custody on flimsy evidence, and in flagrant breach of the Magistrate Courts Acts;
— The right to compensation for unwarranted arrest, harrassment, charge, custody and trial;
— Genuine investigation and retribution for police officers who are guilty of oppressive conduct, falsifying evidence, perjury etc.

'DIRTY TRICKS'

In particular, we need to investigate and publicise the 'dirty tricks' used in this case: for example, the three threatening telephone calls I received (one of which is on tape); the ostentatious way in which Special Branch cars and officers camped outside my house and followed me around for 4 days. Then there was the abortive attempt to use an informer in Cardiff gaol — an incestuous drunkard, convicted brawler and drug addict whose 'incriminatory' statements were concocted for him by senior police officers as part of a sordid 'deal' which backfired.

Despite the near-total media blackout of our trial beyond Wales, these issues must be put before the whole Left, working-class and progressive movements, and the people generally — especially with the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill looming ahead once more. That is why the Welsh Campaign for Civil and Political Liberties is establishing an independent public inquiry with Lord Gifford Q.C. The Labour movement will be well represented on the inquiry's tribunal, and public hearings of evidence are due to begin in February.

The cost of conducting the inquiry and publishing its report will be over one thousand pounds. I urge all socialists to win sponsorship and finance for the inquiry. The Welsh Campaign for Civil and Political Liberties can be contacted at: W.C.C.P.L., 13 Dogo St., Cardiff, South Glamorgan (Tel: 0222-42265).

Letters

Dear *Briefing*,

READING Russell Profitt's article on 'Black People's Sections' (National Briefing Supplement December 1983), I was struck by a contradiction: Russell can see the need for relative autonomy and unity of oppressed minorities in the Labour movement, yet he immediately proposes a scheme in total contradiction to this need. I believe the so-called 'black branches' to be a disastrous muddle, or, less politely, a piece of opportunism that will backfire. What this proposal will do will be to shackle minorities nationally to the Morrison House machine, while setting minorities locally at each other's throats. One step forward, two steps back. It's a fine duplication of every problem of the women's movement!

Autonomy

Firstly autonomy. Obviously (as Russell realises) this is the most important prerequisite of a real fighting minority campaign. Perhaps less obviously, this can only be won in the Party by the creation of independent affiliated bodies (in the 'Socialist Societies' section). 'Black branches' would have no sovereignty and would be subject to the same kind of bureaucratic interference (only worse) as the women's sections. From their inception these branches would be involved in a bitter struggle (like that of women) for national unity and a real Conference. This would be a stagnant 'new beginning' for minorities – repeating the suffering of socialist feminists. We have to learn from what's gone before us, and the women's section 'parallel' is also a warning.

Secondly, the intractable problem of membership. With the women's sections this is straightforward enough (though the Party has no provision for hermaphrodites), but with ethnic minorities it's a potential can of worms. Who exactly is 'black'? Would Russell admit a Cypriot, for instance, or an Armenian? What about a dark-skinned Italian? Then there's the problem of mixed descent: at what point moving away from a black ancestor do I cease to be 'black'? As a grandchild? A great-grandchild? Will we see votes taken on whether people are 'black enough'? The Daily Express would love that, but don't think it won't happen: it will unless minorities are organised as autonomous affiliated societies based on geo-political criteria (such as 'Indian' or 'Caribbean') with discretion as to membership.

Conflicts

Thirdly, conflicts. Different racial/ethnic groups have immediate interests which don't always overlap. They also have particular campaigns (such as Ireland and Cyprus) which they would like to be supported on but on which they want to have the final say. There would be problems in general 'black' branches if groups felt that their discretion was being overridden, for different groups have different social structures, national ties, and places in the division of labour. Of course with affiliated societies the problem of differentiation does not disappear (it may even be reinforced), but (as women can testify) inter-group friction is the price of freedom. Moreover, if conflicting interests were played out in black branches, ethnic sectarianism would sooner or later reach crisis-point, like the IS/SLL battles of the early 1960s. Closures and expulsions would follow, and we would have learnt nothing from 'history'.

I am not proposing a Militant-style burial of racial problems until after the glorious Revolution. And I am not opposing the specific proposal of 'Black People's Sections' because i am 'uneasy' or 'positively terrified' about black people 'getting together'. On the contrary, I am frightened that a potentially liberating movement will find itself enslaved by the bureaucracy – and will have been backed into this corner by its own efforts.

Black organisation in the Labour Party will only be given one chance in the near future. Let's make sure the right course is chosen: instead of holding Black Section meetings in Herbert Morrison House (?!) black people would do better to begin organising their own answer to Poale Zion – socialist societies!

Douglas Hayward
Hendon South CLP

Dear Briefing, In her review of Peter Tatchell's book, 'The Battle for Bermondsey', Sarah Roelof's suggestion that the principal issue in that campaign was Lesbian and gay rights is surely mistaken. To support her case she draws a parallel with the persecution of Jews and homosexuals in Nazi Germany. The comparison does not really stand up.

Hitler and the National Socialist Party had a definite ideology based on racism. They believed in the inherent superiority of the so called Aryan race, which, in their view was threatened by what they called 'degenerates', such as Jews, gypsies, blacks, homosexuals and even Jehovah's Witnesses. The policy of extermination was fanatically followed, even when it was clearly against the best economic interests of Germany.

The situation in Bermondsey was very different. The British ruling class is, and has always been, fairly tolerant towards gay activity, particularly among its own members, even when such practices were illegal. Many of them were educated at single sex boarding schools, where homosexuality was, and no doubt is, widespread. Only if someone had the misfortune to be caught out publicly, as happened to Oscar Wilde, were the penalties likely to be severe. There are, and always have been, a number of gays in all walks of life, including Parliament, who pursue their daily round without let or hindrance. There have even been strong rumours concerning members of the royal family.

Prejudice against gays is much more prevalent among the working class and some sections of the middle class. What happened in Bermondsey was that the establishment, through the media, played on this working class prejudice to prevent Peter Tatchell's election. It is interesting to note that the successful Liberal candidate, Simon Hughes, was much of an age with Tatchell, was also unmarried and had spoken in favour of gay rights. Yet he received quite sympathetic press treatment. Surely the difference was not that Tatchell was perceived to be a champion of gay rights, but that he was seen to be a socialist. Therein lay the threat to a establishment. Hence the campaign of villification to prevent any discussion of the political issues. Peter's support for gay rights, his Australian origins and his refusal to fight in Vietnam were the weapons used to destroy him, but the issue was his socialism. Many socialists have been subjected to similar treatment. Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone have been the victims of vitriolic campaigns of villification by the establishment and their watchdogs. The accusations were different, but the methods were the same. Neil Kinnock is tolerated not because he is a 'respectable, married man', but because he is perceived by the ruling class as posing no threat to their wealth and privileges.

Paula Watson, Westminster South CLP

JOIN THE R.A.C.S.

THE R.A.C.S. Political Committee has been affiliated to the Labour Party at local and national level since 1921.

The Political Committee has a Political Fund which is used to support and sponsor many progressive groups.

Next year elections will be held for this Committee and it is important to keep it in Labour Party hands.

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Please detach and return to. Richard Balfe, c/o Room 190, County Hall, London SE1 7PB. Or telephone his office: 01-855 2128.

A programme for uni

Labour Briefing ***strongly supports unity on the Labour Left.*** We recognise that while ideological pluralism and debate are essential, we can now no longer afford to allow our differences to obstruct the maximum possible unity in action on all those issues on which we are agreed. We must unite around the task of turning the Labour Left outwards, taking it back into the unions and the mass movement, uniting with them in common struggle in order to turn our socialist ideals into a practical reality and give them meaning in the eyes of millions of people who have been repelled from the Labour Party by the vacillations and duplicity of successive right wing leaderships.

The National Briefing structure was set up following Labour's election defeat as a response to the urgent need for a new alliance of left activists and groups. However we believe that there is no basis for unity in proposals that give uncritical support to the present Labour Party leadership, a leadership which is still witch-hunting socialists from the party and attempting to overturn Conference decisions. Real unity of the Left must be based on agreement around proposals which seriously seek to challenge *both* the right wing of the Labour Party and the bourgeoisie and its state.

We believe that the following is a basis for such unity, though we do not intend it to be an exhaustive set of proposals but merely a minimum programme for agreement. Indeed, we recognise that there are many areas of policy which the Left urgently needs to develop through open discussion on as wide a basis as follows. To begin this, we invite discussion on the following minimum programme:

1

We stand for a working class socialist Labour Party committed to fighting for a fundamental transformation of society, which would take control of the economy and the state out of the hands of the bourgeoisie and into the hands of the working class. To this end

(i) we seek the election of a majority Labour government and oppose any coalition with anti-working class parties.

(ii) we oppose any attempt to make the working class pay for the capitalist economic crisis in the form of wage controls or cuts in jobs or services, and support the restoration of cuts which have already taken place under this Tory government. We give unconditional support for working class action in defence of jobs, conditions, wages and services, even when that means breaking anti-working class laws. **In particular we support all resistance to the present Tory attacks on the NHS, local government services and the trade unions, and the privatisation of public services and industries. We believe that extra-parliamentary action is essential, and that we must turn the Labour Party outwards and make it relevant to the working class by uniting in practice with those in struggle.**

(iii) we seek the election of majority Labour councils. We support the struggle for local democracy and the defence of jobs and services, and we oppose any coalitions with anti-working class parties in local government. We will work to help unite those Labour councils who are prepared to resist the Tory attacks.

2

We stand for an internationalist Labour Party committed to an alliance of the international working class, and opposed to all forms of imperialism. To this end

(i) we believe that Britain's continued membership of NATO is totally incompatible with this principle.

(ii) we support the Labour Party's present commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament as set out in Composite 40 and will actively oppose the leadership's present attempts to fudge this commitment. We support direct action to achieve this policy, in particular the actions of the Greenham Common women and any direct action by trade unions.

(iii) we oppose British imperialism in Ireland, and support the withdrawal of British troops and the right of the people of Ireland as a whole to decide their own future.

(iv) we give full support to Eastern European working class organisations, in particular Solidarnosc.

(v) we support the Labour Party's commitment to British withdrawal from the EEC, and oppose the leadership's present attempts to retreat on this Conference policy. We reaffirm our commitment to international working class unity and the fight for a socialist Europe under working class power.

(vi) we support national liberation struggles, especially in Central America, Palestine and Southern Africa.

3

We stand for a Labour Party committed to fighting oppression of women, black people, lesbians, gay men and other oppressed groups. To this end

(i) we support the right of oppressed groups to autonomous self organisation. We support the right of black people to set up Black Sections in the Labour Party.

(ii) we support positive discrimination, in particular the demands of the Women's Action Committee and black activists in the party, and seek to practise positive discrimination in our own left organisations.

(iii) we support the right of women to choose on abortion and to control their own fertility. We will fight for the Labour Party's policy on abortion to be *fully* included in future election manifestos.

(iv) we support the right of black people to defend themselves against racist attacks.

(v) we support the demands of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

4

We stand for a democratic Labour Party and Labour Movement, without which none of our other aims are possible. To this end

(i) we oppose all witch-hunts of socialists. We will campaign for the immediate reinstatement of the five members of the Militant E. B., Tariq Ali and other expelled socialists, and for the immediate re-establishment of Wythenshawe Labour Party.

(ii) we defend the existing gains made in democratising the Labour Party, including the right to use the electoral college to maintain an accountable leadership.

(iii) we will seek to extend party democracy. In particular we

ity of the Labour Left



"Unconditional support for working class action in defence of jobs, conditions, wages and services". Above: Mass picket outside Laurence Scott factory in Manchester, January 1982. John Smith (IFL)

will campaign to increase women's representation as set out in the demands of the Women's Action Committee, and to make the PLP accountable to party policy so that the leadership and the Shadow Cabinet fully represent the Labour Party's view.

(iv) we support the immediate setting-up of Labour Party workplace branches. Recruitment campaigns should be undertaken both in the Labour Party and the trade unions, especially among young people, women, black people and the unemployed.

(v) we support the democratisation of trade unions, and fully support those trade union Broad Lefts who are fighting the right wing bureaucracies and are seeking to bring about democratic change.

(vi) we oppose any attempts to weaken the historic links between the Labour Party and trade unions, in particular the attempt to impose compulsory ballots on trade unions before they can affiliate to Labour Parties.

5

We stand for a Labour Party which is relevant to the lives of ordinary working people. We recognise that politics is not just about the relationships that exist between the ruling class and the working class, or between the individual and the state, but also about our individual relationships with one another and the relationships within and between families. We recognise the contribution the Streetlife Supplement has made within *London Labour Briefing* in raising the issue of personal and sexual politics in the Labour Movement.

It is our intention to stimulate discussion both on this programme and on the wider policy issues which the Left still needs to develop. **We have initiated this process by organising a series of open discussion forums, beginning with a day school on NATO in March, followed by one on feminism and the Labour Party. We hope it may be possible to conclude these forums with a policy conference of the Left.**

Finally, whilst we will fight for unity on the basis of this minimum programme, we are determined not to allow our differences to obstruct united *action* on any individual areas of agreement.

THE above programme is being sent out in the names of Jane Stockton, Graham Bash, John Bloxam and Valerie Coultas. It has been unanimously agreed by them with one exception, which was the inclusion of the statement supporting Labour Party policy to get Britain out of the Common Market.

Jane Stockton, Graham Bash and Valerie Coultas voted for the inclusion. John Bloxam voted against because he thinks the policy is nationalist and reactionary, and that the working class alternative to the bosses' Common Market is not an 'independent' capitalist Britain but a programme for a common working class fight across European boundaries, aimed at establishing a United Socialist States of Europe.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Briefing interviews Fred Halliday

REAGAN'S ROLL-BACK STRATEGY

In the first of a series of articles on underlying trends in world politics, we talk here to Fred Halliday, author of "The Second Cold War", on Reagan's global strategy. Oliver MacDonald asked the questions.

Briefing: What are the main features of the new Cold War as we enter its fifth year?

Halliday: First, and most important, the breakdown of the Geneva talks, the consequent deployments of US missiles in Europe and matching Soviet plans to instal new missiles in Eastern Europe and facing California's cities in the Far East. These decisions will have a ratchet effect, taking us a notch nearer the total breakdown of diplomatic relations between East and West and closer to a possible nuclear conflict.

Second, America is intensifying its intervention in the Third World, both through invasions like Grenada and through sending US forces into crises by agreement with local states, as in Lebanon and also in the Gulf (where 15 warships and large numbers of marines are ready for confrontation with Iran). Reagan had promised just such a militarisation of US relations with the Third World before coming to office.

Third, Reagan has managed to gain a wide consensus within the US for his policies, greatly strengthening his ability to pursue them. This rests partly on the upturn in the US economy, but includes his drive against the USSR and his nationalist economic policy towards other advanced capitalist countries. But it does not include a blank cheque for military action in the Third World, for example in Lebanon or Central America.

What Reagan has failed to achieve in his first three years is any major Third World victories — only Grenada where, it has to be said, divisions within the Left prepared the ground for the defeat.

Briefing: How solid is the consensus in the US establishment?

Halliday: There are more dissident voices than in the British foreign policy establishment — look at the statements by MacNamara or Kennan for example. Nevertheless they got their MX programme through Congress and are asking for a 1985 military budget 17% larger in real terms than the 1984 figure. They won't get all of it, but a large part. And they have already far surpassed the 6% growth in military spending Reagan was talking about during his election campaign.

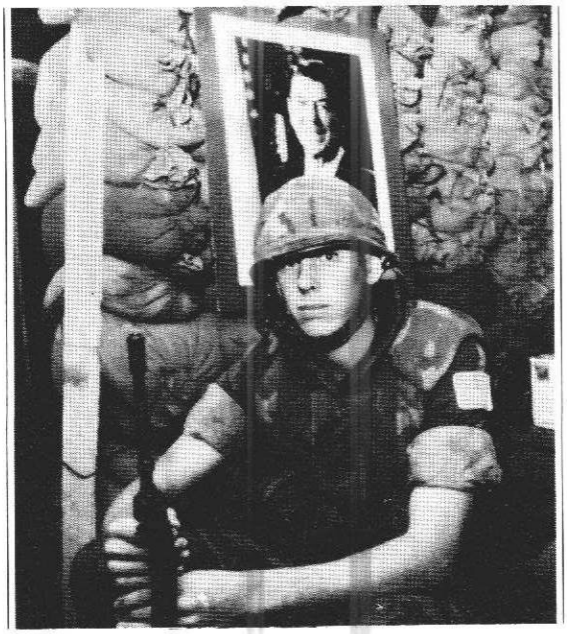
And Reagan has set the tone for US military policies for quite some time ahead. And Democratic candidates this year will have to maintain most of the arms build-up and Democratic calls for more negotiations with the Russians will be framed as "negotiating from strength".

One interesting twist in the discussion is that it is the State Department which is urging invasion of Nicaragua, while the Pentagon is holding back over it and is unhappy about the Lebanon as well. The Pentagon pushes for more arms but wants to avoid military action in the Third World that would entail serious losses.

Briefing: What is the main political objective behind US policy towards the Soviet Union?

Halliday: The long-term aim, openly expressed as a feasible goal over one or two generations, is rolling back the socialist revolutions of the Twentieth Century — nothing less than that. They talk of a 'window of opportunity' created by the USSR's economic problems, its political weakness in Eastern Europe and its domestic nationality tensions.

Their short-term aims, covering a couple of Presidential terms, are: to force the USSR into an economically crippling arms race, to press the confrontation with the USSR in such a way as to increase tensions between the USSR and Eastern Europe, and to put maximum pressure on the USSR's alliance system in the Third World. The weak links are seen in this order: first, the pro-Soviet Third World states, then Eastern Europe, then the Soviet Union itself.



Less to smile about at the sharp end: a GI in Beirut.

Taking the first of these, we find that 17 states voted for the Soviet position on Afghanistan in the UN's last vote. The US wants to break up this core by economic pressure and military harassment. So the Israelis are encouraged to harass Syria, the South Africans to do the same for Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Angola, and the Hondurans, Costa Ricans and others tackle Nicaragua.

It is certainly true that the Soviet Union, as an undemocratic and inefficient self-proclaimed socialist state, serves capitalist ideology and strategy in the West, helping to contain socialism by being such a bad advertisement for it. But the present US leadership bas downgraded such considerations in favour of a strategy of roll-back.

Briefing: What are the main obstacles on this strategy's path?

Halliday: First, US difficulties in taking on the Third World. The Grenadan invasion, the one success, was a tragedy for its people, but as a demonstration of the main imperialist power's capacity to alter the balance of forces in the world it was a joke. Even the Nicaraguans and Libyans, the most exposed states, can hardly take it very seriously. Secondly, the arms race with the Russians won't work because the Soviets are bloody-minded enough not to give way — the Reagan administration miscalculated that — and it contains the important political cost of greatly increasing the risk of nuclear war — hence the dissent in the American establishment. (Its economic costs are also great, diverting scarce resources without having the counter-cyclical, stimulating effects on the economy that used to come from re-armament up till the 1950s). Thirdly, the Cold War drive has produced deep tensions in the other advanced capitalist countries. In the short-term Reagan doesn't need to bother much — he has Thatcher, Kohl, Mitterand and Nakasone in place. But sections of the US business and political establishment are worried about the long-term crisis in NATO and so on. And even the present allied leaders oppose Reagan's economic policies — Thatcher herself has been shouting about them.

In short, the strategy has no chance of working.

Turning Grenada back to 1984

'We have lost confidence in all Grenada's Politicians' was the slogan hanging inside a restaurant in Grenville, near the island's small airport. A fan overhead partly obscured an advert for 'Kentucky Fried Chicken' and the proprietor, Guy Archibald, was collecting signatures on a petition asking the United States to let Grenada associate with it as a new state.

The slogan was similar in style and sentiment to the *few* pro-US signs we saw on the island. The supporters were similar to others we met. They were on the whole business people, small shopkeepers and taxi drivers, or returnees from the States. They, like the small boys we occasionally saw clustered around the US soldiers and their guns, thought they were going to receive favours from the Americans and could hardly contain their excitement.

And they, like the small youth, have a lot to learn.

PRUNE OUT WORKERS

In the few weeks between the invasion of October 25th and our arrival in the island on December 11th, the real combat troops from the United States – their 50 person Embassy staff, 300 psychological operatives and the ubiquitous business elements – had been to work. Lists taken from the Ministry of National Mobilisation of Grenadians, who had been party members or active in the National Women's or Youth Organisations, were used to prune out workers in each government ministry. Internationalist workers were asked to leave. Because, as Nicholas Braithwaite, the Chair of the Advisory Council said, they posed a high security risk.

The practical effects of this is that medical stations have no doctors, schools cannot cover all the classes and agricultural programmes will come to a halt with those with the necessary expertise banned from work. Many social and economic programmes were also summarily halted by the US. The literacy schemes, distribution of free milk, womens co-operatives, plants to process agricultural produce have all been stopped and workers laid off.

COLONISE THE ISLAND

The economic intention of the US is clear. If factories that enabled Grenada to develop its own uses for local produce are privatised, and if attempts to control its own trade and marketing are thwarted, the United States will be able to colonise the island as its own market and its own 'back-yard' farm. So, the Agro Industry Plant is already up for sale and contracts for sugar to be supplied to Cuba are being scrutinised for possible loop holes.

To back up the needs of the US Dollar, the Americans have additionally been using the Advisory Council and Sir Paul Scoon to give it the political space it needs to turn around the Grenadian economy and let the memory of the very popular programmes brought in by Maurice Bishop's government fade.

So, the Advisory Council also laments the lack of Grenadian political parties and right wing trade union leaders claim that Grenadian workers are so disillusioned with any form of political activity that they have been handing in their union cards. But this is all part of the scenario the US want to create to justify their continued interference in the affairs of another country.



What the Americans say in Grenada today.

The majority of Grenadians had been keeping a 'disrespectful' distance from the US troops, but while we were there people were beginning to move round the island again, talk with each other in rum shops and assess the many contenders that were in fact putting themselves forward into the political space the US had been so keen to create, for themselves. Far from the previous 4½ years having stifled political debate, it had begun the process of political education for many women, youth and others and they will be critical voters if nothing more.

Familiar names from the pre-1979 period are already issuing statements, the Grenada National Party, Gairy, Winston Whyte. Grenadians from abroad in the form of the Grenada Democratic Movement, said to be partly financed by the United States and the Grenada Unified Party, claiming to be pro-American and Pro-Socialist, are arriving on the island.

Within the country itself, a number of civil servants and well known names, such as Frank Philbert of the Christian Democratic Labour Party and Lloyd Noel, an ex-supporter of the New Jewel Movement, are looking for office. These two in particular will be looking for the support of liberal minded, church going Grenadians, who do not want to see the return of Gairy.

CONTEST THE ELECTIONS

But what many people, the US included, are really waiting to see is if the New Jewel Movement will be able to reform and contest the elections promised for the end of 1984. Bishop badges are already visible on the street. The NJM's social and economic programmes were undoubtedly popular. A layer of the leadership are now dead or incarcerated in Richmond Hill Prison. But others remain and the memories of the gains of the revolution are still intact.

However, any socialist government that is elected will have to yet again disentangle the country's economy from capitalist strings and deal with the fact that the United States requires that no country stands tall in her back-yard. Maurice Bishop and the NJM party that he led had the benefit of enormous popular support. It is going to be a hard act to follow.

Nadine Finch
(Islington North)
Recently returned from a trip to Grenada

LABOUR AND NATO
— Breaking the US Connection

A Briefing Discussion Conference
COUNTY HALL, LONDON
Saturday 24 March 10.30 — 5.00pm

Speakers include: Joy Hurcombe, Fred Halliday, Tariq Ali, Alan Thornett, Sarah Roelofs, Alan Freeman.
Creche: Apply in advance.
Open to Labour Party members.
Limited numbers. Send £1.50 for tickets and papers to:
Briefing International Committee,
23 Bayston Road, London N16.

Ireland: will they ever learn?

Sarah Roelofs, Islington South CLP

WILL they ever learn? *". . . as long as British troops remain in Northern Ireland, and as long as there is no political solution, someone is going to pick up a gun . . ."* **Bernadette McAlisky. As long as Britain occupies Northern Ireland there will be horrific deaths, mutilations, terrible loss and grief.** *"As long as Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace."* **And neither will Britain.**

No, they will not learn, because it is not in their inerests to do so. It is in their interests to cry crocodile tears and make statements of untold hypocrisy after the Harrods bombing. Where were their tears and grief on that hot summer's day last August when a British soldier knelt down, took aim, got up, walked back, took aim again, fired and killed Kidso Reilly who was standing, unarmed, arms raised?

Tremendous Advances

And no, World in Action, we are *not* fooled. Sinn Fein, as an Irish Republican political party, *has* made tremendous socialist and feminist advances. Witness the discussions and decisions of their recent Ard Feis that you — true Hollywood gangster stuff — 'bugged'. In fact Sinn Fein's electoral and political successes have been such that Jim Prior has been moved to warn of the Cuba developing off our own shores!

No, we are not fooled. We will continue to stand side by side with Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison, not because these individuals are our heroes, but because their cause is just and is our cause.

The Harrods bombing *was* a major setback for the withdrawal movement in this country and for the whole Irish national liberation struggle. It provided grist to the 'hang-draw-and-quarter-'em' brigade. It gave a platform for those just looking for an excuse to ban Sinn Fein and strengthen repressive legislation like the PTA. It gave the media a field day — in fact to such an extent that the Irish Times of Mon. December 14, in an article devoted just to the reactions of UK papers, commented dryly: *"Front page headlines tended to be more emotional, as usual."*

While British imperialism bears primary responsibility for the continuing deaths and destruction as a result of its war in Ireland, British labour movement leaders also carry a major share. The latter have continued to collude with British imperialism with their bipartisan policies. *"Until the British Labour Party can come up with better answers than defending the division of Ireland and its working class, than head-shaking over dead hunger strikers and hand-shaking with its Tory opponents, then Labour's definition of socialism will remain the most curious of all."* (Geoff Bell, Troublesome Business, Pluto, 1982.)

Kinnock Off the Hook

The Harrods bombing allowed Labour leader Neil Kinnock well and truly off the hook as he used the well-worn violence argument to categorically rule out any talks with Sinn Fein.

As socialists we are humanitarians. In fact it is our humanitarianism, our value for human life and our desire for social justice that makes us socialists. Our sadness at death is genuine. We know that only the achievement of social justice for all will bring an end to violence and war, to death and destruction. Only a united Ireland will allow for social justice in Ireland. Only a complete and unconditional British withdrawal will allow for a united Ireland. And the *continuation* of a political dialogue with Sinn Fein is vital for all these aims.

As radical socialists we must:

1. Continue to invite over Sinn Fein speakers.
2. Use every opportunity at every level of the Party to correct the misinformation on Ireland.
3. Pass resolutions condemning the Unionist veto, bipartisanship and calling for troops out.
4. Build the Labour Committee on Ireland — join now and get your trade union, ward, CLP and women's section to affiliate. Request speakers. Sell Labour and Ireland — new issue just out!

(Sarah Roelofs is the women's officer of the Labour Committee on Ireland)

DAY SCHOOL ON IRELAND

(Organised by the Labour Committee on Ireland)

Jan.28 . County Hall. Entrance £1.
Time 10.30.am-5p.m.
SPEAKERS — Desmond Greaves, Sue Colfer, Geoff Bell, Sarah Roelofs.
AGENDA Republicanism and Socialism
Republicanism and Feminism
Irish and British T.U. movements
British Labour Party
CRECHE apply in advance
Open to Labour Party members and L.C.I. supporters
Send £1 for tickets and papers to L.C.I.
BOX 42,
136 Kingsland High Road, London E8.

Message from Armagh

The following message has just been smuggled out of Armagh prison.

"While the strip searching here in Armagh gaol of all prisoners leaving and returning to the prison has become a standard practice since November 1982 an incident involving a republican remand prisoner last week leaves us greatly disturbed as to the motive behind the adminstrative's stance on the issue. The woman was brought to the reception area of the prison on the day of her weekly remand appearance at Armagh courthouse. She was ordered to strip naked. Having stripped to her pants she informed the screws that she had her period and requested that her pants and sanitary towel remain on. She was told that both pants and s. towel must be removed. The woman refused to comply due to menstruation and the female chief officer was summoned. Again the woman explained why she had refused to strip completely naked but was told by the chief officer to 'be a good girl and take your pants off and you can hold your pad with one hand.' The woman refused and the chief officer ordered that the pants and s. towel were to be removed. Those screws present then forcibly stripped her of both andd left her standing completely naked while the 'visual inspection' was carried out of her body. The gruesome ordeal left the woman in so highly an emotional state that one member of the board of visitors found her crying bitterly in her cell when she was returned to the wing. Due to her experience her periods stopped. Worried she seen the prison doctor. He, Dr. Cole, assured her that, firstly it was a healthy sign for a period to stop midway in its course and secondly when she complained about the overall effect strip searching has on her was informed that it was also 'very healthy for a woman to strip in front of a man or indeed anyone'. This man is supposedly a qualified doctor engaged to medically provide for we prisoners. We consider his views on strip searching as both unethical and perversive. Rather than calm the woman's fears who must endure this behaviour every week he has lent to increase her anxiety since he clearly sanctions the administrations misuse of authority in this particular area. We the prisoners have during the past year continuously called upon all influential groups to lend their weight to having this measure withdrawn. We ourselves have and continue to petition N.I.O. in the hope that such will be achieved. But to date N.I.O. refuse to over-rule the governors decision on this matter. As we enter '84 we again appeal to the public and those interested bodies for your help in resolving this issue. Women have been compelled to experience degradation to have the privacy of their bodies violated for far too long in Armagh prison. The pyschological effects of this procedure are too great and too alarming for any young woman."

Labour Women for Ireland is campaigning against the strip-searches. Contact Sarah Roelofs on 01-607-5783.

WHY WE NEED ONE LABOUR COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE
Proposals for Unity

The Labour Committee on Palestine was formed in the wake of Israel's invasion of Lebanon. Within 3 months its emergency motion to Labour Party conference calling for a democratic, secular state in Palestine and recognition of the PLO had been passed. It achieved more in 3 months than the bourgeois pro-Arabist Labour Middle East Council had in 14 years. A large number of sponsors, affiliates and members had been built up and a national conference was held at the end of 1982. A split in the anti-Zionist forces occurred there which could only benefit the Zionists and bourgeois Arabists. Since then both the LCP and the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine have continued their work. The LMEC, using the pressures on the PLO to compromise, has moved closer to the Labour Zionists, condemning the idea of a democratic, secular state in the same terms as the Zionists. And they used a Labour Friends of Israel fringe meeting to attack the Norwood resolution to Labour Party conference.

The anti-Zionist left needs maximum unity and there is no political reason for two Labour committees on Palestine. So we have written to the Secretary of the LCP proposing immediate talks aimed at unity. The Palestinians' cause in the Labour Movement can best be served by such unity and we look forward to the imminent merger of our organisations.

Tony Greenstein
Chairperson LMCfP

Palestinian women organise in the West Bank

March 8th, International Women's Day 1978 was the launching day for the West Bank's first national women's organisation. Officially named "The working women's committee", its title reveals far more about the political constraints on all Palestinian organisations in the committee itself. Legally speaking it is a women's subsection of one of the Palestinian trades unions recognised by the Military Government. (Israel recognises those unions recognised by Jordan on the eve of occupation. Under neither regime have they been able to function effectively). In practice, however, "The working women's committee" is a national, nationalist organisation which does not confine itself to traditional areas of union concern, nor is its membership centred on women wage workers.

I spoke with some women from the Ramallah branch of the committee last summer; their centre was just about to be re-opened having been closed for 60 days by the Military Government. The door was still welded up; chairs and tables lay where they had been overturned by the soldiers; Stars of David had been painted in red lead paint all over the walls and the tiled floor.

CONSTANT HARASSMENT

"We face the same constant harassment from the Israelis as all Palestinian national organisations" said one of the women. *"They hate us because we represent the Palestinian national unity that they want to destroy. But as a women's organisation, the Israelis are not the only problem we face. We have many other problems, not least of these is that many women are so overworked that they have neither the time nor the energy needed to participate effectively in our organisation."*

Many women have five, six, even ten or fifteen children. The task of caring for these and doing general housework falls entirely on them. In addition to this, many Palestinian peasant women are also increasingly having to take on heavy work on the land, much of which was previously done by the men now seeking waged work inside Israel.

Many of these women are constantly pregnant. For many of them, all the water needed for cooking, washing and cleaning must be fetched by them in buckets from the nearest well or standpipe. And travelling, be it to do shopping, take someone to the doctor, or to trace a child detained after one of the street or schoolyard demonstrations that are now part of everyday life in the West Bank, is both time consuming and uncomfortable due to the totally inadequate public transport system. No wonder that, in the words of one of the Ramallah women,



Palestinian women in Jerusalem celebrate International Women's Day, 8 March 1981. "Many of these women suffer quite simply from serious exhaustion."

BREAK OUT OF ISOLATION

Most of the work done by the women's committee consists in organising around these day to day problems that they as women have to face. They establish local makeshift clinics to be visited once a week by doctors sympathetic to the committee, thus eliminating the problem and expense of travel. They organise talks on birth control and on nutrition for pregnant women. They get together to set up local creches to ease the problem of child care. The importance of the work done by the committee reaches far beyond the immediate aim of alleviating the workload on women however — a task which in the present situation of the West Bank can be carried out only to a very limited extent anyway.

The actual process of organising together gives many women a chance to break out of the isolation of their homes, to meet and talk with one another, to discuss issues important to them and to work out their own political views. The committee's work builds up a strong solidarity, both on a personal and political level, between the women involved — a solidarity which is absolutely vital to the present stage of struggle in the West Bank.

ISRAELI POLICY

The main thrust of Israeli policy in the West Bank at the moment is aimed at the destruction of Palestinian unity behind the PLO and the obliteration of the Palestinain national identity — aims which are vital for Israel to achieve not only with regard to the perpetuation of the zionist colonisation of the West Bank, but also to the future stability of the colonial state of Israel itself. Israel is involved in trying to break up the Palestinian population of the West Bank socially and politically, in the same way that they have already carved it up geographically with a massive network of Israeli settlements. In order to do this they are trying to impose on the Palestinians local leaders, who are appointed by the Israeli military government, and who represent the sum total of "self-determination" the Palestinians will get under Begin's autonomy plan.

At the same time the subject of the history of Palestine has been erased from school curricula, and the word "Palestine" is itself illegal. In the face of these determined attempts to atomise Palesinian society, the sort of work being done by the women's committee is of great political importance to the national struggle.

Palestinian women have a long history of political activism, but the women's committee represents their first attempt to organise autonomously. As such the political significance of the committee stretches beyond its vital contribution to the national struggle. As an independent voice and an independent power base within the national struggle, the committee is able to fight for that struggle and to actively take up their own fight against their oppression as women.

By Anna Wagstaff, Oxford East Labour Party

Let the voice of Labour's rank and file be heard!

Constituency Labour Parties are where:

- ★ All the active individual Party members are organised.
- ★ All the hard graft of local and general elections is done; where Labour's fight-back will be lost or won.
- ★ In addition to the recorded contribution to Party funds, uncounted millions are raised every year for local (mostly election) funds.
- ★ Regular, intensive policy discussions take place on local government, national and international issues.
- ★ Party women, and increasingly black members, are organised.

BUT:

- ☆ CLPs have no regular forum to exchange ideas on local campaigning and organisation.
- ☆ CLPs have no lobby to further their needs and rights.
- ☆ CLPs get only 9% of votes at Annual Conference.

ISLINGTON SOUTH LABOUR PARTY will host a

National Conference for CLP delegates

on February 25th and 26th 1984
at County Hall, Waterloo, London SE1

Delegation will be as for Annual Conference: one delegate per CLP (male or female); second delegate who must be female. FEES: first delegate, £3, second delegate £2.
VISITORS WELCOME (registration £3).

CLPS are also invited to SPONSOR THE CONFERENCE for an additional fee of £2 minimum. Sponsoring CLPs (whether or not they have sent delegates) will receive any written record of the Conference produced, and conference papers.

CLPs Conference, c/o Islington South Labour Party, 295 Upper Street, London N1.

CLP .....

Secretary's Name & Address .....

.....

Please send credentials for one delegate/two delegates.
We enclose £3/£5/£7-plus (for sponsorship) payable to Islington South & Finsbury Labour Party.

Signed .....

Creche: *please help by letting us know in advance, if you can, if you are bringing children.*

Please inform us if you need / can offer overnight accommodation.



INDUSTRIAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Triple Alliance launched

Britain's three most important industries, steel, coal and rail are being deliberately wrecked by the Tories. They face savage cuts, closures and cash starvation. At last, after four years of premeditated onslaught by the Tories and after pressure from the grass roots activists, a triple alliance has been formed. Our leaders have come to expect what we have learnt from the bitter experience of the 1980 steel strike, the Welsh coalfield strike and the traindrivers strike, that the future of coal, steel and rail is intertwined. Cuts in one industry rebound on another.

The following is the battleplan agreed by the industries' seven union executives:

1. Forging of new triple alliance link ups wherever they are needed.
2. Regular talks between alliance trade union leaders.
3. Six monthly joint conference between union executive committees.
4. Mass rallies in key cities bringing in local government.
5. Publicity campaign for the unions' case.
6. More triple alliance meetings to be attended by national officials.
7. A triple alliance group of MPs.
8. Joint industrial action to be considered if one union faces trouble at local level.
9. Setting up of inter-union links raising triple alliance issues at branch and Labour party meetings, backing initiatives from the alliance campaign against closures, privatisation and cash cuts, demanding jobs, community ownership, higher investment, import controls, railway electrification and CHP schemes.

The document outlining the above plan was issued by all three unions. I went through it with a tooth comb but apart from one short sentence no reference was made about joint strike action. I tried but failed to speak at the triple alliance launch meeting last October at Brighton. I wanted to remind the platform that the rank and file had proved their mettle against the Tories. They have shown that they are prepared to fight; and that all that's been lacking in recent years is the question of leadership. The only way in which we are going to convince Thatcher and her industrial vandals from the CBI that we are serious in defending jobs in coal, steel and rail is if the leadership is seen to be seriously building for the ultimate struggle. Anything less will be treated with the contempt it deserves. Let us all then enthusiastically welcome the launching of the triple alliance, but recognise that it is one small, but useful, step in the right direction and build one which rank and file activists must fertilize and build with all their might.

Ray Davies ISTC

Defend the Party of Labour

Having rounded off 1983 with the betrayal of the NGA Len Murray has wasted no time in setting a similar course for 1984. According to reports, the TUC is close to agreements with the Tories on arrangements for trade unionists to contract out of the political levy.

The negotiations can not have been very arduous. The Tories have not conceded any of their proposals for destroying the financial basis of the Labour Party. They are pressing ahead with their proposals for compulsory ballots on the political funds, which is aimed at breaking the links between the LP and the trade unions. If successful, this would be a change of historic proportions in the British labour movement, and a big blow against the Labour Party.

STATE FUNDING

The Party gets 75% of its funds from the unions, apart from donations at election time, and local affiliations. Unlike the Tories and the SDP it could expect no money from business sources. The alternative would be some form of state funding, which would make the parliamentary party even more independent of the constituencies. There are plenty on the right wing of the party who would welcome moves towards individual membership social-democratic parties on the European model. Their counterparts in the unions, the likes of Chapple and Duffy, would also welcome this.

NON-POLITICAL UNIONISM

Their model is of 'non-political' business unionism of the American type. Both wings would then be free to wheel and deal around coalition policies towards the SDP, the Liberals and even the Tories. This would be a huge blow to the prospects of forming a majority Labour Government; a blow to the Party as the party of labour; and it would massively strengthen the right in both the Party and the unions.

There should be no complacency on the left on this issue. Five major unions already have a majority contracting out – SOGAT, NGA, ASTMS, COHSE, & ACTT. Unions with large numbers contracting out include TASS, EBU, UCATT and the Tobacco Workers. A MORI poll in January 1982 showed a majority against LP affiliation in the TGWU, AUEW, GMBATU, EEPTU, NUR and USDAW. According to this poll only the NUM and NUPE would support affiliation.

At the last TUC Congress one-third of unions were non-affiliated. Murray and co. are not directing the unions towards closer co-operation with the Party. They are going in the opposite direction. The left needs to start organising now to stop this threat.

Pat Hickey

YTS: Government steps up action

AS THE Youth Training Scheme struggles into 1984 with only two-thirds of its places filled, the Government and Manpower Services Commission are stepping up action to suppress trade union criticism and force reluctant school-leavers in to the scheme.

SHOP-FLOOR OPPOSITION

Opposition to YTS began early, fuelled by experiences under YOP, where even the Manpower Services Commission said 30% of trainees were used for 'job substitution' (ie doing the work of permanent employees). Although the TUC and most unions backed the scheme delegates to 1983 union conferences gave YTS a rough ride.

- NALGO voted against NEC advice only to accept schemes paying the union rate
- NATFHE only narrowly rejected (216-176) an amendment for a campaign against YTS.
- the CPSA executive's motion supporting YTS was defeated.
- the POEU's special conference in November threw out a scheme already approved by the NEC and running in British Telecom.

Even where unions have agreed to participate nationally, shop-floor opposition has boycotted many schemes. According to a recent survey shop stewards committees have rejected 13 out of 31 schemes, because of refusal to 'top up' the £25 allowance and the threat of job substitution. Examples given were

- paper makers Portals Ltd, where new technology will cost 200 jobs in 2 years, wanted to take on trainees while permanent staff were being re-trained.
- Liverpool Central Oil proposed a scheme on a site due for closure.

THREATS

Union opposition is echoed within the Manpower Services Commission itself, where many trade unionists — including the Society of Civil and Public Servants — are opposed to YTS in its present form. But public criticism from within has been muted by management threats.

The MSC is now threatening trade unionists outside the civil service. The most blatant case was Edinburgh Trades Council, which issued a report 3 exposing

- the extent of privatisation
- lack of health
- false claims of union support

The MSC tried to stop them holding a press conference, backed by a call from the Area Manpower Board chairman — also Deputy General Secretary of the Scottish TUC — to say the conference could go ahead if there was no criticism of the MSC. Needless to say, the Trades Council went ahead with a critical press conference receiving much press and TV coverage.

Government ministers have attacked unions for denying school-leavers a 'chance'. The NUM was singled out by Peter Morrison for stopping the NCB scheme. But trainees are 'voting with their feet'. Only 67 of approved places were filled by 8 December. The Government are replying with compulsion.

- careers officers are reporting unemployed school-leavers to the DHSS for refusing YTS places
- school-leavers refusing places are liable to a 40% reduction in social security for 6 weeks.

In the latest development, the Tories have altered the rules of their infamous Young Workers Scheme which gives a straight £15 subsidy to employers paying less than £42 per week and £7.50 to those less than £47 from April 1st.

- 16 year olds will not qualify for YTS subsidised jobs
- the subsidy limit is raised to £50 at the full £15 rate.

This will make 16 year olds more expensive to employ than 17 year olds for most low-paying employers. If the Tories succeed, jobs will dry up for 16 year old school-leavers and they will have no other choice but YTS or reduced social security.

1. Bargaining Report 30, price £2.50 from LRD Publications, 78 Blackfriars Road, LONDON SE1 8HF.
2. A national conference was held in Sheffield in December, and Birmingham have produced a YTS Briefing pack, price 60p. Contact YTS Action Group, 7 Frederick Street, Birmingham, for other contacts and to add your name to the list.
3. Youth Committee Bulletin, December 1983, Edinburgh District Trades Council, 12 Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

Gordon Griffiths



Andrew Wiard (Report)

N.U.S. conference report

Alick Bridger
Delegation Leader,
Sussex University

This Conference saw major changes in organisation. The three sectoral Conferences (Further Education, Public Sector Higher Education and Universities) were for the first time held as part of the whole Conference.

There were only five policy debates (on grants, the Youth Training Scheme, education policy, education cuts and peace and disarmament.) It was agreed to hold a national day of direct action against education cuts. But perhaps the best policy-decision was an amendment calling for British withdrawal from NATO — carried by a surprisingly large majority.

Token support was given to the NGA, but the emergency motion passed condemned 'violence' in the Warrington dispute. A similar motion was passed in support of Warwick University Union in its fight against the £30,000 fine imposed on it by the University after a demonstration during Sir Keith Joseph's visit to the campus last term. But it 'condemned' minorities who indulge in violent confrontation'.

In this the NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students) leadership of NUS are in close alignment with Neil Kinnock. They frequently attack direct action, trying to counterpose it with mass involvement, yet their only strategy for fighting education cuts is to demand negotiations with the Government.

Further Education delegates were angry at the way their sector has been neglected by the National Exec. even though they provide the majority of NUS members. This anger was translated into organisation when over 200 delegates walked off Conference floor in protest at the neglect of the FE sector. They also stood candidates for elections: in the Executive bye-election they pushed Left-Alliance back into 3rd place losing to NOLS by only 55 votes.

With Left-Alliance in decline, Further Education delegates provided the major challenge to the NOLS-dominated Executive. The impact of groups like SWSS, the RCP and Militant was negligible. Socialist Students (the left faction within NOLS) were the only political group exerting pressure on the Exec. from the left and by strengthening its support in the Further Education sector it will continue to do so.

Victory at Lefrays

Lefrays Toy Factory is situated in the Gwent mining area. Employees who have joined the T&GWU to fight for better pay and working conditions, have just won an important trade union victory after sixteen weeks of action against their employers. Diane Taylor, shop steward, talked to *Briefing* about that fight.

'65 employees at Lefrays joined the TGWU in May 1983 hoping that the management would recognise the union. We joined because of bad conditions and poor wages. While receiving our annual pittance of a pay rise the bonus scheme was being quietly eroded away until many of us, over the year, had been unable to earn bonus, making our take home pay an average of £43 for a 40 hour week.

Conditions in the factory were also very bad. In the case of a fire most of us would be unable to escape as doors were boarded up and toys and boxes were stacked in gangways etc. First aid was non-existent except for a box of plasters and a bottle of aspirin. This was highlighted when a girl received burns from a glue gun and no professional help was called.

LOCKED OUT

Between May and August we sent letters to the management asking them to meet the union but to no avail. On August 22nd, we called a one-day token strike for union recognition. We returned to work the following day to find we had been locked out, and, on August 26th we received our notices. For sixteen weeks we maintained a picket of the factory — with support of other trade unions — the miners supplied us with fuel and a caravan, the dockers blacked the toys Lefray imported from Korea at Southampton dock. Donations and help have come from steel workers, trades councils, branch Labour parties, etc. We organised a campaign against Lefrays toys, we called public meetings. The longer the dispute went on the stronger we became.'

They held a successful day of action outside the factory and the police decided to try and break it up. There were violent incidents perpetrated by the police who made eight arrests eventually. Three more people have been arrested at other times on the picket line.

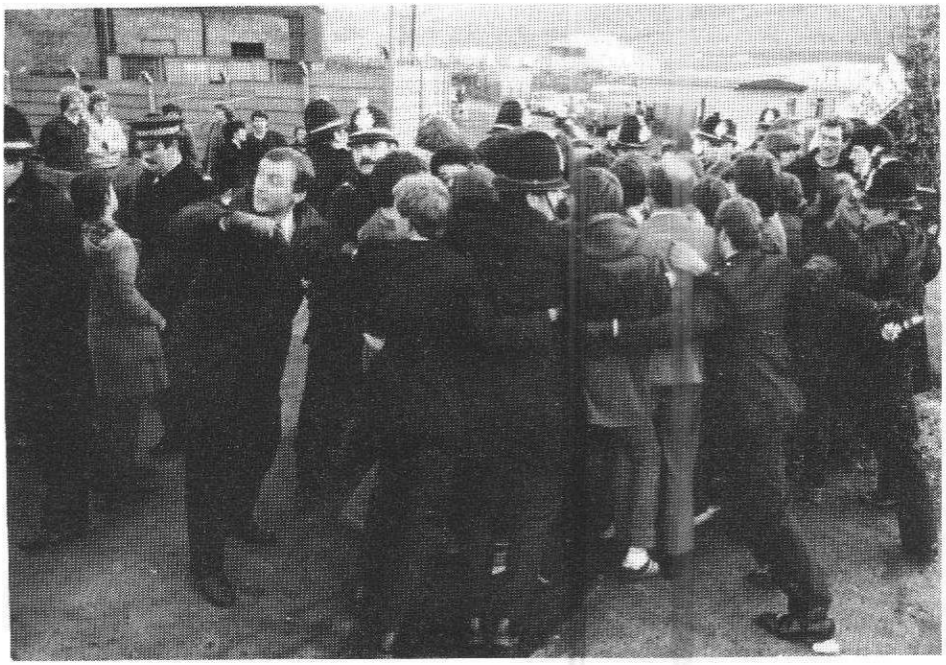
UNION RECOGNITION

On December 15th-16th the sacked workers were told after discussions between union officials and the Lefray management through an arbitrator, that they have won their fight for union recognition (previous talks had broken down) and that they would be offered their jobs back or they would receive a cash repayment.

There are important lessons to be learnt from the Lefray pickets victory (which, incidentally, came at the same time as the NGA defeat).

The essential ingredients for any victory are a rank and file determined to win, a trade union leadership prepared to lead, political leaders determined to support and finally no less important a committed and tangible support from the TUC.

By members of Caerphilly Briefing.



South Wales Argus

Police move into mass picket at Lefrays.

LABOUR— TAKE THE POWER!



ON November 20, in Coventry, the National Supplement Editorial Board decided by a large majority to follow London, Brighton and Merseyside Labour Briefings in adopting "Labour – Take the Power!" as our masthead slogan. Accordingly it appears on the front page of this issue. There is a tradition and theory behind this choice of words....

> the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership— "Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power!"—is an extremely important weapon
>
> **Leon Trotsky the Transitional Program**

1. We in BRIEFING are interested in power. Anyone who is not shouldn't be in politics.

2. Power is not necessarily the same thing as office. Those of us who are now in positions of formal control or influence on local or metropolitan district councils are (or should be) well aware of this by now.

3. There can be no successful conquest of power without a relentless onslaught uniting all sections of the movement against the reformist parliamentary leadership of the Labour Party. The essence of reformism is the refusal to struggle for power, combined with the mistaking of office for power. Labour leaderships in the past have consistently cringed in face of the City, the judiciary, the monarchy and big business, even when they have been given mandates and parliamentary majorities to govern independently in Labour's name. We demand: "Break with the bosses! – Take the power! – Or make way for those who will!"

4. We want the Labour Party to realise its potential as a mass organisation of the working class, and its potential – given a deepening of the constitutional changes already achieved – to transform itself into an alternative machinery of state for a future Labour government. No coalitions! For Labour to govern in its own name alone! The moment a Labour administration is formed – regardless of who is leading it – we intend to orchestrate the demand that it break with the ruling class apparatus of state and take full power into its own hands, under the amended slogan "All power to the Labour Government!" Any ruling class resort to extra-parliamentary obstruction must be met with an answer in kind.

Chris Knight,
(Lewisham East CLP
and *London Labour Briefing*)

Published by London Labour Briefing, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10. Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), Forster Road, London N17.