LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
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SMASH THE TRANSPORT BILL!

By Les Huckfield

There is no economic logic or transport sense in the London Regional Transport Bill. It is solely concerned with selling off the more profitable parts of the system in which public investment has been made. Private monopolies can thus be created, and there is provision to subsidise private operators with public money.

In addition, Nicholas Ridley says he wants to reduce drastically public support to London Transport — perhaps by half, on both capital and revenue accounts — so that our CAPITAL Report estimates that at least 33 stations and 34 bus routes will be closed or withdrawn. In addition, we are forecasting that if all the Bill's effects are allowed to work their way through, there could be a loss of up to 20,000 jobs throughout the system.

The biggest sufferers could be the pensioners, whose Free Travel Pass is now in jeopardy. Though Ridley says he will make London Boroughs support some small concessionary fares scheme, it will definitely be much worse than current practice. He has said he will make provision for the Boroughs to charge their pensioners for their passes.

All this happens when the success of the Travel Card shows that the decline in public transport has at last been halted by the GLC's policies, and when the benefits of genuine integration, soon to be extended to British Rail London services, are being appreciated by thousands more Londoners. In short, just when the GLC is embarking on a more socialist transport policy, Ridley brings in his Bill for purely political motives.



Ealing-Acton Citizen

THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

CAPITAL has been operating with fulltime staff since Christmas and we shall soon have produced and distributed over a million leaflets of various sorts. On January 17th we organised, with the GLC, a successful Lobby of Pensioners and others of the House of Commons, with over 4,000 involved. We have held two successful press conferences, and our CAPITAL Report on Fares and Services after the Bill has attracted wide local coverage. We have organised with other organisations over a dozen meetings and are providing speakers for many more. We now have more than 600 organisations affiliated to our campaign, and more than 3000 transport contacts on our database.

With our weekly information bulletin and meetings every month we have achieved wide recognition as the co-ordinating body for the multitude of organisations involved in previous Fares Fare and Fare Fight campaigns. But we still need the experience and enthusiasm of many more if we are to defeat the Bill.

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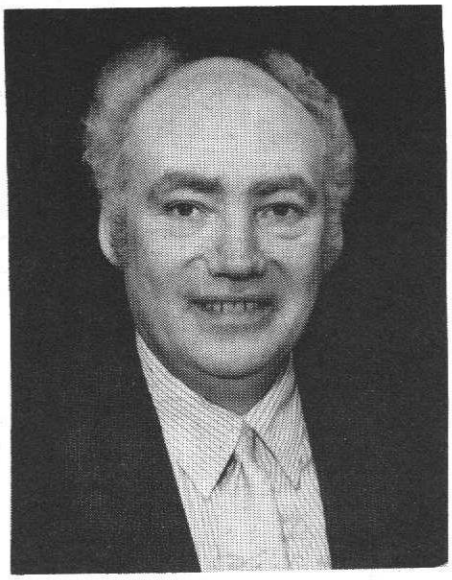
LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

First test for NUR leadership

A number of separate attacks on Railworkers' conditions of service come together this year in an overall productivity package which will present the new Knapp leadership of the NUR with its first major test.

Final agreement on driver-only trains, destaffing of smaller stations and major cuts in timetables along with other major job cuts are all being demanded as a precondition to any wage increase this year. The more militant NUR branches are preparing themselves for action, but exactly what Knapp et al will do is still unclear. A letter has been sent out to all NUR members asking us to be prepared for trouble but a lot more is needed.

In London we also face a fight over privatisation. The planned closure of Marylebone may have hit the headlines, but the other main termini also have battles to fight.



Labour Party Photo Library.

JIMMY KNAPP~
Gen.Sec. NUR

Selling off hotels

For every driver and guard employed, BR also employs large numbers of cleaners, hotel staff, shop workers, cooks, etc. These sectors are under attack. The first stage was selling off the hotels. Though opposed by the workforce, the NUR response — then under Weighell — was to buy shares in the hotels so as to have a say. Clauses were written in to the conditions of sale protecting union rights. Predictably, given the anti-trade union history of the hotel trade, these didn't stand up to much. Hotels have been resold many times — often only on paper — but dropping the protection clause.

Now we are entering a new stage — plans are being prepared at the London termini and main stations elsewhere to privatise all but the essential traffic services.

Where I work at Waterloo, Trust House Forte has already taken over the canteens and now we have been told that all the on-station facilities may be put up for tender. No way could we hope to compete on the open market. Plans rumoured include turning the rundown Parcels depot into a shopping arcade, opening at least one nightclub and upgrading the restaurant. Present BR "Travellers Fare" buffets/bars and off-licence would also go private. Large number of jobs would be at risk. Over the years there has been a steady "rationalisation" — but at least that was under pay and conditions guaranteed by a national negotiation tied in with other grades. Trust House Forte has already made it clear it will not accept the NUR organising its staff — it claims to have an "adequate" Staff Association of its own. Grand Met is also waiting in the wings.

New tough approach

We aim to fight these plans but first we have to confront two basic problems. Firstly at the base, "Travellers Fare" staff have always been one of the weakest sections of the union due to high turnover and neglect from above. We have built up our organisation quickly. Management realises this too — their new tough approach includes disciplining a staff rep recently for what she said *during* a negotiating meeting with management.

Secondly, we have to make sure our leadership takes the issue seriously — we can't have a repetition of Weighell's "buying in" tactic.

As yet these threats have not raised much interest, but branches are trying to get that situation reversed. Flexible rostering disputes or line closures, etc, affecting the running of trains, may hit the headlines, but people should be aware of the steady war of attrition affecting thousands of railworkers — mainly women. Ultimately it will be the running — or not — of trains that will decide on questions of pay and conditions, but if the Knapp leadership doesn't take these other issues seriously, we will be entering the main struggle dangerously handicapped.

Greg Tucker
(Political Officer, Clapham Junction & Waterloo NUR)

SMASH THE TRANSPORT BILL (CONTINUED)

We have been helping the London Transport Trade Union Council and the embryo joint shop stewards committee campaign for a complete stoppage on March 29, which we hope will include tubes, buses and British Rail.

On Monday, March 26, the Transport Day of Action, we have organised the leafletting and advertising of every tube station and bus route threatened in the Bill, and through this hope to draw to more transport users' attentions that they are also involved. We hope that by now our badges and stickers are well known throughout London. We are also taking intitiatives with West End stores and theatres, planning to leaflet them with the effects of the Bill on turnover and patronage.

Ironically, our main difficulty has been the success of the GLC's transport policies. There has been a Transport Act almost every year under this Government, but the worst effects have been mitigated by the policies of the Council as they have softened the blows through increased revenue and capital support. So if the Bill does reach the statute book, Londoners would suffer both because Ridley has far more powers of direction and intervention than in previous legislation and because the GLC would not be able to act as a buffer once he takes over London Transport.

We believe that though there are several other equally important current campaigns, we are making headway on the London Transport Bill especially since it is now assumed in many quarters that its effects really mean station closures and bus withdrawals.

We are witnessing nothing less than the deliberate dismantling of London's transport — not just the tubes and buses, but the suburban services of British Rail too. When the total of tube and bus cuts are added to railway reductions, many areas will be reduced to walking or using cars — and for the 75% of Londoners with no regular access to a car, that could be very hard. It could undermine a whole way of life in many communities and working class areas. And if that's not worth fighting for, then what is?

Les Huckfield, CAPITAL co-ordinator

THE BUSWORKERS CASE AGAINST OPO

The case against further conversions is documented in this pamphlet written by people who work on the buses.
READ THE BUSWORKERS CASE AGAINST OPO
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or ph: 806 7956

BOROUGH ROUND-UP

Deadlock on Hounslow Council

Councillor Enda Donnelly,
Councillor Chris Hickey,
Councillor Bill Raymond,
Councillor Niall Murphy,
Councillor Heather Wetzel,
Councillor John Connolly.

AT ITS rate-making meeting held on Tuesday 6th March, Hounslow's Labour-controlled Council failed to agree a rate for 1984-5. The proposal from the Labour Group included a package involving cuts in services amounting to £1.87 million, an average Council rent increase of £1.50 per week, increases in other Council charges considerably in excess of inflation, and an increase in the domestic rate levy of more than 12%.

Six members of the Labour Group — the authors of this article — attempted to refer back the package to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for reconsideration on the basis of the following:

1) No cuts in basic services,

2) No job losses/reductions in current staffing levels,

3) The rent increase to be limited to 75p per week and other charges to rise by not more than the current inflation rate,

4) All efforts to be utilised to minimise the level of rate increase.

After this was defeated, we decided to vote against the original proposal and this then fell 27-32, being also opposed by the Tories.

Since the meeting, there has been a great deal of confusion within the Borough. The Council leadership, in an attempt to intimidate us into supporting the cuts, has raised the spectre of Commissioners and surcharges. Council unions have been told that their jobs are at risk if the Group's proposals fail to go through. Needless to say, we have been under considerable pressure to back down. However, we are not prepared to do so.

Why We Have Taken Our Stand

On the face of it, our actions can be interpreted as a mere refusal by a small minority to accept the wishes of the majority of a Labour Group. However, the facts on which we based our decision refute this allegation.

Firstly, we are defending the position of the Party against the policy of the Group. Feltham and Heston CLP reaffirmed its opposition to cuts at its January GC. A Local Government Conference held on 11th February overwhelmingly supported a resolution opposing the Group's policy and arguing a "no cuts" strategy. Even the NEC has called upon Councils to defend services and avoid unnecessary rent rises!

Secondly, as we have demonstrated, there is no need for Hounslow to make cuts this year. Our figures suggest that a "no cuts" budget could be achieved with a 3% domestic rate rise if we used all our available reserves this year. We have not argued for this position, but use it to demonstrate the reality in opposition to the lie that "there is no other way".

Thirdly, if the leadership had made a serious attempt to obtain additional funding from the GLC, this would have also aided our efforts to maintain services.

The truth is that we are opposing a Group Leadership which is prepared to cut services in order to minimise the risk of a confrontation with the Tories over rate-capping next year. They have accepted defeat without a fight.

The decision to keep Hounslow Council outside the Association of London Authorities and to remain instead with the Tories in the LBA reflects their outlook.

The Council was reconvened to reconsider the budget on the 15th of March. We were told to toe the line then or else face the consequences. We await the consequences.

TOWER HAMLETS: old habits die hard

THE Tower Hamlets Labour Group is the last of the inner London Labour Groups to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 1980s. However, the ageing, isolated, all-white remnants of what was once one of Labour's proudest areas are determined that if they are not allowed to rule then they will "take their ball away" and let the Liberals gain their first inner London borough.

The leadership under London Docklands Development Corporation board member Paul Beasley deliberately constricted the Party for years and this allied with local neglect allowed the growth of a 19-strong Liberal group. However now that the Party has broken free of its shackles, the writing is on the wall for the Liberals and the old guard alike.

But old habits die hard, and Labour Group meetings remain a farce with no genuine debate. There is no serious liaison with the Parties and LGC, and crude abuse of any progressive idea or institution.

This has even been recognised by the NEC, who belatedly agreed to hold an inquiry into the undemocratic practises of the Labour Group. This (despite one disastrous preliminary meeting) has still to take place. But while the NEC fiddles, Tower Hamlets burns. Relations between the Party and the Group get worse, and a majority of the Group have made it clear that they are determined to drag the Party into their funeral pyre.

This scorched-earth policy not only has electoral consequences for Labour but has a tragic effect on this deprived Borough of Tower Hamlets. Almost alone of the inner London councils, Tower Hamlets has yet to pay a single penny in government penalty for exceeding the meagre Government expenditure targets. Even with such limited expectations of expenditure, Tower Hamlets manages to underspend! This is the reason why one of the poorest London Boroughs has accumulated an obscenely massive £19 million in the bank despite the horrendous local social and unemployment problems. In those circumstances it borders on the criminal to impose rent and rate rises as Tower Hamlets have done.

Meanwhile a majority of the Group continue to vote consistently in Group and council against Party policy. There can be little question that unless the NEC take this matter more seriously (even at this late hour) the result will be the expulsion of the Party-oriented Councillors from the Group, and the expulsion of the anti-Party councillors from the Party, followed by protracted Bermondsey-style appeals, wrangles and hearings, and the resultant loss of Labour control in 1986 followed by the loss of two Labour MPs shortly thereafter.

The alternative is for the NEC to free the active local party from the millstone of a dead Labour Group and for it to rebuild and campaign in the municipal socialist tradition which was born in the East End.

The writer of this article has asked to remain anonymous for fear of disciplinary action.

Haringey by-election

Three Tories have resigned their seats on Haringey council. This follws the decision of the present Tory leader (a wet) not to contest their Annual elections in May and the resignation from the Tory Party of another councillor over the government's health service cuts. The Labour Party will be out to win these by-elections in Woodside, Archway and Alexander wards. Help from comrades in other areas of London is needed. Please contact:

Greg Gordon, Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, N8. Tel: 340 7362

OR Diana Minns, Agent. Tel: 387 9893 (work)

OR James Smith, Archway ward. Tel: 340 2256.

Strike against Ealing Tories

On March 1st over 1,000 school meals staff and teachers in Ealing came out on strike against the Tory Council's plans to privatise the school meals service and cut 48 teaching posts from the Borough's middle schools. A highly successful protest march was held, calling at the Education Office to hand in a note of protest before ending with a rally outside the Town Hall. Hundreds of leaflets were handed out to shoppers along the way. In the evening, there was a lobby of the Council's rate-fixing meeting, but sadly all this action was to no avail as the Tories voted down the Labour Group's 'alternative budget' and just managed to push through a £4 million cuts package using their narrow overall majority. Apart from the cut-backs which gave rise to the industrial action by the GMBATU, NUPE and the NUT, the Tories also decided to scrap the public relations and entertainments departments with consequent compulsory redundancies.

Privatisation of schoolmeals

It was close, however. The Labour Group failed to defeat the privatisation of school meals by just 1 vote, while on middle school staffing our proposal to re-instate the 48 posts tied 34-34, only to be declared 'not carried' by the Tory Mayor. Throughout the debate on this appalling step, the Tories sat glum and almost silent — the unspeakable advocating the indefensible. Only the Chairman of the Education Committee got up to claim unconvincingly that the curriculum would be maintained — an assertion that has been directly contradicted by many governing bodies and headteachers. The cut which reduces staffing levels by 8 per cent, will mean larger classes, a loss of specialist and remedial teaching, more mixed age groups, and fewer in-school activities and outside visits. As one Labour councillor put it — "it's a betrayal of the children in our schools." The future for the Council's 615 school meals staff now also looks bleak. Negotiations with two potential contractors, Gardner Merchant and Commercial Catering are proceeding, Sutcliffe's (the firm with the Merton school meals contract) having been discarded. This may have had something to do with the fact that their portable oven broke down when they came to demonstrate their wares to the Council's School Meals Working Party, with the result that samples of their 'meals' had to be taken downstairs to the Town Hall ovens to be heated up! And all this was after they had denied serving cold food in Merton!

Impossible choice

All the private firms involved have made it clear that they will not pay any council staff they might take on either sick pay, holiday pay or retainer fees, so employees face an impossible choise between agreeing to worsen their own terms and conditions in an attempt to stave off privatisation and having a contractor force lower wages and redundancies upon them.



School dinner workers demonstrate against Council plans to privatise the service.

The Labour Group and all three Ealing CLPs have given full support to the unions in their campaign against cuts and privatisation, and the ferocity of the Council's assault upon basic services has been a political education for many parents and Council workers. However, it looks as if the only event which is going to stop the Tories from wrecking what's left of public services in our Borough is defeat at the polls, so 1986 here we come!

Cllr Hilary Benn
Labour Education Spokesperson, Ealing Council

Ealing bye - election challenge

The Tories on Ealing Council are among those who most avidly follow Thatcher's rules for local authority spending. At the recent rate-making meeting their proposals included rent increases above the level recommended by central Government as well as the cuts outlined in Hilary Benn's article in this month's *Briefing*.

The recent lobby of the Council (1st March) was the biggest so far — and the fifth successive council meeting to be the scene of a mass protest. Now, however, there is the opportunity for voters in one local Ward to do more than protest — as there is to be a by-election in one of the two most marginal wards in the Borough of Ealing.

Following the resignation of Pete Eckles, a Labour Councillor , who has moved from London, Hobbayne Ward, which returned two Labour and one Tory in 1982 (with one K. Veness losing out on the "aardvard" factor) will give us the chance to show the Tories that the people of Ealing reject their policy of cut and cut again.

When the by-election was announced, Ken Kettle, the Tory Leader of the Council, declared that the Labour Party had engineered the by-elections for this period, "*to capitalise on the discontent it had orchestrated over the recent budget plans, and in particular over a cut in the number of middle school teachers and the change to private contractors cooking school meals.*"

We immediately issued a statement, accepting Cllr. Kettle's terms to fight the by-election upon and we are now campaigning to ensure that our candidate, Frank Curtis, Chair of Ealing LGC, is returned with a large majority, to prove that local Tory policies are unacceptable to local people.

The Tories have only a two-seat majority on the Council and have recently lost vital votes (most recently on the axing of the 48 teaching posts) on the Education Committee, so it is essential that this by-election is won by Labour.

A recent by-election, in Argyle Ward, normally a safe Tory seat, saw us slash a 1200 Tory majority to 250 *and* annihilate the Alliance (whose vote fell from 1000 to 450), so a clear victory in Hobbayne is a distinct possibility.

If you can help, please contact Ruth Blunt on 422 1082 or Charles Thomas on 567 3982 (evenings) or Kevin Veness on 422 2056 (daytimes).

Kevin Veness, Secretary Ealing LGC

Fighting in Westminster

Almost a year ago the hard right took over the leadership of Westminster City Council in the form of one Lady Porter, who has since become notorious for her dogmatic approach to privatisation and the abolition of the GLC. The first the staff heard of her was when she sent them all a letter (sent 1st class) to their own homes. It contained such threats as 'anyone who is considered lazy or inefficient will either be demoted or made redundant'. We next received a questionnaire asking what we thought about our jobs and how 'efficiencies' could be made. The people who sent back the correct answers were rewarded with a colour TV and a video recorder.

In September we heard about the privatisation of the Architects and Valuers Departments. The Council also told us they were reducing the budget by £8m; this was a cut of 5% and £5m more than Government guidelines said they needed to. Also at this time most of our senior branch officers disappeared and left a new team of inexperienced people up to their necks in it.

In October we organised a march and lobby of the Council which attracted 700 Westminster NALGO members. It was unfortunately the high point of our campaign and despite a Council report which showed our Architects Department to be 20% cheaper than outside firms, we recently lost 53 Architects and 16 Engineers due to privatisation. Our Valuers Department has proved itself cheaper for the last six years and despite various attempts by the Council to hide reports and change the rules of tender, it appears to be too ridiculous for even them to privatise.

What we have found amazing is the way Chief Officers will go out of their way to justify privatisation and fiddle the figures in favour of whatever the councillors' political wishes are. We know, for instance, that the Council has two lists: one is services that can and therefore should be provided by the private sector; the other are services the Council has to keep but can commercialise or cut.

The biggest battle against the cuts took place in the Libraries Department. With one day strikes, a couple of walk-outs, several lobbies, two fines' strikes and a big publicity campaign. Our biggest threat was an indefinite strike; however, we were stabbed in the back when our full-timers refused to run a ballot.

Despite all this, the Council has given few concessions on the Library closures particularly that of Portland Library. However, the staff will be continuing the fight right to the end and perhaps beyond, with the likelihood of us occupying Portland Library and also refusing to take on the duties of 13 attendants who were recently made redundant.

Our biggest achievement has been getting people involved in the union and changing the union's priorities so that next time the Council privatise or cut, we'll be ready for them. The best example of this is our liaison with outside organisations.

In September, Westminster NALGO had little contact with local people and only a tentative liaison with NUPE. We now have a formal joint shop stewards committee. We also now produce a very professional, glossy newspaper for the Westminster area with a print run of 30,000 copies. This is produced every month in conjunction with the anti-cuts organisation called Save Westminster Services. It is paid for mostly out of a voluntary levy but the real contribution our members make is by distributing it around the area they work. This is remarkable because only a small number of our members actually live in the borough.

The GLC campaign has brought us together with local teachers and the trades council to organise a big feeder march on the 29th March, and also a conference to discuss what kind of action we can organise jointly in Westminster.

The Council meanwhile has added £180,000 onto its press/propaganda budget. We can't compete with this kind of expenditure, but we have got more people on our side. It may sound naive, but I reckon that's more important.

Ian Wingrove,
Branch Secretary,
Westminster NALGO

Freemasons - a threat to democracy?

NALGO, the biggest white collar union, will be debating a Haringay/Lewisham composite motion at its June Conference in Brighton calling for an enquiry into the activities of secret societies operating within the public services with specific mention of Freemasonry. Freemasons undoubtedly are the largest secret society in Britain with an estimated membership of over 500,000. Public services including local government and the police have around 10% of the total. It is restricted to men and 99% or more are white. Within the same lodge will be found elected members from the main political parties and senior council officers. Freemasonry may be a harmless, drinking club or a sinister conspiracy of men out to obtain power.

Freemasonry has a number of secret rituals based on Pagan/Judaic/Christian beliefs — only fully disclosed to a minority of members (for more information read Steven Knight's recent book "The Brotherhood"). Roman Catholics are forbidden to become members. At each stage of initiation members swear a fearsome oath of allegiance and are pledged to help other members of the brotherhood.

In Lewisham at least five labour councillors belong to the Poland Lodge whose membership includes members of the Tory party and over 20 senior officers of the council. The number of labour councillors is much reduced compared with five years ago when about half the group were masons. All five are senior members of group and are or have been chair or vice-chair of committees (two have been mayor). A number of other London Boroughs and the GLC have larger numbers of masons.



The only way to avoid accusations of corrupt practices in the areas of staff appointments, promotions, and the awarding of contracts is for councillors and officers to disclose their membership. If Freemasonry is a perfectly harmless activity there should be no need for secrecy as regards membership (their religious practices are a matter for them) and I would hope CLPs and the NEC will conduct a parallel enquiry to NALGO and jointly devise a monitoring system throughout the public services to ensure secret societies do not undermine the democratic fabric of this country.

Ken Terry,
Vice-chairperson Lewisham NALGO
Writing in his personal capacity.
Woolwich and Eltham CLP

Social anthropology: *An introductory course for feminists and socialists. Lecturer: Chris Knight (Dept of Anthropology, University College, London). Mondays, 6.30pm, Morley College, Westminster (near Lambeth North underground). A course of seven lectures, starting April 30th. Mixed.*

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WILL THEY FIGHT NEXT YEAR?

IT LOOKS as if enough right-wing renegades will ignore the local Labour Party and Council Labour Group in Liverpool, and so a Tory budget of cuts and rent and rate rises will be voted through. Leaders of many London Labour councils will heave a sigh of relief, as they will not now have to face the embarrassing situation of refusing Liverpool support and solidarity action. The leading local government figures, such as Livingstone, Knight and Blunkett have been unusually quiet on the subject of Liverpool Council's uncompromising stand. Instead of joining with Liverpool in open confrontation with the Government, we are again faced with the philosophy of "fight next year" – the trouble is, it is always *next* year.

Debates around cuts, rent and rate rises are all about how much we can reasonably hit working class people. Presumably, there is a level which is unacceptable, and at that point we will all fight. The problem is that as Labour representatives, *all* measures that hit working class people should be unacceptable. We have reached that point now. If Liverpool had not been forced to go alone, the six right-wingers who betrayed the Liverpool manifesto would have found it a lot harder to ignore the Labour whip. And years and years of slowly chipping away at services and eating into people's pockets mean that when the crunch comes we may find that many will not follow us.

If we are to "fight next year", we can expect our councillors to be spending much of their time involved with cuts campaigns, on the doorstep, and speaking at union branch meetings, building a base to fight from.

So what's happening to London this year?

BARKING
RATES – 62p increase (15p in the pound)
RENTS – up 65p a week.
The only Labour Borough to keep within the the government's guidelines!

CAMDEN
RATES – 8% increase.
RENTS – No increase.
CUTS – No cuts in jobs or services.
The unions are particularly concerned about the £2 million 'readjustment' in the council repairs money: this reduction has been made in relation to the amount of money spent this year rather than the need of those concerned.

GREENWICH
RATES – 9% increase.
RENTS – Up 75p a week.
CUTS – No cuts in jobs or services.

HACKNEY
RATES – 17% increase.
RENTS – No increase.
CUTS – Council claims 'no cuts' budget – but it is widely believed there are hidden cuts.

HARINGEY
RATES – 7.8% increase.
RENTS – No increase.
CUTS – No overall cuts, but a flat rate will be cut from each budget head and reallocated.

This decision follows that of the local government committee which called for no rent rises, no cuts, and a rate increase as low as possible to carry this out.

HOUNSLOW
RATES – 12.9% increase.
RENTS – Up £1.50 a week (although they would still be the lowest in London).
CUTS – £2 million.

A rebellion of six councillors could, like in Liverpool, stop this budget being passed. However, in this case the six are trying to stop cuts, not implement them.

ISLINGTON
RATES – 14% increase.
RENTS – 75p increase.
CUTS – None.

'Fortress' Islington shows how increasing rates is no way of redistributing wealth. The average council tenant will this year be paying £31.62 rent and rates a week, instead of £28.84 for the same services.

LAMBETH
RATES – 15.7% increase.
RENTS – Up 50p per week.

LEWISHAM
RATES – 14% increase
RENTS – No increase.
CUTS – Minor.

The Local Government Conference voted down every suggested budget and left the Labour Group with no mandate. The result was probably the most acceptable to most people. Yet again, money was 'found' due to underspending.

NEWHAM
RATES – 7.1% increase.
RENTS – 75p per week.
CUTS – None: growth from substantial reserves.

SOUTHWARK
RATES – 15% increase.
RENTS – Up 75p per week.

TOWER HAMLETS
RATES – Up 2p in the pound (2% increase).
RENTS – Up 75 a week.
CUTS – Some.

Despite having reserves of £19 million, the rates and rents will still go up. As Cllr Graham Allen is quoted as saying in the local paper, "while there is one homeless family, one old person without meals on wheels, there should not be a penny in the bank. If we have the money, it should be used".

So what does all this mean? Basically, we see increased costs for the same, substandard services. Council tenants hit twice in many Labour boroughs, from rate *and* rent increases. 'Creative accountancy' has protected many Labour boroughs from having to face any real confrontation this year, so we are left to fight rate-capping next year. Obviously, strategies and tactics need to be sorted out now. It is hoped that the Left in local government will use Briefing as a forum for organising that fight.

Kevin Flack,
Lewisham East CLP.

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Organised by Wages Due Lesbians. Further information from King's Cross Women's Centre, 837 7509

Next London Editorial Board: Friday 27th April at 6.30pm at County Hall.

Next issue out April 19th. Deadline for articles: Monday April 9th.

BYE-ELECTION ROUND-UP

CAMDEN

The excellent result achieved by Labour in the bye-election in Chalk Farm Ward in Camden last month denied the Alliance yet again a place on Camden Council.

The Liberals had been hopeful of gaining the seat – it was one of the most marginal in Camden in May 1982, and consists of an area around 'elegant' Primrose Hill which on the surface would seem to be a natural home for Liberal support. As it turned out Labour more than doubled the May 1982 majority, the successful candidate, Richard Stein, receiving 49% of the poll, 7% up on Labour's vote last time. This was achieved with a 4.5% swing away from the Alliance and 6.3% from the Tories.

It followed a particularly acrimonious campaign with the opposition using all the tricks they could think of. The Tories ran a smear campaign, accusing named Labour councillors and Labour Party members of corruption. The Liberals, unable to campaign on policies, tried their usual ploy of trying to persuade Tory voters to vote for them on a tactical 'get Labour out' basis.

INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL ISSUES

Both these campaigns proved to be dismal failures, confirming the findings of a MORI opinion poll in November that the Labour Council in Camden does have the popular support of residents in the Borough. The particularly good result in Chalk Farm must be put down to the hard work carried out by the candidate and the local Labour Party Branch over the last few years. In addition to regular activities and newsletters, the Branch has been prominently involved in two local issues with successful outcomes: the Arlington House campaign, and the campaign to get rents reduced at housing association properties in Auden Place.

The result goes against the view that Labour is losing support to the Alliance from newly affluent members of the working class. Where the Liberals have made gains, notably in London in Tower Hamlets and Bermondsey, they have been in those rundown areas which have suffered most at the hands of right wing, rotten Labour councils and moribund Labour parties. If we are to learn anything from this election it must be that radical policies and an active, campaigning party are the way to win support for Labour.

Jane Stockton
Holborn & St Pancras CLP

TOWER HAMLETS

WHILE most activists' attention was focussed on the by-election in Chesterfield, we in Bromley Ward of Tower Hamlets were fighting to retain a Labour seat against the Liberals. The seat had become vacant due to the resignation of Labour councillor Cosmas Desmond. While there was some unhappiness in the local Party over the way the resignation was handled this did not seem to have much effect on the doorstep during the campaign. A complete canvass was carried out with several leaflet drops. Both Parties concentrated on local issues with Labour pointing out that the Liberals had no real policy on the cuts in, for instance, the Health Service, but were in fact the new East End Tory Party.

Labour had previously held the seat with a 115 majority but the Liberals overturned that and won by 15 votes on a 42% turn-out. While the loss of a Labour seat is to be regretted we can take some heart from the fact that even with the help of Tory and National Front votes the result shows that the Liberals did not do too well even against the appallingly bad record of the Labour administration in Tower Hamlets.

The local Party now needs to take note of Tony Benn's victory speech at Chesterfield and with "the passionate advocacy of socialist policies" change the image of the Labour Party in Tower Hamlets.

John Mitchell

BERMONDSEY

How did Labour manage to lose Burgess Ward, Bermondsey – a 'safe' Labour seat – to the Liberals at the bye-election on Feb 23? If this question can be clearly answered and the different factions in Bermondsey Labour Party cease *blaming* and start taking *responsibility* for the state of the party then it can start to march back to recovery. The alternative is loss of many more wards to the Liberals in Bermondsey and possibly loss of overall control of Southwark Council.

ANTI-COUNCIL VOTE

The turnout was higher than the last Council elections. The Labour vote essentially held up but the Tories voted massively for the Liberals and extra people turned out to vote *against* the Council. The Liberals (846) scored an overall majority over Labour (597) Tories (81) and NF (47).

The election agent Tony Goss mainly blames lack of active support from Bermondsey Party for the defeat. It is true that, even in the face of a national effort by the Liberals, support was lacking, but the actions of Tony Goss himself contributed to this apathy.

STITCH-UP BACKFIRES

The sad fact is that Burgess Ward bye-election was a text book example of how to lose. This does not mean that either the agent or the candidate did not work hard and conscientiously; they did.

It is simply that what can only be described as a stitch-up by their faction backfired. The five steps to defeat were:

1 The retiring Councillor, Ron Sater (not a man of the left) gave the ward no notice and therefore no time for pre-election preparation; and the election date chosen gave the party minimum campaigning time.

2 The Party Local Government Committee, which was dominated by Tony Goss's faction, vetoed a prospective candidate nominated by the Ward secretary before even the ward had held its selection meeting. The LGC refused to give reasons and stated they would continue to veto him whatever the ward wanted.

3 Some LGC 'supporters' were abusive to certain members of the ward (who were angry at the LGC) and actively discouraged them from helping in the bye-election.

4 Support was weak from Bermondsey Party and some ward members were understandably not keen on helping. The LGC's appalling manoeuvres contributed considerably to this apathy.

5 Labour's election propaganda was weak and not frequent enough. This was largely due to this same lack of support and apathy.

Although this sad chain of events must be understood, *all* members of theparty must take responsibility for allowing *their* LGC to behave in such an anti-democratic fashion.

Furthermore these events must not obscure the overall fact about Bermondsey. . . As long as Southwark Council and the Labour Party is seen to be failing to deal with problems such as housing repairs, empty properties and homelessness, and is seen to be fighting its own supporters in NALGO and many tenants associations, then the Liberals will get support. When the Council gets itself together – with our help – the basis for Liberal support will vanish.

Indeed in the Ward's polling district with some of the worst problems – where Labour has done most work with the TA and the Council has responded, by, for example, giving tenancies to many squatters – Labour did best.

What is needed now is an imaginative fightback by Labour with regular newssheets, regular contact between Councillors and tenants – through well-publicised advice sessions, and a clear will from the Council to respond to problems on the ground.

Piers Corbyn
Burgess Ward Bermondsey CLP

LONDON REGION

A view from above and below

At the same meeting of the Briefing Editorial Board I was both asked to write the impressions of an ordinary delegate to the Regional Conference *and* supported for the Briefing slate for election to the Regional Executive. Obviously, the Briefing comrades and I had a similar lack of faith in the power of their slate and my chances of being elected. We were all wrong — and, much to my astonishment, on the Saturday evening I found myself elected to the Regional Executive.

Thus, my impressions of the Regional Conference are not those quite of the ordinary delegate who's supposed to be writing this article — I spent half of the conference in a state of shock! — but, in fact, I don't think they're really that much different. For example, my awareness of the intimidatory and alienating nature of a raised platform, peopled by "our superiors", was heightened rather than decreased by the fact that I was now entitled to wander up there — and didn't dare!

Vauxhall's resolution

Any look at the "feel" of the Conference has to work backwards. Sunday afternoon was the high spot — something which the reporter from Labour Weekly obviously missed by leaving at lunchtime as their report makes no mention of it at all. My CLP was closely involved in the debate on discrimination which took place straight after lunch on the Sunday. Vauxhall's resolution on gay rights had been the starting point for a number of supportive amendments and one of our delegates, Richard Sandells, moved Composite I to such effect that we heard later that he had swung some uncommited trade union delegations. Our amendment was part of Composite H, again moved with considerable effect by Dianne Abbot from Westminster North CLP, which aimed to establish the right of black sections to exist and to influence the deliberations of the Positive Action Working Party set up by the NEC to hive off the "problem" of women and black members.

The debate on dicrimination was unlike any I had attended on this issue at a Labour Party conference. My experience of debates on women's organisation has been that they are either a signal for tea or, as happened at Annual Conference in 1982, a signal to stay and heckle and vote against. In contrast, black women and men, lesbians and gay men, and a blind comrade speaking on behalf of those with disabilities, were listened to attentively and supportively by the majority of Conference (the minority being, on the whole, Militant supporters, unfortunately including some members of my own CLP, who made snide remarks throughout and failed to understand that wheeling out a black woman to denounce "tokenism" was perceived as crass hypocrisy).

Debate on education

When this debate was over, won on a large card vote, it was not long before the atmosphere became tense once more during the debate on education. The GLLP Conference has been called a GLC appreciation society — maybe; but it certainly isn't an ILEA appreciation society. Policies on the compulsory redeployment of teachers and secondary schools reorganisations have led to considerable anger in a number of London CLPs — and this anger spilled over into Conference.



John Chapman

In contrast, with the exception of the debate on Northern Ireland first thing on the Sunday morning, Conference was not an inspiring affair. Debates on local government, health, employment, women's rights just did not "take off" in the way the debate on discrimination did. This was a pity. We need to look to our base — as Dianne Abbott put it: "The Party needs to be retaken by the people on whose backs this movement has been built" — but we also need to make policy-making and deciding campaigning initiatives and tactics a matter for the enthusiastic involvement of all. The LCC-inspired Composite A1, taken early on Saturday morning, missed the point with its proposal for half of Conference to be workshops.* Workshops are useful for consciousness-raising and experience-swapping, but they cannot be a substitute for policy-making — which is what conferences are for and which is what black, women and gay comrades are demanding to be included in.

Timetabling

In this context, the timetabling of conference and the groupings of resolutions need to be looked at closely. The time spent discussing the abstractions of campaigning could have been better spent discussing the practicalities of the emergency resolution from London Transport NUR (which got 5 minutes at the end of Sunday afternoon) calling for a united, co-ordinated campaign to defend the GLC, ILEA, LT and local authorities, instead of the confusing plethora of campaigns we are currently faced with. Why was this resolution not taken during the Defend the GLC/ILEA debate. And why was a resolution about violence against women on the underground not taken under "Transport"? It would have fitted there just as aptly as in Women's Rights.

As a footnote to my impressions of conference: as always, childcare arrangements were a mess. Children were on the platform, distracting the speakers because of the distance between the creche and the conference hall. Over-10-year-olds were banned from the creche at short notice, despite the fact that it is illegal to leave an under-12-year-old alone. No facilities were available at lunchtime to allow delegates with children to attend fringe meetings or the pub. If I can achieve nothing else as a member of the Regional Executive, I will *try* to get childcare at conference improved!

Joan Twelves
Vauxhall CLP

* Editor's note: It is not clear what the LCC's view on workshops is. See following article.

CONFERENCE '84

Minorities: 'Militant' & right unite

At long last, Standing Orders Committee, at least understood the high level of interest there would be about both the debate around women's representation and rights, and around discrimination against black members and gay members. The debate on women was set for 2pm on Saturday and the discrimination debate for 2pm on Sunday. However, it is a pity that our attitudes to the black community, gays and lesbians can still be grouped together under the title discrimination.

At the executive meeting preceding the Regional Conference it was more than obvious that the Labour Party establishment still perceives itself as the defender of a predominantly male, white working class. It was like watching the worst of music hall comedians to see the reaction to every motion that mentioned the black community, women, gays and the Irish. On the other hand, motions on transport, employment and education caused little dissent despite obvious differences in policy within the executive and the party on issues such as redeployment or lorry bans.

But one word about women, gays or the Irish- and the right, *Militant* and John Spellar were, as usual, united in opposition to any move to adjust a Labour Party structure that is blatantly *not* working for these groups.

MILITANT AGAINST BLACK SECTIONS

In conference itself the right could again rely on *Militant* to put the argument. So we heard that setting up black sections would be a mere panacea and divert the community's energies. Should we take this as self criticism of their years of work in the LPYS? We also heard that encouraging black organisations to affiliate to the party or black members to form their own sections would be a 'class splitting policy'. This is an argument continuously raised in the context of women's representation too. It is perhaps the earliest call for cosmetic unity.

For these comrades choose to ignore the very real social, economic and political differences caused by sexism and racism and discrimination against the gay community. That is not to deny the oppression experienced by working class women and men every day, but it is to recognise that objective conditions are quantitatively worse if you are black, female or gay.

ENHANCING POWER OF WOMEN AND BLACK PEOPLE

To ensure women elect their own representatives or that black women have the support of their own sections is a political strategy to enhance the power of groups who have been previously powerless.

It would be unfair to connect the LCC with all the above comments, but their defensive attitude to the new leadership and his concerns has also meant that they have stayed away from the controversial ground around discrimination. Despite their paper commitment, many of their leading members say these issues are not a priority. In this context it is important to note that they were not as a group happy about the inclusion in Composite A1 on campaigning the section calling for workshop sessions at the regional conferences. One of their leading members in fact argued against them at the executive on the ground that they lead away from decision making.

This shows a lack of understanding of the connection between the political process and the policies it will produce. If conference continues to use a traditionally male and white structure for debate, it is unlikely that those most crucial to the debate will play their full part. This will not lead to new policies needed to restore the Labour Party.

RESOLUTIONS CARRIED

Fortunately, conference partially understood this and voted 522,000 to 198,000 for black sections and 563,000 to 174,000 for gay rights. This now needs to be translated into action in every CLP and union. Gestures have been made, but no power has changed hands.

In this context it is important to remember that although a group of Greenham women were invited to sit on the platform at conferences and a collection of £504 was raised for their struggle, it took action by women members of the executive to ensure that they were allowed to thank conference for themselves.

Nadine Finch
Islington North CLP

Mildly historic for gays

London Labour party conference was a mildly historic moment for the Labour movement Lesbians and Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

It was the first party conference to discuss, let alone pass, any Lesbian/gay rights motion.

Months of effort had gone into convincing enough parties that, yes, there are going to be hundreds of motions on the GLC and the Health Service. 'Lesbian and gay rights isn't personal but political' (Roger Thomas? Bermondsey?), and maybe this year, they'd consider shoving us up their list of priorities? Well, some listened and we won enough motions.

Also, fortunately, the mover and the seconder were a gay man and a Lesbian, and there were many other 'out' Lesbian & gay delegates there as well.

Richard Sandells, moving the composite from Vauxhall CLP started off by saying: 'Our sexuality informs our behaviour in most of what we think and do – it certainly isn't confined to what we do in bed.' He went on to say that we'd achieved much greater success lately, in getting this across to the Labour movement.

Sarah Roelofs, Islington women's council delegate, seconded. She raised the issue of Dr Roger Thomas forced to resign by his party over a 'gay' offence, and drew applause by saying that neither Thomas nor Gerry Bermingham should be forced to resign for 'personal' reasons. She said, '*I* have no personal problems, my only problems are *your* prejudices.'

The regional committee recommended support, and surprise! we won! By 563,000 to 174,000 as it happens.

This majority was most interesting because it means, though we don't know for sure, that unions like TGWU, NUR and POEU, not unions with gay rights policies, must have voted for us.

The motion wasn't mild either! As someone said to me afterwards, '*We* have to carry out the decisions agreed, but it is good to know that we have such powerful allies.'

Paul Canning, London LCGR

London LCGR can be contacted, for speakers and information, via its London office: 30 Chippenham Rd, W9 (286 9692).

Ealing Briefing Group

Ealing Briefing Group has found itself a permanent meeting day and a new home (for the present at least).

The Group now meets on the 4th Monday of every month (excluding bank holidays) at the West London Trade Union Club, 33-35 Acton High Street, W3.

The April meeting will feature, among other things, a discussion with Jane Stockton on the Streetlife *supplement and related issues.*

Meetings commence at 7.30pm and all Labour Party members are welcomed. For further details contact:

Andy Kellaher (Ealing North and Convenor) on 841 4640/571 2394, Ruth Clarke (Ealing Acton) on 840 2099 or Pete Purton (Ealing Southall) on 571 5019.

PUBLIC MEETING

"Show Trials — Paid Perjurors in Northern Ireland"

Speakers include:
Tony Gifford QC (author of recent Cobden Trust pamphlet on accomplice evidence)
Janet Loveless (Campaign Against the Police Bill)
Speaker from Relatives for Justice

Monday 9th April
7.30pm at County Hall

Organised by South London Labour Committee on Ireland

ILEA divides and rules

At the beginning of March, inner London schoolchildren received a firm kick in the teeth from the London Labour Party machine. The blow was ironic because on the first day (3rd March) of the two-day London Region conference, with the blessing of Ken Livingstone and the GLLP Executive, the London Party voted overwhelmingly against cuts in local government and in support of Liverpool City Council. The composite, moved by NUPE believed 'that the only basis for mobilization is the clear adoption by Labour Councils of a policy of no cuts in services.'

The following day, with the blessing of the London Executive, NUPE, the TGWU and the GMBTU voted to support the cuts in education made by the Inner London Education Authority. They voted down the only resolution on the agenda (from Croydon NE and Hackney N & Stoke Newington) against compulsory transfer of teachers. On a show of hands, many thought the resolution was carried but on the card vote, it was lost by 457,000 to 231,000. When ILEA is fighting for its life, it has chosen to divide its workforce and attack one of the groups most likely to defend it. For those unfamiliar with the discussion, compulsory transfer of teachers means a cut in the service delivered to children because it leads to increased class sizes, loss of subjects from the curriculum and hence a poorer education.

The education debate, in spite of its forced brevity, was the most controversial and acrimonious of the whole conference. The contentious item in the debate was an amendment from Hackney North, which opposed the compulsory movement of teachers in the ILEA. In a manner which is only too familiar to the Labour Party faithful, the amendment nearly fell off the agenda 'by accident' and the debate almost did not take place.

At the beginning of the conference, the Standing Orders Committee revealed that the amendment would not be debated since it had been omitted from the education composite (K). The Hackney North delegates discovered that compositing had taken place between the Socialist Education Association, Ilford South and Croydon NE. None of these three organisations had been informed by LP Regional Office that Hackney N should have been involved. Consequently, the composite, drafted by the SEA, an organisation which favours the forced movement of teachers, entirely excluded the content of the Hackney N amendment.

Accidents do happen of course and Croydon NE and Ilford S wanted the error rectified. The SEA, however, closely linked to the ILEA leadership, was implacably opposed to the amendment returning to the agenda. To cut a long story short, following a day and a half of intense discussions and lobbying, the debate was allowed to take place. A composite motion against cuts in ILEA was moved by Croydon NE and seconded by Hackney North.

LOBBIED DELEGATES

On the first day of the conference, members of the Inner London Teachers' Association, the London NUT leadership, had lobbied delegates to win their support against redundancies and compulsory transfer. During the debate on Sunday afternoon, Steve Cowan, a teacher from Tower Hamlets and seller of *Labour Herald*, attacked the NUT asking that, since the NUT was not affiliated to the Labour Party, what right had the NUT to lobby the Labour Party. He accused the teachers of seeking to make themselves a special case and warned that if compulsory transfer of teachers were ended, it would be at the expense of the manual workers. While it is probable that the ILEA leadership had sewn up the votes of NUPE, the T&G and the G&M before the debate, the arguments used were almost certainly as divisive. The device of setting the manual workers against the teachers has been used frequently by this ILEA leadership to clear a path for its policy of cutbacks.



Frances Morrell

On the Saturday of the two day conference, the London Party declared itself unanimously in defence of the trade union rights of workers at GCHQ: the right to stay in your place of work and not have your conditions of employment changed against your will by your employer. On Sunday, NUPE, the T&G and the G&M voted to withhold that right from London teachers. They had fallen for the oldest trick in the book.

When ILEA is fighting for its life, such divisiveness sabotages the interests of manual workers, teachers and children alike. The next time the manual workers are in dispute with the ILEA, and that may not be in the very distant future, they will expect the support of the teachers. I hope they get it. Solidarity has to start somewhere.

Keith Lichman
Hackney North CLP

Women's Committee: where next?

On Saturday 7 April the GLC Women's Committee will be holding an open meeting on organisation. The chairperson of the committee, Valerie Wise, will be making a number of suggestions to change the organisation set up just over a year ago. These changes include the abolition of the co-ordinating group and the transformation of the working groups into advisory bodies nominated by the County Hall civil servants (the support unit).

These changes, if implemented, will mark the end of an imaginative attempt to establish geniune participation by the women of London in the work of the committee. The open meetings will be kept, but they are exercises in consultation, differing only in form, from the regular consultative exercises carried out by most central and local government departments. The working groups will be formalised and absorbed into the County Hall bureaucracy.

The reason advanced for these proposals is that attendance has declined to such an extent that the co-ordinating group has become unrepresentative, while many of the working groups have ceased to function at all. This is true. But whereas Valerie would argue that this is because the groups have completed their part in the formulation of policy, the implementation of which can now be safely left to the 'experts' at County Hall, I would suggest that the failure came from disillusion, caused by women finding that they had no power over the decisions taken.

To put matters right we should not acquiesce in the proposals emanating from County Hall bureaucrats, which are concerned only with administrative convenience. Instead we should turn the co-ordinating group into a body of delegates representing organisations concerned with women, so that its members have a clear line of democratic accountability. It can then monitor the activities of the Women's Committee and, more importantly, formulate policies and ideas in conjunction with the working groups. Such a system, if successful, could provide a blueprint for the development of a genuine participatory democracy, in which people will be able to take power over their lives, instead of delegating that power to representatives in County Hall.

Paula Watson
Westminster S CLP

Hackney: some things you can't cover up

By Keith Veness (Secretary of Hackney NUPE officers' branch) and Chris Knight (Lewisham East CLP)

A MAJOR corruption scandal threatens to rock Hackney Council. In the light of its own special investigation, *London Labour Briefing* accuses the council of choosing to close down Spurstowe Terrace regional assessment centre and sack several members of staff rather than allow these staff to continue asking questions which were promising to blow the lid off a ring of financial corruption rampant among a number of high-ranking employees of the Social Services department.

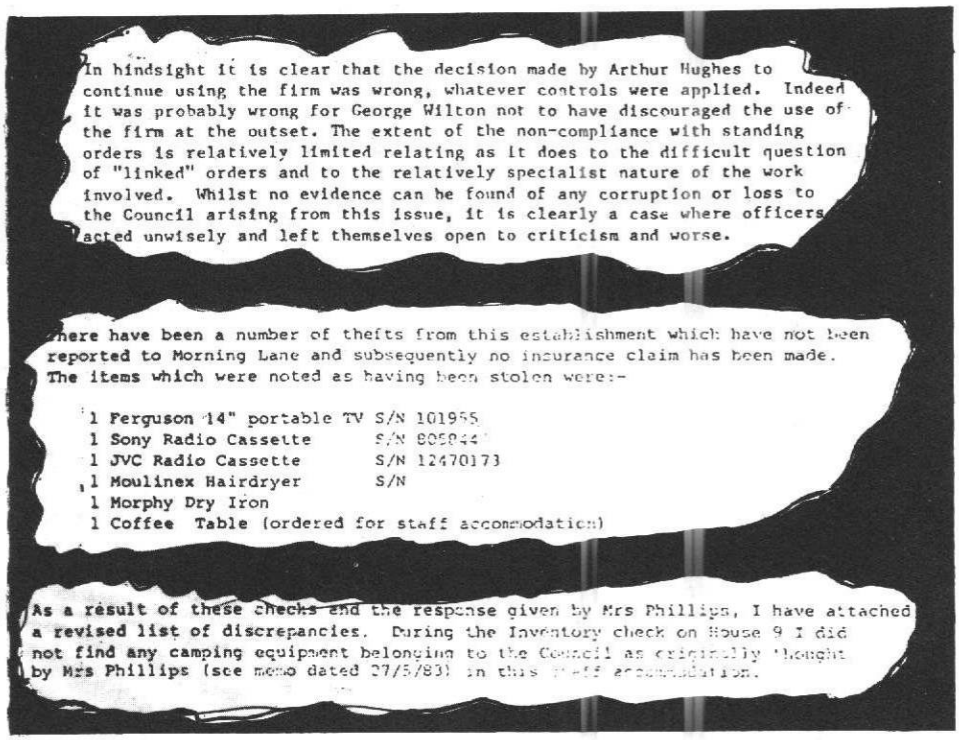
The accusers are: (1) Steve Shoreman, former principal of Spurstowe Terrace, (2) Wendy Verity, a residential social worker in the centre and (3) Robin Blair, head of the therapy unit. Their accusations are essentially endorsed by an internal auditor's report commissioned (and then ignored) by Hackney Council. The story began when Robin Blair — interviewed by BRIEFING last month, noticed that the system of Spurstowe Terrace staff 'emoluments' was not being properly monitored, that bedding and electrical items were going missing and that outside contracts were being improperly awarded. This was all reported to the Principal (Steve Shoreman), who decided to investigate. Meanwhile, to clamp down on one particular abuse — the use, by the centre's Domestic Bursar, of her personally-issued cash-card to purchase goods which were never used on the premises — Robin Blair confiscated the Cash-and-Carry card. This accusation is confirmed in the Council's internal auditor's report, published in Social Work Today:

"It was necessary to obtain from the company operating the Cash and Carry a list of codes and related provisions relevant to the period under review. This analysis identified one specific problem: Code 19b on the till rolls related to beers etc. However in virtually all these cases these purchases were described by 'Ms X' as something else [toilet rolls]. This is clearly a deliberate misrepresentation, borne out by the fact that toilet rolls were normally supplied through central stores."

The accusation is that boxes of beer, sweets, tights etc — much of which the children in the centre never saw — were being purchased with Hackney Council's money and passed on for profit to others unnamed.

The same auditor's report criticises the then acting director of social services, Arthur Hughes, for allowing the use of a firm run by the son of a council employee to do contract work on the premises — e.g. supplying and making wall units for the girls' bedrooms. The report says, "it is clearly a case where officers acted unwisely and left themselves open to criticism and worse".

An internal memorandum to Peter Walker, dated July 7 1983, shows a number of unexplained disappearances of expensive items which "have not been reported to Morning Lane and subsequently no insurance claim has been made".



In hindsight it is clear that the decision made by Arthur Hughes to continue using the firm was wrong, whatever controls were applied. Indeed it was probably wrong for George Wilton not to have discouraged the use of the firm at the outset. The extent of the non-compliance with standing orders is relatively limited relating as it does to the difficult question of "linked" orders and to the relatively specialist nature of the work involved. Whilst no evidence can be found of any corruption or loss to the Council arising from this issue, it is clearly a case where officers acted unwisely and left themselves open to criticism and worse.

here have been a number of thefts from this establishment which have not been reported to Morning Lane and subsequently no insurance claim has been made. The items which were noted as having been stolen were:-

1 Ferguson 14" portable TV S/N 101955
1 Sony Radio Cassette S/N 805944
1 JVC Radio Cassette S/N 12470173
1 Moulinex Hairdryer S/N
1 Morphy Dry Iron
1 Coffee Table (ordered for staff accommodation)

As a result of these checks and the response given by Mrs Phillips, I have attached a revised list of discrepancies. During the Inventory check on House 9 I did not find any camping equipment belonging to the Council as originally thought by Mrs Phillips (see memo dated 27/5/83) in this staff accommodation.

The items include a fridge, a portable TV, a cassette recorder, a dry iron and a coffee table, as well as a large number of electrical items, rugs, blankets, etc.

Conspiracy

What is shocking about this case, however, is not just that petty corruption was occurring. It is that when an attempt was made by three people at Spurstowe Terrace to put a stop to it, they were confronted with an extraordinarily well-organised counter-attack, clearly emanating from somewhere within the bureaucracy of the Council itself. Instead of an investigation being begun to identify and remove the offenders, moves were started to stifle the whole line of questioning in the only way possible – by concocting an extraordinary story ("School of Sin") about sex in the centre, published in the *Sun*, by dismissing the accusers and closing down the whole centre on grounds of its supposed sexual immorality (an utterly baseless fabrication in the best traditions of the *Sun*). Who fed the story to the *Sun*? Who, working at that newspaper, received it and ensured its headline treatment? And for what purpose?

Progressive

It was not the fact that Spurstowe Terrace was run on progressive principles – although it was. Robin Blair and Steve Shoreman were implementing – successfully, as everyone acknowledged prior to the events described – a philosophy of care based on treating the young residents as human beings with rights of their own rather than simply as problems to be locked up and contained. There is no doubt that certain traditionalists felt threatened by the success of this approach, but Hackney Council's shameful collusion in the snuffing-out of this experiment must be explained on other grounds.

Sinister

A vital factor in the difficulties experienced by the three at Spurstowe Terrace has been the Masonic connection. It is common knowledge that a large number of Chief Officers in Hackney are Masons. When NUPE first heard of allegations of financial mismanangement they called in their officials and took the matter up directly with the Director of Finance. His first reaction was to say that all this was 'dynamite' and that the Fraud Squad would have to be called in. One week later, the union was surprised to be told by the same Director that "such things are endemic" and that the whole matter had been dropped. It is sinister that so many top people in Hackney Council are in a secret society whose members will protect each other regardless of justice for the victims of crime, or the effects of their actions – in this case, the effects on a number of children of the sacking of staff and the closing of Spurstowe Terrace.

P.S. Steve Shoreman has just been served with a disciplinary notice for daring to speak to SWT* and exposing the above and a number of other facts.

*'Social Work Today', which has also published the above extracts from the auditor's report.

Oppression of gays and lesbians
IT IS A CLASS ISSUE!

Bob Cant (Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and Tottenham Labour Party)

Margaret Hodge is to be congratulated for replying to Sarah Roelofs on the question of lesbian and gay rights. The congratulations are not for the content of what she said but for the fact that she has brought out into the open the fears and anxieties of some sections of the Labour movement about lesbian and gay rights. The whispering is over and the debate can begin.

The central question about her article is the doubt which she casts upon the class dimension of lesbian and gay politics. Twenty years ago most people in Labour movement had fairly straightforward ideas about class. They acted as if the working class was white, male, heterosexual and in unions like the NUM or the TGWU. The family wage was treated as if it were a natural phenomenon. Recently, of course, all these assumptions have been called into question by changes in the economy and the growth of a number of social movements. The working class is now widely understood to be more complex and varied in its activities and aspirations than had previously been accepted.

The most problematic part of this changing view is the implication that some parts of the working class may have benefited from the greater oppression or exploitation of other parts of the same class. This can particularly be seen in terms of domestic labour which women are still expected to provide within the family whether or not they are in paid employment. It can also be seen in the fact that large numbers of Third World workers were recruited to work for pay and under conditions which would not have been acceptable to British-born workers. Many socialists (including probably Margaret Hodge) are currently grappling with the practical aspects of these issues. Lesban and gay rights is the most recent arrival in this series of class re-definitions.

THE POLICING OF SEXUALITY

The major class-related analysis which has come out of the lesbian and gay movements is the view of the policing of sexuality as a form of social control. In British society heterosexuality is institutionalised in such a way that all waverers are policed by the family, by social workers, by the schooling system, by the medical system, by the police and by the judiciary. This is not to say that heterosexuality is a creation of the State but it is certainly very much a protected species. Some non-heterosexual people do escape the policing and those who do so most publicly often seem either to be wealthy or in a reasonably well-paid job or part of an alternative culture. It is thus easy for the intellectually idle to believe that there are no lesbians or gay men in the traditional working class and the poorest sections of society.

The policing of sexuality is, of course, most devastating where there is greatest poverty. Most people of my age (39) can remember people who were thought to have committed suicide because of the socially unacceptable nature of their sexuality.

The judiciary is brutal to lesbians in a different way. The number of lesbian mothers who have won contested custody cases can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Given these two sets of legal evidence, I have always found it hard to understand the myth of increased state tolerance towards lesbians and gay men. The state does not confine its interest to working-class lesbians and gay men but they are, of course, the ones with the fewest material resources to resist these attacks or escape from them.

While this now seems to be less common, the policing has not, in any sense, declined. In the most measurable sense it has actually increased. The number of convictions for consenting homosexual activity (the heterosexual equivalent of which would not be a criminal offence) has actually increased since the 1967 Sexual Offences Act was passed. For manual workers who would find it most difficult to move away from their own community the effect of these convictions and their coverage in the local press is devastating.

One of the other areas where the poorer lesbian and gay man also experiences major discrimination is in the field of housing. This is particularly so in the inner city areas to which many of us migrate because of the intolerance of smaller communities. A survey by the Gays and Housing and London Gay Switchboard showed that sexuality was a major cause for homelessness among lesbians and gay men. The lack of a 'fixed abode' is not only destructive in itself but also compounds other problems relating to welfare benefits or employment. Any socialist housing policy must take account, and must be seen to take account, of the needs of this particular group as much as any other group of homeless people.

Another major area of discrimination lies in employment. A number of well-documented cases such as those of John Warburton and Susan Shell have shown how people in the caring professions are particularly at risk from homophobic employers if they are not prepared to be dishonest about their sexuality. But such cases are only one feature of the ongoing discrimination which many lesbians and gay men experience at work. It is common knowledge that many lesbians and gay men experience harassment at work of such a kind that they are unable to hold down a job for any period of time. In a period of recession the effects of such a work record are particularly difficult to shake off and are a major contributory factor to widespread poverty. The situation of the older lesbian or gay man in this category is particularly desperate. Even among those lesbians and gay men who do hold regular employment there is far less likelihood that they will be promoted, particularly if they come into contact with members of the public, than their heterosexual peers. It is to investigate this kind of employment problem that the GLC has given funding to the Greater London Lesbian and Gay Employment Campaign.

These three areas of the law, housing and employment are only three of the ways in which lesbians and gay men experience discrimination on account of their sexuality. Such discrimination is not only confined to working class lesbians and gay men but it is at its most devastating amongst them. The fact that the campaigns around these questions have often been raised by lesbians and gay men in more secure forms of employment is hardly surprising and is really no different from the fact that Labour movement issues have generally been raised by the best paid, better organised sections of the working class.

The fact is that all these issues are very much bread and butter issues for lesbian and gay activists in the Labour movement and for the communities to which we belong. No-one in the Labour movement can gain by making invisible the particular quality of our oppression and ignoring the stigma which is attached to us. When we seek to make the Labour movement a habitable place for lesbians and gay men to come out, we are seeking to win over one of the most alienated minorities in British society. There is no point in pretending that there are not real differences between that minority and the rest of the Labour movement. But there is far more in common than there is dividing us, and it is on that common ground that a new Labour movement for the 1980s and beyond will be built.

Fighting back! Lesbians and Gays have had enough!

The latest incident in a long line of appalling incidents, some reported in Briefing, took place in central London a few weeks ago.

A Gay man was arrested for 'insulting behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace' – kissing his lover goodnight. What followed will be familiar to many Gay men.

– He was knocked out by police banging his head against the side of the police van.
– Kicked in the back on the way to the police station (Vine St.) – The man suffers from a creeping disability of the spine.
– Had his earrings pulled out.
– His trousers ripped off in the struggle.
– Was denied access to his blood testing equipment and his insulin. He is a diabetic.

He was subjected to comments like; 'Ok, you want to have your fucking insulin; We will let you have it up your arse.' This was one of the more printable ones.

If he had been arrested with the Police Bill in operation he might well have been dead – it allows for 4 days detention. A mass picket was organised for his first court appearance on March 22nd. Further actions will take place. Ring 286-9692, during office hours for further details and offers of help.

The victim unlike (quite legitimately) many other Gay men is not going to be anonymous. He wants to fight back and his name's Jimi Christmas.

Labour Movement Lesbians Reply

This is a response from Labour Movement Lesbians, a group of lesbians active in the trade unions and Labour Party to some of the issues raised by Margaret Hodge in last months 'Briefing'. We feel that the question of lesbian and gay oppression, of heterosexism and what the labour movements responsibility is on these issues is something rarely discussed in meetings or journals. Margaret's response to Sarah Roelof's article seems designed to push lesbians and gay men onto the defensive in a situation where we have little territory within the labour movement to defend. What is needed is a rather more open dialogue about the relationship between the politics of sexuality and other political issues.

We would like to very strongly question the picture of working class life put foward in Margaret's article. This presents a patronising view of the working class as defined by a common diet, reading material and so on which by inference is inferior to that of the middle classes. Further it assumes that there are no differences among the working class either on lines such as race or sex, or for that matter more individual differences ... In particular the picture presented of working class women is that their relationship to men and the family is unproblematic; that working class women do not face rape, battering and other forms of sexual violence inside and outside marriage. This ommission lends itself to the argument that working class women have no interest in questions of sexuality. Certainly in terms of sexual violence, if anything, the reverse it true, not because working class men are more violent than their middle class counterparts but because middle class women have slightly more possibility of escape from violent situations due to their greater economic and social mobility. Nor is it the case that talking about sex and personal relationships is a middle class preserve. Such an assumption indeed shows a lack of knowledge of the 'culture' of many working class women.

Reinforce invisibility

The majority of people in this country are working class; so are the majority of lesbians. It is of course the case that it is sometimes easier for middle class women to 'come out' but the effect of putting down all lesbian activists as middle class is to reinforce the invisibility of working class lesbians and make their struggle even harder. Saying this is not to deny that it is important for the womens movement and lesbian feminists to look at issues of class. Indeed working class women in general, and more specifically working class lesbians have increasingly begun to organise and demand the movement does just that.

Labour Movement Lesbians feels that it is dangerous to equate racism with anti-lesbian, anti-gay prejudice since this is to deny the different historical experiences each oppressed group has been through. We feel that as lesbians it is important for us to confront our own racism and anti-semitism. However, we reject any attempt to try to say that the oppression suffered by one group is less significant than that suffered by another. Margaret ignores the fact that lesbians and gay men do suffer material economic oppression; fails to mention the number of people who have been sacked because of their sexuality and the way that operates to silence so many thousands of others. Nor does she look at the more ideological aspects of black people's oppression. We would point out for example that women, black people and lesbians and gays all face harassment and violence on the street.



John Chapman

Sarah Roelofs speaking on gay and lesbian rights at regional conference

Outrageous

We feel that it is outrageous for anyone who doesn't suffer a particular oppression to tell those that do the tactics they should adopt. The notion of 'bigoted confrontation' totally denies the place of anger in politics. As lesbians we adopt a number of different responses when dealing with heterosexism. Those responses will vary according to the situation; we are likely to say rather different to our mother than to a man who starts yelling abuse at us on the streets. Nor do we think that people only change through rational argument; anger and emotion will sometimes be rather more effective in forcing us to confront our own prejudices.

We want to challenge the notion that sexuality is the concern of a small lobby. On the one hand we think that the Labour Party should adopt policy on issues on principle not on some opportunistic notion of lobby size. On the other hand we feel that there is a consistent lack of understanding of the lessons of the womens movement that sexuality isn't fixed, that it does change and further that many of the issues raised by lesbians and gay men are of relevance to other people; particularly anyone living outside a conventional nuclear family.

Margaret says that we have to integrate minority politics fully into general politics. This is fine if that integration is based on recognising and therefore fighting the divisions that exist within the working class rather than ignoring them in the hope they will go away. Otherwise those general policies will be based on the interests of white heterosexual men!



Sponsored by the Socialist Group of the European Parliament, Richard Balfe and Alf Lomas

LETTERS

London Transport: In defence of the GLC

Dear Comrade,

One of your recent contributors referred to the GLC's inadequacies in relation to jobs lost on London Transport. We campaigned in the May 1981 Election on a Transport Policy that not only promised a fares cut but also increases in bus and rail services and therefore an increase in staff to run these services. The 'Fares Fair' scheme led to a net increase of 568 LT staff by 15 December 1981.

On 17th December 1981 the Law Lords ruled that 'Fares Fair' was illegal and LT began a cut back in services and staff. Our officers and lawyers advised us that fares would need to be increased towards the point of diminishing returns. In GLC debates we pointed out that this proposal would be detrimental to the passengers, increase traffic congestion, lose jobs on LT and cause more accidents on the roads.

After the Law Lords' ruling we had to decide whether to resign and let the Tories run the GLC or continue with a Labour administration and fight for a better transport policy. We chose the latter. After taking legal advice from Socialist lawyers and Transport 2000 I proposed a motion at the GLC that we instruct officers to prepare a plan which would enable us to reduce fares and improve services (with the obvious staffing consequence). Despite quoting the legal advice I had received I was unable to get a seconder. It was only some weeks later, when faced with a possible legal challenge from the London Borough of Camden and with GLC officers supporting fresh legal advice from a new QC that the GLC was agreed to instruct officers to prepare a plan.

In the meantime the GLC, Passenger Groups and Trade Unions launched campaigns to reverse the Law Lords decision. We supported Douglas Jay's Bill to overturn the Law Lords but this was defeated in Parliament and the fares doubled in March 1982.

The GLC produced the Balanced Plan which offered a 25 per cent fares cut, the introduction of Travelcards providing a greater integration, fewer reductions in bus and rail services, improved efficiency and the consequent job loss. This was the best we could get legal clearance for in the Autumn of 1982 but it represented a huge step away from the massive job losses and service cuts of the Law Lords. So much so that LT refused to implement and declared it illegal.

Minimise job loss

In adpoting the LT budget for 1983 the GLC did everything possible to minimise job loss. We lifted service levels above those required in the Balanced Plan and insisted there should be no compulsory redundancy. In March 1983, despite an active GLC and Met. Counties campaign, the Government's 1983 Transport Act became law. This was intended to stop us reducing fares and improving services and to force LT to privatise many of their services. Nevertheless, after a successful legal action with LT in January 1983 the GLC implemented the fares reduction in May 1983. Under the new Act the Government gave guidance to the GLC to keep within £125m of revenue support to LT but we have successfully bust this limit and we agreed our revenue support to LT as £235m. Of course every extra pound of support represents more jobs on LT. The success of the Travelcard is now legendary, with a 16 per cent increase in travel on LT and reductions in car commuting and accidents and we have now legally justified higher levels of bus and rail service again for this year. It has been suggested in the Tory Press that the GLC's success in arguing the case for public transport and our implementation of the popular fares cut in May 1983, (despite the 1983 Transport Act), were the major reasons for the sacking of Thatcher's Transport Minister, David Howell immediately after the General Election.

The GLC consulted Londoners on the Balanced Plan in Spring of 1983. In the forword to the consultation document containing a summary of the Balanced Plan I posed a series of questions which highlighted my own criticisms of the undesirable aspects of the Plan. Particularly One Person Operation, high fares levels, low service levels and job losses. It was the public's decisive rejection of the worse aspects in the Balanced Plan that also assisted us with legal advice to propose alterations to the LT 3 year plan (proposing huge job losses) and so suggest major improvements.

The GLC proposed amendments to the Plan to ensure that:

1. In 1984 a minimum of 166m bus miles are run, rising to 168m if possible, and a minimum of 29.3m train miles are run (compared to the LT Plan's intention to drop to 156m bus miles and 28½m train miles by 1986).

2. Travelcard integration with BR to go ahead. This will create more passengers and therefore more jobs and services.

3. No compulsory redundancy.

4. A searching independent appraisal of OPO by the Transport Studies Unit at Oxford University and except for night services the GLC has forzen the level of Bus OPO.

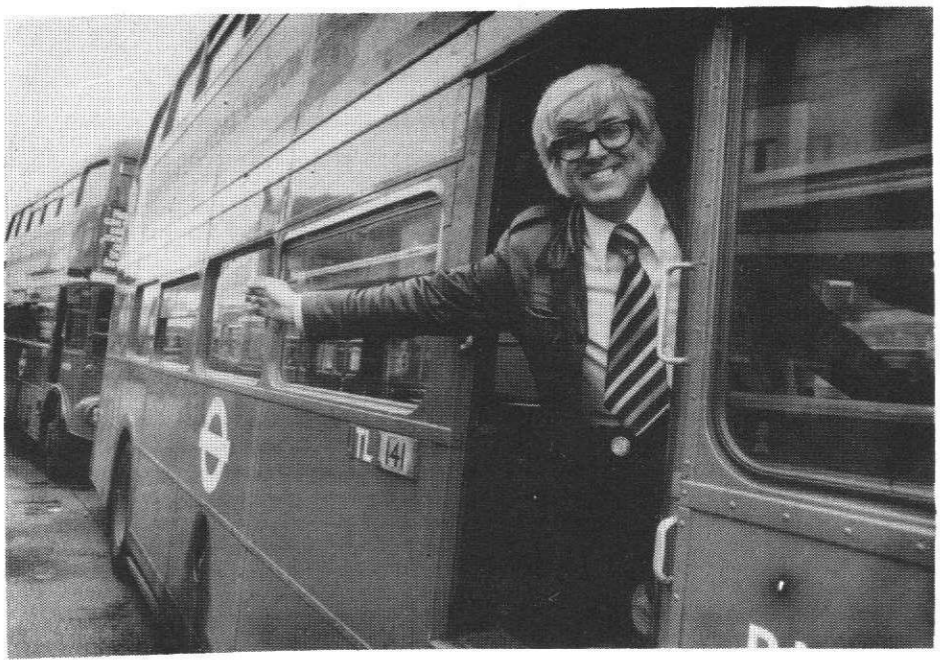
5. 31 stations that LT had originally considered as possible candidates for closing have been saved (together with hundreds of jobs).

The GLC has fought against LT's proposals to close the East London Line and has instead agreed to increase the level of service. We are also considering increases to the Bakerloo Line service. The GLC has approved such measures as the construction of the Light Rail in Docklands, increases in BR services, improvements to LT and BR stations, new bus garages, electrification of the North London Line, studies into improving services on BR's West London Line and the reopening of the Snow Hill Tunnel, various Dial-a-Rides for people with disabilities and extension of the Tube to Heathrow Terminal 4 all of which have created many jobs. Recently with the assistance of the Industry and Employment Committee we have been involved, together with the LT Unions in resisting LT's plans to close Aldenham and Chiswick Works.

I feel that to accuse the GLC of inadequacies in relation to jobs lost on LT could only come from the same people who hold the GLC responsible for the 6,000 extra road accident injuries that also occured directly because fares were doubled after we lost 'Fares Fair'.

Yours for socialism

Dave Wetzel



Keystone

SECTARIAN NARROW-MINDEDNESS OF THE FAR LEFT

Dear Briefing,

As with many on the labour left, Nadine Finch, in her article on Eric Hobsbawm, mixes a credible analysis of the present political situation with a somewhat incredible solution.

We all as socialists can speak glowingly of the need for a mass-movement, and she is right in recognizing that, since the late 1970s, the labour Party has been forced back into fighting against the pervading framework of society's right-wing ideology.

It is sad therefore, that the writer then displays the kind of sectarian narrowmindedness that has taken an unfortunate hold on the far-left.

Somehow she asserts that to agree with Hobsbawm's analysis of labour's long term decline, and to envisage new ideas, as opposed to aged incantations, leads one to become some kind of Ramsay Macdonald.

Surely the recognition that we, as a party, actually need to win power is not something even Briefing is beyond?

Yours fraternally,

D. Best

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

GETTING OURSELVES A GOOD PRESS

We all know that the press and the media are not on our side. We know that our policies, our actions and even our individual characters are distorted by the media in order to discredit our politics. We know that the media has a very powerful effect on the development of people's views. But what can we and should we be doing about it? Is it possible to make the existing press fairer? How can we counter lies and distortions about us, and how can we use the existing media to get over our views? How can we improve and extend our own press, from our local newsletters right up to national publications and productions? This issue of the Streetlife Supplement takes up some of these questions by looking at the practical ways campaign groups, and left organisations and individuals have been tackling the issue.

Jane Stockton

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

Working to redress the balance

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom was publicly launched at a TUC fringe meeting in 1979. The organisation's sponsors came from Trade Unions, Political Parties, and the entertainment, academic, religious and media worlds. They reflected a growing concern with the media; a concern that surfaced particularly during the low pay dispute, the 'winter of discontent' and the eleven month lock out at the *Times* newspapers. The unbalanced media promotion of Margaret Thatcher in May 1979 and the increasing incidence of action being taken against biased newspaper content by printworkers also revealed the need for reforming activity. National Daily and Sunday newspapers are, in the main, controlled by a handful of multinational companies and their proprietors maintain a tight control over the content and political line of the paper.

The CPBF is equally concerned, however, about bias in the broadcast media. A great deal of evidence has been amassed to show that the BBC and IBA's claims to balance and impartiality are a myth. The Glasgow University Media Group with their 'Bad News' publications and the CPBF's film 'Why their News is Bad News' have publicised this message widely.

MEDIA STANDARDS DECLINING

Recent years have seen rapidly declining media standards. The press circulation war has led to bingo millionaire promotions and jingo cheerleading during the Falklands war. Chequebooks have flashed, with fortunes being offered to incompetent policemen, criminals' relatives and Royal family keyhole watchers. Interviews that could not be bought are made up and individuals' lives wrecked or made a misery by the hounding of harassing journalists. Channel 4 has been under constant attack with its more radical and innovative programmes being scrapped or scaled down.

The CPBF works to redress this balance and for a more diverse, accessible media which will be accountable to its critics. Not just Trade Union leaders, politicians and the Royal Family suffer at the hands of the media, but also women ethnic minorities, gay people, the young and old, community groups, single parents and claimants are attacked and vilified daily by the media.



'Wild eyed trots'
Cartoon by Ray Lowry
First appeared in the New Statesman 23 January 81

Leeds Postcards

'And to ensure a balanced and impartial discussion of the latest government measures I have with me a government spokesman and a wild-eyed Trot from the lunatic fringe'.

RIGHT OF REPLY

A major area of interest has been therefore, the Right of Reply. The Campaign has published information and advice, held

(continued on next page)

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Making the link

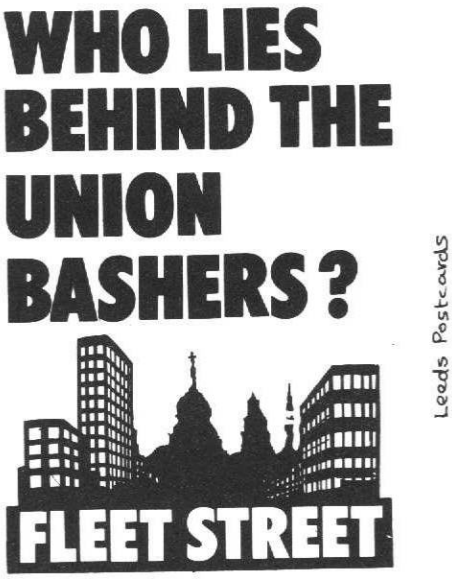
No one should be surprised that the media institutions are, and always will be in a capitalist society, hostile towards socialists, effective trade unionism and certain minorities. The news media is one of the crucial means by which capitalism is sustained and legitimised in our society and therefore the media is necessarily hostile in its treatment of labour movement ideas and actions where they are challenging to capitalist mechanisms and structures.

Capitalism not only possesses power and authority through the private ownership of the media but through the exercise of political power via Parliament and other State bodies. The BBC, that supposed 'bastion of independence and balance' is in fact directly owned and controlled by the State. Its twelve governors are appointed for fixed terms by the State, the State grants it permission to charge a licence fee and sets the level of that fee and the State lays down conditions about how the BBC must conduct itself. In practice this grip of the State means that the BBC's impartiality and objectivity ends at the point where moderate reformism stops.

Commercial broadcasting companies are privately owned but also operate on conditions laid down by the State. In common with all privately owned enterprises they aim and usually succeed in making a profit and have therefore a more detectable interest in being anti Left.

IN PRIVATE HANDS

With a few exceptions the ownership of newspapers is all in private hands. The importance that capitalists place on the control of the news media for the important role it plays in the creation of public opinion, can be demonstrated when it is learnt that many of the nine daily and seven Sunday national papers are unprofitable and have been so for many years. There is however a willingness of some owners to stand losses on a continuous basis and this display of benevolence has enabled all but two national newspapers to survive the last 15 years.



Who are these 'angels' of the dailies and Sundays? In nearly every case they are multinationals or other large profitable companies which are very profitable in their other activities and rely on a favourable commercial environment to remain so. Their interest in controlling the national press is obvious and the anti Left bias of these newspapers is assured.

MAKING THE LINK

Whilst arguing that the news media's hostility towards the Left is inevitable in a capitalist system I am not suggesting that this hostility should be accepted and not challenged. But we should always make the link in our attacks on the media, with its ownership and control and the designed role it plays in the indoctrination of the masses in a capitalist society.

Paul Wilkinson
Brent East Labour Party

Working to redress the balance

(continued from previous page)

a National conference, supported the Frank Allaun Right of Reply Bill in Parliament and given assistance to many organisations and groups. During the Health workers dispute in the Summer of 1982 the CPBF assisted with media relations in obtaining contacts for replies and generally working for fair coverage. A 30 minute video film is being produced on this subject.

We have no Right of Reply in Britain and the Press Council, which is supposed to be a public watchdog on the Press, is utterly worthless. This was the finding of an independent commission of inquiry which was initially set up by the Campaign. Their report, 'People against the Press' exposes the record. The Press Council is financed by the newspaper proprietors and has no sanctions that it could call upon even if it was so inclined. This situation has led the National Union of Journalists to withdraw from the Council and the CPBF to call on people to boycott the Council.

The Campaigns 'Right of Reply Unit' continues to assist people where possible. Media Unions and the TUC have good conference resolutions to back the Right of Reply. It is essential to put them into action.

The other side of the picture is to create a more diverse media. To do so we need greater access to facilities. The CPBF wants more, not less, papers expressing the wide range of opinion that exists in Britain. This aim particularly includes Local Papers. We therefore need a state-run National Printing Corporation and local municipal plants available to hire printing time. Redistribution of the income from advertising is necessary in order to fund the launch of new papers, and, if they are to have a chance to grow, the grip on distribution held by Smith and Menzies must be broken.

To take these issues further the Campaign held a conference on the proposed labour movement Daily and is planning a publication on the topic. Many other new issues are being worked on, including; Cable and Satellite TV and developments in local radio. Educational work in providing speakers, classes, publications and videos are under way. The Campaigns' Open Door programme on BBC 2 'Why their News is Bad News' presented by Julie Christie and Julie Walters brought a response from over 400 viewers (the programme is available on VHS videocassette).

The Campaign's bi-monthly journal 'FREE PRESS' has a circulation of over 9,000 and publications such as 'REJOICE – Media Freedom and the Falklands' sell rapidly. Regional groups exist in various parts of the country: the North East, North West, West Midlands and Wales and are being launched in Greater London, the first being in the South East. These groups respond to local and national media, hold regular meetings and debates and produce local directories and pamphlets and leaflets. A great deal of educational work is undertaken by the regional groups by supplying speakers and information. Plans are in hand to launch groups in Yorkshire and Humberside, East Anglia and the East Midlands.

MEMBERSHIP DOUBLED

Membership has doubled in the past year, growing to over 1,000 individuals and 600 organisations. Thirty Trade Unions are nationally affiliated, including the largest in the TUC. The political breadth is demonstrated by the affiliation of Plaid Cymru, Ecology Party, 120 Labour GMC's and plans to launch a CPBF Liberal Media group. A wide variety of academic institutions, campaigning groups (including CND, environmental and civil liberties groups) community printers, bookshops, local alternative Papers as well as Trade Union branches and regions have joined and reflect the growing concern with media bias.

For details of membership, literature, videos, conferences etc. contact: 9 Poland Street, London W1 3DG. Phone 01-437 2795.

Mike Power (Chairperson CPBF)

STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

The Right of Reply

Whilst there is broad agreement amongst those excluded from, or misrepresented by the media about the damaging effect of media bias, there is little corresponding agreement about what should be done, in practical terms, to challenge it.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom's campaign to promote the Right of Reply has provided an important new approach for mounting successful challenges to factually inaccurate, or distorted media coverage.

The Right of Reply, which exists as a statutory right in several countries, means the right of groups or individuals to correct distorted news items quickly and effectively. Ideally, a statement from the group or individual concerned should be printed (or broadcast) speedily, with equal prominence to the original offending item, and without distorting headline or comment.

IMPORTANT DEMAND

Given the uselessness of the Press Council and the libel laws as forms of redress, the Right of Reply has become an increasingly important demand, and has been supported by all the major media unions and the TUC. With the help of media workers there has been a steadily increasing number of successful struggles for the Right of Reply. A remarkable recent example was Arthur Scargill's recent statement in the *Sun* in response to a spurious 'ballot form' about the miner's overtime ban.

The CPBF's approach to the Right of Reply is two-fold. Firstly, we aim to inform the public about how to get the Right of Reply, thus helping to overcome the sense of powerlessness most people feel when contemplating making such a challenge. Secondly, we aim to encourage the growth of consciousness amongst media workers that they can and should take responsibility for the content of their product.

Although actually achieving the Right of Reply is undoubtedly difficult, particularly in the present political climate, there is always something to be gained from confronting the media in this direct way. Editorial power and lack of accountability is maintained by the public's silence and inferred acquiescence.

A brief guide to how to get the Right of Reply is given below:

1. GET YOUR CASE TOGETHER

Why does the story offend? Is it factually inaccurate? Have you been misquoted? Has it caused you personal distress or difficulty? Have you been harrassed by journalists?

Is the item in breach of the NUJ Code of Conduct? The code was introduced by the NUJ as a means of encouraging professional integrity amongst journalists and actions under the code can be undertaken by NUJ members on behalf of members of the public. Penalties include fines of up to £1,000 and expulsion from the union.

Get in touch with other people who may be supportive, or who have been misrepresented in the same piece. Work out your case together and write it up as fully as possible in the form of letters, statements, articles etc.

2. CONTACT EDITORIAL SIDE

Firstly, try to contact the journalist(s) responsible for writing the offending item. Confront them with the implications of their actions. Ask them why they told lies/distorted your position.

Editors are not renowned for making themselves available to those who wish to complain about their product. Don't be fobbed off, however. Someone with editorial responsibility must be present at all times. Write to the editor as quickly as possible, and, if possible, get a delegation together and go to see her/him in person. At this stage it could be very useful to ask for the help of trade unionists (see below). For example, the management may try to stop you even entering the building. A meeting outside the building with union officials could make this considerably more difficult.

3. CONTACT THE RELEVANT MEDIA UNIONS

Use the appropriate chain of command to get in touch with union workplace (chapel) officials. Chapel officials in individual newspapers need to feel secure that any action they are asked to take will be backed officially. Therefore, some chapel officers may have to refer back to their London or National officials, and it may be necessary for you to contact these officials in order to obtain endorsement for a chapel approach.

The relevant unions are:

Press: National Union of Journalists (NUJ), National Graphical Association (NGA), Society of Graphical and Allied Trades (SOGAT '82), Electrical, Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union (EETPU).

Broadcasting: NUJ, Association of Broadcasting Staffs (ABS), Association of Cinematographic, Television and Allied Technicians (ACTT).

Please note that workplace officials are referred to as Father or Mother of the chapel (FOC or MOC).

State your case to the F/MOC, in what ways you have been misrepresented, and ask for help. This help may take any or all of the forms suggested below:

★ Help to get in to the building in order to meet the editorial side.

★ Help to actually meet the editor.

★ Help to negotiate with the editor over getting a Right of Reply, ideally as an article written by you and presented equally prominently to the original item. A lead letter or smaller article may be an acceptable compromise.

★ Independent action by your unions. For example, printing a statement or disclaimer in support of your objections.

★ Take action against responsible journalist(s) under the NUJ code of conduct.

4. CONTACT OTHER MEDIA

Your struggle to challenge bad coverage is, itself, newsworthy, especially at a local level or to the alternative media.

Make direct contact with local radio stations. With a little encouragement they may be willing to interview you.

Prepare a press release, with pictures if possible, and send to likely sympathisers or good contacts in the media. Write to letters pages of other newspapers, challenging the editor of the offending organ to explain why he refuses to respond to your complaints.

5. IF ALL ELSE FAILS

Consider picketing or organising different forms of protest. Start a letter-writing campaign.

Involve the workplace unions in these activities. It is important that they know what you are doing, and are invited to take part.

More direct actions, like occupying the newsrooms or editor's office have also been used in the past.

Lesley Wood
(Information Officer. CPBF)



Cath Tate

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Back on the level

It is hard to see how any radical mass movement for change can develop until we can do something to loosen the Establishment's stifling and distorting grip on the means of mass communication. As we start to face up to the challenges of video, cable TV, electronic publishing etc. it does not bode well that we have yet to use the humble form of the magazine to its full potential (let alone the newspaper).

True, in recent years *Marxism Today*, *New Socialist* and *Sanity* have joined *Spare Rib* and *New Statesman* on many newsagents' shelves, but by and large, these five are only read by the highly-educated and self-defined. Politically, three of these share a rather stifling consensus on the importance of a certain type of Labour Party, *Sanity* defines itself very narrowly and *Spare Rib*, as a Women's Liberation magazine, leaves room for a more general coverage of current affairs. There is no widely available, accessibly written, attractively presented magazine devoted to counter-information and alternative views and culture. Is this such a daunting project?

THE LEVELLER LAUNCHED

A group, mainly journalists, formed in 1976 to produce a magazine along these lines and came up with *The Leveller*. They launched the magazine on £7000, raised largely by appealing for hefty 'founding subscriptions', an idea taken up by *New Socialist* in their launch campaign. *The Leveller* reached the height of its fame and circulation (around 10,000) in 1978, after it investigated and published the identity, along with *Peace News* and the NUJ *Journalist*, of a Colonel H A Johnstone. Johnstone gave anonymous, damning evidence as 'Colonel B' at the ABC Official Secrets trial, so called after Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell: Aubrey and Campbell were arrested in 1977 by the Special Branch after interviewing Berry about his work 7 years before as a soldier in Signals Intelligence.

The Leveller was always produced largely by an unpaid collective. The inevitable turnover of members resulted in a loss of investigative skills and an increasing collective commitment to personal and cultural politics and feminism in particular. This resulted in an explicit 'change of direction' towards feminism in December 1981 (the collective remained mixed). By this time its circulation had fallen below 5,000. *The Leveller* ceased publication indefinitely in February 1983.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

What went wrong? Three practical problems stand out that seem to afflict all attempts to develop the radical, independent press: lack of resources, problems in reconciling efficient organisation with democracy, and the distribution hurdle.

The distribution prospects for small-scale publications are in turmoil after the recent bankruptcy of the Publications Distribution Co-operative (PDC). The history of PDC, and the current situation, are dealt with in Christian Wolmar's recent *New Statesman* article (8/3/84). The barriers presented by the virtual monopoly of Smiths, Menzies and Surridge Dawson have been thoroughly examined in several *Comedia* publications. Suffice it to say that *The Leveller* never obtained effective widespread distribution.

Lack of resources and inefficient organisation compound political problems in obtaining widespread distribution. A distributor needs a periodical to be launched with an adequate promotion budget, to look reasonably 'professional', and to appear regularly, on time. Lack of resources and a notion of democracy also meant that *The Leveller* was produced by an open, voluntary collective. The democracy of an open, voluntary collective is somewhat limited by the type of people who can afford to get involved, and the inevitable 'hierarchy of commitment'. Also, certain jobs like bookkeeping, subscriptions, clearing up, drumming up advertising etc. are less appealing than writing copy or attending previews.

the Leveller

In Spring 1983, the collective had dwindled to a core of six, and was faced with debts of over £5000. Little money was due from past issues – our only lifeline was a typesetter, our paste-up skills and general goodwill and support. We appealed yet again to our subscribers and friends, who generously coughed up £500. A 'collective rump' of 2½ people decided to carry on typesetting, in the hope of salvaging someting. The debts are now virtually cleared and the graphics business is almost thriving. We called a 'relaunch' meeting on February 25 to see if anyone else was enthusiastic about the possibility of a new *Leveller*.

ENCOURAGING RESPONSE

The response was very encouraging – over 50 people turned up and many more have been in touch. But everything is still to do. Learning from the past, the current feeling is not to relaunch until we have secured newsagent distribution and adequate launch capital (say £25,000). Also, our budget will include modest wages for a collective, handling essential editorial and administrative work. Production will be handled by an expanded, self-supporting Leveller Graphics. As for the magazine itself, its politics, content and design will emerge slowly from the activity of those who get involved in the work of relaunching. However, there is some initial consensus (I think!) which I will try to define.

PUTTING ANTI-SEXISM AND ANTI-RACISM INTO PRACTICE

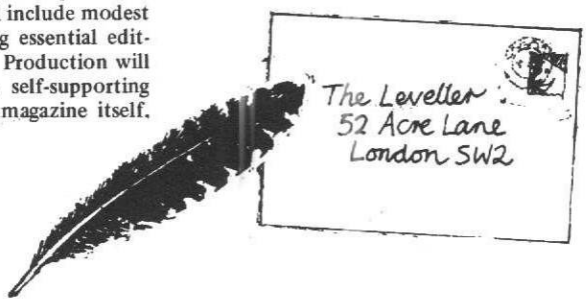
The new magazine will build on the investigative, cultural and feminist traditions of the old *Leveller*. There is a commitment to put anti-sexism and anti-racism into practice in a positive way, both in the pages of the magazine and in how we work. We will try and reach out to those who are uncommitted but starting to ask questions, and reflect and support the concerns and actions of all those who feel excluded from the more established radical publications. The magazine will probably identify more with a younger generation of readers, people who haven't been through the heady days of the late '60s and early '70s and then been demoralised by subsequent defeats.

It will try and break out of the visual straitjacket of many radical publications, by closely involving graphic designers in the initial planning of the magazine; exploiting the possibilities of 'in-house' production by involving designers in editorial discussion; and building up a pool of sympathetic illustrators, cartoonists and photographers, who we aim to pay. It will encourage a variety of writing styles.

One last, fundamental point concerns input. *The Leveller* never did conform to the traditional restrictions of a narrow editorial line and reliance on established sources – professional journalists, recognised experts and politicos. From this came unpredictable and sometimes brilliant articles. It also led to incoherence – topical issues of major importance were often simply ignored in the later years. A new magazine will certainly need all the investigative and editorial skills and specialist knowledge it can muster. But to make *The Leveller* work, we are seeking comprehensive sympathetic contacts internationally and in all parts of this country, who can together keep readers more in touch than is possible from reading existing publications.

If you want to help, keep up with developments, contribute to the discussion etc., we are at *52 Acre Lane, London SW2, 01-274 2288*. Send a large SAE for the first issue of the relaunch newsletter.

Richard Reeve



'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Black and white and red all over

During the period I have been politically active I have become increasingly adept at a pastime known as 'Dodging the paper sellers', a pastime familiar no doubt to most non-selling Briefing readers. Nevertheless, I took a deep breath in February this year and bought *all* the left papers I could lay my hands on for one particular week just to see what I was missing. (I have to admit that I did not manage to read them all cover to cover.)

Why are so many of these papers so uninviting to read? Looking at the array in front of me I am faced with: 'THATCHER MUST SPEAK', 'REAGAN, THATCHER, HANDS OFF LEBANON', 'FIGHT FOR EVERY JOB', 'DONT LET THEM OFF THE HOOK' and 'GET THE TORIES ON THE RUN'. Front page titles that excite almost as little interest as last month's *Briefing* front page: 'No Collusion. These Tory plans are UNCONSTITUTIONAL'. These titles do not attract your interest because they are totally uninformative and bossy. The front page title/s are the window on to the paper. These ones let the potential buyer know that they will end up none the wiser when they have finished reading the paper – just bossed at.



TEDIOUSLY PREDICTABLE

Inside most of the papers are a mixture of information and comment. Occasionally there is a good informative article, if, for example, that particular paper has a supporter whose job or circumstances give them inside information unobtainable elsewhere on a particular subject. Even these articles are often spoilt by the comment attached to them. Many articles though are comment with a smattering of information easily available elsewhere thrown in. The trouble with the comment is that it is tediously predictable (Government collapsing, TU and labour movement must unite and fight, we must build campaign etc, etc) and is usually delivered in a high handed, self opinionated, hectoring, macho fashion. I do not willingly open a paper to be lectured at – it's like taking medicine. I like to at least flatter myself, even if the way that information is presented to me will prejudice the views I hold on that particular subject.

Looking at the left press it is remarkable how similar in appearance and content many of them are when one considers how bitterly their supporters fight each other. There are variations and exceptions of course. *Tribune* and the *Morning Star* both benefit from being longer established papers – more news and less comment, but both have a rather old fashioned 1950's look about them. The *Morning Star* I got did not even have the Hungarian gymnastics they sometimes go in for. *Labour Herald* is in glorious colour, while the *Next Step* gives the appearance of being a totally uniform grey. *Militant* seem to have discovered a place called Liverpool. I have yet to see a *Labour Herald* without a picture of Ted Knight or Ken Livingstone in it. A gold star for *Socialist Action* which had a prominent article on gay rights, the only one I found in the papers. A black mark for *Militant* who seemed to most studiously ignore sexual politics, (perhaps they are all too young for that sort of thing!).

EXISTING ON COMMITMENT

Most left papers of course are chronically underfunded, in debt and understaffed and only exist from week to week on commitment. But are the late nights and early mornings worth it to get 16 sides of A3 written, pasted up, printed and sold? The only function papers seem to have is to establish an identity for the group that produces them. I very much doubt that they further socialism in this country. In fact producing a paper can be seen as a diversionary activity since it detracts people from campaigning in more effective ways. There is a place for journals/papers to discuss issues, but who has time to read a discussion journal produced more than once a month? There is also a place for a daily paper with up-to-date news but that can only obviously be produced by a well funded organisation. Where does that leave the weekly papers? They fall between two stools and I cannot see what function they perform for the movement as a whole outside the small group that produces them.

IN FAIRNESS

In fairness to the left press, I also picked up some of those well-funded, well-staffed papers produced from Fleet Street that are bought by literally millions of people. What did they consider to be the most vital piece of news for their readership on February 10th, during a week when the left press had either Lebanon, cuts, jobs or GCHQ on their front pages? The *Sun*'s front page had 'Star golfer Nick in Love Tangle' (plus an attack on Hackney Council). The *Daily* Star had 'My jail sex ordeal' about lesbian prison warders. The *Daily Express* had 'Home to Freedom' about a 20-year-old returning from his Hungarian father to live with his Scottish mother. (One wonders if the *Express* will follow up the case to see if he gets a job in Kilmarnock.) The *Mirror* did at least headline the Lebanon on the front page but that was under a photograph of the Queen and Princess Di attending the funeral of the Master of the Queen's Horse (Who?!).

When one considers the resources available to the left press and to Fleet Street it is amazing just how much the left produces and how little and of what low quality most of Fleet Street produces. Even so the left must not forget that quantity is not quality and must still seriously ask whether it is all worthwhile.

Cath Tate Streatham CLP

Can you believe....?

TRIBUNE, FEBRUARY 17, 1984

YOU have to hand it to Militant – they deserve full marks for trying. Central Television was recently filming a mock demonstration in Nottingham for a new comedy series about an imaginary trade union called The Tolpuddle Inheritance. Suddenly, out of nowhere and completely unscripted, there appears a *Militant* seller who promptly tries to flog copies of the paper to the somewhat surprised placard-holding actors and actresses.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Why the GLC does not advertise in the Standard

THE GLC does not place advertisements in the 'New Standard'. The decision was taken some months ago when the paper refused to disown or apologise for a JAK cartoon that depicted Irish men and women as all being terrorists. As time has gone on the New Standard has now lost hundreds of thousands of pounds of income from the GLC decision.

The policy was reaffirmed at the time of the Parkinson resignation when a cartoon was published of two Civil Servants saying to each other "well at least we can take him (Parkinson) off the queer list". In an answer to a Council Question from Deirdre Wood, Ken Livingstone said the policy stood and that the paper would have to crawl on its knees and apologise before it would be reversed.

The policy is correct. And we are in a stalemate situation with the 'New Standard', waiting until the financial losses are such as to force them to retreat.

But at the same time we have an ambiguous relationship with the Press.

A move to deny some elements of the press access to and facilities in County Hall was heavily defeated in the Labour Group as being counter-productive and likely to lead to even worse coverage. Many Labour members continue to speak to reporters from the 'Standard' and the paper is invited to Press Conferences. All the Council's press releases, sometimes five or six a day, are sent to the 'New Standard' in the quest of getting positive coverage and sometimes we do get it.

The debate is an interesting one. Do we carry our policy on the 'Standard' to its logical conclusion and have no contact at all? Or do we believe that in recognition that this powerful medium is hitting the streets every day we have to try our best to get the most positive coverage possible especially in the midst of the Save GLC/ILEA Campaign. A speculative point is whether our advertising ban has had any effect on coverage of GLC/ILEA issues – would the coverage be more sympathetic but for the grievance at the financial loss or is the 'Standard' trying harder to be 'nice' in the hope of getting the advertising back?

Who can say?

But we could have a fascinating debate on double standards.

By Andy Harris, GLC/ILEA member for Putney.



Blinded by trivia
Design by Ingram Pinn
First appeared as cover to Labour Research, January 81

BLACK WOMEN & MEDIA CONFERENCE

The *Black Women and Media Conference* will provide the space for Black women to meet and talk about the media in this country, as well as learn and share various media skills. Skill sharing workshops, which will take place on the Saturday, include ones on *publishing, silk-screening, offset litho printing, layout and design, radio, music, photography, theatre, video, T.V., writing/poetry, and getting a newsletter together.*

On Sunday, we hope to have group workshops to discuss various aspects of the media. Some of the topics we hope will be discussed so far are:

How can we improve access for Black women into the media?

How do we combat the media's role in perpetuating racism and sexism?

The need for an autonomous Black women's media network.

How can we gain access to media skills – skill sharing amongst ourselves, training courses etc?

Visibility – how can we control images presented of us (often distorted, racist, misrepresented)? Similarly with media coverage of our issues?

How can the feminist media/Black media be made more accountable to Black women's needs and issues?

DATES: 14/15 April 1984

VENUE: The Factory, Chippenham Mews, London W9. Wheelchair access. Signers will be present to interpret. We are looking for translators so that non-English speaking women can participate. If you can help, please let us know. CRECHE available. Social on Saturday night. We will arrange accommodation for women.

For details, contact:

Black Women and Media Conference, c/o Outwrite Women's Newspaper, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street,

Write for the Streetlife Supplement!

NEXT ISSUE

The theme of the next issue of the Streetlife Supplement is 'coming out'. This expression is usually used in the context of gay men and lesbians openly declaring their sexual orientation. However it is equally applicable to all individuals who openly declare views or behaviour outside of the accepted establishment 'norm' – in some environments openly admitting you are a socialist or that you are anti-racist takes courage! We hope to deal in the Supplement with all these aspects and meanings of 'coming out', and welcome your contributions.

Articles and letters should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1 by *Saturday 7th April*.

OUTWRITE INTERVIEW

Continuing from this issue, in next month's Streetlife Supplement we will be publishing an interview with OUTWRITE WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER. *Sarah Roelofs*, for Briefing, will be speaking to *two members of the Outwrite collective* about their use of the media to campaign against women's oppression, racism, imperialism and lesbian oppression.

STREETLIFE MEETING

The next Streetlife meeting, to discuss topics covered recently in the Supplement and themes for future issues, is on *Thursday 19th April* at 8pm at County Hall, London SE17. All Briefing supporters are welcome to attend.

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LABOUR
BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 6 April 1984

EDITORIAL STATEMENT:

LIVERPOOL LABOUR— AN EXAMPLE TO US ALL!

THE stand taken by Liverpool City Council against the Tory attacks on jobs and services deserves full support throughout the labour movement. Although rate-capping may well place ten or even twenty Labour councils in direct confrontation with the government next year, that confrontation is taking place in Liverpool *now*. We recognise that Liverpool cannot wait.

Ever since it became clear that they faced the choice between 5,000 job losses and a 200% rate rise just to stand still, Liverpool City Council have been building a campaign to challenge the Tories and demand back some of the £125 million they have stolen from the city since 1979. The campaign, which began with a march and rally of 20,000 people last November, has been directed at winning support for a fighting stand amongst the council's workforce, the local and national labour movement, community groups, tenants associations and, of course, the people of the City. In most of these areas it has been hugely successful. The major council unions have voted to support a 24 hour strike on March 29th, the day of the Council's budget meeting, as a demonstration of their backing for the Council's stand. Many other workers from both the public and private sectors will also be out and between 50,000 and 100,000 people are likely to be on the streets of Liverpool that day.

Still Unclear

Despite this magnificent response it is still unclear whether the Labour Group will carry its 'illegal' budget. The Labour majority is only 3 and seven right-wing members of the Group have declared that they will not give their support. Sadly, but not surprisingly, these renegades were swiftly praised by Labour's front bench spokesperson, John (only my friends call me Jack) Cunningham. Not surprisingly because, instead of supporting Conference policy and organising the defence of a council fighting the Tory cutbacks, the Party's leadership have been at pains to distance themselves from Liverpool's fight. Against this background it is not difficult to see why the seven felt free to ditch the policy of the local Party. It remains to be seen if they will stick to their intentions. The whole weight of the local Labour movement is against them. At the Party's North West Regional Conference on 10th March, after hearing out, in total silence, Jack Straw's proposal for a 'legal' budget (60% rate rise, £1.50 rent rise, 1,500 job losses), the delegates voted almost unanimously to back a confrontation with the Tories. Even the Regional Executive, not noted for its left-wing composition, recommended support for the call for a 24 hour strike on the 29th.

The leadership should take note of this and, even at this late stage, come into line with the democratic decision of the local Party. As a beginning they could put pressure on the seven to support the Labour whip rather than go to Liverpool to advise the Council on how best to cut its services and sack its workers.

Can Still be Won

Whichever way the seven vote, the momentum that has built up in the campaign will not be easily dissipated. Everything will not be over on the 29th. Even if the Labour budget is not carried it is difficult to see how the Liberals or the Tories could get a majority for their proposals which are bound to include massive cuts and job losses. The campaign must go on and if it does the fight in Liverpool can still be won.

To this end, as a matter of urgency, Labour Parties throughout the country should declare their support, maximum pressure should be brought to bear to force Kinnock to change his tack. Other Labour-controlled Councils can and should offer practical assistance, consulting with their unions on possible solidarity action and looking at ways of providing financial help.

Whatever the outcome in Liverpool, the City Council's determination to fight must be an inspiration to all those Councils which face the battle next year. Winning support for Liverpool should be the first step in beginning their campaigns. Liverpool has set an example for us all – its lessons must be built on without delay!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Exeter's Left will not be silenced!

In June 1983 a group of us on the left decided to set up Exeter Labour Briefing. Our decision was prompted by the dominance of anti-socialist ideas in certain sections of our party. eg. support for issues like, the Falklands/Malvinas was, the expulsion of Militant, an incomes policy, etc. What finally solidified our minds was the decision of my branch to forbid discussion in the newsletter which accompanied our monthly agendas.

In July we produced our first issue. The EC responded by asking us to change our name, 'Exeter Labour Briefing' as, apparently, this title caused some party members to thing that our publication was an organ of Exeter Labour Party.

Labour Briefing

We refused on the grounds tha the editorial made our independent and unofficial views abundantly clear. Furthermore, the existence of other Labour Briefings, throughout the country, was widely known. Indeed, we had chosen our name explicitly because we wished to identify with the politics of other Labour Briefings. The Right-wing thus failed in their initial attempt to bully us.

Behind the thinking of the Right-wing was a hope that we would disappear. This was not to be; in December we produced an issue with the theme: Unity Yes, but with whom to do what? In March 1984 we produced our latest issue; the front page article criticised Right-wingers who had voted with Tories on a local management body to prevent the unemployed running their own Unemployment Centre. The Right-wing were incensed by the whole March issue. At the March GMC meeting we went into the hall after selling Exeter Labour Briefing outside in the cold (A rule restricting the distribution of literature at the GMC meetings was in force)

The minutes of the EC were passed. Only later did I see the small print, half way down the page, which read "... the EC unanimously recommends that the GMC instruct the members involved in the production of Exeter Labour Briefing to cease publication of the paper of this name...." Never before, to my knowledge, had a resolution been passed in this way.

Continue to publish

We will continue to publish because we will not let the Labour Party drift away from socialism, its commitments, its responsibilities. There can be no surrender to the municipal careerists who desire status and an easy life under capitalism, while disguising their intentions behind a concern for "the confusion of ordinary party members".

Peter Bowing

Permanent residency for Jonathan Bloch!

Jonathan Bloch, a South African refugee, has been denied permanent residency by Home Secretary Leon Britten on the grounds that his actions are "inimical to the host country's interests." The Home Secretary has pointed to Jonathan's co-authorship of the recently published book, *British Intelligence and Covert Action*, which describes some of the undercover activities of the British Intelligence Services throughout the world since World War II.

Jonathan arrived in the UK in 1976, having been an active opponent of the Apartheid regime, involved in trade union and student politics and Chair of the Students Wage Commission which examined low pay for Blacks. Jonathan was granted refugee status in this country in 1978.

The decision to deny Jonathan permanent residency is highly unusual. Refugees fall outside the Immigration Rules but are normally automatically granted permanent residency after they have lived here for five years. Jonathan's visa expires in December of this year and then there is the option of deportation. He has no right of appeal through the appelate authorities set up by the Immigration Act, and his travel document, without which he cannot travel abroad, has not been returned by the Home Office.

Although Leon Britten has pointed to *British Intelligence and Covert Action* as a threat to state security, the book is still freely on sale, and no legal action has been taken against Jonathan or his co-author Pat Fitzgerald, who is a British citizen.

Jonathan's local MP, Ernie Roberts has taken up his case with the Home Secretary, but so far with no success. Arthur Latham, on behalf of the London Labour Party, has also protested. To rally support for Jonathan's case, please put the following model motion through your Labour Party branch and constituency:

This branch/constituency calls on the NEC to protest to the Home Secretary against his refusal to grant Jonathan Bloch permanent residency. This branch/constituency also calls on the NEC to effect a change in Labour Party policy, to grant refugees the right to permanent residency, and if refused, the right to appeal.

Details are available from 87 Windus Rd. London N16

Letter: SOLEY: 'I'M REALIST NOT FABIAN ON IRELAND'

Dear editor,

Sarah Roelofs writes a very interesting piece on uniting Ireland with Unionist consent, but I am not sure why it is supposed to be 'Fabian' to work out a realistic policy to achieve that aim.

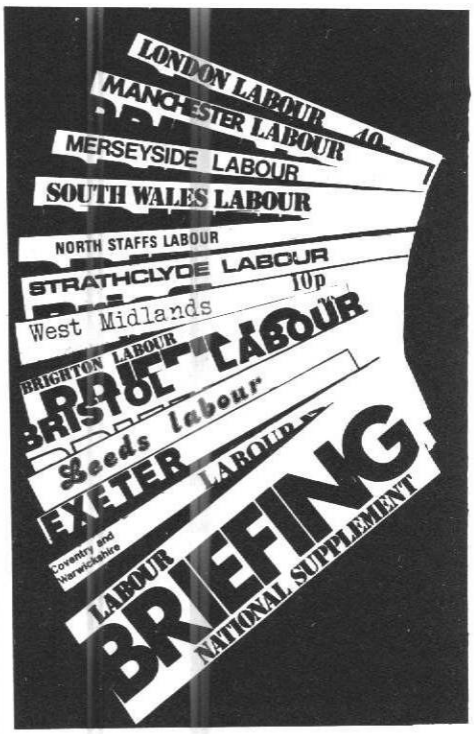
Front-bench spokesmen are supposed to put into effect Party policy, and the Labour Party since 1981 has had a very clear policy which states that Ireland should be united by consent, with no veto on political developments by the Unionists, and it is the latter phrase which enables me to see it as a realistic policy. In other words, London and Dublin not only can, but must take initiatives. It is not a question of convincing the Unionists with words, but with actions, which are much more important.

Comparisons with Zimbabwe are very unwise. The black population there was approximately seven million, and whites about quarter of a million, in a land area at least six times that of the whole of Ireland. There was no way the whites could have made Zimbabwe ungovernable but both communities in Ireland *do* have that ability.

I understand the arguments for immediate withdrawal, but even if this is considered desirable, those who support it — as Sarah Roelofs does — must answer the question of how we would disarm all the Unionist groups and how we would guarantee they get no further arms. Sarah Roelofs has failed to answer that.

Her point about federalism is a very important one, and I have raised it myself sometimes, but I recognise the problems of federalism and a great deal would depend on the final structure and constitution.

Yours faithfully,
CLIVE SOLEY.
House of Commons.



Who to Contact

London. Graham Bash, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10. (01-961 3803).

Brighton: Dave Lowney, 35 Quebec Street, Brighton, E. Sussex. (0273 693655).

Merseyside: Stuart Marshall-Clarke, 8 Ashford Road, Meols, Wirral (051-632 3840).

North Staffs: Andrew Dobraszczyc, 4 Robert St., Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent. (0782 822574).

South Wales: Graham Atwell, 53 Clive Street, Grangetown, Cardiff (0222 35916).

Exeter. Peter Bowing, 42 Powderham Crescent, Exeter, Devon EX4 6BZ.

Strathclyde: Gordan Morgan, 59 Durward Avenue, Glasgow G41.

Preston: Karen Bradley, 128 Tulketh Brow, Preston (0772 727720).

Leeds: Paul Hodgkinson, 31 Hillcrest View, Leeds 7.

THE LESSONS OF CHESTERFIELD

By Nita Clarke,
Press Officer GLC Labour Group

THE Chesterfield by-election was a triumph for the Labour Party for all sorts of reasons. Apart from the obvious importance, in Neil Kinnock's words, of having someone of Tony Benn's experience, ability and stature back in the Commons, it demonstrated at a critical time to the movement and to the electorate that the 'new model' party works.

How was it achieved? Firstly, by superb party organisation on the ground, under the general direction of the agent Peter Coleman for whom no praise is too high. Unlike in other by-elections Peter knitted together a local party with strong views on how things could be done – but with little or no experience of campaigning – with the imported full-time workers, and the strain rarely, if ever, showed.

Secondly, the nature of the public campaign. Right from the beginning the campaign team refused to allow the media to present the agenda so that the candidate, not the policies became the issue. There was plenty of media access to the candidate – particularly local media – but on our terms. Rather than the interminable daily press conferences, where the candidate and the guest for the day sit like Aunt Sallys while the prima donnas of Fleet Street indulge in the daily baiting on issues of little or no relevance to local voters, journalists were invited to accompany Tony Benn on parts of his daily round of factory gate and other meetings, canvassing and public meetings, to listen to what he had to say, and more importantly, to see for themselves the public reaction and response to him.

Thirdly, the candidate himself. As a communicator of both the ideas and practicality of socialism – or common sense as he frequently called it – Tony Benn is second to none. A punishing daily schedule of workplace meetings, canvassing and public meetings was designed to enable him to put his message across to as many of the voters as possible – to the extent that by polling day an estimated half of the electorate claimed to have seen or met him in person. Such face to face campaigning blew away swiftly any idea in the town that Benn was the bogeyman the media have created. Towards the end of the campaign the polls showed that under 5% of electors thought that the choice of the so-called 'controversial' candidate was an issue. As a result the Liberal campaign of filthy personal abuse against Tony backfired. Mudslinging was their sole campaign tactic and when the mud failed to stick, their thread-bare collection of cliches that masqueraded as policies stood exposed, as indeed did the inability of their candidate to even master the cliches.



John Chapman

Tony Benn talks to the workforce at Lampcaps factory during the Chesterfield by-election.

Fourthly, the policies on which Labour fought. There has been a great deal of ill-directed speculation since June about whether Labour's policies were to blame for the defeat. But there is no doubt that Labour's policies on jobs and rebuilding the economy, preserving the health and welfare services and moving towards a more peaceful world were what the working people of Chesterfield wanted to hear – and further wanted to see put into practice.

Fifthly, and most crucially, party unity. Even the most cynical observer was impressed by both the display and the reality of a united Labour Party determined to win power. No-one should underestimate the impact of the massive public meetings where people queued to hear Roy Hattersley (1,500), Neil Kinnock (2,000) or Denis Healey (over 1,000), or of the hoards of PLP and other Party members of all shades of opinion who came to canvass. The evident relief with which party supporters in Chesterfield greeted this impressive display was echoed by the voter who admitted he had been thinking of voting Liberal 'but now I've seen with my own eyes that you can all pull in one direction and take those buggers on – I'll vote for you.'

Chesterfield is a Labour town. Despite over 11,000 on the dole, the trade union movement is strong and well organised and proved the bedrock of the election campaign. Again and again on the doorsteps we heard the same thing: 'the Labour Party let us down in June – you were a shambles – not worth voting for.' Rightly or wrongly, that was the popular perception. Among all the other lessons of the campaign – the way to handle the media, to get the socialist message simply and directly across – the lesson that all of us working in the campaign learnt above all was that for the sake of working people in Chesterfield and throughout the country we must never, ever, let that June catastrophe happen again.



ALAN WASSELL

Save Wakefield's nurseries!

The four month campaign to save Wakefield's two council nurseries continues despite a court injunction. Both nurseries were occupied, but in one the Labour controlled council succeeded in removing the parents. In the remaining nursery, the long occupation continues. The parents are supported by the local trades councils, the district Labour Party, all the local authority unions and many of the NUM branches. Councillor Sir Jack Smart, the leader of Wakefield council, had to suspend eleven councillors who support the occupation. Having resigned from the chair of the AMA, he should go the whole way and resign from Wakefield Council

Cllr. Garth Frankland

The Euro-election and disarmament

**Joy Hurcombe,
Vice Chair CND,
writing in a personal capacity**

HOWEVER you view the Common Market, the Euro-elections cannot be ignored. It is important that the Labour Party takes this opportunity to present the voters with a clear statement of its policies. These policies should have a common perspective, the socialist perspective. It is totally inadequate to isolate separate issues which may appear to be more or less relevant to Europe and the interests of the EEC. Apart from giving the impression that we support the existence of the EEC and the capitalist market economy, such an approach would be pure opportunism. And in presenting our programme, we have to make it clear that this is the Labour Party's programme, showing where we stand. It is unlikely that a common manifesto with other 'socialist' parties in Europe, however desirable, would be more appropriate.

What about Disarmament, then?

The Labour Party has a chance to put right the damage of last June when we failed to argue for unilateral nuclear disarmament. We should argue that our programme is directly relevant to the issue of European nuclear disarmament but is not dependent on the policies of other European countries. We must make it absolutely clear that the EEC has no role as a military alliance. The EEC has no defence policy and the fact that we are presenting the party's programme on disarmament should not be used as an opportunity to



imply that the EEC should widen its role. A strong, armed Europe with a common arms sale policy would heighten the tension in Europe especially if the US nuclear weapons and bases were replaced by modern electronic so-called 'conventional' warfare. US defence experts seem to be pressing Europe to take on a more independent attitude to defence commitments — with conventional weapons high on the list of demands. This would fit in well with the US doctrine of Air Land Battle with its integrated strategy of early use of nuclear, chemical and conventional weapons. NATO has yet to adopt this strategy but it cannot be long.

Our failure to campaign against NATO and our complacency on the politics of the Common Market may result in a tighter control of the EEC by NATO, with Ireland's neutrality disregarded).

In presenting our case for disarmament, we must not forget that nuclear disarmament has always been seen as a step towards further disarmament. Socialists in Europe cannot want to live in an armed capitalist super-state.

What priorities should we campaign on?

At the conference in Brighton this year we re-affirmed our position on unilateral nuclear disarmament. We committed the party to campaign against the deployment of Cruise Missiles and Trident submarines. We voted to remove all existing nuclear weapons and bases and to reject any escalation in the arms budget. Such a programme would contribute to "building a nuclear-free zone in Europe" and would complement the demands of the other peace movements in Europe.

What of CND?

CND will not be fighting an election. They will be concentrating on the issues of Cruise, Trident and US bases. They will direct people's attention to the US war fighting strategies and highlight the protest against the notion of a European nuclear battlefield. They will be demanding a Nuclear Free Europe.

The Labour Party has a clear policy on nuclear weapons. We must not confuse the voters in June. It may be our last chance to get it right before the next General Election. Let's put it to the voters and campaign on it.

Youth ready for action

Youth CND is now in top gear and ready for action! The 270 delegates from 90 groups at our conference on 17/18 February voted over and over again for *action* to get rid of the missiles. The CND Executive has already recognised the conference, so it's going to be pretty difficult for them to repeat their actions of last summer when they shut down our elected National Committee and declared our 'undemocratic' and 'unrepresentative' July conference invalid.

Despite their claims of *us* being undemocratic, the exec managed to enforce a no observers rule at the recent conference and insisted that all delegates brought proof of age before being allowed in! But firm disapproval of this sort of organisation was expressed when the conference voted down the exec-backed interim committee's report in favour of a left counter report.

Those of us who have fought against the actions of the exec over the last period have been proved right. The recall conference, which even the CND exec had to admit was highly successful, basically reaffirmed the actions and ideas that were so contentious at the July conference.

A Leeds emergency resolution calling for YCND to organise a mass demo in London when Reagan visits this June was over-



whelmingly pass ed. This was despite the fact that CND was then arguing *not* to have such a demo. The feeling at the conference was summarised when one delegate said, "Reagan visits *London* on June 6th ... and CND organises a demo in *Coventry* a week earlier!!".

We also reaffirmed our opposition to American military intervention in places like Central America and the Middle East (an issue central to the shutting down of the last conference) and insisted on our right to actively oppose real wars, so long as we do not actually conflict with CND policy.

The many young women at conference argued successfully for supporting and building women only actions, especially Greenham Common, and organising regional delegations of young women to visit the camp regularly, and reaffirmed our policy of positive discrimination in YCND.

On Hiroshima Day, a long youth march will start — going to nuclear bases around the country and ending up in London with a multicultural demo and festival.

And that's just the beginning!...

Later in the year YCND will hold an anti-Trident demo in Glasgow and the idea of planning a European wide youth march and conference was raised in a workshop and passed by conference.

Again, we agreed to work with the labour movement and to build a young trade unionists conference — but a resolution on joint work with the Labour Party Young Socialists was defeated, but after a much livelier and healthier discussion than at previous conferences.

In all, the conference tried to put the confusion of the last months behind us and showed that what the youth in our campaign want is lively, mass action to stop the missiles.

Sue MacDonald (Hackney North LPYS, Hackney Youth CND)

DEBATE

GREENING OUR SOCIALISM

By Peter Tatchell

Throughout Europe, the last decade has seen the rise of a new political movement — the Greens. Their impact in realigning radical Left politics is best exemplified by the success of the West German Green Party in capturing 28 seats in the Bundestag in March 1983. The Greens, with their inspirational combination of both a grassroots and global view of the future, have addressed themselves to issues such as the ecological crisis which have been relatively neglected by the Labour Movement. In the process they have captured the imagination of many people hitherto disinterested or disillusioned with traditional party politics.

At first sight, ecologists and socialists may appear to have little in common. But beneath the veneer of different concepts and rhetoric which superficially divide us, we share fundamentally similar concerns. Indeed, in some respects, the Green Movement, with its emphasis on decentralisation, autonomy, participatory democracy, civil rights, co-operative enterprises and the humanisation of bureaucratic institutions, is very much in the early tradition of ethical and utopian socialism as pioneered by people like Robert Owen, Edward Carpenter, William Morris and the young Marx with his theories of alienation.

The potential for Red-Green co-operation clearly exists. We ought to exercise it, not only to stop Sizewell B, acid rain and torturous experiments on animals, but also to listen and learn from each other. The Greens, for example, need to recognise that the ecological crisis of environmental pollution, rapidly diminishing natural resources and the division of the world between North and South, is *not* the result of abstract industrialisation. It is, in fact, the consequence of a specifically *capitalist* form of industrialisation harnessed to imperialism and it can only be resolved by a transition to a socialist planned economy. Likewise, the Left needs to reformulate its socialism in the light of insights from the ecological movement. One example of this is the issue of Third World development. Grossly neglected by most socialists, this issue exemplifies how a green perspective can resolve a dilemma which has plagued the Left in the West for decades. With our dominant Croslandite vision of socialism through a redistribution of the fruits of increased prosperity, both Labour's right *and Left* cling desperately to the *oppressive illusion* of indefinite economic growth. Not only is such unlimited growth impossible in the long term given the finite resources of our planet, but it can only take place at the expense of the Third World.



Chronic underdevelopment

Economic expansion in the advanced industrial states invariably means that we suck even more raw materials out of the poorest countries to meet manufacturing and consumer demand in the West; thereby perpetuating the Third World's state of chronic development. It is this process of draining a disproportionate share of the world's resources out of the impoverished rural nations into the rich industrial countries which is the basic impediment to Third World development. So long as we maintain the present system of industrial production and consumption and the present system of global free market economy, the 'have-nots' will never be able to escape underdevelopment and achieve economic equality with the West.

Unlike the Greens, most socialists have barely begun to realise the dramatic implications of such a conclusion. They have preferred to argue that the route to development in the poor countries is through the expropriation of foreign entrepreneurs and indigenous big business to establish a socialist society where the economy functions for the benefit of working people. Though often helpful to the process of economic modernisation, nationalisation alone is not enough. What is absolutely crucial is that the Third World countries retain within their own economies more of the natural resources and manufactured products which are the building blocks of development.

Put simply: the long term economic progress of Africa, Asia and Latin America is ultimately dependent on the industrial states making do with *less*. That means the flow of raw materials and manufactures out of the poor nations into the factories and shop windows of the advanced capitalist metropolises has to be *substantially reduced*. Few socialists have ever faced up to this harsh reality; largely because they have never been able to see how we can make do with less without provoking a massive and electorally unacceptable decline in our Western standard of living.

But thanks to the Green movement, however this predicament seems resolvable through a commitment to an ecological socialist economy where the West uses less resources, but uses them *more efficiently* In this way making do with less does not have to mean a lower standard of living; though it would mean a *different* standard of living.

Radically new patterns of production

We would certainly have to develop radically new patterns of production and consumption. Contrary to the present capitalist free market, a planned green economy would put far greater emphasis on durable commodities, reconditioned products and the recycling of used materials such as paper, glass, plastics and metal etc. Applying new technologies of fluidised-bed combustion, our power stations could double their fuel-to-energy conversion rates, and by introducing Combined Heat and Power stations, much of the remaining waste heat and hot water could be tapped into district heating systems linked to local factories, offices and housing estates. A far-reaching programme of energy conservation and insulation could reduce our energy needs by 25% and would create five times more jobs than the government's proposed expansion of nuclear power.

Vast resources could also be saved by a switch away from private motor cars to a cheap integrated public transport system and from curative care in the NHS to *preventative* medicine.

This convergence between Reds and Greens is one of the most important tasks facing the radical Left in the years ahead. Given the menacing scale of the ecological crisis, we must speak and work together to ensure that it succeeds.

National Campaign against Police Bill

The National Campaign against the Police Bill has now set a date for its Labour movement conference of May 12th, in London, a week before the next national demonstration on May 19th.

It is vital that the Labour movement gets off its haunches and supports this conference. Since the last Labour party conference where a resolution was passed supporting a campaign against the bill, there has been effectively no Labour support for that campaign. The LM presence on the January demonstration was pathetic. When the issue is raised in Labour parties you meet blank, bland faces. Of course it's terrible, but what's it got to do with us?

Well it's got a lot to do with us. I'm not going to list the effects that all its aspects will have on LM activity. On Greenham, on the streets. Maybe you could invite a speaker to your ward and find out.

The (Government created) conspiracy of silence on the bill has worked. Only those oppressed sections, who've wised up as a result of years of oppression, know what it's about.

Its nasty powers are already used every day on them. The bill will make things much worse.

The conference is an attempt to 'raise awareness' and fight complacency and it should be supported.

Paul Canning, Gay rep on NCAPB Exec.

National Campaign against the Police Bill, 50 Rectory Rd, N16 7QY, 01-249-8334.

Next National Editorial Board: Sunday April 22 at 12 noon in Cardiff. For details ring Graham Atwell, 0222 35916 or Glynis, 0222 864349.

Next issue out April 19th. Deadline for articles: Monday April 9th.

Childcare is political

CHILDCARE is political. If we really believe that women should play a full part in the Labour Party and that we should draw the maximum number of people into its activities, we cannot ignore the obstacles in the way.

It has traditionally been women who have performed child-rearing, which can mean they are prevented from getting to meetings and party events. In North Islington we have made a tentative start to combatting this problem, but a real answer depends on making party members aware that babysitting is as much a political commitment as marching on a demonstration.

A couple of wards in Central CLP (before it was swallowed up by North and South Islington) had been operating a pairing arrangement whereby two wards met on different nights and exchanged babysitters. My own wards had sent a motion to the GC calling for some sort of babysitting system to be set up but this kept being remitted to the wards or put off, due to the build-up to the council elections or opposition from some councillors who maintained they could not change their ward meeting nights due to pressure of council business.

No Longer a Marginal Issue

Following the elections last year the CLP did agree that childcare could no longer be treated as a marginal issue. It was decided to have a GC vice-chair (childcare). At the AGM this year there was a deafening silence when nominations were called for, a comment in itself. Eventually I offered to take this on because I considered it an important function. My education began then.

The fact was that there was little clear idea of how such a system could work. The theory was that wards would be paired one would change its meeting night and the two exchange



babysitters. Each ward was asked to elect a co-ordinator to help achieve this.

It sounds nice and neat. Members who had previously not been able to go to branch meetings, GCs, LGCs, and women's section, would now have some help. The response from the wards was uneven. Individual members were reluctant to give up an evening, councillors were still unhappy and quite legitimate objections were raised about 'strangers' looking after other people's children. However, every ward but one has now elected a childcare co-ordinator who hopefully will raise the issue in the wards and draw up rotas of members prepared to give time.

Uncharted Territory

When I convened a meeting of these co-ordinators it was obvious we were exploring uncharted territory and that it would take time, perhaps a year or two, for party members to become convinced that childcare was politically essential. It seems to me that it is pointless to compel members to embrace a policy that they do not fully understand or believe in. We have to constantly point out that if we are to have a truly mass party, then we must make an effort to satisfy the needs of every group, and that individual sacrifices benefit the party in the long-term, by freeing more people to take part.

The issue of creches has also been raised. At present they tend to be thought of at the last minute before a conference or meeting, and then mainly as a device for keeping unruly children out of the way. There are organisations such as Mobile Creches and community groups which supply creche-kits, to approach. My experience is that they need plenty of notice, because they are heavily in demand; when booking a hall a reasonable-sized room should be available for a creche, and an attempt ought to be made to identify what the need is likely to be.

There is a hidden need for childcare because many women cannot get to meeting to express their problems. Our task is to start uncovering that need and discuss together how we can meet it.

PHIL COHEN (Islington North CLP)

N A C conference

On February 25th. the new National Abortion Campaign held its first conference since the split in the original campaign last October. NAC now comprises those who argued for retaining the central focus on abortion while those who wished to work around broader demands have become the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign (WRRC).

The conference was very successful and those of us who had been demoralized by the split felt that it had given us renewed energy and enthusiasm. Over 100 women (and a few men) attended, as individuals or as representatives of Labour Party and trade union branches. It was particularly encouraging to find that a number a women new to the campaign were involved in local NAC groups.

At the opening session speakers raised questions about the possible reduction in the legal time -limit for abortions, the effects of NHS cuts, campaigning in the Labour Movement and black women's experience of abortion. In the workshops which followed these and other issues were taken up in discussing ways of campaigning for better facilities while countering the moves of anti-abortionists. The afternoon workshops were on more specific topics — time-limits, young and black women, campaigning in the labour movement and campaigning for better facilities.

The importance of trade union activity was stressed, especially since the anti-abortionists have been active here. It was suggested that where unions were affiliated we should set up NAC groups in the branches. Where not we must actively seek affiliations.

Education was recognised as a priority, both to counter the propaganda of the anti-abortionists and to inform women of their rights. We should aim to give talks in schools and to involve black women by publishing literature in their languages which is understandable in terms of their culture.

One of the most urgent issues facing us is the threat of a reduction in the legal time limit for abortions. We need to publicise the fact that, while only 2 per cent of abortions are carried out on women more than 20 weeks pregnant, these are often those women who most need terminations — young or middle-aged women who have failed to recognise the symptoms of pregnancy, or where foetal abnormality has been detected late, or where delays have been caused by the actions of doctors or lack of facilities. It was suggested that we turn our defense of the existing 28 week time limit into an offensive campaign making use of the recent RCOG report which showed that many late abortions are the result of NHS delays. Better facilities would mean less women undergoing the distress caused by late abortions. In campaigning on facilities we could link up with cuts campaigns.

One possibility which was not raised was that of working with the WRRC, since they also plan to campaign around time limits. Whatever was felt about the split it is time we realised that the two campaigns which emerged from it are not mutually exclusive and that we can and *must* work together to defend abortion rights.

As always, funds are a pressing problem. NAC needs donations and affiliations and are asking supporters to take out standing orders. Contact NAC at 47, Waldram Park Road, London SE23 2PW.

Stevi Jackson South Wales Briefing. Cardiff Central CLP.

AT LAST! Hornsey and Wood Green CLP will soon be all set to offer childcare facilities to its members now that the post of Childcare Officer has been created — and as the motion said . . . "Preferably this Officer to be a man"! The job of the Childcare Officer will be to connect up those parents in need of a child-minder with volunteer members in the CLP. My own Branch have in the past thought of "twinning" with another Branch, but decided that as it is such an important issue the Constituency should take responsibility for it — this means every parent in the CLP (especially women) will have the opportunity to attend meetings. After spending many years listening to women discussing childcare problems and what to do about it, I think this is a really good way of trying to solve some of them.

Linda Clarke
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP



Personalising our politics



Two years ago, some of us from London Labour Briefing asked the editorial board to guarantee some space in every issue for a supplement on personal politics. The result – the Streetlife Supplement – has been appearing in London Briefing ever since.

The Streetlife Supplement is organised predominantly by women, but it was never intended to be simply the 'women's pages' of Briefing, or a space where 'women's issues' could be hived off. It was instead an attempt for all of us, both women and men, to learn the lessons of the women's movement that 'the personal is political'. The name 'Streetlife' was chosen to illustrate our belief that politics is not just what happens in parliament, the council chamber or the management board room, but is also about what happens in our homes and our streets and in our social and sexual relationships.

PERSONAL LIVES . . . PEOPLE'S CONCERNS

Traditionally the Labour movement and the male Left have seen personal aspects of our lives as non-political, and have reduced politics to economics and statistics. But for most people who aren't political activists, their concerns are the things that happen in their daily lives – the state of their housing, how they get on with their neighbours, how safe the streets are, what personal and sexual relationships they have . . . What happens in parliament, or the state of the country's economy, is *only* important to the extent of how it affects our lives. If our politics ignores the human and social aspects of our lives, it is irrelevant to the large mass of people on whose behalf we often like to think we speak.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

The Streetlife Supplement has attempted to break down the separation between the Labour movement and the women's movement and for that matter between traditional politics and life, by taking up a whole range of issues from the point of view of our own experiences.

DIFFERENT THEMES

In each issue we try to deal with a different theme, for example housing, pornography, disablement, the experience of lesbians and gay men, childcare, health, mental health . . . Sometimes people have written very personal articles about their own sexual relationships or a particularly personal experience (one woman wrote about her miscarriage). We have also tried to look at our (the Left) own way of organising politically, which all too often reflects many of the aspects of society as a whole (male, white dominated, hierarchical, bureaucratic . . .) which we are trying to change. We have covered themes such as the effect being a political activist has on our home lives and social lives, and how we can try and change the structuring of meetings etc. to make them more accessible to women, black people and working class people.

PATRONISING AND TOKENISTIC REACTION

I have to say, unfortunately, that not all Briefing activists, in particular some men, are fully in favour of the Streetlife Supplement. Not of course that they say so to us! They don't discuss with us their political objections or why its not a priority for them. There has never been a challenge to the existence of the Streetlife Supplement, but I know objections exist, and yes I know who some of you are. Instead the reaction has been the usual patronising, tokenistic one of 'allowing women to get on with it, while we concentrate on more important issues.'

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

I know how the argument goes though. How can we expect to have satisfying personal and sexual lives, decent homes, safe streets etc. in a capitalist (patriarchal) society. We have to get rid of capitalism first, and the only way to do that is through the power of the employed (predominantly male) industrial working class. We have to prioritise. What happens in our personal lives isn't as important.

In my view this kind of argument completely misunderstands people and the forces for change that exist in society. Firstly, it ignores the lesson of the women's movement, and of other groups such as tenants, squatters and the unemployed, that we can take effective collective action around issues, by examining and politicising them through our experience of their effects on our lives. Surely, Greenham alone, has shown that the mobilisation of women is a powerful force for change.

Secondly, it implies that the working class are automatons, who, given the correct leadership, will rally behind us. But people only take action when it feels relevant to their concerns and their needs. We won't get mass support for socialism, if people don't identify their struggle to overcome the oppression they *feel* with our struggle and our movement.

WE WANT POWER FOR OURSELVES

Thirdly it implies that the interests of everyone are identical to those of white men. Well they aren't. Neither are women's interests or black people's interests *represented* by white men. *Men* have power and privileges over women. The women's movement has developed because we want power for ourselves and that means some of your (men's) power! We are organising politically and taking action according to our priorities and our needs. Women do not automatically support men's actions – the response of some miners' wives to the present miners' strikes shows that.

Far from being a 'diversion' from the class struggle, the political priority of the women's movement, which is what personal politics is, is vital for us all and fundamental to the ability of that struggle to succeed. Just as socialism won't be brought about without the support of the industrial working class, it won't succeed either without the support of women. That support will not be given if it is not in our interest. We are getting organised and we're not prepared any longer to allow men to set the terms of political debate and organisation!

We are planning to hold a meeting later in the year (probably October) with people from other Briefing groups who are interested in taking up personal politics in their area. Details will be printed later in Briefing, but more information can be obtained from me at *110 Agar Grove, London NW1*. Back issues of the Streetlife Supplement can also be obtained from the same address.

Jane Stockton
(Editor, London Briefing Streetlife Supplement)

£70 Wanted

GREENHAM Peace Camp women have been given until April 2nd – then they are to be evicted.

In May, the next batch of Cruise missiles is expected to arrive!

Pass resolutions in wards, GMCs and your trade union branch to send them Gortex survival bags. They cost around £70 and would help the Peace Women to continue their camp.

LABOUR WOMEN AND FEMINISM

Later in the year, Briefing women are organising a day school on the above theme. The provisional agenda will be:

INTRODUCTION – Speakers: Jo Richardson and a woman from Briefing.

SESSION 1 – How should the Labour Party fight for women's liberation? Workshops on: Abortion and reproductive rights, Greenham Common and the women's peace movement, sexual harassment and trade unions, women and racism, pornography and violence against women, heterosexism and sexuality, women's committees, international sisterhood.

SESSION 2 – Making the Labour Party accessible to women. Topics: History of women's participation in the L.P., W.A.C. and positive action, Women's T.U.C., black women and the L.P., women with disabilities, women and elections, women with children.

SESSION 3 – Debate – Briefing women and L.C.C. women – 'What strategy for Labour women?'

We are holding regular planning meetings to which all women are welcome. Details from *Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1.*

We are also holding a **FUNDRAISING PARTY** (women only). **FRIDAY 30TH MARCH, 8PM** at **110 AGAR GROVE, LONDON NW1.** Food, music, raffle. Please bring a bottle. **£1.50 waged, 50p unwaged.** All women are very welcome.

FIGHT FOR CONTROL OF

As the battle to defend the NHS against the Tory onslaught hots up, and the campaigns across London gain strength and support, the issue of democratic control of our health services once again needs to be placed firmly at the top of the socialist health agenda.

As direct cuts and closures focus public attention on specific local issues it is the ideal opportunity to launch a campaign for a democratically controlled health service genuinely responsive to the needs of both the people who use the service and those who work in it.

No room for accountability

The current structure of District Health Authorities leaves no room at all for democratic accountability. The majority of members are appointed from above by the Regional Health Authority with a handful appointed by the Local Authority. The bulk of appointees on any DHS are drawn from the professional or managerial classes and are totally out of touch with life at the sharp end, on the hospital wards, in the casualty departments and in the ambulances.

The people who are struggling to hold the services together as the cuts bite deeper — the porters, ambulancemen, nurses etc — are totally excluded from the process that dictates how our services are run. And yet it is these people who are in daily contact with the users of the service and have the best view of the way it operates.

The need for collective and democratic management of the health service is urgent. With the Tories now preparing to implement the recommendations of the Griffiths Report, which suggests that our hospitals should be run like a supermarket chain by outside managers who have no experience of the NHS, we need to have a feasible democratic alternative agreed as part of Labour Party policy.

As the Campaign Ambulance clocks up the miles the current situation demands that in many respects we have to adopt a defensive position. But it is this defensive position which gives us the opportunity to draw together different groups with different interests and to thrash out a plan for a truly socialist health service.

The current rallying cry of "Defend the NHS" certainly helps to draw people into campaigns, but as the battle intensifies we must take care that we're not defending the undemocratic and unsocialist elements of the service.

Labour's Charter for the Health Service briefly touches on the need for public control, *"We believe that the public should have greater control over the NHS to make it a service run by the people for the people."* Despite the vagueness this certainly provides us with a starting point from which we can move forwrdm, and is definitely an improvement on the attitude of *"The medical profession know best, we'll let them get on with it,"* which has been adopted by past Labour Governments.



Carlos Augusto (I.F.L.)

Occupation of St. Mary's Hospital, London

Democratic control

Democratic control must be seen as fundamental to any future socialist policy on the National Health Service, but it could well be rendered ineffective if we don't take control of all the powerful outside influences at the same time.

Nationalisation of all sections of the drug, medical supplies and medical equipment industries plus the abolition of all private medicine would free the NHS from the shackles of the capitalist market place. These are sweeping proposals but they go hand in hand with the need for democratic control.

I'm convinced that as people become more aware of the Tories intention to dismantle the NHS they will begin to question the actual decision making process. It is our job to expose the current system for the sham that it is and to have a clear alternative readily available. The formulation of that alternative should begin now.

Geoff Martin.
Secretary Sutton Area Hospitals Branch NUPE.
Secretary Sutton and Merton Health Emergency.

Conference Report
HEALTH FIGHTBACK '84

Over a hundred people attended the Health Fightback Conference in Bradford on Saturday 25th February. This conference was organised by staff and supporters from Thornton View, Hayes Cottage and Northwood and Pinner Hospitals — all of which have been involved in occupations in the recent past. Whilst Thornton View is still occupied after almost seven months, the other two have won a nine month reprieve following the determined stand taken by the staff coupled with massive support from the local community.

The fact that health workers from all over the country travelled to the Conference demonstrated the intense interest that the occupations have engendered. Increasingly, people are coming to realise that rational discussion will not sway a Government which is intent on fundamentally altering the National Health Service as we know it today. Coupled to the threat of privatisation and the effect that will have on patient care direct action is seen as the only way of defending jobs, working conditions and ensuring that an adequate service is provided to local people.

During the Conference a number of work-shops were held and individual nurses and ancillaries were able to explain the specific problems they faced whether these were threatened closures or creeping cuts which gradually sapped the provisions available in the hospitals. Overall there was a heartfelt resentment that one of the best Health Services in the world was being systematically destroyed and the workforce was being split up, conditions deteriorated and patients suffering.

Summing up the Conference Jeremy Corbyn M.P pointed out the problems implicit in a service with no democratic input from workers or users and indicated the danger of the current attack on trade unions at Cheltenham being extended to cover the Health Service. At the end of the day everyone agreed that the Conference had been a great success and should mark the beginning of a new fight amongst health workers to defend the National Health Service.

Steve Clare
Hillingdon Health Emergency Secretary

OUR HEALTH SERVICE

The Oxford 'Who Cares' Conference

The Oxford 'Who Cares' Campaign has managed to secure a degree of national acclaim and approbation. It has increasingly put itself forward as the basis for a national campaign with a strategy readily supported by the National Health Service Trade Unions (TUC affiliated) and the leadership of the Labour Party.

The Union and Labour Party bureaucrats have, of course, been quick to recognise the advantages of sponsoring such a campaign. It gives the Trade Union and Labour Party leadership an ideal 'get-out clause' because, by providing the financial support, they can dictate to some degree the ideology, policies and spheres of campaigning work while not directly attacking the Government or being exposed to a charge of indolence by the rank and file.

Moreover, the campaign is based on similar lines to the 'People's March for Jobs' ie. a broad based campaign including Tory 'Wets' and Vicars, inspired by the large Euro-Communist clique in Oxford and their newly acquired friends, the 'New Statesman'. The 'Who Cares' leadership have also, through their literature, stressed the view that it is essential to work with the Trade Union DHA Representatives, academics, lawyers and G.P's and that direct action may hinder working relationships with "sympathetic" DHA members. In other words, they see the local campaigns as secondary and indeed potentially disruptive. Even more alarming is the fact that the campaign leadership has not thought twice about riding rough-shod over the Regional Joint Trade Union Committee on the issue of privatisation.

The Oxford campaign is, for example, producing a campaign pack. Nowhere in the pack is the question of women's and ethnic groups health discussed — instead it advises how to get a Health Sub-Committee, model resolutions and constitutions.

I am sure we would all agree that there is much more to fighting cuts than merely a defence of the local hospital/service. It is also necessary to re-examine the concepts of health and ill-health. Indeed, there may be little scope for hospitals as we know them today under a comprehensive socialist health service which emphasises occupational and preventative medicine. What is needed now is a radical health campaign/movement incorporating direct action and full support and mobilisation by the Labour and Trade Union Movement. The NHS will only be defended through extra-Parliamentary action.

What is necessary is for the Labour and Trade Union Movement to
(1) Support and actually encourage direct action in defence of the NHS.
(2) To help establish local and national Joint Shop Stewards Committees.
(3) For the Labour Party and Trade Union Movement to adopt a more progressive and plausible attitude to private medicine and the pharmaceutical industry ie. socio/nationalisation.
(4) For more democratic accountability with the right of recall over Labour Party and Trade Union Representatives on DHA's and RHA's if they support cuts and closures.

In London the Health Emergency Campaign can offer a progressive socialist response to the fight against cuts and closures and if the Labour Party and Trade Union bureaucrats do set up 'populist' campaigns then we must take them to task and fight for the adoption of the well-proven tactics of direct action including occupations. They have to be made to realise that hospitals cannot be saved through back-room meetings.

MICHAEL WALKER, COHSE
Branch Secretary, Hillingdon
District 618

Take the power from the Tories

SINCE the Tories won the June election they have declared war on all sections of the community. The ban on trade union membership at GCHQ is the start of a long campaign to destroy trade union rights at all key public sector workplaces. The deliberate promotion of nuclear energy at the expense of coal means the attack on the NUM is for real.

Abolishing the Metropolitan Counties and the GLC represent just a part of the steps to a centralised state – power taken from the elected councillors and given to a series of squalid little quangos full of Tory lackeys.

Promotion of 'choice' in the Health Service means loneliness and death for thousands of elderly, a 'return to the home' for many women workers and luxurious private hospitals for the few.

A knock on the door in the middle of the night followed by deportation to another country, often with political danger for the people who are involved is the real way that the Immigration Laws are operating in this country.

Privatisation of the jobs of thousands means no trade unionism in return for low wages in dangerous conditions. The motive of private profit in the public sector is replacing the concept of services available for those in need.

The 'new realism' of last year's TUC has been shown for what it is – the Tory Government has no intention of negotiating with the labour movement.

Has the realism of the TUC actually deterred them from forcing through the trade union laws, which year by year tighten the screw against political trade unionism? Has it deterred them from slashing 4,000 jobs from the Health Service, or from closing pits and cutting railway lines?

In the face of this the response of the labour movement ought to be very clear – everything that is essential to the defence of working class living standards is at stake – but is it?

The code word in the Labour Party, the watch word from every platform, the central theme of every circular and end of every speech is the need for the Party to 'CAMPAIGN'. What does this mean?

Is it to be the promotion of personalities in the party and the concept that the only thing preventing Labour's electoral balloon rising is the deadweight sandbaggage of policies?

Campaigning by the Party at all times is critical; it is what built the labour movement, it is what the vision of socialism came from, and it must be the central theme of all activity.

There are many things to campaign on – not just defending the National Health Service as an abstract concept, but supporting hospital occupations at Thornton View and Hayes and also leading the demand for a real Health Service.

– Opposing the destruction of the coal industry by the closest possible alliance with the mineworkers, and opposing the nuclear power industry.

– Exposing racism in all its forms, in Immigration Law, in employment.

Now is the time for every Labour Party to be promoting membership and to be out all the time arguing and convincing and leading the battle for socialism. The next election manifesto must be clear on the end of Cruise, Trident and Polaris; on control of the economy; on the end of wage controls; on international solidarity, not poodle-like following of the USA; on local democracy and control of our own lives.

A number of campaigns on critical issues are going on; the job of the Party is to support, cooperate with and coordinate these campaigns.

Jeremy Corbyn

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Adams assasination attempt — whither the SAS?



Gerry Adams, last year.

At least two points are crystal clear following the Loyalist assasination attempt on Gerry Adams on 14th March:

1. That those nationalist leaders who have come closest to giving the nationalist struggle a socialist perspective have been murdered — or have only just survived an assasination attempt. Miriam Daly, Shaemus Costello, Marie Drumm all died. Bernadette MacAlisky — and now Gerry Adams — survived.

2. That the SAS, at some level, has been involved. According to the Guardian of 16th March the Ulster Defence Association (the Loyalist paramilitary group generally believed to be behind the assasination attempt) has claimed that "they had reliable information that Mr. Adams was under surveillance by an SAS unit at the time." The same Guardian report quoted Gerry Adams saying from his hospital bed, "I think the British might have had information that it was going to happen. I don't think it was an attack planned by the British, or carried out by them, but I think they were aware it was going to happen." Adams also pointed out that it was the British who had the most to gain from the assasination of any Irish republican.

The three gunmen who fired on Adams' car were stopped and arrested almost immediately. The RUC's initial explanation for this remarkable, and commendable speed was changed within 48 hours. It involved the presence at the scene of what the RUC has called an off duty member of the Ulster Defence Regiment and which way round Belfast city centre he was driving.

There is a striking similarity with the shooting of Bernadette MacAlisky. Then also security forces were very quickly on the scene and then also it later emerged that the SAS were in the vicinity.

Labour Briefing and the Labour Committee on Ireland were among the many groups to send messages of solidarity to the injured men. Ian Paisley and others made suitably callous comments concerning Adams reaping what he has sown. Paisley et al blinded by the bigotry that loyality to British imperialism engenders, typically distort reality. As long ago as 1869 the radical Charles Bradlaugh wrote the following commenting on the Fenian Brotherhood's pledge to expel Britain forcibly from Ireland.

"But why does Fenianism appeal to force? Is it not because by successive governments, empty promise after empty promise has been made of attempt at redressal of Ireland's grievances, all have been broken?... It is you, the governing classes, who have set the Irish race the bad example of the appeal to force. You have ruled them by force."

Until Britain leaves Ireland lock, stock and barrel, there will be no end to the 'carnival of reaction' which James Connolly predicted would follow partition. Ultimate blame for the assasination attempt on Gerry Adams lies with Britain — it is Britain which is reaping what it has sown when Irish republicans bomb targets in Britain. The 'carnival of reaction' would clearly love one of the main obstacles to its perpetuation — Gerry Adams — removed.

Sarah Roelofs

FEMINISTS PICKET ARMAGH JAIL

Over 300 women from Ireland and Britain picketed Armagh women's prison on International Women's Day weekend this year. The London based Armagh Co-Ordinating Committee had organised the trip over for British feminists as they have done since 1980. The women were expressing solidarity with the Irish republican prisoners and protesting at the conditions the women are kept in. This year, as in 1983, the institutionalised sexual harassment of women prisoners by strip searching, was a major feature of the protest.

All women entering or leaving the prison are subjected to a strip search — a visual examination of the naked woman's body. This primarily affects remand prisoners; i.e. those who have not yet been proved guilty of anything. These women have to appear in court every week — though during 'supergrass' trials some remand prisoners have to make daily court appearances. If a remand prisoner refused the strip search she will be forcibly stripped. All clothing has to be removed for examination article by article. Any sanitary protection, both tampons and pads, must also be removed and handed out for examination. All the evidence shows that despite Northern Ireland Office repeated statements that strip searches are a 'security measure', they are in fact primarily aimed at humiliating the women prisoners and lowering their morale.

However, the work of the Armagh Co-Ordinating Committee has helped to ensure that the women prisoners morale is kept high and the issue of the strip searches is being brought to public attention. A half page article on the Committee's work in the *Guardian* on March 9th was entitled 'The only point of a strip search is degradation'.

And women involved in the Labour Committee on Ireland have managed to get 6 resolutions condemning the strip searches on to the agenda of the 1984 National Labour Women's Conference in May. This will probably be the first time that National Labour Women's Conference has discussed the Northern Ireland situation — certainly the first time it has discussed it from a feminist and anti-imperialist perspective.

Sarah Roelofs
Women's Officer
Labour Committee on Ireland

GRENADA. . .GRENADA. . .

The present emphasis in the press on the events surrounding Maurice Bishop's death tend to obscure the fact that the US played a major part in the destabilising of Grenada. It also ignores the manner in which the US is now reversing the island's recent development as an independent and socialist country and creating another colony for its own economic and political purposes.

The report of the Labour Movement Delegation that visited Grenada in December 1983 is now available for £1 (in advance) from: *Rupert Downing, 4 Grays Inn Buildings, Roseberry Avenue, EC1 R*

Members of the delegation are also keen to give talks to Labour Party and trade union meetings about the delegation and its findings.

GERMANY: A NEW, MASS LEFT IN THE SPD?

We continue our series on politics in Western Europe with an article by GÜNTER MINNERUP on West Germany.



100,000 demonstrating against Pershing in Stuttgart at the end of last year.

West German politics since the elections of March 1983 has been a curiously subdued affair. It had been widely expected that the victory of Chancellor Kohl's Christian Democrat—Liberal coalition would provoke intense domestic unrest, a spectacular 'hot autumn' of clashes over the deployment of Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles, and a renewed Cold War between the two German states.

Instead, the two most momentous domestic political events have been the beginning of the pre-trial bribery proceedings against Economics Minister Count Lambsdorff and the scandal surrounding the sacking of the NATO deputy commander Günther Kiessling for alleged homosexuality. The peace movement protests of last October were, to be sure, the largest so far, but the reaction to the arrival of the first missiles was nothing like the virtual civil war so often predicted. Relations with East Germany, finally, were well oiled by the billion dollar loan for Honecker arranged by far-right Bavarian prime minister Franz-Josef Strauss last summer.

Kohl, quite simply, is no Thatcher. In his few months in office, the affable former prime minister of the Rhineland-Palatinate has already become the butt of cartoonists and comedians as well as political critics for his bumbling indecisiveness, his woolly rhetoric and his embarrassing provinciality. He would probably have long been replaced as leader of the Christian Democrats were it not for the inability of the party's warring factions to agree on a suitable successor. For there are 'Thatcherite' forces in the CDU who would like nothing better than a determined government assault on the welfare state and the unions, as well as a more whole-hearted endorsement of Reagan's Cold War against the 'evil empire' and its East German province, but they are for the time being counterbalanced by those who are reluctant to risk the social peace which has served German capitalism so well since the war and to jeopardise the lucrative deals with the East which depend on preserving some semblance of détente.

Kohl's tenure of office is further cushioned by the feebleness of the opposition challenge. The SPD is just as badly divided as the CDU, and its new leader Hans-Jochen Vogel as weak as Kohl. It is not only still smarting from its election defeat as such, but has terrible problems sorting out its policies. Within months of leaving government as a result of the defection of its Liberal coalition partner in autumn 1982, the SPD carried out full about-turns on Cruise and Pershing (from uneasy support for the NATO 'dual-track decision' to outright opposition) and other key issues (ecology, economic policy). The programmatic consequences of these sudden changes in direction are still being chewed over by all factions within the party, and will take some time to digest.

Vogel is the protege of Willy Brandt, the ex-Chancellor and 'grand old man' of the party, whose main preoccupation at the moment is to hold the various wings of social democracy together and to regain the votes lost to the Greens. Vogel's role is, in many ways, similar to that of Michael Foot's role during his leadership of the Labour Party, and so far he has been quite successful within the party in as much as the shift to the left has not yet found expression in the emergence of an organised left wing. There is no 'Bennite' rebellion in the SPD, not even a Benn: unless one takes Oskar Lafontaine, the leader of the Saarland party and member of the party executive who has publicly questioned West Germany's membership of NATO and raised the possibility of a general strike against missiles deployment.

One of the main reasons for the absence of such an organised left within the SPD is the existence of the Greens, who have attracted most of those young militants who would otherwise probably be found in the SPD. Both the SPD and the Greens are deeply split over their mutual relations between supporters and opponents of joint Green-SPD campaigns and parliamentary alliances. The right wing of the SPD insists that the Greens should foreswear any support for the 'violence' of extra-parliamentary mobilisations and commit themselves 'unequivocally' to 'constitutional', ie. parliamentary politics, while the Greens' 'fundamentalists' have written the social democrats — and with them the organised Labour movement — off as a progressive force.

The third pillar of the as yet unconstructed, but urgently necessary opposition alliance is the trade-union movement. In West Germany, where the Christian Democrats have strong working-class roots because of the long tradition of Catholic trade-unionism, the unions are not affiliated to the socialist party but are required by their constitution to remain politically neutral. While this is largely a pious pretence and links between the SPD and the DGB (the West German TUC) are close, it does allow the union bureaucracy to distance itself from unpleasant political choices when it wishes to do so. But it may soon be forced into a confrontation with the Kohl government over the metalworkers' and other unions' campaign for a 35-hour week. The employers have already threatened to respond to any strikes on this issue with a nationwide lock-out, and in that event a real test of strength could unfold to rock the foundations of the government.

'Miss Philippines' on Women Against the Dictatorship

Following our January article on the struggle of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation, we look here at the rising women's movement in the Philippines against the Marcos dictatorship.

Last November President Marcos of the Philippines complained in the American magazine 'Fortune' that he had 'had enough problems with men' but now he was faced with the rising involvement from women in the mass movement against his dictatorship. He added: 'I am not a male chauvinist: I love pretty girls and I admire beauty'!

This insolent remark has now been thrown back in his face by the news that the country's 'beauty queen' of 1974, Nelia Sancho, is playing a leading role in mobilising women against the Marcos regime.

Nelia Sancho was first arrested on charges of 'subversion' back in 1976. In an interview with the French paper Le Monde she tells how this experience transformed both her attitude towards the regime and her view of women. 'What I saw of the brutalities inflicted on the women political prisoners made me gradually wake up to the problems that women face. And I also grasped that women's participation would be decisive for the victory of the movement for human rights, liberty, justice and democracy, and against the exploitation of our country and its resources by foreign powers.

'I also saw how direct and courageous women could be. For example, we organised two hunger strikes when I was in prison. In fact, it was the women, for the most part, who were the vanguard of the struggle there.

'In the Philippines, and no doubt in all the countries of the Third World, we women must concern ourselves with all national problems. Women are part of the whole people and are thus confronted by all the problems of repression and exploitation. But at the same time we see the necessity to take up the specific problems that women face and to define a distinct programme that allows women to pay the greatest possible role in the national struggle. It is essential that women organise themselves into a political force and that is why we are in the process of forming the Alliance of Women Against Repression and Exploitation (AWARE).'

Nelia Sancho stresses four areas where problems are most acute. First, economic life: 'In many sectors women are used as an unpaid reserve army of labour — especially in agriculture and household activities. But also in industry and commerce where the government sees it can use women as cheap labour. Thirdly, women are often treated as sexual objects. Prostitution has assumed unprecedented proportions to meet the requirements of Western tourist groups and American soldiers stationed at US military bases.

'Finally, in my own opinion, women are objects of intimidation and terror on the part of the armed forces in their efforts to suppress the resistance. AWARE tries to raise concern about these issues. But this raising of consciousness is only the first step. AWARE struggles also for the democratic rights of women and for them to take an equal place in our society.'



Marcos with his boss in Manila in 1982.

THE DAY AFTER: THE TRUE BERLIN STORY

A great deal of press comment has been devoted to the realism of the effects of the nuclear war shown in the film *The Day After*. Almost nothing has been said about the realism of the causes it puts forward for the war. Yet discussion of the causes shown in the film should give us grounds for concern.

The crisis begins in Berlin with a Soviet blockade of West Berlin, followed by a NATO push towards the city from West Germany, a supposed mutiny of East German troops and a Soviet push westwards through the Fulda gap. Perhaps the least credible part of this scenario for a Western audience is the idea that NATO might send tank divisions from West Germany to relieve Berlin.

Yet this notion was precisely the one that was put forward by the Americans in the last great Berlin crisis, which took place in 1961-2.

This Berlin crisis has been largely buried from public memory by the Western media which prefers to retell the drama of the Cuban missile crisis — hailed as a great victory for the West. Yet an illuminating — and alarming — account of the Berlin crisis has been provided by the person who was the British Minister in Berlin throughout the crisis, Geoffrey McDermott.

McDermott was a senior Foreign Office official, sent to Berlin after serving for many years as the Foreign Office's adviser to British intelligence, so his accounts of the crisis (in *The Eden Legacy* and *The New Diplomacy*) can hardly be questioned by the Right.

The crisis broke on August 13th 1961 with the building of the Berlin Wall. The Ministers and military officials of the three Western powers in Berlin met that morning to discuss what response to make to the wall. McDermott explains: 'The US commandant wanted to send his meagre forces to knock the nasty thing down.' This was opposed by the others present at the meeting. But McDermott goes on to say that in the next few days Kennedy 'considered very drastic action, including the use of nuclear weapons and a kind of relief-of-Mafeking advance of NATO troops through East Germany to Berlin. He wisely turned these down: they would no doubt have led to a Third World War.' (*The New Diplomacy*, p.20)

In other words Kennedy seriously considered taking the step that is portrayed in

The Day After.

This was not the end of the matter. McDermott continues the story: 'On four occasions we officials were told — though quite rightly the publics in the Western allied countries were not — that Kennedy was contemplating all-out nuclear war to deal with the Communists... The British and French generally counselled patience, but their views had no great effect on the President's decisions ...' (*The Eden Legacy*, p. 180).

A repetition today of the Berlin crisis of the early 1960s is unlikely while the four power agreement on Berlin at the start of the 1970s and the West's acceptance of territorial boundaries at that time still hold. (Though both leading West German Christian Democratic politicians and US Secretary of State George Schultz have recently called for the scrapping of Yalta and a return to Germany's 1937 frontiers.)

But the fact that a crisis provoking a third world war is more likely to start in the third world rather than Europe simply means that the European NATO states would have even less influence on the US. And in this connection a book published last year by the British intelligence intellectual, Anthony Verrier of St Anthony's College (Britain's spy college) throws new light on that other great crisis of the early 1960s, the Cuban missile crisis. He quotes the head of British intelligence, Richard White, as sending the following message to SIS members just after the crisis:

'I have been asked by the CIA to let you know of the absolutely crucial value of the Penkovsky intelligence we have been passing to them ... this intelligence was largely instrumental in deciding that the *United States should not make a pre-emptive strike against the Soviet Union, as a substantial body of important opinion in the States has been in favour of doing.*' (*Through the Looking Glass*, p. 183)

Verrier goes further and explains the thinking of influential figures in Washington thus:

'To the end of the crisis on the 27th, Washington was preparing for nuclear war, and there were men in the capital who were prepared to initiate it, despite — *or because of — Khrushchev's virtual admission on the 26th that his gamble had failed ... Russia should be struck before another crisis of confusion struck America.' (p. 224)*

Two questions arise from all this: is the Reagan administration 'softer' towards the USSR and more 'peace-loving' than Kennedy? Secondly, is it more open to influence from its NATO allies than Kennedy was?

LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE ON PALESTINE

Saturday May 19, County Hall, Waterloo

Speakers include Moshe Machover (Labour Zionism), Uri Davies (Histadrut), Jeremy Corbyn MP, PLO Representative, Colin Talbot, POEU, Peter Tatchell.

Registration £2 per delegate
2 delegates per labour movement organisation

BRITAIN UP TO ITS NECK IN GULF WAR



A British 'adviser' in Oman

Whitehall is managing to conceal from the public the extent to which Britain is tied hand and foot to whatever the US administration may do in the world's bloodiest current war — that between Iraq and Iran.

The huge US fleet and thousands of US marines poised to intervene in the event of an Iranian breakthrough in Iraq's main oil-producing areas is greatly hampered by the refusal of Saudi Arabia to allow a large land-base for the US military on its territory. The US has therefore turned to the one state ready to co-operate: Oman, which is, in reality little more than a British colony.

Oman occupies a key strategic position on the southern shore of the Straits of Hormuz and once the Iraq-Iran war got underway, the US signed a military co-operation treaty with the Sultan in June 1980. Under this the US has all the naval and airforce facilities it needs, and since December 1981 the US has been engaging in such 'joint manoeuvres' with the Oman armed forces as Bright Star2 and Jade Tiger — preparations for full-scale war against Iran in the Gulf.

The British are involved in this up to their necks for the simple reason that the so-called Omani armed forces are in fact almost entirely commanded by British officers. The 'Omani' troops are in fact in large measure Pakistani and Baluchi and alongside 450 Omani officers and 400 'advisers' — the overwhelming majority of which are British serving officers 'on secondment' from regular duty — a threadbare legal fiction. A British Major General has overall command of the Omani land forces and dozens of British naval officers run the Omani navy operating in the Gulf.

If the Americans decide to hit the Iranians and the Iranians hit back, these British troops will be directly involved

This is not what Whitehall had in mind back in the early 1970s when Sandhurst-trained Sultan Qabus took over the country. Indeed there is some evidence that the Foreign Office wanted to apply its well tried tactic of backing both sides in the Iran-Iraq war so that it would win either way. This is what might be called the 'Nigerian civil war tactic' when Wilson gave visible support to the Nigerian government while he called the heads of the supposedly independent aid organisations into Downing Street 'and urged them to do all they could to relieve conditions on the Biafran side ... assuring that all is not lost, whichever side wins'. (*The Management of Britain's Foreign Relations*, p. 300)

So Britain has been giving visible aid to Iraq and verbal backing to the Americans while giving covert military aid to Iran.

The problem is that the Americans have told Thatcher publicly at the beginning of March to stop such monkey business and toe the line. We can be sure that Thatcher will obediently toe the line.

So Whitehall's fevered efforts to maintain British bases and neo-colonies in the third world as a way of giving it leverage vis-a-vis other imperialist powers turns out to produce something very different: conditions in which Britain must serve the US administration in its bloody — and dangerous — wars in the Third World: Cyprus bases meant the Lebanon adventure; 'Fortress Falklands' means grovelling before US policy in Central America so that Washington continues to hold the diplomatic line for Britain in South America; and now Oman.

The Trade Unions and the Labour Party

By Eric Heffer

THE REACTIONARY Tory government is determined to turn the trade unions into tame pussy cat unions. They at this stage will not destroy the unions altogether, but ensure they exist without any real strength or power. They argue that unions have been too powerful, when in fact the unions have always been at a disadvantage with the employers.

Since Mrs Thatcher was elected to office in 1979, the Government has introduced and put on the statute book the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts, they have used unemployment as a weapon to undermine the unions, the most blatant example being the GCHQ at Cheltenham, and they are pushing the Trade Union Bill through the House of Commons, which is currently in committee stage.

That Bill could badly affect the unions and the Labour Party. The Bill intends to impose ballots on unions every ten years to see whether or not the unions wish to continue with or to create a political fund. This means a fundamental change in the law, and the Party will have to concern itself with organising campaigns in the unions to get political funds continued and developed, and then to affiliate to the Party.

The Government was considering, under pressure from its right wing back-benchers, including a clause in the Bill which would have meant that workers in unions would have had to legally say whether they should or should not contract in or out of paying the political fund. The Tories over the years have wrongly argued that workers were paying the political levy because they had not been informed that they could contract out. What they wanted to do was to legally change that situation.

The TUC have now arrived at an agreement with the Government on the operation of the politcal levy, and as a result the Government have decided not to go ahead with the new clause. However it would be wrong to believe that the Bill has had its teeth withdrawn. It remains a bad Bill, and if it becomes law as it stands, it will have serious consequences for the Labour Party and our financial basis.

Under the 1913 Trade Union Act trade unions can finance political objectives only if they set up a special fund for that purpose. The new Bill intends to impose three new curbs on the political fund. First, there will have to be regular ballots to confirm the existence of a political fund. Secondly, it will prevent the political fund from being used for political purposes after it has ceased to have the support of a ballot to continue it. The third thing the Bill does is to change the definition of 'political objectives'. The Bill also does some other important things. It will override established union procedures and force trade unions to ignore their own rule book. It will allow judges to determine what is 'fair and reasonable' and it will tie up the unions in complicated procedures which will effectively prevent them from taking official industrial action. It will also attempt to gag trade union opposition to Government policies, and of course limit the political objectives of the trade unions.

Clearly trade unions must and should be fully democractic. I have always believed that unions should have good democratic constitutions, which means regular election of officials, and with the right of recall under certain circumstances. It is not however the job of a Tory Government to interfere for its own reactionary reasons in the internal affairs of the unions. This Government has carried out salami type tactics against the unions; it has more such tactics in mind.

The entire labour movement must respond to these tactics. Up to now there has been a wholesale retreat by the General Council, a retreat that was only partially halted by the Government's attacks on the GCHQ. Even then it was too late, and decisive action should have been taken at the outset. The Party in the coming period has a great deal of hard work to do together with the unions. That must be one of the most serious tasks ahead. Part of that work must be building good, sound and vigorous workplace branches.

Fighting for student union

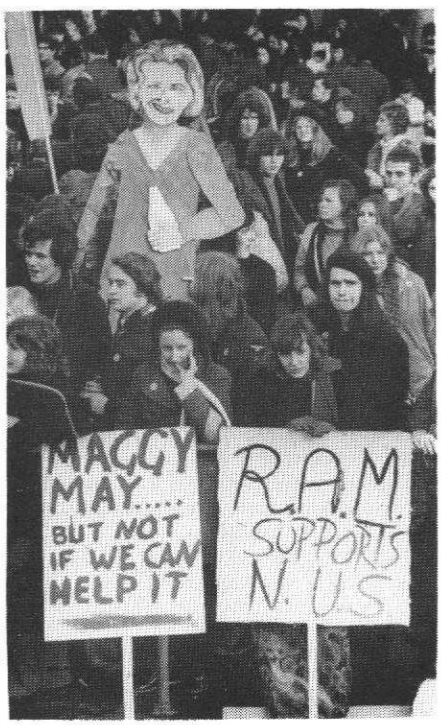
In the January 1983 issue of the *Chartist* Geoff Norris, wrote:

'In the late 1960s we were still fighting for basic rights like autonomy and recognition. Now these have been won – often through very militant struggles – we've established representative institutions.'

Mr Norris was the Chairperson of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS). To say he has been proved wrong would be an understatement – his analysis was completely divorced from reality in 1983 and is even more out of touch in 1984.

Rhodes Boyson changed the method of Student Union financing – giving financial control of students' unions to college management. This move represented an attempt to depoliticise the student movement and avoid similar outbreaks of militancy to those which took place in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The Boyson rules allowed the University of Sussex to withhold union funds during an anti-cuts occupation. At Warwick a demonstration against the visit of Sir 'thief' Joseph was followed by a £30,000 fine on the students' union funds. The academic year began with a letter from the Attorney General ordering college managements throughout the country to prevent payments to CND and the subsidising of coaches to demonstrations.



Labour Party Photo Library

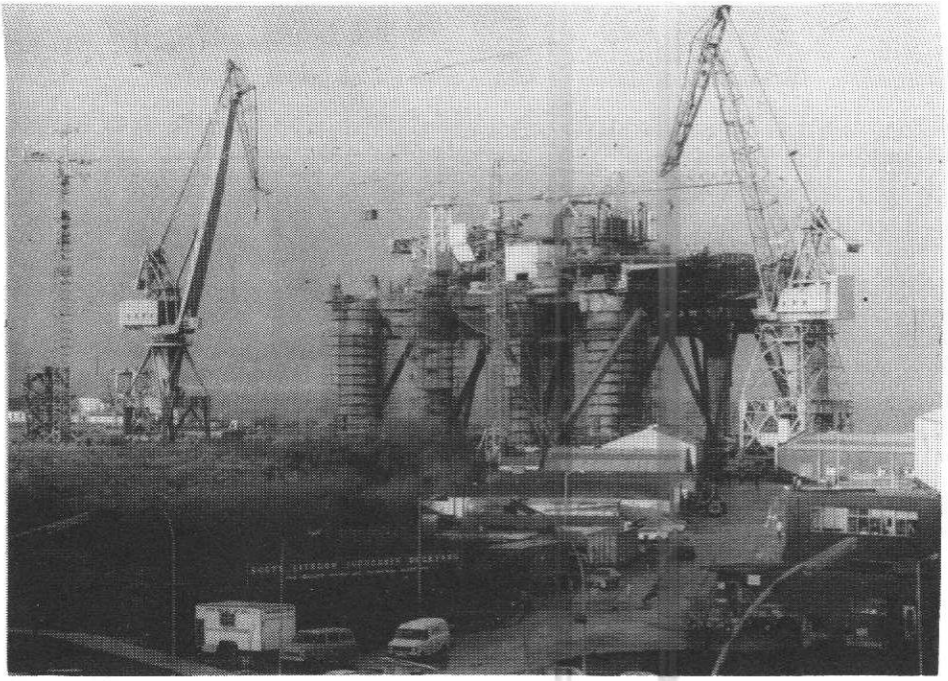
The change in Union financing helps right-wing students' unions police their own membership. Calls for occupations, rent strikes and demonstrations are met with warnings of dire consequences such as the closure of unions' sporting facilities. When at Sussex we proposed a donation to CND, Phil Wodlas, our NOLS candidate for NUS President, spoke of irresponsibility, court cases and massive fines. At Warwick the union President accepted an increased quoracy for union meetings – effectively limiting the chances of a further demonstration in return for the £30,000 which had been witheld.

In Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) we believe that there will be further attacks on student union autonomy. In response we argue for a co-ordinated campaign led by NUS to achieve union autonomy. If as usual the NOLS leader-

Surrender at Scott Lithgow

"The magnificant fight put up by workers at Scott Lithgow has forced Mrs. Thatcher to eat her words. ... Half a battle has been won. It has taken the workforce, the entire community, and indeed a large section of the Scottish population to do it. Now we need ... to convince the government that Scott Lithgow should remain part of British Shipbuilders (BS)."

This is the claim made in a Scottish TUC leaflet publicising a demonstration held in Glasgow at the beginning of March. At the time of its — limited — distribution, it was not Thatcher but the STUC, the leaders of the CSEU (Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions), the Labour Party spokesperson for Scotland and Scott Lithgow convenor Duncan McNeill who were busy eating their words. Whilst the leaflet called for the yards to remain part of BS, the leaders of the Scottish labour movement were already reconciled to its privatisation



Labour Party Photo Library

Weak-kneed vacillations

As for the leaflet's introductory reference to "a magnificent fight", nothing could be further from the truth. One of the stories currently going the rounds in Port Glasgow is that the shop stewards at Scott Lithgow do not even read their own union newspapers because they find them too left-wing. Whether it's true or not, it certainly accurately sums up their degree of militancy, which finds its clearest expression in the weak-kneed vacillations of convenor Duncan McNeill.

A strike of January 1982, for example, in protest at the lack of toilet and canteen facilities due to frozen pipes, ended in defeat: the stewards had no stomach for a fight. Four months later, the shop stewards committee signed a no-strike agreement with management — without consulting the workforce. Then, in September of the same year, came the celebrated Crossword Strike, over the victimisation of a militant shop steward for doing the "Financial Times" crossword puzzle during a power-cut. Not a few of the shop stewards were glad to see the back of the victimised militant.

In the 'fight' for the yard's future in recent months, the story is no better. Mass meetings have been a rarity, there have not been any sectional meetings or shop stewards' bulletins to mount a campaign amongst the workers themselves and counter management propaganda. And the 'work-in' tactic was not a sign of a burgeoning militant fightback but an attempt at a 'respectable' alternative to occupation.

On the rare occasions when mass meetings have taken place, McNeill and his acolytes have vigorously opposed calls for occupation, denouncing those who put forward such a demand as "disruptive elements" out to oppose the shop stewards as an end in itself. Even the ban on overtime, belatedly adopted in February, was achieved in the face of opposition from McNeil. Within a fortnight though, McNeil had agreed to management's demand for a lifting of the ban. There had been no consultation with the workforce.

The reaction of the STUC to the crisis at the yards was equally dire, thereby maintaining its long standing track record of passivity and surrender to job-destruction in Scotland in recent years.

Broad democratic alliance

The STUC did nothing to campaign among workers in Scotland for solidarity action with Scott Lithgow, or the sit-in at the Henry Robb shipyard in Edinburgh which was occurring at the same time. The STUC sought to build a "broad democratic alliance" to prevent closure, that pet-project of the Communist Party, which exerts a powerful influence on members of the STUC General Council. But the STUC's alliance with Liberals, 'progressive' Tories, clerical reaction and Chambers of Commerce was based, as it had to be, on the lowest common denominator: verbal expressions of support for the workforce.

This was not a united fightback. It was a united whimpering about the effects of a possible closure of the yards. And it undercut any possibility of mounting an effective campaign against privatisation and in defence of jobs at Scott Lithgow. Thus, throughout the crisis, the Tories, British Shipbuilders, and the management at Scott Lithgow had a free hand to wheel and deal as they wished, secure in the knowledge that neither within nor outside of the yards was any effective campaign of opposition being mounted.

The only remaining question, at the time of writing, is which firm will take over Scott Lithgow. Bechtel has dropped out, leaving only Trafalgar House and Howard Davis in the running. Front-runner of the two is Trafalgar House, the conglomerate which includes amongst its subsidiaries Cementation International, well known for its links with the Thatcher family.

When, as now seems inevitable, the privatisation of Scott Lithgow has been completed, it will be virtually as a give-away to the firm which acquires it. And those responsible for this latest donation to the coffers of private industry are the leaders of the STUC and the CSEU as much as the Tories.

Stan Crooke

autonomy

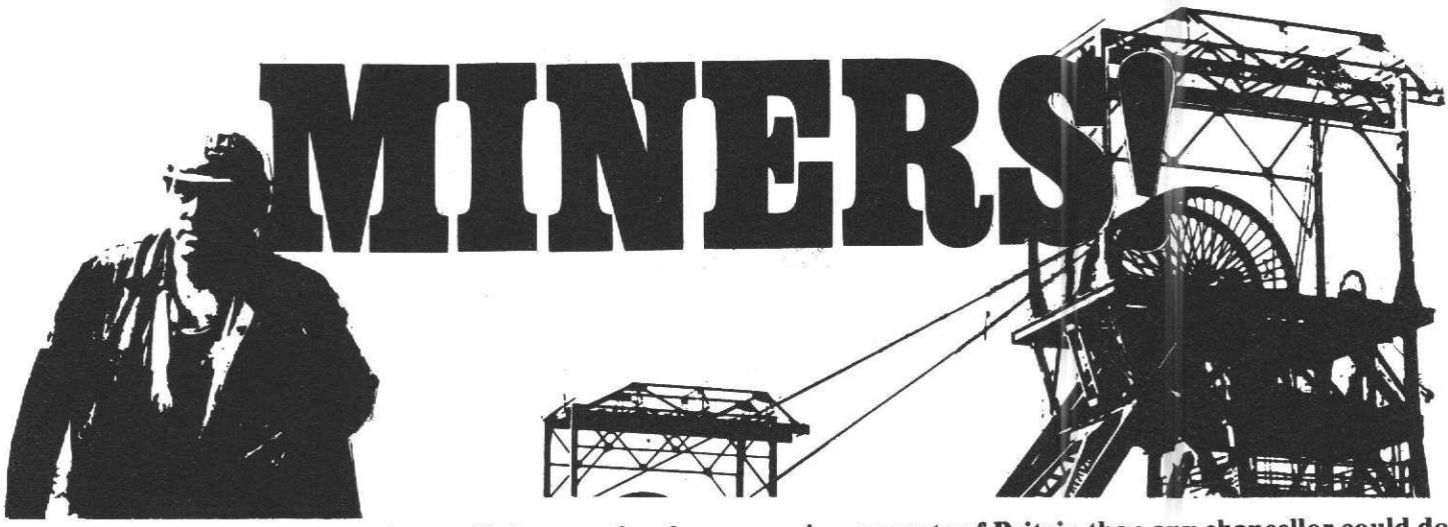
ship of NUS fails to provide such leadership, we argue individual unions should support threatened unions.

The new NOLS Chairperson is waiting for the next General Election and believes labour should represent the views of the electorate. To achieve this he '. . . requires those on the left to be unambiguous in isolating and marginalising the influence of the Trotskyist left and its fellow travellers.' (John Mann, Letters, *The Guardian*, July 1983). SS.N. does not believe that the left is the problem. We seek to build an alternative to the NOLS leadership. To this end we are supporting candidates for the executive at the NOLS conference. At the NUS conference we are supporting candidates to fill the spaces left by NOLS for right-wing students in the name of pluralism.

If you wish to know more about SS.N., write to 35 Quebec St, Brighton, enclosing a sae.

Bryn Griffiths, Chairperson of Sussex University Labour Club (personal capacity) & Socialist Students in NOLS.

DEFEND THE MINERS!



'The defeat of Mr Scargill's miners will do more for the economic prospects of Britain than any chancellor could do in one budget' editorialised the Sunday Times about the national miners strike

And indeed a defeat for the miners could gladden the hearts of every employer, every financier and every member of the ruling class in Britain. For it would not simply mean miners were thrown onto the dole it would also be a green light for the Tories to put a halt on all effective picketing, overturn trade union democracy, reduce trade union membership and break up the links between the trade unions and the Labour Party. Economic prospects for all British workers would then be very bleak.

A victory on the other hand will strengthen the hand of all trade unionists, every movement for social justice and hasten the removal of this visious Tory government. This is why solidarity with the miners is *so* crucial. The militant miners are taking a stand for every trade unionist and Labour Party member who wants to fight this government rather than grovel before it. The right-wing is willing to stand by and watch with their arms folded as left-wing leaders of this union are villified by the Tories.

Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party leaders must be forced to come off the fence. They have to come clearly and set a date, jointly with the TUC, for a day of National Action in support of the miners and the right for effective trade unionism to continue to exist.

Below we print the views of Jack Collins, President Kent Area NUM, on the background to this strike.

'For a long time people were encouraged by the media to ridicule Scargill's list of seventy pits. Scargill and the left of the union have now been vindicated. Now with the coalboard saying 20,000 jobs will go in the next few months, this means that pits will be closed, because the coalboard are saying that they can't compete economically. The new criteria being used by McGregor to close down pits could decimate the mining industry. If a pit can't produce coal at what the government describes as an economic rate per ton then that pit will also be chopped. It's easy in the best coalfield to bring out figures to show that at a particular time the pit is uneconomic.

The figures of miners out on strike have to be looked at realising that the 185,000 figure includes the 18,000 White Collar section who are not traditionally militant. The vast majority of miners are out on strike.

In different areas we must persuade miners to come out in support of the NUM's case. Nottingham, the second largest coalfield, is a low cost area with a high level of productivity. Kent is a low productive area with high costs. Economics being what they are Notthingham is a brighter area in terms of the national coalfields in Britain. But what we have to realise is that we're not just talking about competition on a national basis but on an international basis. If Kent can't keep up with Nottingham and it is closed you can be sure that Nottingham won't be able to compete with the cheap coal the government wishes to import from South Africa, Australia and from Poland. If Nottingham doesn't get involved in this battle now and the coalboard is able to take out the militant areas then there'll be nobody left to fight the multinationals with.

Most miners at the moment think the government are acting from a position of strength but I believe that they are in a weak position. The British economy is in ruins and the Tories need to cut living standards. Miners want a halt to this rundown and they're going to fight to ensure that these attacks stop and their unions are not destroyed.

The miners are the strongest section of the British working class. In order to advertise this strength the Tories announced two days before our executive meeting that they were giving huge redunancy payments to buy our members off. They want to buy us off because we're strong, not because we're weak. We're determined to use that strength to inflict a defeat on the Tories.'

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