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LONDON LABOUR SUPPORTS THE MINERS!

by Jonathan Stephenson

The free spirit of working class solidarity is alive and well in East London if the enthusiasm and commitment generated there by the Miner's strike is anything to go by. The dispute has galvanised Labour party activists in the area as few recent issues have succeeded in doing – because once again the men and women of the NUM are in the vanguard of the fightback against a reactionary Tory Government and its coercive laws. As Chris Morris, press officer for the Hackney trade union sub-committee puts it, 'This is the one people have been waiting for. With the miners in the fight we know we can win.'

There aren't any mines in Hackney, but you wouldn't know it from the way the offers of support and messages of encouragement have been pouring in. By the end of the first week of the strike many more than enough people had volunteered to house miners' pickets passing through London and by the end of the first week in April a total of £3,250 had been collected in donations for the Kent Area NUM.

UNPRECEDENTED GESTURE

In an unprecedented gesture Kent have seconded two miners to stay in Hackney for the duration of the strike and organise support. Peter Ford from Betteshanger Colliery and Roger Godfrey from Tilmanston have been speaking at branch meetings and in picket lines, touring workplaces, raising over £200 a day and generally finding the pace of life even more exhausting than it usually is on the coal face. Donations have come from a wide range of labour movement bodies and individuals – at one recent joint meeting of the Hackney North/ Hackney South Labour Party trade union

(CONTINUED OVER)



Stefano Cagnoni (IFL).

Kent Miners march to Midlands reaches London, 7th April.

LABOUR–TAKE THE POWER!

Hounslow: Cuts budget gets through

As reported in last month's Briefing, Hounslow Council had failed to agree a rate at its meeting of March 6th due to a refusal by six Labour Councillors to support a package involving £2 million in service cuts and a £1.50p rent increase.

The Council was re-convened on the 15th March, and this time the cuts package got through. The six of us who opposed the cuts proposed an alternative budget which would have maintained services, restricted rent increases to an average of 75p per week, and actually have meant a slightly lower rate increase than that finally approved. In our view, this budget could be achieved by creative accounting and would have meant that Hounslow would be able next year to stand alongside other London Labour authorities in defence of the GLC and in opposition to rate-capping.

Sadly, the majority of the Labour Group decided to maitain their support for cuts, and, aided by Tory abstentions, their budget was approved by 27 votes to 24.

Since the meeting, Feltham and Heston CLP has overwhelmingly supported a resolution defending our stand and insisting that no disciplinary action be taken against us by the Labour Group. However, the Group decided on the 9th of April to suspend the six of us from membership unless and until we agree to accept their policies.

John Connelly

FINE VICTORIES IN HARINGEY

Diana Minns, Agent

THREE previously Tory seats in Haringey were won in by-elections on April 12. Fighting on a platform of opposition to the Rates Bill and abolition of the GLC and in defence of the health service and local government, Labour won three excellent victories. Jim Gardiner in Woodside Ward had a huge majority of 683 over the Tory rival. Sharon Lawrence in Alexandra and Clive Boutle, won seats which had never been Labour before.

The victories will prove an inspiration to us all. They were the result of organised campaigning, hard work and clear and positive publicity. On these results we would win the Euro election and make Hornsey and Wood Green a key marginal and the country Labour in a general election.



Labour Party Photo Library

LONDON LABOUR SUPPORTS THE MINERS (CONTINUED)

liaison committees (which are meeting every Monday while the strike lasts) Roger Godfrey received a cheque to cover collections from Hampstead Health District, Hackney Teachers' Association, Hackney NUPE and the TGWU branch for the Council's DLO.

Support has come from more personal sources too – like the tobacconist who is selling cigarettes to the miners at half price and the local Post Office branch which raised £23 in a jar on their counter.

Kent miners are never slow to show solidarity when they are called upon – witness their eye-catching and extremely welcome presence on the Democracy Day March at the end of March – so it is good to see solidarity being reciprocated now by the people of London.

RALLY

Over 250 filled Hackney Town Hall on Friday 13th April (unlucky for the Tories, not the miners) for a rally organised by the trade union liaison committee and addressed by Kent Area Secretary Jack Collins. And the next day another 500 Londoners travelled from Islington, Hackney and Stratford in a delegation to Betteshanger, where they were entertained in the pit social club. This delegation was sponsored by, among others Jimmy Knapp, Ray Buckton, Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Islington North MP Jeremy Corbyn (who was on the delegation).

Everybody recognises the need to keep up the pressure and the momentum. One off collections have to become regular weekly events – Finsbury NUR have already done this. Door to door collections, street meetings and sales of the 'Kent NUM: Support the Miners Fight for Jobs' badge are being organised by local wards and must be stepped up. Kent need £15,000 a week to put their pickets on the road – and get some of them past the flying coppers. There are plans for a national demonstration in London to be coordinated by the Kent Area.

This struggle is vital and Roger Godfrey certainly knows it. *'Our jobs are on the line and our sons' jobs. And our freedom. We will fight to see that the day does not dawn in this country when you have to carry identification cards and when you cannot travel from one county to another. The only guarantee of that is a strong Labour Party and trade union movement. The Government cannot beat us provided that we get the support that we need.'*

Collection sheets and badges for sale are available from Kate Pitman on 985 6429 or Pamela Hanson on 986 8460 (Hackney South) and Lesley Courcouf on 800 3260 or Charlie Owen on 278 2424 (Hackney North).

Jonathan Stephenson

SQUATTERS ROUTED by 200 RIOT POLICE

Piers Corbyn, Burgess Ward, Bermondsey CLP and Tenants Rep on Southwark Council Housing Committee for Peckham District

Lambeth and Southwark "left" Labour Councils have stepped-up their attacks on homeless people who squat. The squatters, some of whom are in the Labour Party, and some of whom understandably find themselves more and more opposed to the Labour Party, are fighting back.

Lambeth

Lambeth Council sent 200 riot police, armed with all the paraphernalia of high-tech paramilitary subjugation of urban unrest, against squatters in Effra Parade, Brixton at 4.30 am on March 25.

How and why could a "left" Labour Council perpetrate such an act which could easily have been staged in Ulster? The history of Effra Parade is a story of bureaucratic insistence on the demolition of perfectly repairable houses fuelled by the desire of the Council to eliminate an "anarchistic nesting ground" which had been a thorn in Ted Knight's side for some years.

Effra Parade workers' cottages were CPOed in 1977 as 'unfit'. The Council then re-let two and the other seven were squatted. The Council's demolition plans – which followed the demolition of much of the 'frontline' after the 1981 riots - was widely opposed. Architects working for a local housing co-op declared the houses were sound and repairable and many of the squatters who were offered (very poor) rehousing refused to leave. Lobbies by the squatters and their numerous supporters failed to impress Lambeth Council who appear to have been more interested in parading para military might through Brixton's night.

Which side of the barricades?

Ted Knight and Hazel Smith (Housing chair) would presumably dismiss the occupants of Effra Parade as 'anarchists', and indeed some of them may well be, but so what? The people who so spiritedly defended their homes are surely on the same side as us against all capitalist or bureaucratic oppression. If their action had taken place in Derry or Gdansk, Lambeth's leadership would have cheered them on. Indeed many of them may well have become anarchist-inclined because of the unsatisfactory way the Council has dealt with them and the problems of other homeless people in Lambeth. "Crowbar", Brixton squatters' news-sheet absurdly describes Lambeth Council as "Trotskyite". This labelling, like the Council's labelling of them leads us all nowhere. If Lambeth Council, or indeed any of us, are to see what is then we have to be able to see through the labels and prejudice we place in front of our eyes.

Southwark

A hundred squatters and tenants disrupted and halted a Southwark Council meeting on March 7 through chanting, singing, throwing Council agendas, turning on the fire alarms and chaining the Councillors into their chamber. The occasion was the passing of a new "clamp-down" policy on squatting in Southwark.

This new policy, which actually still leaves the Council with some room to manoeuvre was adopted as the Council claimed to have cut the 'void rate' in Southwark. In fact Southwark Council still has more empties than any other London Borough. The improvement it did achieve was mostly due to granting tenancies to squatters, and surveys carried out by Tenants Associations show the Council consistently underestimates the number of empties. Indeed the Council's claimed improvement could just be an "education cut" – a reduction in the ability to count empties!

Thanks to the relentless work of organised squatters and allies in Tenants Associations, the Council was stopped from using the Tresspass Law against squatters, although that was mooted last summer.

£½ million wasted!

The Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations recently launched an Empty Property Campaign which recognises the need for action on Southwark's empties crisis and has spurred some TAs to properly consider links with organisations of homeless people who squat.

Now a number of TAs positively support squatting and use it to fill flats, bring new life into decaying areas and cut the cost of empty flats to the Council which currently runs at a staggering £500,000 per annum in lost rent and rates.

The squatters in Southwark – which link together through "The Squatters and Tenants Joint Campaign to Defend the Homeless in Southwark" – call for rent books and an end to evictions. Their response to the Council's attack has been to step up the opening of new squats resist evictions at every level, and build links with TAs, Community Groups and Labour Party wards wherever possible.

Barricades

The first flat to be threatened and receive a Sherriff's writ after the new policy was enacted has been securely barricaded and so far not a bailiff has been seen! The Council's direction less window dressing will surely crumble in the face of a movement with a clear intention of positive achievement.

NATIONAL SHORT-LIFE CONFERENCE

30th June 1984
10am — 4pm
Thomas Coram Foundation
40 Brunswick Square, WC1
Chair: Chris Wadhams
£4 Unwaged £1.50
Lunch provided at these events
Burseries available for small groups.

Further details from Mary Evans, HEO, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1. Telephone 01 633 9377

SATURDAY 5th MAY 10am — 4pm
Bethnal Green Library

One day workshop:

Mounting a local campaign to GET THE EMPTY HOUSES USED

The meeting will be addressed by local activists and some of London's leading housing campaigners.
All welcome. Creche provided.
Entrance by ticket, price £1, unwaged 50p which are available from Ross Fraser/Mary Evans at the Empty Property Unit, 157 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8UU
Tel: 01 633 9377

MAY DAY '84. CROYDON MARCH AND RALLY

Saturday 28th April. Assemble Thornton Heath Clock Tower 10.30am. March to rally in Central Croydon.

Speakers: Brian Nicholson, vice-chairman TGWU; Valerie Wise, chair GLC women's committee; Andrew MacKinlay, Labour prospective Euro-candidate; Roger Poole, NUPE national officer, Marian Carty, convenor CPSDC. Chair: Ron Spurway, President CTUC.

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G.L.C.: TORIES SIT

SOMETHING VERY strange is going on. Three former Tory Cabinet Ministers and former Prime Minister Edward Heath vote against a major Government Bill in the House of Commons, and 36 of their Tory colleagues also vote against it or abstain. The Cabinet is split down the middle. Both the Labour Party and the Alliance are hostile to the proposals. What is going on?

The Government have introduced their 'paving bill' to abolish the GLC. What it does is to cancel the 1985 GLC elections, and provides for the present Labour majority on the Council to replaced with an appointed Tory majority at midnight on 6th May 1985, without a vote being cast. It is a breathtaking proposition.

Gerrymandering

The Second Reading debate in the House of Commons on 11th April was astonishing. The Tories were in complete disarray; and the next morning the Times carried the headline: "Heath accuses Cabinet of gerrymandering over GLC".

This Bill changes fundamentally the local government arrangements affecting sixteen million people.

a. The Bill is a constitutional outrage, abolishing as it does a specific democratic election, and the right of Londoners to vote from time to time in the future for a London-wide elected authority.

b. It is not necessary to the Government's purposes of abolishing the GLC for this cancellation of elections Bill to become law.

c. Parliament has been treated with contempt, due to the Government's failure to publish the evidence submitted to it in response to its White Paper, Cmnd 9063;

d. The proposed changes in London local government will not produce the "simpler, cheaper and more accessible" form of government identified by the Secretary of State as the main objective of his legislation.

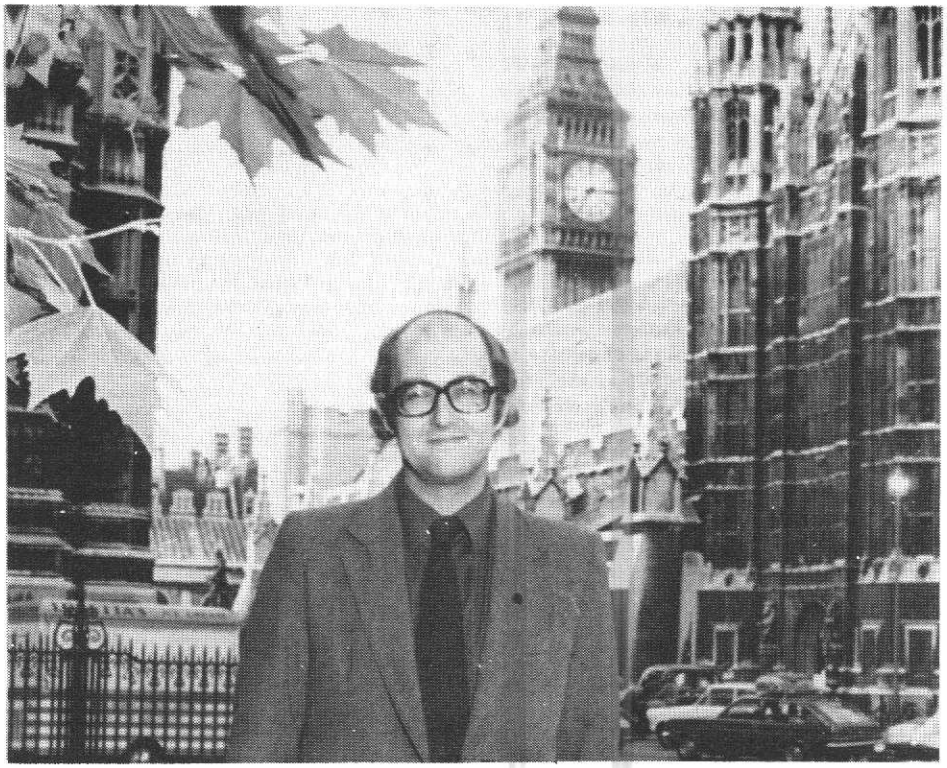
e. The Bill has few, if any, friends anywhere.

f. The Interim Provisions Bill has, as its unspoken central intention, the requirement to engineer a change in party political control at the GLC on 7 May 1985, without a single vote being cast; and

g. The Bill is unwarranted, as the most frequent charges made against the GLC by the Government are not true; and that disputes of this kind could, in any event, be resolved properly by the Conservative Party standing candidates in the May 1985 CLC elections, thus seeking to obtain a majority for their policies at County Hall.

Cancellation of Elections — No other Bill laid before Parliament in recent times has sought to abolish a single franchise without replacing it with another.

The cancellation of the 1985 GLC election, and the proposal to abolish on a permanent basis London-wide elections for a London-wide authority, *was not mentioned at all* in the Conservative Party's 1983 General Election Manifesto. The Conservatives' commitment was to abolish the GLC and return most of its functions to the Boroughs, with joint Boards covering the "residual" functions such as police and fire. There was no mention of the need to cancel the 1985 GLC election.



Therefore, any mandate derived from the electorate's endorsement of the Conservative manifesto pledge to abolish the GLC at the 1983 General Election was a mandate made without knowledge of the specific plans that would be brought forward to abolish London-wide elections. In this context, the alleged mandate must carry significantly less weight than it would otherwise do.

It is not necessary for this particular Bill to be enacted by Parliament in order for the abolition of the GLC to be carried through. This Bill merely removes a political inconvenience for the Government — a GLC election in May 1985 which might conceivably endorse the Labour GLC's policies and return them to power for a further term of office. The Government could, instead of cancelling the 1985 election, have ensured that the election took place but that the term of office enjoyed by the County Hall administration elected in May 1985 was limited to no more than a year. This option is still available to the Government; they could include in the main abolition Bill — to be introduced next Session — a series of clauses to limit the life of the next GLC administration. The fact that this most simple of courses has not been followed shows a degree of confusion and political spite which is unprecedented.

The specific consequences of the Government's cancellation of elections proposal are these. On 6 May 1985, the Council elected in May 1981 will still be in office; the present distribution of seats on a party basis is Labour 48, Conservative 41, Social Democrats 2, Liberal 1.

On 7 May 1985, a new administration will be enthroned at County Hall. No-one will have cast a vote; no party will have issued a manifesto; no individual elector will have chosen the individual candidate whom they wished, above all others, to represent them; there will have been no public debate on the merits of particular policies or a particular style of leadership. Without a vote being cast, an overall Labour majority of 4 will be transformed overnight into an overall Conservative majority of between 14 and 23. It is not possible, at this stage, to be more precise about the size of the eventual Conservative majority on the appointed Council, due to the imprecision of the Government's drafting of Clause 2(5): *but a Conservative majority there will undoubtedly*

ON A POWDER KEG

by REG RACE

be, if the Bill is enacted in its present form.

Party control on the GLC will therefore change, by a process of nomination. What is equally significant, however, is that the *individual Councillors* will change drastically also, if the scheme set out in Clause 2 is implemented. The Bill states that, from 7 May 1985, individuals may only be GLC councillors if they are nominated by Borough Councils; and only those persons who are existing Borough councillors are eligible to be nominated. This proposal will, at a stroke, decimate the ranks of "available" GLC councillors with any experience of County Hall. Under the Government's scheme, only 9 of the existing 92 GLC councillors would be eligible for appointment to the new council from 7 May 1985. 3 of the existing 48 Labour councillors would be eligible; 6 of the existing 41 Conservative councillors; and none of the existing 3 Alliance councillors. Those individuals who would not be eligible for appointment under the Government's scheme include:

Ken Livingstone (Leader); Sir Ashley Bramall (former Leader of ILEA); Richard Brew (former GLC Tory Leader); Sir Horace Cutler (former GLC Tory Leader); Baroness Gardner of Parkes (Tory GLC member for 10 years); Illtyd Harrington (Deputy Leader of the Labour Group); John McDonnell (Chair, Finance and General Purposes Committee); Frances Morrell (Leader, ILEA); Adrian Slade (Liberal Leader); and Professor David Smith (Tory Leader, ILEA).

It is also undeniable that Parliament is being treated in a contemptuous fashion in respect of the provision of relevant information to MPs and Peers. Cmnd 9063 asked interested groups to respond to the Government's proposals by 31 January; since then, Ministers have been blocking every attempt to discover how many responses have been made, by whom, and in what terms. First, they refused to place a comprehensive list of responses in the Library of the House – an unprecedented move. Second, they refused to include on te list that they did deposit in the Library any organisation other than local authorities and "major national organisations" – by this definition excluding all those locally based or London-wide organisations that had submitted representations. When MPs placed PQs on the order paper asking for indications of whether particular named organisations had submitted evidence, and whether they were in favour of, or against, the abolition of the GLC, Environment Ministers refused to reply. Finally, when the PQs were re-cast, on advice, to ask what representations had been received from particular constituencies, Ministers used the "disproportionate cost" rule in order to avoid answering. The undeniable fact is that backbench MPs have been thwarted at every turn in their attempts to elicit real information concerning the views of their own constituents; and it is clear that this series of blocking manoeuvres by Ministers has been carried out with one aim in view – namely to deny information to Parliament as its publication would be deeply embarrassing to the Government.

The truth of this statement can be easily demonstrated. The GLC has itself received copies of 751 submissions, and has analysed the contents of all of them. Of these 721, or 96%, are opposed to the Government's plans to abolish the GLC. 20 responses (2.6% of the total received) were ambivalent on the question of aboliton, and only 10 (1.3% of the total received) were in favour of the Government's plans.

The peculiarity of the Government's position is strengthened by the fact that, on this occasion, changes in the structure of local government are being proposed without any objective analysis of the problems facing it. The 1963 reorganisation of London was preceded by the Herbert Royal Commission; the 1972 reorganisation of local government outside London was preceded by the Redcliffe-Maud Royal Commission. In 1983/4, specific proposals have been made – backed only by a short manifesto commitment.

Cheaper and Simpler?

In introducing the contents of the Bill on publication, Patrick Jenkin indicated that this objective was to provide a "simpler, cheaper, and more accessible" form of local government in our cities.

Local government in London will certainly not be "simpler". Administrative relationships between the Boroughs, the ILEA, the Fire Board, the London Planning Commission, and the residual body to deal with debt management, superannuation and residual legal matters, will be frighteningly complex. The Government's plans are a recipe for a tide of memos to sweep over London. These facts sit uneasily with the views of Sir George Young MP, who on 24 February 1984 described the abolition proposals as good because they would "lift an unnecessary burden of bureaucracy off the shoulders of Londoners".

Local Government in London will probably not be "cheaper". Reliable estimates by the leading firm of City Stockbrokers Fielding, Newson-Smith demonstrate that Boroughs would have to pay a higher average interest rate for their capital borrowing than the GLC presently does. The GLC's own estimate of the likely cost to London's ratepayers of this burden, at present levels of capital spending, is an extra £10 million per annum.

Nor is it likely that rates in London Boroughs will be reduced as a consequence of the disappearance of the GLC precept. A computer-based GLC study has shown that, if the GLC's present level of sending were continued, rates would rise in 25 out of the 32 London Boroughs.

In this context it is highly significant that the Government has itself produced no firm and detailed costings of the savings that are in prospect for ratepayers as a consequence of abolition.

On 31 January, William Waldegrave MP answered a PQ from Jack Straw MP in respect of the way in which the alleged savings of £120 million described in the DoE note "Abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils" had been calculated. Mr Waldegrave's reply stated that "the figure represents a rough estimate of the potential savings from the elimination of an entire tier of local government, including the saving of about 9000 jobs". Prior to this "rough estimate" being reported to the House, Mr Waldegrave had answered PQs from Jim Lester MP about the detailed basis for the estimate of saving 9000 jobs, and about whether a firm estimate of the "financial costs and benefits" arising from the Government's proposals would be made before legislation was published. Mr Waldegrave replied:

"The figure of 9000 is only a broad estimate and it would be premature to go further until the districts have taken detailed decisions on how they will staff the services to be transferred to them...

"Firm estimates of costs and benefits resulting from the abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils will depend on decisions taken by successor bodies. Preliminary estimates from some districts indicate that substantial savings could be achieved in the services transferred to them". These replies indicate that the Government has no real idea of whether any cost savings will accrue, thus demonstrating that the ideal of "cheaper" local government as a consequence of those proposals may well be a mirage.

In terms of accountability and accessibility, the GLC's expenditure will be dis-

(CONTINUED OVER)

GLC: Tories sit on powder keg (continued)

tributed between directly-elected authorities (the London Boroughs), and the non elected quangos. The facts are these: excluding the expenditure of the ILEA, 56% of the GLC's present spending is on functions which will be distributed to unelected and unaccountable quangos, whilst only 44% is currently spent on functions to be transferred to the directly elected Boroughs.

The Bill has Few Friends

The Interim Provisions Bill, and the proposals which lie behind it, have few friends anywhere.

Political response to the Government's plans from Conservative quarters, as well as from socialists, has been markedly hostile.

Mr Alan Greengross, Leader of the GLC Conservative Group, said: "I think the interim structure, to put it mildly, is going to present massive problems. I just cannot see how 84 borough members who, the borough leaders themselves agree, have neither the time nor the experience to do the job properly, are going to achieve an effective hand-over". (Guardian 31 March).

The GLC Conservative Group's evidence in response to Cmnd 9063 stated: "Direct election is a far better way of handling a local authority than through indirect election".

George Tremlett and Bernard Brook-Partridge, Conservative GLC members for Twickenham and Romford, wrote in a letter to the Guardian: "Sir, One has to make allowances for Mr Norman Tebbit, but his latest outburst (Tebbit Says London Is In Hands Of Marxists Bent On Revolution, March 15) was so bizarre that we sought a copy of his speech from Conservative Central Office.

"By jingo, he said it. He really said it — and he said something else which your report omitted: 'The Labour Party is the party of division. In its present form it represents a threat to the democratic values and institutions on which our Parliamentary system is based. The GLC is typical of this new, modern, divisive version of socialism. It must be defeated. So we shall abolish the GLC...'

"There we have it. The first frank admission of what some of us have been saying all along is true; namely that the Government is intent upon abolishing the GLC in order to prevent the electorate of London from voting for a party of which the Government disapproves."

The response of many Conservative-controlled local authorities has also been critical of the government's proposals. Almost all the Conservative London Boroughs express reservations about one or more aspects of the proposals, Enfield, Harrow and Merton raise very strong objections, as does Conservative-Liberal controlled Hammersmith and Fulham. The non-Labour Boroughs of Brent, Waltham Forest and Richmond are totally opposed to the reorganisation.

A perhaps surprising degree of opposition has also been expressed by the Conservative-controlled Shire Counties. Their views were reported in a document for the policy committee of the Association of County Councils, which met on 18 January. The counties' views were as follows:

Buckinghamshire: The proposals would have the most serious implications for the electoral accountability of local government, which should be enhanced and not diminished.

Hampshire: Locally-elected councils should not be removed without the fullest inquiry. Diffusion of accountability and increased bureaucracy were likely if joint boards were introduced. The case for abolition not established — the existing authorities should be judged by the electorate in 1985.

Hereford and Worcester: Creation of Joint Boards could erode direct accountability of local authorities for their expenditure decisions.

Abolition of Metropolitan Counties appears to transfer responsibilities away from local government to regional Civil Servants.

Surrey: Concerned at no analysis of the proposals. Transfer of services to non-elected joint boards will diminish local democracy and accountability — central control will be increased; and non-metropolitan local government will be affected, both financially and in the long-term, structurally.

However, the most fundamental division of opinion has occurred in the Cabinet itself. On September 20 1983, Patrick Jenkin MP wrote a minute to the Prime Minister following meetings of the Ministerial Group on the Abolition of the GLC and the MCCs (Misc 95), which was effectively a sub-committee of the Cabinet. The minute stated:

"There are two options for replacing the elections.

"(i) Deferral. It would be in accordance with precedents of past reorganisations to defer the elections for a year; existing councillors would continue in office. The deferred elections would then be overtaken by abolition of the GLC and MCCs on April 1, 1986.

"(ii) Substitution. Councillors appointed by the London boroughs and the metropolitan districts would take over the role of the GLC and MCC councillors almost immediately after the date on which elections would otherwise have taken place...

"The views of the Group on the options were divided.

"Some members argued that there were constitutional and political objections to substitution: in particular, that we should be accused of creating a new procedure in order to engineer a change in political control in the GLC area and possibly (depending on the results of the elections between now and May 1985 and on the basis of selection of the substitute councillors) some of the MCC areas.

"A small majority of the Group, however, considered that both our own supporters and the wider public would find it incomprehensible that we should, in effect, extend the terms of office of the GLC and the MCCs. Moreover, to do so would provide those bodies with scope for obstruction at a time when this would be most damaging to our policies. They therefore favoured substitution...

"In political terms this is probably one of the most sensitive decisions we have to take. My own recommendation is in favour of substitution. I propose we should announce this in the white paper", Mr Jenkin said.

Mrs Thatcher replied in a minute from one of her private secretaries, Mr Michael Scholar, to Mr Jenkin's private secretary, Mr John Ballard, which shows that she initially disagreed with her Environment Secretary's advice. The Prime Minister preferred deferment of the May 1985 elections to substitution, he wrote. (Published in the Guardian, 26.3.84).

It is apparent, therefore, that the Government have failed to persuade their own supporters in local government that the proposals have merit; the Cabinet has been, and is still, divided on the propriety of cancelling democratic elections; and outside opinion is ranged firmly against the legislation.

Other organisations which have opposed the plans include the Association of Chief Executives of the London Boroughs, and scores of community organisations and professional associations. In addition, the management consultants Cooper and Lybrand have reported that abolition is unlikely to produce any net saving and could cost an extra £60 m a year.

Opinion among the population as a whole is strongly in favour of retention of the GLC, as the following table shows:

	MORI Oct 83	Harris Dec 83	MORI Mar 84
Against GLC Abolition	54%	59%	61%
For GLC Abolition	22%	22%	22%
Don't Know	24%	19%	17%

We Can Win

There is a *real* prospect of winning the battle to save the GLC. The Cabinet is in disarray; Departmental Ministers are demoralised; the Tory back-benchers are in open and unprecedented revolt; there is solid and overwhelming public support.

We must build on the progress made. The movement must ensure that the response to the Parliamentary petition is massive; that trade unionists are mobilised to defend their services and jobs; and that all MPs are lobbied to oppose this pernicious cancellation of elections Bill when it comes back to the floor of the House of Commons shortly after Easter. We're on our way!

A new dawn in Hackney?

Most people living in Hackney find their lives blighted in one way or another by economic recession. For those of us in the Labour Party who feel the local state should do something about it, the last two years have been a bitter disappointment. Lacking a coherent political strategy and an unreserved commitment to the struggles of workers and tenants, the council leadership has lurched from one crisis to another. Having contemptuously opposed an occupation of an area housing base led by local people who demanded greater tenants' control, workers' democracy and more support for the DLO, the leadership finally alienated the GMCs of the CLPs by introducing a budget which raised the rates by 17%.

Both GMCs of the local Labour Parties support the 'Three Noes' policy – no to rent increases, no to rate increases beyond the level of inflation and no to cuts. In an area suffering such acute industrial decay that there are no large factories, the burden of a rate rise falls on working-class residents. Due to corruption and neglect, council services such as housing are spectacularly inadequate. The notion of 'value for money' is a bad joke for council tenants waiting months for routine repairs. Workers delivering the services are frustrated by bureaucracy and lack of capital investment. When the leadership was making the budget, most of us in the Labour Party felt there was no lesser evil to choose from – no-one could sacrifice their interests to defend someone else. In principle and political action the 'Three Noes' could unite worker and tenant battling against the odds in Britain's poorest borough.



HACKNEY LABOUR LEFT

Hackney Labour Left – a loose grouping open to everyone who supports *London Labour Briefing* – and numerous sponsors held an open meeting to thrash out a political strategy for the next year of the council's administration. At least 60 people turned up on the basis of agreeing with the 'Three Noes' and the principle of accountability of Labour Group to the policy of the CLPs. We agreed that the current leadership could not shake free of its appalling industrial relations, nor galvanise support from local people affected by the budget and that an alternative leadership should be proposed at the Annual Borough Conference of Labour Group and GMCs which elects the five main leadership positions.

The political platform of the alternative leadership leadership is to mobilise tenants and trade-unionists in Hackney against government attacks on living standards and local democracy, and to focus on what can actually be achieved. Condemning the past budget obviously isn't enough and we oppose any form of cuts that may be implemented as a result, be they reductions in working conditions, or increases in under-staffing. A mass campaign should be conducted against rate-capping and the council should make a commitment to defy any government legislation which either enforces cuts or as in the Rates Act prevents the council freely deciding the rate-level. The council should offer full solidarity with the struggle in Liverpool and with local struggles such as the occupation at St John's area base.

In housing the council should work closely with the Hackney Federation of Tenants Associations and whilst the budget decision gives a *carte blanche* for rent increases in October, no such increases should take place. Aiming to make an immediate, visible improvement in local housing, resources should be decentralised to an area-base level by 6 months time, subject to full consultation with the unions. A landlord account should be set up to provide local budgetting for locally-based housing workers and to open up the housing revenue account to tenants' scrutiny. Ethnic monitoring should be extended to all areas of housing to eliminate racist practices. Any senior council officers obstructing these policies will not be tolerated.

DLO WORKERS

DLO workers feel they are the first most likely victims of cuts. We defend them against all attacks. We support moves to end the use of private contractors, we reject these contractors at present using non-union labour and we want to organise the DLO so that it has an immediate advantage in getting contracts to protect the current level of jobs. Linked with an improvement in services, we feel this approach could be very popular in Hackney. We are also against the sale of any council property in Hackney which could be socially useful.

For borough council employees we feel there should be some permanent structure set up – maybe a committee – with responsibility for industrial relations on the basis of clear and consistent negotiated procedures. The policy of the structure should be to respect and encourage the self-activity of workers and trade-unionists' right to organise themselves. There are as yet disagreements about the form this structure should take, but we all acknowledge the need for radical change in the existing staffing and Equal Opportunities Committee.

POSITIVE ACTION FOR WOMEN AND BLACKS

In the sphere of positive action for women and blacks we feel the council leadership has been reasonably good. There should be a continuing commitment to support the demands of women's and black and ethnic minority organisations, and to consolidate the council's own equal opportunity employment policy.

In order for these policies to be carried out we feel it's necessary for a new leadership to take over. The Labour Group should act as forward-planning political strategists and not crisis-managers reeling from one disaster to another. All left councillors have an obvious responsibility in terms of guarding the development of socialist policies within the Group. The following people are prepared to stand on this platform for the elected leadership positions: Leader: Hilda Kean. Deputy Leader: Patrick Kodikara. Chief Whip: Maureen Colquoun. Mayor: Ken Hanson. Deputy Mayor: Gerry Lawless.

Philippa Jones,
Hackney Labour Left

For further details of Hackney Labour Left meetings contact Pat Jordan (800-7853) or Phillipa Jones (253-5535).

Socialism in Southwark — a Tragedy or a Farce?

Having convinced the electorate that they could work with the unions and establish a new era in industrial relations in Southwark, this council is now showing their interpretation of this by mounting another attack on their workforce by sacking a woman for following the policy of her union. In a Tory borough this would not be surprising; but in a so-called "socialist" borough this is scandalous and an attack on all trade unionists.

At the centre of this dispute is the sacking of Siobhan Stokes who was taken on during the recent Residential Social Workers action as one of a number of mobile workers with the aim of reducing the effectiveness of the action being taken then. But Siobhan decided to join Nalgo and took a part in the action, afterwards working in a children's home in the Camberwell area. On March 2nd she was asked to move to another home in the Sidcup area. Having visisted the other home it was felt by the head of that home that the journey would be too excessive (involving two hours of travelling each way) and this was agreed to by Siobhan's manager. However, later that evening, she was against contacted by her manager and told that she would have to move. As it was now the weekend she saw her union representative on the Monday, and, at a meeting with management that same day she informed them that she was prepared to work in any of the homes in the London area but not in Sidcup. This was in accord with policy laid down by the local union at the end of the R.S.W. dispute in order to protect those members who had been taken on as mobile staff. The terms and conditions of these staff have never been agreed to by the unions.



John Chapman (IFL)

NALGO picket outside Southwark Town Hall in support of Siobhan Stokes.

"LOYALTY OATH"

On March 16th Siobhan was again summoned to a meeting with management (having reported for work every day as being prepared to work in any of the London homes) and was asked again to move to the new home. She refused. She was asked to sign a 'Loyalty Oath' saying that she would in future abide by all terms of her contract, including giving up her right to take any industrial action in the future. She refused. She was immediately sacked.

On Monday March 19th the Social Services Section walked out on indefinite strike. By that afternoon the rest of the branch had joined them.

Since then the response from this 'socialist' council has been one of trivialisation, rumour-mongering, misrepresentation, and pure lethargy. Instead of negotiating the council has preferred to try to smear Siobhan and avoid any discussion as to the manner of her dismissal or the matter of the 'loyalty oath'. Before discussing the matter with the Labour Group the leader, Alan Davis, had already gone on record as saying that she would never be reinstated.

When the Labour Group finally met they instructed the Industrial Relations Emergency Sub Committee to enter into negotiations. It was six days before that committee entered into serious negotiations, have prevaricated over the issue, and then only to try to get the matter taken to arbitration. Their remit was to end this dispute: they seem to be more interested in ensuring that it is unnecessarily extended. Siobhan's reinstatement is not a matter for arbitration; it is a demand that must be met. If Southwark Council were able to refuse this then the way would be clear for them to attack any other union activist.

When the labour movement fought for the rights of the workers at G.C.H.Q. this council fully supported that issue: but in Southwark they want their own 'loyalty oath', and will sack those workers who refuse to sign. There is no difference between this council and Thatcher in such circumstances.

REINSTATEMENT

At every meeting of the Branch since this dispute commenced, one simple demand has been made: the reinstatement of this worker. The Branch recognises that this is an attack on the fundamental rights of trade unionists to organise and take action in the defence of their working conditions.

The issue at the heart of this strike are simple but essential:

1/ The right to follow trade union policy.
2/ No loyalty oaths.
3/ No victimisation.

Next year, when rate capping comes in, Southwark council will be wanting the co-operation of the trade unions to mount a fight back. If this matter is not settled satisfactorily then the chance of any joint campaign must be seriously at risk.

A socialist council that fights its own workforce can only be viewed as at best misguided, at worst reactionary and autocratic, possibly even Stalinist.

The workers at G.C.H.Q. were given £1000 and six week's notice to leave their union: Siobhan Stokes was given two hours and no money.

Stop Press: Having spent three days with the conciliation service, management unilaterally withdrew from conciliation on April 9th. They also reneged on all the discussions up to that point.

Dick Larkin
(The Lane Ward
Dulwich CLP)

Southwark

I am writing my thoughts on the Southwark Nalgo dispute, caused by the sacking of Siobhan Stokes by the Council. It is the end of the third week of the strike and there have been no cheering developments to report to the 1100 Nalgo members on strike today. We are all tired and worn out on this gloomy day, dazed by too many meetings and long boring cold picket duties.

'What do you want me to report to the strike operations committee?' I ask the members on the morning picket duty. 'Tell them we're cold,' they say.

UNDERLYING TENSION

There is an underlying tension in that reply. People on the picket line are beginning to begrudge the officers' 'cushy life', constantly in meetings from dawn to dusk which appear to be getting us nowhere, whilst they're cold and fed up on the picket line. The divisions start to form.

In the union branch office this afternoon, a male member joked 'Would you like to write a bit as a token woman?', as he bashed out an article for *Briefing* on the dispute. 'No, I'm sure you'll be able to do that quite well,' I joked back

As Bishops goes, so goes the nation.

In July 1981, in a Bishops Ward, Lambeth, by-election, Labour lost two council seats to the SDP/Liberal 'Alliance', a result of the first major electoral victory for the 'Alliance', and marked the beginning of the disastrous split in the anti-Tory vote that culminated in the re-election of the Thatcher Government.

Now, almost three years later, in another by-election in the same ward, Labour has not only regained one of the seats but, significantly, won over 50% of the entire vote cast by a greatly increased turnout.

Labour's recovery in Bishops Ward (which extends from Waterloo and North Lambeth clear down to Lambeth Walk) actually began during the General Election period last year with a rise in party membership. During the past year, ward membership has tripled and now includes both the youngest voter in the recent by-election and an 82 year old veteran member for sixty years, as well as representatives from every estate and major road in the area.

Since the General Election, the Ward Party has also been involved in a wide range of local issues. The connection between Labour's policies and the maintenance of jobs and services has been made directly relevant by linking them to these local issues.

ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

Our strong, active local membership, and record of involvement throughout the year, made it impossible for the opposition to succeed in their usual attempts to brand Labour as extremist, irresponsible, and unrepresentative. Voters had come to know Labour Party members as friends, neighbours and workmates, engaged in trying to defend jobs and services of benefit to everyone and under severe threat. During the by-election, we were able not only to canvass support but to discuss with people on their own doorsteps changes necessary to make our area a better place to live.

It has become clear that people do not want extravagant promises, and most are aware that no real improvement can occur until we elect another Labour Government. However, we must demonstrate *now* that we are prepared to listen to the voters' views, and make sure that our policy is relevant to them. The opinions expressed to us during the campaign, and a possible resolution of some of the issues at a local level, will form an important part of our discussions within the ward over the next few months. We will also make sure we are kept aware of public views by regular canvassing.

GOOD ORGANISATION

On election day, Labour won in Bishops Ward because of a good candidate, a good organisation, and enthusiastic support from party members both within and without the ward. Our aim now is to consolidate our victory by continuing to recruit local people to the party.

Postscript: In 1981, when the SDP/Liberals won in Bishops Ward, it was front news in many papers. In 1984, when Labour recovered its seat, most of the same papers failed to report it at all. Isn't that strange?

Bishops Ward Results

Vote per candidate	1981	1984
Labour	706 (32%)	1650 (53%)
SDP/Liberal	1091 (49%)	1104 (35%)
Tory	323 (15%)	255 (8%)
National Front	93 (4%)	116 (4%)
Turnout	2213 (32%)	3127 (41%)

Paul Wheeler (Ward Organiser, on behalf of Vauxhall Labour Party, Bishops Ward Branch)

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NALGO Dispute: Thoughts of a woman on strike

(mustn't upset sympathetic boys by being serious, I think to myself). But it set me thinking. When do we, as women, intervene and challenge ways of organising? Should we rock the boat during a dispute or leave our frustrations and criticisms till after?

What involvement can women have in an intense dispute in which it is necessary to spend twelve to fourteen hours every day including evenings and weekends locked in meetings of various kinds? The whole routine of daily life is over turned for everyone and it seems we have no power as trade unionists, to control the pattern of events. So guess who are unlikely to be able to be involved — women who have responsibilities for looking after children or demanding partners.

Some of the 'boys' on the trade union side are concerned, but are caught up on the 'custom and practice' tread mill and cannot dramatically change the routine, I know. Other revel in it, creating 'in jokes' in smoky rooms or down the pub afterwards, and are unaware of the alienating atmosphere they create.

IF THE NEGOTIATORS WERE WOMEN

Supposing the negotiating team had been all women they would have had to demand a different timetable out of necessity; the system would have to cope with their demands.

The 'boys' games' are at their worst though in the Southwark Labour group meetings, called to discuss the dispute. Having attended two evening group meetings called specially to discuss the dispute, incidentally leaving my daughter indoors on her own yet again, I was depressed by the reaction of some of the male councillors. Some of them seemed to want to completely ignore the fact that the dispute was crippling services in the borough. These same councillors had argued the case for putting up the rates because they said they cared and wanted to protect people in the borough. It is a funny way of protecting people, getting into dispute with your work force! Others were busy making empty speeches which left their options open because it's election time for council chairs. I don't want the outcome of the dispute to be decided in this way.

These 'boys' games' have got to be stopped if the trade union and labour movement is serious in its claim to want women actively involved in decision-making. The old patterns have got to be broken. This won't happen unless women themselves press for changes and now *is* the time to do it.

Whether it is in the trade unions, or as councillors on local councils we have got to demand that tasks are spread around a larger number of people. The mind numbing length of time locked in meetings must be challenged. Good decisions are unlikely to come out of these meetings. It is an old ploy learned from years of experience by bosses all over the world.

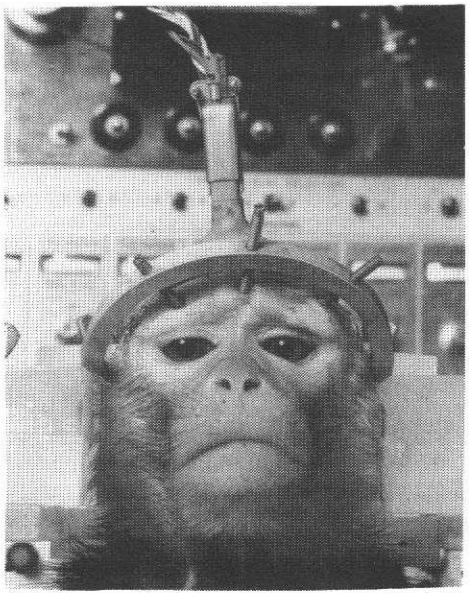
TAKING WOMENS' ISSUES SERIOUSLY

But to return to our dispute. We are on strike because a woman worker, following the union agreement, refused travel from Tufnell Park to Kent. We would have supported a male worker who refused the same unreasonable journey. Nevertheless it is an integral part of our argument, I hope, that as a woman she would be very vulnerable travelling early in the morning and late at night to and from work on public transport alone.

I am glad that danger is taken seriously. Now all we need is for all the other issues women are raising to be taken seriously too. Girls don't play 'girls' games' and boys shouldn't need to play 'boys' games'.

Penny Newell
Member of Southwark Nalgo
and Peckham CLP

Mellor targetted by animal rights campaigners.



Putney Conservative MP David Mellor is being targetted by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection in a nation-wide campaign against the Government's proposals to replace the existing legislation on animal experiments, the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. David Mellor is the Home Office Minister with responsibility for animal experiments. His proposals for new legislation will mean that the LD 50 test, Draize eye irritancy test and behavioural and psychological research will continue. Additionally, cosmetic, tobacco and alcohol research and the use of animals in warfare experiments will not even be outlawed.

CONSERVATIVE PARTY

The government's true position is revealed however by the fact that over £¼ million has been given to the Conservative Party between 1979 and 1982 by three multinational drug companies – Reckitt & Colman, Glaxo and Beechams. In return, Margaret Thatcher has awarded a knighthood to one individual from each of these companies. The object of BUAV's campaign is to bring Mellor's position to the attention of Putney constituents. Over 70 activists in one February weekend covered 95 per cent of Putney's households by distributing over 40,000 BUAV leaflets. These leaflets, which juxtaposed a photograph of David Mellor with three others of animal experiments, attacked him for not even being prepared to abolish, for example, cosmetic experiments and warfare research.

WORRIED MAN

The campaign has continued since then with stalls and further leafleting. At a public meeting attended by nearly 200 local residents, the Putney Anti-Vivisection Campaign was launched. With so much local activity David Mellor is obviously a very worried man. His hysterical writings in the local press clearly reveal that his position is not in tune with public opinion. Animal Rights campaigners are determined to continue to undermine his local power base as we wish to prove that the issue of animal experiments is an important one and one which no politician can continue to ignore.

The BUAV believes that no MP will want to be tarnished with a public image of supporting cruelty to animals. The BUAV has a dossier on every MP and we are considering other MPs of all parties who we can similarly target.

Kim W. Stallwood
Campaigns Officer, c/o BUAV,
16A Crane Grove, Islington,
London N7 8LB
01-607 1545/1892

Putney CLP Science and Ecology Group

Science and Technology are integral parts of our lives. As well as giving us a greater understanding of the universe, they have raised our standard of living and extended our lifespans. Yet, they have also squandered our resources, polluted our environment and they promise us the horror of nuclear extermination.

The use of science in this way is not the inevitable consequence of "progress". Science is not "neutral". It cannot be divorced from politics. It both reflects and helps to determine the values of a society. Science, in the hands of the people who rule this country and who run our industries is being used to exploit and oppress people all over the world. The people who benefit from science are the people who benefit from profit. Social and political decisions are taken by "experts" behind a smokescreen of jargon that leaves the rest of us ignorant and powerless. Knowledge is power, and it is in the interests of the powerful (and rich!) to keep the rest of us in the dark. Science, under capitalism is exploitative, oppressive and polluting.

OK! So it is easy to look at the world, decry the injustice, oppression, poverty, waste and filth, then make polemical statements about the need for change! What we need is a vision of a socialist future as well as a strategy to achieve it. A "Science and Ecology Group" has been set up by a group of Putney CLP members with an interest in political ecology. Recognising the importance of science and technology in society, we have involved ourselves in discussing and clarifying our socialist vision from a "red-green" perspective.

At our meetings we have discussed political ecology, The Labour Party and ecology, women in science, and alternative technology and industrial production.

In recent months we have produced a statement of "ecological principle" for the Labour Party, which we hope will be submitted as resolutions to the next party conference. Building on the firm foundation of Clause Four, the resolution embodies the arguments for a balanced retreat from growth, as discussed by Peter Tatchell in the last issue of Briefing. We hope that the resolution will be considered by constituency parties throughout the country and ultimately adopted by conference in October. In the meantime we would welcome comments and amendments. The resolution is reprinted below.

In the near future the Putney CLP Science and Ecology Group will be holding meetings to discuss biotechnology, health and computer technology. We also hope to stage a debate with the Ecology Party. Comrades from outside Putney are welcome at all our meetings. Contact us and we'll keep you informed. We would also like to contact similar groups in other constituencies.

Our address is:
Putney CLP Science and Ecology Group,
c/o Thamesfield Branch,
Putney CLP,
35 Felsham Road, London SW15.

Simon Molyneux and
David Murphy,
Putney CLP.

Conference Motion
ECOLOGY

Conference agrees that an ecological perspective must become a vital party of Labour's socialist programme. Equally, conference believes that protection of the environment is impossible without democratic socialist economic planning, ownership and control.

Conference therefore calls for:

1) Economic growth and objectives to:
a) be based on a full employment policy which links skill and technology to social need.
b) be achieved through popular democratic control.
c) be concerned with socially useful forms of production and services which convert jobs, skills and technology away from such wasteful and dangerous activities as the manufacture of nuclear weapons.
d) take full account of the social, environmental and health costs.
e) support long-life goods, and promote repair, maintenance and recycling to conserve resources.
f) use indigenous and renewable resources as far as possible.

2) A safe energy programme that will be based on:
a) the phasing out of nuclear power.
b) the conservation of our coal, oil and gas reserves through insulation and community heating projects.
c) the development of renewable energy sources such as wave, wind, solar, tidal and geothermal.

An environmental development policy that will:
a) aim to eliminate dangerous pollutants from the environment.
b) ban all radioactive waste dumping at sea and in the ground and implement an urgent research programme to find ways of disposing of the accumulated waste of the nuclear era.
c) negotiate agreements to curb international environmental fouling, such as acid-rain.
d) promote non-polluting industrial and agricultural production.

Cutbacks in YTS

THE GOVERNMENT has instructed the Manpower Services Commission to cut 18,000 places from the Youth Training Scheme. These cuts will all be in the community projects (Mode B1 in MSC jargon(. The simple reasoning behind this is that the Government prefers the employer-based schemes (Mode A), which it claims are cheaper to run, and more relevant to the needs of young people. As a result, 5000 adult supervisors' jobs in the community/voluntary sector will be lost, 700 of which will be in London alone. It is very clear that this is only the first step and that more cuts are planned for the future.

Why cut Mode B Community Projects? Mode B is essential to YTS, not as a substitute for Mode A but as a complement to it, to cater for the many young people who would not get Mode A places.

These schemes are being cut after just six months of YTS. Surely this is not enough time for them to be sufficiently well developed to allow decisions to be made about their future – but this is just what the Government is doing.

In particular, Mode B schemes have been specially designed for those with special needs, yet the Government is trying to force all young people into the private sector irrespective of whether it suits them.

They also do a great deal to help young people face up to and cope with the prospect that for a number of them, unemployment will be a way of life for some time to come.

Mode B1 schemes also cater for the most disadvantaged groups of young people, many of whom would not be offered Mode A places. These schemes also operate in some of the most disadvntaged areas of the country where Mode A provision is negligible.

What Can Be Done

The Youth Training Scheme has always received a fair amount of hostility from various sections of the Labour Movement. Quite correctly, it is considered a means of providing cheap labour and substituting for full-time jobs. But this criticism is applied only in relation to Mode A schemes. Mode B1 community schemes *do* exist for the benefit of the trainees and *do* attempt to provide real training and real help in the search for suitable full-time employment.

The only way these 18,000 training places and 5000 jobs can be saved is by persuading the Government to change its mind, rather a difficult proposition in the current climate.

We in ACTSS voluntary sector branches are trying to convince the TGWU to withdraw support from Mode A (a policy of non-cooperation) if redundancies take place. We are having some successes on a local level with shop-stewards in some industrial sections but a policy needs to be adopted by the union nationally.

I would hope that other unions follow this course. The TUC agreed to back YTS although they had some reservations mainly regarding cash and the conditions on the schemes. They agreed because of the strong commitment of YTS to Mode B schemes. Now that the commitment to Mode B has clearly gone, can they continue to support YTS as a whole?

Trade union representatives on Area Manpower Boards can also help. They must refuse to approve schemes that have been cut. If they do not, they are in a position of making their fellow trade unionists redundant. They must force the MSC back to the Government for increased resources, and actively divert money from some of the other MSC projects, e.g. the Community Programme.

Help is needed

Please contact any of the people listed below for information about what the cuts will really mean (some schemes just will not be able to carry on after the cuts have been implemented – meaning an even greater loss to the community).

Support those actively mounting a campaign against these cuts, such as Lambeth and the ACTSS YTS Action Committee.

Persuade your council to follow suit; your union branch to condemn the cuts; donate money (ACTSS 1/524 has given £200 towards the campaign); ask to have a speaker at your meeting. Use this opportunity to recruit YTS workers to the relevant ACTSS/NALGO branch. Ask me to send a model motion.

Quote from press statement issued by Moss Evans on 22nd March 1984. "There have been many bad experiences on the Youth Training Scheme. These have mainly appeared in Employer-based schemes. The Community-based schemes have, by comparison a far better record of providing help and training for young people. There are now calls within my union for us to withhold approval from new employer based schemes if these are to be at the expense of the superior community-based schemes".

Peter Nash

CONTACTS:
Springboard Islington. Martin Frost, 338/340 Upper Street, N1 (226 0508).
Islington Nacro. Howard Canatelli, 69/85 Old Street, EC1 (251 5361).
Stopgap. Ian Wright, 389B Harrow Road, W9 (969 9179).
Camden Ventures. Richard Kirkham, 12 Oval Road, NW1 (267 4551).
Peter Nash — Futures in North Kensington, 2 Kingsdown Close, W10 (727 6772).
Glenn Barclay (secretary ACTSS 1/524), Community Service Volunteers, 237 Pentonville Rd, N1 (278 6601).

Labour Left – into the lay Union Organisations!

Trades Councils have been around a long time. Many pre-date our own party. They are important organisations within the working class movement but how many of us are delegates to them and more importantly hold office?

Trades Councils must be the forum for local trade union branches, where events can be analysed, plans made, campaigns led and class issues and consciousness raised. In some outer London boroughs where Labour's electoral prospects are currently very poor one could argue that the local trades council is a more important body than the local party.

What priority should we give to trades councils? Given that a person can only attend a limited number of meetings, should some comrades forgo taking office in their CLP and concentrate on playing an active part on their trades council?

RUN DOWN

Recent experience in South West London has indicated that some trades councils are quite run down as far as delegates and affiliated branches are concerned. This limits their ability to be effective. Another limiting factor is the problem of 'generation gap', a problem familiar to some CLP activists. Good brothers and sisters with many years service on trades councils often react adversely to new ideas and the inexperience of new delegates. This adverse reaction is seldom clearly argued or based on trade union policy or political concerns but often stems from perceptions of power and the retention of office. A regrettable but familiar problem.

When all trade unionists are fighting against reaction from employers and the reactionary climate of the country which stems from the Tory Government's vigorous pursuit of its class interests, it's time to shake out reaction on trades councils and make them play a fuller part in the class struggle, within their localities.

Ensure your local union branch is affiliated to the appropriate trades council. You may be eligible to affiliate to more than one, depending on the area of your branch. Affiliate for the maximum number of eligible members. Send your full quota of delegates, make sure they report back regularly and fully. If you are or become a delegate make sure your trades council delegate(s) to the Greater London Association of Trades Councils (GLATC) report back in detail. This is most important as increasing numbers of trades councils are becoming concerned that GLATC suffers from the problems of trades councils set out above.

SEARCH OUT UNORGANISED WORKERS

Trades councils must seek the affiliation of all organised workers in the area. They must also search out all unorganised workers, subject to correctly establishing the appropriate union and in consultation with union officials.

The trades council should also have a formal liaison with the Labour Party Local Government Committee, in order to represent the views of organised workers, especially those in non-affiliated unions.

Lastly, close liaison must be maintained with local Labour Party Workplace Branches. Indeed trades councils should take a lead, through Labour Party members, in the formation of workplace branches.

F.L.Syratt; SOGAT '82 ATAES Branch; President Sutton & District Trades Union Council.

Defending Metropolitan Counties — Next Steps A view from London Transport



The one day strike on March 28th against the government's proposed Transport Bill and the abolition of the GLC was the first truly united response from London Transport workers against attacks that are already being launched on them as well as a political protest.

The tubes were completely shut and only fourteen out of sixty two bus garages were able to run scanty services. Everyone was surprised and delighted by the response. The strike brought out several issues which it is important to remember for the future.

Firstly, it showed that given some leadership, people will respond and do understand many of the issues concerned in the government takeover of LT (for which management are already preparing through sackings on petty disciplinary issues, more productivity, etc.) The District Council of the NUR, which is left-dominated — did not sit around complaining that the membership would do nothing, but went out and organised for the strike. The London Transport TUC which unites all the unions was forced into coordinated action. The fact that all the unions agreed to come out together gave members more confidence in the potential of success.

At the rank and file level organisation and preparation was crucial some NUR branches held mass meetings (not a tradition on London Transport) — we held one in my branch with Ken Livingstone to discuss the strike. On the buses, local isolation is a big danger. Flying pickets were organised and they found that in some garages, workers had been informed that the strike was unofficial. Pickets were able to discuss with them and even persuade some to come out. This just goes to show how flying pickets, contrary to what media propaganda tells us, are actally a way of extending democracy.

What then are the next steps and how can the widening support be galvanised, especially in the unions?

The most important task is the glaring need for more unity between the different campaigns and the unions involved. Different days of action involving predominantly different groups of workers each time will begin to wear out our forces. The GLC Labour members and the London Labour Party must take responsibility for this. In the past they have refused, praising the plethora of campaigns and structures and adding that in any case the Labour Party cannot interfere in the affairs of the unions.

This latter point is very current in the Labour party and very wrong. This is because in practice it can mean complete absence of cooperation with the unions except at a very bureaucratic level. In my view GLC Labour members have done very little to link up with the unions. Dave Wetzel, responsible to the GLC for LT elucidates this in his letter in the April issue of London Labour Briefing; the GLC has happily gone ahead with the implementation of Drive Only Operation and a policy of job loss regardless of what the rank and file workers want. Mr Wetzel tries to explain this in terms of political expediency at the time. However, workers whose jobs and conditions are threatened may not appreciate that this is what socialism is all about. This problem has become even more extreme in other local authorities where workers and Labour groups are locked in battle — the most notable examples in London being around the Direct Labour issue.

Despite all this workers have shown their support for the GLC and its overall policies. This despite the fact that no material has been directed to London Transport workers, few mass meetings organised for them, etc. Dave Wetzel says that Labour members do have close contact with the LT TUC — good — the problem is that this body is made up of full time officials for the most part and has in the past been rather slow to act. In my view members should get round the branches and depots, take up workers grievances in public on the LTE board, within ILEA and in the local authorities and help to galvanise them to fight to defend the councils and themselves. This kind of activity is *not* interfering with the unions — this is showing that you support them and regard them as the major allies in the fight. To do any less is to perpetuate a split between the unions and the Labour Party which with the new Trade Union laws coming in the autumn threatens to destroy our movement.


Melanie Friend (Report)

Through the NUR a proposal has gone forward to the London region of the Labour Party for a conference of all the unions and the Labour Party to plan the next stages of the campaign, to discuss suggestions for more action, for a referendum of Londoners on the issue, etc. We can only hope that this will be taken up here and in other areas and can be used as a first step toward the more united campaign based securely in the unions.

J. Arkwright
N.U.R.

Closure of Marylebone Station

Despite consistent denials, the British Rail Board has finally announced plans to close Marylebone Station and the lines between Marylebone and Northolt and Marylebone and Harrow with the subsequent closure of 4 inner suburban stations including Wembley Complex, the nearest station to Wembley Station.

The announcement came as no surprise to those working at Marylebone. Since last summer a *Save Marylebone Campaign* has been established which has the support of the rail unions, many other trade unions, Labour Parties and trades councils, passenger groups and local community groups. Passenger groups have held two public meetings along the line, a petition campaign has been initiated and local councils have got together to organise their own opposition to closure.

The closure of Marylebone Station will not only be the first major London terminus to close, leading to a deterioration in service to commuters, but will inevitably lead to loss of jobs. British Rail wants to shed 20,000 jobs over the next two years as part of its 'Corporate Plan' for the Rail industry. This plan, if put into effect, will not only result in the decimation of the national railways but open the way for privatisation of the profitable parts of British Rail, in line

Combatting the Multinational Company in the fight for jobs on the Dagenham Estate

The Motor Industry is the best example of the role of the multinational company. Ford clearly portray that role in taking advantage of the world capitalist crisis in order to reorganise production internationally in such a way that they maximise their profits.

Anyone who has ever visited the Dagenham Estate in East London would appreciate just how important a manufacturing site it is. Apart from the six plants operating on the site itself, there is the back-up of many services and component suppliers. Local communities in East London and beyond are very interested in Ford Plants as additional sources of income and employment, and any cut-back or closure is of concern to the local council in the loss of revenue.

MARKET LEADERSHIP

Ford has enjoyed in this country market leadership for many years consistently of 30% of the domestic car sales. Indeed Ford profits in this country have financed building plants abroad.

But Bill Hayden, Vice-President, Ford of Europe recently met Essex MPs, GLC representatives and local councillors, who were told by Hayden that the labour force on the Dagenham Estate will have to be reduced to 13,500 by the end of 1985, further evidence of a multinational company from thousands of miles away determining the fate of jobs in Dagenham.

STRONG AND UNITED CAMPAIGN

The call has been made for a strong and united campaign to maintain the Dagenham Estate as an integrated and comprehensive manufacturing centre, which is still vital to the future job security at Dagenham in spite of the decision of the workers not to fight against the Foundry closure.

Extensive meetings are now taking place between the Plant managements and shop stewards on improved efficiency proposals, to win support of the workers for these proposals and ensure survival of plants threatened with closure.

Closer working and unity of the workforce with increased liaison and co-ordination with the Shop Stewards Committees, Trade Union Officials and Members of Parliament must prevail if we are to combat the role of the multinational company in running down the Dagenham Estate.

(by Sid Harraway, Ford Shop Steward)

LIMES GROVE: MAKE IT OFFICIAL!

Glyn Beagley, Chair, S.E. London Medical Branch, ASTMS (in a personal capacity)

IN THE March Briefing, we reported on the dispute at the Limes Grove Medical Practice in Lewisham. The Practice was under threat because the Partner, Dr Barbara Jacobs had announced her intention to break the collective agreement on equal pay and had unilaterally sacked two of the workers. Glyn Beagley reports on the current situation.

The dispute continues. One of the sacked workers has left the practice but is still seeking to have her dismissal overturned. The other, Bee Briggs, the psychotherapist, is still working in. She is fully supported by the ASTMS Group at Limes Grove, and by the S E London Medical Branch.

Barbara Jacobs is on maternity leave but has now taken court proceedings to bar Bee from entering the premises, on the grounds that since she is sacked, she is now trespassing!

This new development puts ASTMS officials on the spot. The National Officer, Terry Comerford, has seen his role as mediating between the Partner – who is a member of the MPU, the doctors' section of ASTMS – and the other members of the collective. ASTMS has refused to make the dispute official or provide Legal Department assistance. Now ASTMS must stop mediating (ACAS can do that!) and start organising support.

The main danger is that Dr Jacobs is considering closing the premises at Limes Grove and moving to another site, thus ending the collective for good.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We call on all those who are interested in seeing a new approach to health care to defend this unique collective by:

1. Getting your Labour Party, trades union, etc to support the work-in by one of the sacked workers, who is still treating patients.

2. Get donations to support the campaign and pay the sacked worker. (Monies to ASTMS SE London Medical Branch, 72 Dalberg Road, London SW2 1AW).

3. Invite a speaker from Limes Grove who will be able to give more information on the dispute and the unique service the Practice provides. (Address: 43a Limes Grove, London SE13, phone: 853 5544).

SUPPORT SO FAR

The workers at Limes Grove have been supported in their dispute by: ASTMS No.8 Divisional Health Services Advisory Committee, ASTMS Branches: SE London Medical, N London Medical, NE London Medical, W London Medical, London Publishing, ASTMS Groups: Royal Dental Hospital, Institute of Psychiatry, Kings College Hospital, SELM Speech Therapists'; Greenwich NALGO, S London ACTSS, Lewisham and Deptford Trades Council, W Lewisham and E Lewisham Labour Parties, London Health Emergency Campaign, Deptford Women's Employment Centre, Outwrite Women's Newspaper, Spare Rib, Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign, Release.

with Tory policy.

The Marylebone branch of the National Union of Railwaymen organised an open meeting for all those working at Marylebone. Some members were concerned with redundancy and transfer payments. A Kent miner, who had been invited to address the meeting on the miners' dispute, intervened to say that they had been through the same discussions over the last two years. It was one of the main reasons why there were divisions inside the NUM today, because one miner had been set against another, one pit against another and so on. At the end of the meeting it was agreed unanimously that we would oppose closure of the station, loss of any jobs and a reduction in services. British Rail is trying to convince passengers that they will have a better service, a blatant lie.

NOT INEVITABLE

Proposals are going before both Marylebone NUR and ASLEF (train drivers) branches to agree to hold regular joint meetings between the two branches to discuss action on the closure threat and the joint pay claim (see article in National Briefing supplement for further details on the pay claim). A public meeting is being planned in the near future.

To date there has been no *public* response from any of the rail unions' national leadershiops on the threat to close Marylebone. The station has been under sentence of death for the past 20 years and some people regard it as inevitable. But the closure of the station has to now be seen in the context of the attacks of the nationalised railway industry as a whole. The workers at Marylebone cannot be left isolated, to fight their battles alone. It is a battle for all railworkers nationally. We at Marylebone are beginning to realise that we too have to support those who are being attacked in other sections of our industry and that there has to be a national response from our union leaderships. The miners strike has also shown some of us not only how it is possible to win but that with united action we can win.

Tessa Van Gelderen
Marylebone NUR
Brent South CLP

ILEA's mid-term report

(A comment on the ILEA Labour Group Report presented to the Greater London Labour Party Annual Meeting. 3rd and 4th March)

The report of the ILEA Labour Group by Frances Morrell, Ruth Gee and Lesley Hammond was a masterpiece of understatement as far as bread and butter issues were concerned. Doubts about the report on London Region LP Executive had been mollified by Ken Livingstone and Richard Balfe, who piloted through the report's acceptance. The London Conference had little time to discuss the niceties of the report. A number of points, however, need clarification.

"We have adopted a policy of preferring redeployment to redundancy and, in spite of falling rolls that could have led to a loss of 350 teacher posts, have maintained near constant teacher numbers". In 1979 ILEA employed 23,179 teachers in schools; in 1983 only 21,008 were employed – a loss of 2,171 jobs in 4 years. 'Near constant teacher numbers' therefore means a job loss of 9.4%. The 1984 figures will reveal further job loss.

Compulsory Redeployment

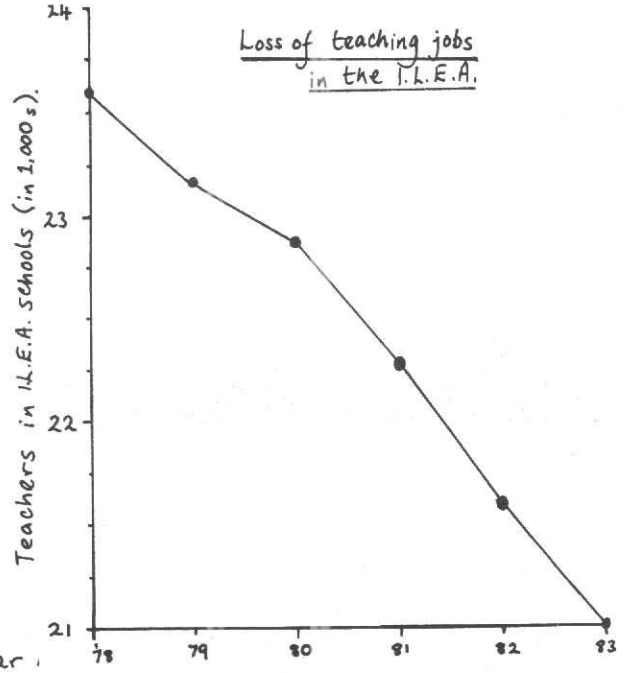
Opposition to compulsory redeployment is central to the struggle to improve the quality and nature of Inner London education. ILEA schoolchildren have a variety of problems and special needs such as the uncertain motivation of many working class children, aggravated and magnified by the unsuitability of secondary school curricula and the demands imposed by an academic, university-orientated (and dictated) examination system; and the number of pupils whose first language is not English (16% of 50,353 pupils in January 1983). The strategy most likely to have a measurable impact on these and many other problems would be the reduction of class sizes brought about by a decrease in the pupil teacher ratio (PTR).

Falling rolls in schools could have led to a substantial improvement in the PTR if staffing numbers had been maintained (or increased). Ken Livingstone always used to argue for this when he represented Hackney North on the GLC. Now that he is in a position to do something about it, he seems less sure of himself. The ILEA, however, has resisted such improvements, and for the last twenty years has stubbornly insisted on maintaining a basic PTR of 17:1 for the calculation of the teacher establishments in schools. A PTR of 17:1 does not mean that there are 17 pupils in every class in every school. Head teachers and senior teachers with administrative roles are included in this calculation and since they do less actual teaching than an ordinary teacher, the effective PTR will be higher than the basic 17.1. The effective PTR is also worsened by the problems presented by the upper school curricula.

Sixth forms in schools are generally small but the pupils require to study a variety of subjects. The proper belief that a sixth former who desires to study a subject should be entitled to do so has meant that sixth form classes are usually not large (less than 10 pupils). This in turn increases (worsens) the effective PTR in the lower school.

Comprehensive Opportunities

Secondly, pupils in years 4 and 5 of the secondary schools have traditionally been offered a wide choice of subjects, academic and non-academic, to provide comprehensive opportunities for development. Parents and pupils value a large range of 4th year option choices and judge a school according to the opportunities offered. The richness of choice, however, means that many 4th and 5th years classes are small (about 15 pupils/teacher or less) – a situation that is good for the elder pupils but which has a deleterious effect on class sizes in years 1, 2 and 3 because fewer teachers are available to teach them.



To be fair to ILEA, the overall PTR in secondary schools is not 17:1 but 13.2:1 – a figure which is either second best or third best in the whole country. The ILEA PTR has improved steadily since 1963, when it was 18.1:1. The problems outlined above, however, mean that class sizes in the lower school tend to hover around 25 to 30 pupils per teacher with schools relying heavily on pupil absenteeism to make the situation half manageable. Since most classrooms have significant numbers of non-readers and non-English speakers, 25-30 pupils/teacher is far too large.

Another problem with ILEA's current PTR of 13.2:1 is that the improvement that it represents over the notional 17:1 on which the authority bases its resource allocation has never been consolidated. ILEA makes allocations for special needs of various kinds but never concedes that the 'extra teachers' so allocated are part of basic staffing. Thus when ILEA comes under Government pressure to make cuts, it is able to say to schools that they are over-staffed because their PTR is better than 17:1. No Inner London school actually operates on a PTR of 17:1, nor could any possibly manage on such a ratio. What has been happening recently in ILEA is that many schools, singled out on the basis of criteria which were not educational, have had their PTRs pushed up well above the ILEA average by compulsory transfer.

Many schools hit in this way have records of militancy in defednce of their working conditions and their pupils. The educational aimlessness of the transfers, however, suggests that they are part of a softening-up process in preparation for this year's redundancies, voluntary or otherwise. (We should discount Frances Morrell's statement to conference about no redundancies in light of the more recent statement in ILEA's newspaper *Contact*, 9.3.84, on teacher redundancies, which talks of 'voluntary severance').

Reading between the lies

We are now in a better position to interpret some of the statements in the ILEA Labour Group report.

'During the next year, we will be re-examining the relevance to secondary pupils of the subjects that they are taught...' The likely outcome is that subject choices will be lost from the upper school curriculum in secondary schools so as to make more teachers available for years 1 to 3 and cut down the large class sizes. Such a policy would limit the choices open to 4th and 5th years and make the likelihood of all pupils finding satisfactory examination courses and receiving a genuine comprehensive education even more remote. Educationally this would be disastrous. In the past, such lack of choice has been ILEA's classic excuse for closing small schools.

The purpose of ILEA's 16-19 Review Sub-Committee is now transparent. Sixth form teaching within secondary schools is considered uneconomic because of small class sizes. The benefits that a sixth form gives to a school's community are discounted in the interests of fiscal streamlining. Sixth form centres will require fewer teachers. Those 'released' by the change can either be redeployed teaching in 11-16 schools or could be made redundant. In spite of the assurances which the authority will give, however, the sixth form centres are unlikely to accommodate all those who would wish to stay on after 16 and the courses they offer will not be able to adapt as flexibly to 16+ demand. 'A' level courses will not be run in schools for classes of less than 10. This will effectively close all sixth form work in schools. For the majority of teachers who will lose their sixth form teaching in schools and not find teaching posts in the sixth form centres, the lack of stimulating and demanding course work will be stultifying and will have a knock-on effect in the lower school.

Workers' rights aside, ILEA's policy of teacher redeployment only makes sense if the teaching situation in schools, reflected by class size, is satisfactory. The exceptional needs of London children mean that class sizes are still too large. Judging by the truancy rate or by the examination successes, far too many children are being failed by our schools. It is teachers that are needed to rectify the situation – not creative accounting.

According to ILEA's budget consultation document (1984/5). to avoid forced movement of teachers in their schools would cost £5 million. Each 1p on ILEA s precept brings in approximately £11.29 million from the boroughs. The cost of no teacher movement is therefore less than 0.5p on the precept. In the context of ILEA's 8op precept in 1984 (compared with 77p in 1983), the cost of abandoning its anti teacher policy and presenting a united front to the Tory government would have been negligible. ILEA's budget in fact is savaging school resources against worsening the education service. The real teacher shortage in classrooms is being aggravated by fewer books less paper and a shortage of resources in general.

The ILEA Labour Group report is notably disingenuous about its negotiations with teachers. It mentions the offer of permanent contracts for some part-time teachers. It also mentions an offer of increased supply cover. What it omits to say is that the offer of a 35% improvement in supply cover (for absent teachers) was conditional on teachers agreeing to cover all other teacher absence – something to which teachers will never agree Teaching is one of the few trades where the workers are not only expected to do their own jobs but where the employer can insist on the jobs of any absent teacher being done without extra payments. The Report also omits to mention that the part-time contracts offer which the authority boasts of as progressive was conditionally linked to its entirely unacceptable offer on cover



John Chapman.

Frances Morrell addresses Democracy Day demonstration.

In the context of the real cutbacks in the education service, ILEA's much-vaunted equal opportunities and multi-cultural initiatives, vital though they are. look like hollow and shabby attempts at window-dressing. With a rapidly deteriorating situation in schools most teachers are sinking into day-to-day survival and have no enthusiasm for ILEA's pious statements. Compulsory transfer as a weapon of intimidation, threatened large-scale redundancies, voluntary or otherwise, and 10 years of low pay settlements, have all contributed to a massive decline in morale and to cynicism about ILEA's intentions.

Not only does the Labour Party need to be serious about the defence of the institution of the ILEA -- it needs to be serious about the quality of the service delivered and the conditions of service of its workforce. Paying lip service to the fight to save local government while simultaneously endorsing cuts in London education, as the Labour Party did this year, is going to convince no one of the need to fight to save ILEA.

Keith Lichman,
Hackney North CLP

A reply to Keith Lichman

Dear Briefing,

Keith Lichman's article in the April Briefing takes the Education debate to an all time low! According to him manual workers are dupes of the ILEA leadership. This is typical of the elitism of the NUT and their total lack of class solidarity.

What is the truth of the matter? The manual unions agreed a common line at NUPE's request. At no time was the ILEA leadership involved. The NUPE decision (which the T&G and the G&M followed) was based on what was best for education in London and what was best for *our* members.

NUPE have a legitimate case in this dispute which unfortunately CLP's have either not heard of or ignored. For years our education service and the school meals service has run on the backs of our underpaid badly protected members in the schools. In the past NUT members have followed their leaders and crossed NUPE picket lines. Now under a new ILEA leadership there have been limited advances: the school meal service is defended, the holiday retaining fee is maintained, some progress on low pay has been made. All these limited advances cost money, but not teachers' jobs. Meanwhile teachers have gained voluntary transfer scheme, voluntary severance, higher grades for supply teachers. Yet still they pursue their campaign against transfer knowing only too well that the cost will be met, if at all, at our members' expense.

What was our position at Regional Conference? Firstly, a clear unambiguous defence of the GLC/ILEA which we moved. Secondly, a clear cut criticism of the Labour Group of the GLC for lack of progress on low pay. Thirdly, questions to ILEA on our negotiations. Fourthly, opposition to the Hackney North amendment.

We are opposed to compulsory redundancies. Our members do not yet have that protection. But we find it odd to say the least that comrades who on other occasions support low paid manual workers, the overwhelming majority of whom are women on this occasion, seem to support a privileged WASP, male domianted, sectional claim.

Further, the ILEA leaderships argument has not been answered? How can we defend a fully comprehensive system if class sizes and pupil/teacher ratios vary so greatly in the system. There clearly has to be a redistribution. Of course supply teachers are a stop gap measure when teachers refuse to move on grounds of disruption of classes but that clearly cannot be good for the pupils.

Finally, when we are accused of falling for ILEA's divide and rule tactics we must ask — when will ILTA approach us for discussions? Comrades should realise we have *never* been asked for our view or support. Unfortunately for the NUT we are left between them and ILEA. As the votes showed NUPE are *not* pawns in anyone else's game.

Stuart Madewell.
(NUPE delegate to GLLP Conference, writing in a personal capacity.)

Redbridge education - Labour on the offensive

Since last autumn Redbridge has been the centre of a major education debate, prompted in part by the fall in the number of pupils reaching secondary school age in the next decade but more importantly by the decision of the Tory council to use falling rolls to cut schools and strengthen selection.

To understand the nature of the campaign one first has to look at the Tory council, deeply divided between the two options that they have put forward to the people. The first known as 'option A' is to keep the two existing Grammar schools, close two 'comprehensives', amalgamate two others and shut a number of sites. At present Redbridge Grammars cream off about 9% of children, but under this plan this figure would increase steadily. Option A is favoured by the Tory centre and 'wets' (although Redbridge 'wets' would be rather dry in other boroughs). The second preferred alternative 'option D' is for the establishment of two further grammar schools, that would mean 25% of children beind educated in selective schools. The remaining schools would be renamed 'high' schools (Secondary modern was considered by the Tories to be too emotive a term). The supporters of option D, the hard liners, bring forward arguments which come close to 'survival of the fittest'. They attempt to sell their 'high' schools on the back of the MSC/TVEI initiative where technological education is sufficient for 75% while academic education is the preserve of the select 25%.

ON THE OFFENSIVE

From the start the three CLP's and the Labour Group of Councillors have been on the offensive to promote the goal of fully comprehensive education, which meant shutting the two existing Grammars while maintaining all the existing community based schools. The party has consistently argued that falling rolls should be used to increase ecucational opportunity, cut class size and reduce pupil teacher ratios.

The Labour Party was central to the establishment of the Redbridge Campaign for Comprehensive Education, but soon it became apparent that this demand had a much wider support than the party's base in Redbridge. Other political organisations, parents associations, teacher trade unions have all voiced the same opinion that only fully non-selective comprehensive education would cater for the needs of all the borough's children.

The local press has given wide coverage to the issue, a series of petitions has been presented, schools and houses have been leafletted and 2500 people marched through Ilford in March to protest at the council's plan.

The Tory council decided to open up a 'consultative' process inviting parents to attend meetings where the Director of Education would explain the range and nature of the 'problem', in their words 'too many schools not enough children'. After the Chair of Education spelt out the councils proposals, at meeting after meeting parents and teachers spoke out for comprehensives. The support for the retention or expansion of selection was minimal.

COUNCIL BY-ELECTIONS

Mid-way through the procedure, two council by-elections were held, both in safe Tory wards. In one where the Labour Party has worked hard over a number of years the Tory majority was cut by more than a half. In the other wards where the Liberals have worked at 'paving stone' level they defeated the Tory, while the Labour vote remained constant.

The Council has issued a consultative form to be filled in by parents. The general feeling is that the form has been ambiguously worded to diffuse opposition to the council's options. To agree with the councils options requires just a tick, to oppose and propose comprehensive education requires the individual to write in the suggestion. Nevertheless the mood of parents seems to have been to continue to press for comprehensives. Many parents of pre-school age children have complained that they have been excluded from having a say in their childrens' future.

The feelings of parents, teachers and the community became incensed when the Chair of the Education Committee stated that the council was in no way bound by the consultative procedure, that it was only to guide their decision. People naturally felt cheated, and that the exercise was simply a cosmetic one. To ease his way out of a tight corner the Chair explained that the council would want to listen to governing bodies, in the knowledge that every governing body has a massive in-built majority.

CREDIBILITY ENHANCED

At the present time we await the outcome of the poll. The credibility of the Labour Party has been enhanced by the way it has conducted itself. In the council it has shown itself to be the opposition, in the community it has endeavoured to explain the issue and put over policy.

A number of issues remain. The unity of the movement around comprehensive education has been formed without any real discussion of 16-19 education where real differences exist between party policy and that of the N.U.T. and other teachers' bodies. More important at the present however is the tactics to pursue in the coming months should the council press ahead in the face of large scale opposition. The Labour group face the problems of how to interpret the splits in the Tories which could leave them holding the balance of power on the issue. In any case school reorganisation would not take place until September 1985 and we have a responsibility to keep the issue alive as it will be a major factor in the borough elections in May 1986.

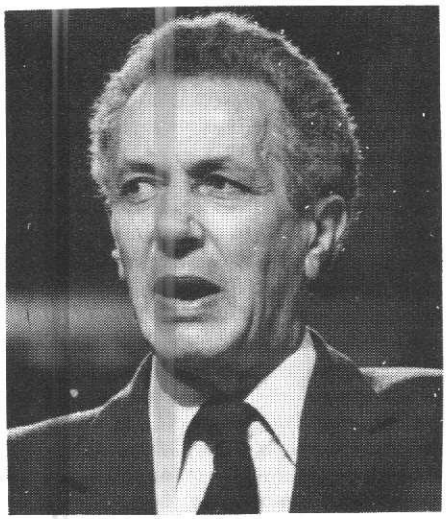
Paul Jeater Ilford North CLP

Stop Press: 48% of the questionnaires returned from parents demanded a fully comprehensive system, and only 13% wanted a return to full selection. The schools Sub-Committee is meeting on April 30th, and a big rally and lobby of councillors has been planned for that date.

Direct Elections for ILEA

The Government have conceded direct elections for the ILEA. Sir Keith Joseph announced this on April 5th. Previously ILEA was to be run by councillors nominated onto a joint education board from the twelve inner borough councils. Two thousand organisations and individuals wrote to the Government to say they thought the plans for ILEA were unworkable. Three wrote to say they agreed! Over 100,000 Londoners signed "We need ILEA" petitions. In the face of such opposition it is not surprising the Government eventually backed down. But it is just the first of many victories we need to go on to achieve.

ILEA will still be rate-capped and the cuts would be truly massive. Over and above this the Government will have direct control of ILEA's budget and maximum teaching and non-teaching staff numbers until 1990. And



David Fowler.

KEITH JOSEPH

the governing bodies of the schools will have 75% of the political places appointed by borough councils and not ILEA. For the area I represent this would be a nightmare with Wandsworth's Tory Council making

DISASTER FOR THE DISABLED!

Linda Clarke
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP

For the majority of people being mobile is like breathing, you don't have to think about it or worry about it, the right bits just move! Most of the time I have to be conscious of every move I make when getting from A to B (whenever I've thought about something else I've landed flat on my face!) I also suffer from fatigue and extreme weakness so I can't walk very far. You can imagine the problems I have had with travelling!

OUR LIVES IMPROVED

Last year 2 things appeared for disabled people which have changed my life for the better, thanks to the GLC! The GLC Taxi Card for Disabled People is available in some London Boroughs and in a few months will be extended to the whole of London. There are 3 black taxi companies taking part in the scheme and when I need a taxi I just have to make a phone booking and quote the GLC number and my card number etc. Up to the first £6 shown on the meter I only have to pay £1, I pay everything over the £6, so if £8 shows on the meter I pay £3. The GLC pays the remainder of the fare owing to the taxi company; they also pay the tips and extra charges for luggage etc. Friends travelling with me pay 15p each. The other service I can now use is Haringey Dial-A-Ride for disabled people which is partly funded by the GLC. They have specially adapted vehicles to take wheelchairs and will take me anywhere within the Borough for 20p for the first mile, maximum charge 80p. I also now get free travel on London Transport from 9.30am onwards (I use to pay a concessionary fare until just over a year go when it became completely free).

THE FEARS

But the feeling of security and freedom to get about without worry is clouded with fears for the future. I am now gravely at risk of losing all of these precious things. How dare those rich, able-bodied Tories try to take my mobility away from me, how dare they take away our right to vote for London, for *our* services! All of you reading this must make everyone you meet aware of the benefits that disabled people are now enjoying because of the socialist policies of the GLC. When the GLC Taxi Card is made available to all disabled people in London, the GLC should advertise it on TV like it does the Festival Hall (how about "Disabled people can't enjoy the pleasures of the GLC Festival Hall without a GLC Taxi Card!").

Just because we are a minority doesn't mean the majority of people should remain ignorant of our needs! Who will pay for the Taxi Card and Haringey Dial-A-Ride if the GLC goes; the Councils certainly won't have the money to take them on, especially when rate-capping comes in. If London Transport is taken away from the GLC and the fares double, how are local Social Services going to afford to pay for our free disabled travel passes? The GLC are also thinking about ways to improve buses and tubes to make them more accessible (eg the campaign against one-person operated buses). I recently had an experience of a driver closing the doors on me just as I was getting out of my wheelchair, driving off because he couldn't be bothered to wait. This would never happen on conductor buses; they are usually very helpful towards disabled people. The GLC Disabled Women's Working Group (part of the Women's Committee) have already put forward many proposals about accessibility on London Transport. The last thing Government Quangos will have is a disabled women's Transport Group!

THE FIGHT

Giving out stickers and balloons to save the GLC and against rate-capping is good and important, but we won't save anything without unions taking mass industrial action. One-day London Transport stoppages are great but a longer strike is needed with other unions in support to stop the LT Bill becoming legislation in a few months' time. If the LT Bill is passed, then how can the GLC be saved? The GLC, Labour Party and Unions have got to work together to defeat this Bill NOW! The GLC is actively caring for people in many ways and this *must* be put across to the public. You can be sure I won't be giving up my new found mobility or my democratic right to vote for the GLC without a fight to the end!

the bulk of the appointments and using the power to fill the governing bodies with some of the nastiest people in London. Squeezed between socialist policies from County Hall and governing bodies controlled by right-wing Tories, the schools wouldn't know if they were coming or going.

With direct elections likely to be in 1986, it means education in innner London would have three different authorities running it between May 1985 and May 1986!

So we must fight on. More petitions, more public meetings (where we are winning hands down against feeble Tory arguments and exposing them to parents), more visits to Tory MPs' advice sessions, more letters to Tory MPs', more letters to the Press, more demonstrations and strikes. If education is worthy of direct elections then so is public transport, the fire service, regional planning, the arts and all the other GLC services. This concession on direct elections for ILEA must be used to expose the disunity in the Tory ranks and the inconsistency of their arguments and we must use it to strengthen our resolve to save the GLC.

'EDUCATIONAL EXPERTS'

... And just a word about having direct elections for an education authority alone. What sort of people will have the confidence to put themselves forward for selection and election? It will be mainly "educational experts" and I fear working-class parents whose expertise comes from having children at ILEA schools will not feel confident or articulate enough to compete for selection in what could become a rather exclusive market.

Andy Harris
GLC/ILEA Member for Putney

PS: In appreciation of Cath Tate's article in last month's Briefing I've tried to make my contribution less "bossy".

Letter

For SCPS Affiliation to the Labour Party

Dear Comrades,

At the annual general meeting of the East London DHSS branch of the Society of Civil and Public Servants the following motion was passed for submission to this years annual conference.

"That this conference believes that this union should play a full role in the political process of the trade union movement. Conference recognises that the Labour Party is the political party of the trade union movement. It is also the only party fighting for union rights, to defend the welfare state and against the cuts and rising unemployment.

The union executive is therefore instructed to ballot the membership as to whether the SCPS should affiliate to the Labour Party."

It is vitally important that as many branches as possible mandate their delegates to support this motion and ensure it is passed at conference.

If passed this motion would enable socialists to reply to the gathering attacks on political activists in the Civil Service and also encourage similar attempts at affiliation in other white collar unions.

Further information about the motion and also the Broad Left in the SCPS can be obtained from the address below.

Yours Fraternally,

Tony Browne

NEXT ISSUE

Next London Editorial Board. Monday 21st May at 6.30pm at County Hall.

Next issue out: May 17th. Deadline for articles. Saturday May 5th.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

Outwrite Women's Newspaper

Developing an anti-imperialist feminism

Outwrite Women's Newspaper is published monthly and campaigns against women's oppression, all types of racism, imperialism and lesbian oppression. It covers news of and has features on women's struggles and achievements internationally. Outwrite works to develop and campaign for an anti-racist and anti-imperialist feminism. Sarah Roelofs, for Labour Briefing, spoke with Shaila, who is from India, and Teresa, who is from Chile. They are Outwrite's only paid workers (by means of a GLC grant).

SR: Why and how did Outwrite come to be set up? What were your aims?

Shaila: The idea for a national women's newspaper goes back to the Feminist Publications conference in 1978. There was a workshop on 'did we need a national newspaper?'. It was felt that the left, for example, had 10 weekly papers at least, while there was nothing that said quickly and cheaply what women around the world were thinking and doing – and what they were achieving. There was nothing that could be sold by women on the streets and at meetings in an agitational way.

During 1981 five women – an Iranian, an Afro-Caribbean British woman, an Indian, an Arab and an English woman – were meeting regularly. The first Black women's conference had happened and Black women were getting much more active. Black women felt very alienated from the white middle class feminist journals that existed then, most of which didn't carry news about what Black women were doing. Black women's issues and international women's issues weren't being covered while white women were catered for to a much greater extent. And in mixed Black publications Black women were also invisible. We needed to counter this invisibility of Black women on both sides – in the women's and Black movements. It was also felt that British women should step out of their insularity. Most of the women's newsletters and journals catered for British women's domestic needs and their knowledge of what was happening beyond the Channel was decidedly skimpy.

Teresa: Britain is one of the most egocentric states going! The British are kept in ignorance of what is really going on and the media collude in this, so there is appalling ignorance of politics in the Third World, – and in fact of politics here.



Shaila: And British people are ignorant of the part that Britain has played in carving up the world. Even the British working-class are very imperialistic – they take pride from that image – just look at the Falklands war. The left fails too, to be really internationalist in perspective. I've read left papers such as Socialist Action and Black women are invisible there too. There's no insight into people's everyday lives and experiences.

Teresa: The internationalism of the left isn't real internationalism – it's used to give a platform to their own ideas. And most of those ideas concern romantic stories about brave,

(CONTINUED OVER)

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

(CONTINUED)

Developing an anti-imperialist feminism

glamorous, guerrilla men. It's like a Marxist Mills and Boon! They never say anything about the social cost that women have to bear – women are only mentioned when they join with the men. So the left's solidarity work is quite patronising and missionary.

Shaila: So we wanted a newspaper for all women with a strong internationalist emphasis – covering Third World and Black women's struggles. We also felt it was crucial to bring out the differences between women – all women are oppressed, but different women are oppressed as just that – differently.

Teresa: Patriarchy is universal, but women's situations can be very different. And many of the things that women suffer from are not directly economic which is mostly how the left sees it. Women in Chile are often prevented from being politically active by their men. Women have to fight ideological battles against men as well. A woman commander of a women's battalion in El Salvador has said 'Up here in the mountains we are not only going to bury imperialism, but we are also going to bury machismo as well' – and I think that's a really good way of putting it.

Shaila: There is such a lack of awareness of how women lead their lives in the rest of the world. And so little understanding of the gaps between women, between a feminist sociology lecturer here and a woman untouchable in India. British feminism can't unite all these women.

We were very tired of being told what feminism was, that to be a successful feminist you had to go by the US and British definition. Women in other countries organise in their own way, but still place women first. *Outwrite* hopes to bring this out. The feminism that the world knows of is Western feminism. Internationally women's self-definition has to be respected and paid attention to.

During the summer of 1981 the collective grew until it was two-thirds white women. We weren't particularly happy with this, but we needed the practical support. Up until recently it's been mostly white women who have had journalistic and printing and publishing skills. We didn't get much support from the main women's journals, and what we did get was sometimes quite patronising and hurtful – like big sister to little sister. We had some support from Socialist Challenge and from East End News, and from Black women's groups.

SR: When did the first issue come out?

Shaila: International Women's Day 1982. That was our deadline. And we made it, but only just! Our print run now is 8,000, we sell 7,000. The price has just gone up from 20p to 30p. We'd really like to publish twice a month but we just haven't got the resources. Everything we get is ploughed back into the paper.

The collective now is mostly Black women and women of colour, with 8 to 5 white women. It's closed to white women now. Some of the women are mothers and there's different class backgrounds. More than half are lesbians.

Teresa: We see ourselves as helping to develop an anti-imperialist feminism. We need to be able to fight imperialism without losing our feminism. We like to think that *Outwrite* is an instrument in this.

Shaila: In the beginning we were very angry, we were having to fight to make ourselves visible. Now we feel we can be more thoughtful. There's a wide range of views in the paper and sometimes there are contradictions in the same issue. I think that's quite healthy, that there is no one line.

Teresa: To be a feminist anti-imperialist you need to take up the effect that imperialism has on our personal lives. We have long debates and discussions in the collective on the relationship between anti-imperialism and feminism and between lesbianism and socialism. There must be a place for lesbianism in socialist struggle.

Shaila: We are united in thinking that anti-imperialism is a feminist issue. I would call myself a socialist with a small s as I have socialist principles, but I would also call myself a radical feminist because of the powerlessness of women vis a vis men. We need positive discrimination if we are to take power.

Teresa: Socialist men need to be so much more aware of their privileges.

Shaila: Unless there is a strong autonomous women's movement we simply get rid of one lot of men in power only to have them replaced with another lot.

Teresa: I think the radicalisation of women in Nicaragua was inevitable and led to the formation of the Women's Organisation. And in El Salvador there are now women only battalions. Women are increasingly realising their own strength.

Shaila: We see so often how women are let down by the socialist or national liberation struggle. We were recently sent an article from some Zimbabwe women which was quite bitter and angry. They described how they had fought side by side with the men for national liberation and now they were side by side with no one. Any changes have been short lived.

SR: Do you feel Outwrite has been recognised enough?

Shaila: Well, we're recognised as part of the alternative media – the feminist alternative media. We've been featured 3 times in Private Eye and once in the Tatler! The left has responded quite opportunistically generally – that is they have articles from *Outwrite* or mention it when they think its the right time and will sell their paper.

SR: What do you think of the Labour Party?

Shaila: Not much. Last June for the General Election we carried a fron page editorial saying VOTE LABOUR, because we thought they were the best of a bad bunch and women stand a better chance with Labour. Since then we've had articles on women in the Labour Party, because we want to cover as wide a range of things as possible and there are many feminists in the Labour Party.

Subscribe to Outwrite

Outwrite is produced from a tiny room in an old warehouse near Bethnal Green. They rely heavily on volunteers and the commitment of their collective. If any women would like to help out, contact Outwrite at: Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2. Tel. 01-729-4575. Have you got a subscription to Outwrite? If not you can send for a free copy and subscription details to the above address. Many Labour women haven't heard of Outwrite yet. Do you think you could sell it in your women's section? You don't have to take many (maybe 5 or 10 a month?), but every Outwrite sold helps it to become more widely known and popular!

Politics of kinship

A conference on "Feminism and the politics of kinship" is to be held in September (8th & 9th).

A 'taster' workshop is to be held to which all are invited on Sunday May 13th at 39 Clova Rd E7 at 2.00pm (creche).

The theme is Jealousy.

Please come! Phone Kate 733-0861 for further information.

Social Anthropology

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 undergrounds). A course of seven lectures, starting April 30th. Mixed.*

NEXT ISSUE:

In the next issue of the Streetlife Supplement we will be continuing the theme of 'coming out'.

Letters and articles should be sent to *Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1* by *May 7th.*

STREETLIFE SUPPLEMENT MEETING

The next meeting of the Streetlife Supplement will take place on Thursday 17th May at 8pm at County Hall. All welcome to attend.

The agony of leaving my children

My burden of guilt

Leaving out certain details of my past became automatic for several years for me and that only changed when circumstances made it easier for me to reveal them. I didn't decide to 'come out' until it was safe I suppose. The event that created the need for this silence was leaving my husband and three children in 1976 after living with him for eleven years.

I had lived with him from when I was nineteen and we had been through some hard times. We lived a lot of that time in Brixton – he was black and I was white. Brixton wasn't a fashionable place to live in 1965 and women who lived with black men then were all taken to be prostitutes, which made getting a room hard. All the white landlords said on their ads 'Sorry – no coloureds' and the black landlords didn't want bad white girls in their places.

THREE CHILDREN IN FOUR YEARS

I had three children in four years and we were hard up all the time. Strangely enough by the time I decided to leave him things were materially a bit better. He was very possessive and intimidating. The future seemed to offer no improvements. He had his life style and with difficulty I tried to have one too.

We had split twice before and I had taken the children both times. Now I felt I mattered in my own right and that they would be better off with the stability of their school friends and familiar home. I knew he could cope with the domestic bits. Two women friends encouraged me to take the final step, something he never forgave them for. If he could have separated me from other people's influence he always felt things would be okay. They were leading me astray.

I tried to go back twice within the first few weeks. I felt so unhappy, but soon realised that he was bent on revenge and would make me even more captive than I had been before. He then 'gave' me the eldest child.

RIDDLED WITH GUILT

Because I felt riddled with guilt and felt I had no rights over the other two children, and because I still held out hope that he would become more reasonable, I didn't contest custody or access for some months. This was a fatal mistake.

It wasn't to be for another two years before I was to see them again, many visits to court, broken access orders and welfare reports later. All was very costly, even with legal aid and my low wage. During that time neither the eldest son with me, nor myself told anyone about the other children. It was too painful for my part – shameful. How could a loving mother leave her children? The other two children also blotted out their past to their friends.

Still the whole thing remained buried never discussed at work and only disclosed to a few close friends. Then my exhusband said the children could come to my home and I proudly told people 'This is my other son and daughter', much to their surprise.

I didn't tell everyone though, and it wasn't until three years ago when because my exhusband wasn't available to look after the children for two years that they came to live with me and I could talk about all three of them to people at work.

PAIN AND MISERY

I have gradually overcome the enormous guilt I felt about leaving them. It affected all three children and one of them now lives with his father again. He's very muddled and unhappy, and is currently making me suffer two. 'If only this – if only that', he says.

I don't regret what I did but I do regret the pain and misery that we all went through and are still feeling.

My ex-husband's pride, ego, what ever you call it, took a severe blow and he still oscillates between being abusive to me via the children and joking with me over the phone. All this after eight years separation.

I think 'coming out' is made difficult by the pressures of what is acceptable, and this varies I suppose on your background and class, to a certain extent.

My mum took a lot of stick from actions I decided to take and was blamed for them, even by me, for a short while. I didn't want to be solely responsible for all the unhappiness and turmoil that had been caused.

The attitude of my exhusband was a mixture of black male chauvinism and need for revenge, which hardly helped the situation and made discussion virtually impossible.

HUSHED UP IN CASE IT CATCHES ON

What I wished I had known at the time was that it is not so unusual for women to leave their children. It's just hushed up in case it catches on in a big way and damages the family life image and mother bonds. It's the state set-up that makes it a major crime and I still carry the burden of shame without having committed a crime.

Penny Newell

Write for the Streetlife Supplement!

Labour Briefing is the only specifically Labour Party publication which provides space every month for the discussion of personal politics. The women's movement has taught us that the struggle for socialism and for women's liberation affects *every* aspect of our lives, right down to our individual personal and sexual relationships. The aim of the Streetlife Supplement is to use this lesson to break down the separation between the women's movement and the labour movement by trying to discuss political issues through our own personal experiences. Each month we try to publish contributions around a particular theme, and then follow these up in meetings held on the 3rd Thursday of every month. If you would like to contribute to the Supplement or would like further information, contact Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1.

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NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 7 May 1984

MINERS' STRIKE: WE WILL WIN!

"It's going to be won. It'll be won because of the solidarity between miners and by extending that solidarity to other sections of the class. It doesn't matter if Neil Kinnock doesn't give us full support because the cheques coming in from local Labour Parties shows that the members of the Labour Party do support us. We'll appeal directly over the heads of the renegades to the workers.

The right-wing in the unions should be ignored. It would be a disaster to hand over our struggle to the TUC. Len Murray's been on his backside for so long he'll only get involved to sell us out."

Jack Collins, President of the Kent Area of the NUM



LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Times (1[illegible]
outstrip their leaders in the extremity of their positions.
fields." The same writer warns the City that the miners' delegate conference in Sheffield is turning into "a real miners' soviet", and that even the hesitant TUC could prove unable to stem the tide now pressing in the direction of "serious revolutionary socialism" and an all-out General Strike. Brian Walden in the London "Evening Standard" has been warning for weeks that he sees no way of avoiding a General Strike. And the "Sunday Times" (15 April 1984) – accurate reflection of the ruling class mind – advises Mrs Thatcher in brave words:

". . . Mr Scargill is bent on a revolutionary challenge to the government. So it is hard to see how the strike can be settled by the usual fudge. The odds are that the strike of 1984 will end like that of 1926."

The Sunday Times brags that a General Strike could be beaten now as it was in 1926, and that – with the spine of the trade union movement broken – the "economic benefits would be substantial."

In reality, we have every reason for confidence that the struggle now beginning to unfold can be won. It is true that the Tories have been arming and training their police and troops for use against us ever since we humiliated them in 1972-4. These armed men present a formidable force. But our side must prove a superior force in terms of numbers, initiative, organisation, physical resistance where necessary and the ability to split, paralyse and demoralise the enemy through the sheer scale of our popular support. A year ago, such a struggle could not have been won. Now, in the trail of a series of disastrous blunders made by the government – GCHQ, the attempt to gerrymander next year's metropolitan county elections, the attempt to impose rate-capping, etc. etc., – the most favourable political conditions for an all-out offensive are ours.

This is not entirely a struggle or a moment of our choosing. It is being forced on us by a vicious government that intends decimating the mining industry, crippling trade unionism, destroying local democracy and attempting to rescue capitalism by driving ordinary people into poverty and despair. But if this is to be the hour of decision, we must measure up to the scale of the tasks we face. A struggle for power is a struggle with no holds barred. It may be that events over the next few months will determine the balance of class forces for the next generation.

Coughing and heaving from ....
Lungs of dust being laid to rest.
Work to do, the burdensome tasks,
Teams of men with ebony masks.
Nerves and solidarity the day demands;
Coalition of brains and sinewy hands.
The work's routine, the relief is slight;
Feelings hidden, lamps shing bright.
Colliers cutting at the earth's womb;
Foetus position, deep entombed.
Strata broken, bloody gash;
Screams of pain as bones are smashed.
The dust has settled, the way is clear.
Mates are clawing with abject fear
To free their comrade from his cairn;
Porrected, such is their prime concern
As the broken body comes into sight,
They realise they've lost the fight.
The pit has claimed another life,
Grief for a mother, a son, a wife:
Still the footsteps echo through the night.

Sirs scabs on miners

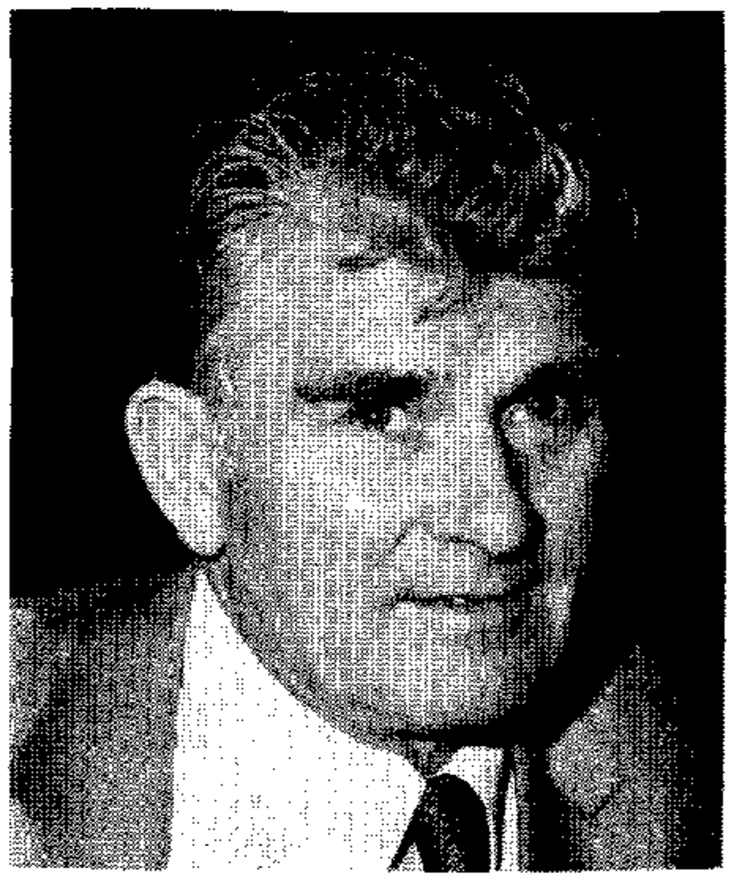
Bill Sirs, the General Secretary of my union, the ISTC, has brought the whole of the membership into disrepute. By scabbing on the recently formed Triple Alliance of railworkers, miners and steelworkers, his actions stand in stark contrast to the massive support given by the National Union of Seaman, ASLEF and the NUR, who have refused to handle any coal for the NCB.

Sirs knows that the miners' dispute is the most important working class struggle since the war. He knows that if the miners are defeated, the huge amount of legislation planned by the Tory 'think-tank' prior to the general election will be put into operation — with all the disastrous effects for our health and education.

But even if he was bone-headed enough not to understand the political realities of such a defeat, he must understand the effect his scabbing will have on the steel industry. Plans are afoot for further cuts in steel jobs in England, Scotland and Wales. And when they come and have to be resisted, what support will other unions give to those they regard as scabs.

Sirs will no doubt get his well deserved place alongside Joe Gormley in the House of Lords but we must not allow him to gain that dubious honour on the backs of defeated coal, steel and railworkers. We at grassroots level transformed the ISTC into a left wing union during the post-1980 period. And it is now up to us to build support for the miners and help ensure their victory.

Ray Davies ISTC



David Fowler.

BILL SIRS

As the media argues the rights and wrongs of the miners actions, support from the whole Labour Movement is crucial. This support should take the form of:

1. *Financial aid to meet picketing expenses and assist the mining communities.*
2. *The opportunity for miners to speak to trade union and Labour Party branches, tenants associations, community organisations. This is very important in order to counter the media's disinformation.*
3. *Organised visits to mining areas to show solidarity.*

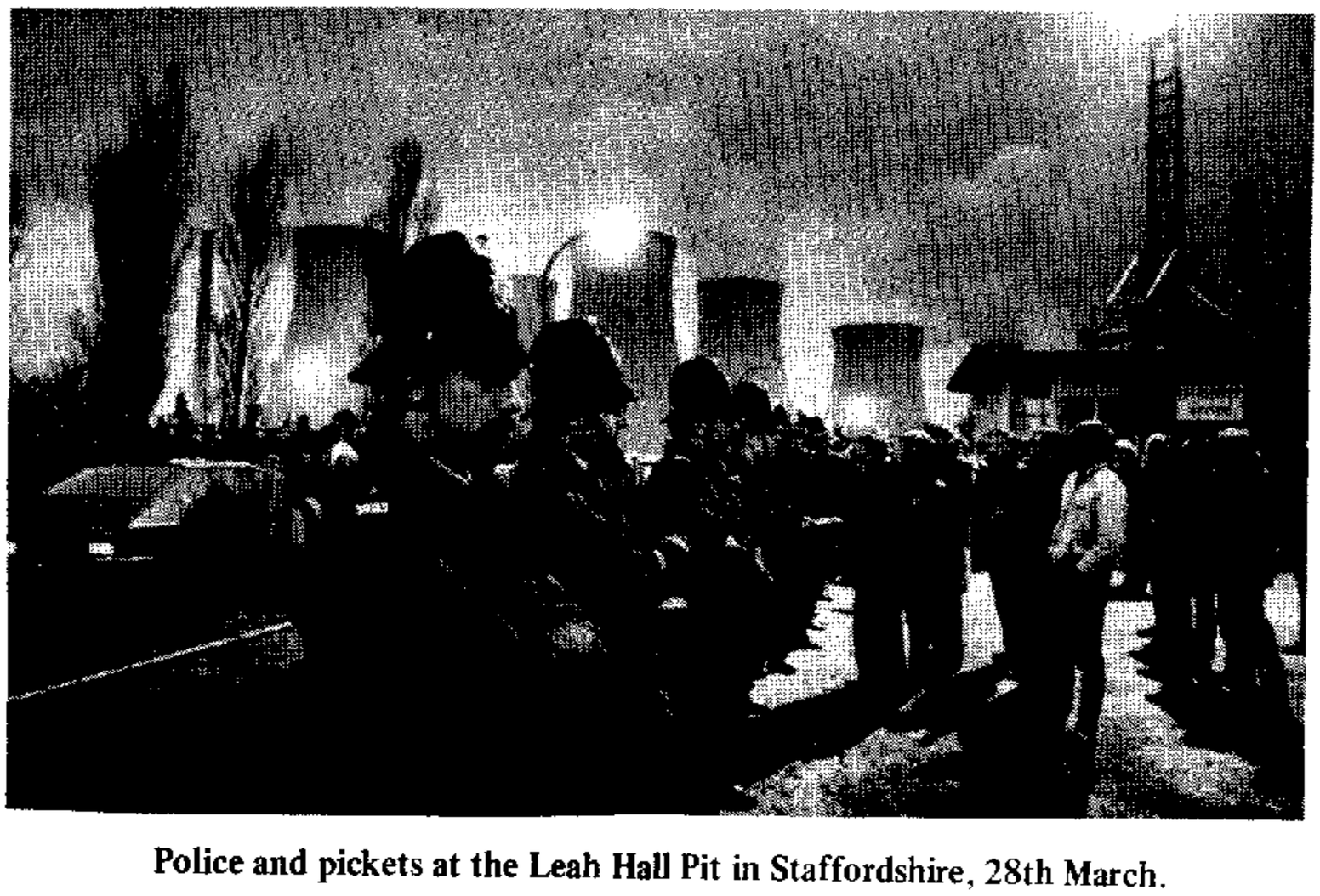
Contact your nearest National Union of Miners Office.
Or in London, contact:
Kent NUM
c/o TGWU
Headland House
308 Grays Inn Road,
London WC1X 8DS
Ph: (01) 278 7801 ext. 39.

THE POLICE BILL AND THE MINERS STRIKE

The antics of the police during the miners' strike confirm what the NCAPB has been saying since its inception, last year. The Tories in their attempt to weaken the unions and control Britain's severe economic and social crisis will seek not only to pass anti-trade union legislation and attack local government but will also need to strengthen the repressive forces of the state. Police powers are being increased to be used against the labour movement.

This strategy includes increasing the police's hardware-plastic bullets, CS gas, water cannons, machine guns — and increased use of intelligence gathering. The Police Bill is a central and essential part of these moves. If it is passed it will legalise the road blocks and stop and search employed against the miners. It will legalise detention without charge for four days, intimate body searches and searches of the homes and workplaces of people who are not suspected of any offence.

Despite its clear anti-labour character and despite unanimously passing a resolution at the last Labour Party conference against the Police Bill and supporting a campaign against it, the Labour Party and trade unions have been noticeably absent on activities against the Bill. To put this right and to discuss how the Police Bill will be used specifically against the labour movement, the NCAPB has called a labour movement conference on 12th May. Supporters of *Labour Briefing* are also urged to support and build the National March against the Bill on 19th May.



Police and pickets at the Leah Hall Pit in Staffordshire, 28th March.

National Campaign Against the Police Bill, c/o 50 Rectory Rd, N16
Tel: 01-249 8334

LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE AGAINST THE POLICE BILL
1-6pm, Sat May 12th
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London (near Holborn tube)
Speakers from the Labour Party, NUM, NGA, CPSA, NUR and others.

NATIONAL MARCH TO OPPOSE THE POLICE BILL
from Hyde Park (Speakers Corner) to Jubilee Gardens
Saturday 19th May, ASSEMBLE 12 noon

Miners' dispute: Solidarity is spreading

By Valerie Coultas

In stark contrast to the Labour leadership's hesitancy on the miner's strike the rank and file of the movement has swung behind the militants in the coalfields who are out to defend jobs.

In *South Wales* police have been tapping phones to try and stop South Wales miners going to Port Talbot to stop the movement of coke and coal. When Keri Evans, a Swansea LPYS member, was arrested on the NUM picket line, he heard Superintendent Viv Brook admit that snatch squads were being used on Port Talbot picket lines. South Wales Labour Briefing has a new issue out on the miner's strike.

Nurses from *Rotherham* have been on the picket lines at Cresswell pit. Accused by police of secondary picketing, the nurses at first refused to budge and only later moved off. 'They were obviously frightened of what would happen if they arrested nurses in uniform', explained Gwen Mellors from Badsley hospital. A delegation to the coalfields is planned by the Sheffield Labour Parties and a support committee has been established.

In *Dundee* trade unions have already agreed to a day of strike action in support of the miners, probably April 18th. At an emergency meeting of the Scottish TUC, an NUM resolution calls for a day of action across Scotland in support of the miners. A thousand people at a Glasgow STUC rally donated £15,000 to the miners. Sammy Gilmour, speaking from the floor, felt it was 'unfortunate that the initiative for strike action in support of the miners came from Dundee rather than the platform'. The STUC is largely responsible for future solidarity action.

In *Merseyside* pickets from Yorkshire and South Wales were joined by striking refuse collectors and dockers when they came to Birkenhead's Vittoria Dock to stop coal imported from Rotterdam leaving the Quayside. NUS members are refusing to pilot in shops, and Liverpool railway workers have refused to move coal.

The *West Midlands* TUC has launched a support committee and held a major meeting on 4 April. Birmingham Trades Council is also organising support on the rank and file level. In *London* Labour Party rallies have been organised in Brent, Hackney, Camden and South London in support of the miners with speakers from the Kent NUM. Railway workers are organising to stop the movement of coal. On 7 April over 1,300 people assembled at Camberwell Green, South London when 30 Kent miners arrived on the first leg of their 130-mile march to Nottingham. When the Kent coalfields were first established people had marched *into* the Kent coalfields and now they were marching *out* of them to defend their jobs. A big rally greeted the miners when they arrive in Nottingham on Saturday 14 April. On that same day the North and East London Labour Parties visited the Kent Coalfields to take money and express solidarity with the Kent miners.

All over the picture is clear. The miners are in the vanguard of the fight to defend jobs and the right to have effective trade unions. No-one in the Labour Party must be allowed to scab on this strike. Every Labour Party should be organising solidarity demonstrations and calling on the NEC and the TUC *to name the day for National Action.*

WOMEN SUPPORT THE MINERS

Kay Sutcliffe is a miner's wife from Kent. On Thursday 22 April she, along with two coachloads of women from Dover, arrived in Leicester to demonstrate their support for the Kent miners and the NUM. As her story reveals the women from Kent not only changed the minds of some Leicester women about the dispute but they gained a new self-confidence from their actions. Kay was talking to Valerie Coultas.

'In the 1974 strike we had a small women's committee to organise distribution of food parcels to the miners. We kept our section going for a short while but when the mining industry got on its feet again we split up. We still had the basic structure when this new trouble came up.

The first meeting we held was last Tuesday. 40 women turned up. We weren't quite sure at first what to do. So I said I would like to take our Snowdown banner and march through Nottingham. Everyone thought this was a good idea. We approached the union and Jack Collins, Kent NUM, said he wouldn't tell us what to do but he made a suggestion that we might go to Leicester coalfields, because they were part of the South Midlands coalfield with Kent.

When we arrived in Coleville several men met us. It was our plan to do everything ourselves, carry our own banner and march as women like a women's peace march. But two of the men -- one was my husband – pointed out that the Snowdown banner was rather heavy, and we let them carry it.



'WE'LL BEAT MACGREGOR'

We assembled at Scotland Road Playing fields and the march went ahead. 'Black is the colour, Mining is the game, we'll beat MacGregor and send him home again. We'll march on through the wind and rain, because Snowdown is our name', we sang as we were walking through the streets. Several local women abused us urging us to get back home but we ignored them and kept on with our march.

At the end, after I and one of the Yorkshire women had spoken, some Coleville women came up and confronted us. They were under the impression that when the pits were closed in Kent everyone had been promised a transfer to another pit or large sums of redundancy money. The Kent area has never been given such a guarantee. Women thought everyone had a job to go to. We finally convinced a couple of them that our men had no jobs to go to if all the pits were shut and they were very sympathetic.

A CLOSE COMMUNITY

I can't really say that the response of the Kent women has surprised me entirely. We've got a very close community down here. Women have responded who are not only wives of miners but any woman who is closely involved with the community.

On Monday night we had another women's meeting. Numbers didn't dwindle, even more women turned up after they had heard what we'd done. We're ready and waiting for the next event. In 1974 it was different. I was 10 years younger and I had small children. Women were in the background receiving instructions. I've never known women get involved like this before. I think it was that silly photograph of a woman with a plastic gun in the *Daily Mirror*, saying that she wished she had a real one to shoot at Arthur Scargill that angered me most. Anyone who makes a threat like that should be taken to court! It was so important to me to show people that women supported the strike and the union.

MY ANGER MOVED ME TO ACTION

It was my anger that moved me to action. Previously I've always taken a back seat and let others speak for me. My husband wasn't at home when I started to think about doing something – a good thing because if he had been I'd probably not have surprised myself so much. If someone had told me a fortnight ago that I'd get up and motivate other women I'd never have believed them. It just came so easily and I really enjoyed it.'

This article also appears in the current London Labour Briefing special issue on the miners' strike.

WOMEN AND THE STRIKE

The mobilisation of wide support will be crucial to the outcome of the miners' strike. Women are involved in organising support groups for miners' families, in raising money for strike funds and in small numbers attend rallies and solidarity pickets. There is much support from the women at Greenham, many of whom see themselves as involved in the same broad struggle as the miners. But the fact that the NUM is a male union raises difficulties for women who wish to express their solidarity and there is some unease among feminists on the left about women's involvement.

The women most directly affected are miners' wives and it is on them that the attention of both right and left press tends to focus. The right make the most of those wives who oppose the strike, the left counters with an equal emphasis on wives supporting the strike. Both tend to portray the wives in terms of female domesticity, as motivated by concern for their families and this is compounded in the left's case by women being cast the traditional role of backing-up their menfolk.

The reasons why some wives do not support their husbands, and why they don't take a more active part, go unexamined. On a miners' march through Blackwood, Gwent on March 31st, I was struck by the strong support expressed by women on the streets, many of whom obviously knew the men involved, but only a handful took part in the march.

MALE BONDING

It may well be that the affairs of the union appear to be part of a male sphere from which women are excluded. It should be recognised that the supposed traditional solidarity of the miners, much romanticised by the Left, is based as much on a machismo male bonding of tough men doing a tough job as on a sense of class consciousness. How many miners treat their wives as comrades in struggle rather than as dependants for whom they are responsible? How many of them see their wives' work as just as much part of the labour process as their own?

One of the major problems for other women, felt particularly acutely by feminists, is the miners' sexism. Women are likely to face sexist comments, be treated as mere appendages to men they happen to be with, or ignored completely. One very commonplace incident which I found particularly disturbing was when miners picketing the Port Talbot steel works suddenly lost interest in the coal being moved out and surged towards a passing woman runner, jeering and whistling and causing her visible distress. ('Much more interesting than coal' was one comment – how's that for evidence of miners' political consciousness?) As the one woman present I felt powerless to act and extremely unnerved at being in the midst of concerted male aggression towards another woman. That this is only to be expected from men is precisely what deters women from joining picket lines.

Not all my experiences have been so negative. I've found that women have an easier time, are taken more seriously, and are more able to challenge sexism if they are with other women as part of a solidarity picket. In any case strike leaders I've talked to say they prefer people to turn up in numbers, as representatives of identifiable organisations, rather than as isolated individuals.

SEXIST STEREOTYPES

One category of women who are always welcome in picket lines are nurses. Miners have supported health-workers in the past and this solidarity is being reciprocated. Health workers are not all nurses, but union activists are well aware of the propaganda value of the image of nurses and miners side by side. But the appeal of this image rests on the crudest of sexist stereotypes – the miner, all that is tough and masculine; the nurse, all that is caring and feminine. Male nurses simply don't have the same impact.

These criticisms are not meant to detract from the importance of the miners' struggle, but merely to point out some of the causes of the uneasiness which many women feel about taking action in support of them. Women need to organise as women to challenge the sexism of male trade-unionists, to make them realise that solidarity is a question of political commitment rather than machismo brotherhood. It might help if organisers of solidarity meetings and rallies ensure that women speakers are involved, but so far in South Wales there has been considerable resistance to this idea.

Stevi Jackson, Cardiff Central CLP,
Cardiff and South Wales Briefing.

NUR & THE STRIKE

'We reaffirm our instruction to members not to cross NUM picket lines. Further we instruct all members to refuse to deal with the movement of coal or coke unless a specific request is made by the NUM at the central coordinating committee. This decision to take effect immediately.'

These instructions from the National Union of Railwaymen, together with similar instructions from the train drivers' union (ASLEF), the Transport Union (TGWU) and the Seamen's Union (NUS) are vital if the miners are to win. Banning the movement of all coal both gives essential solidarity to the miners and because it defies the Tories' anti-union laws, confronts the government head on.

Many railworkers have been refusing to move coal even before such instructions were issued. Some have been sent home. Yet, in the same week that the NUR stated the position of the union, the leadership seemed reluctant to defend a freight guard at Stonebridge Park depot in North West London who was sent home for refusing to work a coal train. All railworkers should immediately respond to any such attack on a member. Manchester drivers stopped all trains, including passenger trains, after one of their colleagues was sent home. At Tinsley, management have been unable to carry out disciplinary threats because both the ASLEF and NUR branches have stood firm.

FURTHER ACTION

The national leaderships of the rail unions should now take further action to ensure that railworkers do not move coal.

*** Inform management that any disciplinary measures taken against any members carrying out union instructions in support of the miners will meet with action taken by the union(s) as a whole.**

*** Encourage all union branches to invite a miner to address them, so the NUM's case is fully explained. Depots should be flooded with literature spelling out the miners' case to counteract the lies and distortions in the media.**

*** Monitor any movement of coal on the railways and immediately inform other railworkers and the NUM so appropriate action can be taken.**

The miners strike and the joint pay claim submitted by NUR and ASLEF (the first time this has occurred) has strengthened the Federation of Rail Unions, particularly at local level. Many are beginning to hold joint branch meetings both to discuss solidarity with the miners and to inform members on the latest stage of the pay claim. The pay claim includes:

*** A substantial increase on the basic rate**
*** The minimum earnings level to become the minimum enhanceable basic rate**
*** A reduction in the working week from 39 hours to 35 hours**
*** Annual holidays to increase from 4 weeks to five weeks.**

20,000 JOBS TO GO

The British Rail Board is demanding that any improvement in pay and/or conditions

(CONTINUED OVER)

Briefing National Supplement page 6

The miners' strike and the trade union left



Labour Party Photograph Library

THE miners' strike has clearly radicalised the political situation in Britain and is giving a powerful lead to the working class in how to confront the gang of asset strippers and union busters who mascarade as a government. At the same time the stand being taken by Arthur Scargill and the left in the NUM is providing a well-needed pointer to the left in the rest of the trade union movement.

The reality is that, despite very important electoral successes, the trade union left has been in serious crisis over its failure to assert any credible independence from the right wing or point an independent way forward for the workers in the unions where it has won the leadership.

The Broad Left leadership of the CPSA floundered over the DHSS strikes in the winter of 1982/3.

The Broad Left majority in the POEU leadership floundered with an elitist, legalistic approach to the privatisation struggle. Their policy of selective action and strike pay based on full wages linked to a consistent failure to challenge the influence of unelected full-time officials like Bryan Stanley led to the collapse of the POEU when faced with the Mercury injunction – creating a major breakthrough for the Tebbit laws.

The Broad Left leadership of the NUR had no more answers to BR's workshop closure programme than the AUEW leadership.

Serious Mistake

In the NUM itself the failure to back last year's South Wales strike under pressure from the right wing – the calling of an emergency executive meeting which led to a national ballot – was a serious mistake by Scargill. The betrayal of Kinneil was a disaster. After that, every pit which struck was left in isolation, despite the militancy which was obvious amongst the rank and file.

The TUC swung further to the right in September, entering into talks with Tebbit and consolidating a big right-wing majority on the General Council. They gave Thatcher the green light to push forward the Tebbit laws and then turned their backs on the NGA, creating the conditions for the attack on trade union membership at GCHQ.

Throughout this there was no serious challenge from the left to stop the sell-out – at least none which was based on a drive to mobilise the membership against it.

The BLOC conference failed to address the problems – despite a keynote speech from Phil Holt of the POEU Executive, which stressed "the crisis of leadership in the unions" (!). (Not the POEU, of course, that was the model we should build on).

The conference was big, which reflected the important developments taking place in the broad lefts to the left of the Communist Party. But the chance of a serious discussion on the real problems the left has encountered was lost in the desire for a popular rally.

Equally, nothing approaching a serious analysis of the miners' strike took place. Yet the miners' strike is the most important stand a left union leadership has made for many years. It stands in stark contrast to the retreats of the last year.

Driving Force

It is true that the driving force of the strike has been a powerful movement from the rank and file of the NUM – but within that Scargill's stand has been very important. He has not been stampeded by the scabbing in Nottinghamshire or the right-wing campaign for a ballot.

The direction of the strike has also been good. The decision to write to the TUC asking them not to intervene and instead turning to the transport unions has kept the right wing out (and split the TUC). The call for a national strike or a general strike can be made later if the conditions are created for it.

There are serious dangers, of course, like Mick McGahey's deal over Ravenscraig. But the example of a left union leadership basing itself on the rank and file and leading a confrontation with the Tories through a fight against their own right-wing is like a breath of fresh air.

The miners' strike is an historic strike in that its outcome will largely determine conditions in the labour movement – the Labour Party as well as the unions – for a long time to come. It raises the question of what kind of Labour Party we want. Neil Kinnock wants a ballot because the strike might interfere with the May elections. Our job should be to bring the Labour Party into the fight alongside the miners and other sections who may join them if things develop.

A defeat of the strike would create a very serious situation. But if the strike is not headed off by the right wing at tomorrow's executive and the signs are it won't be – it can be not only the most important challenge to Thatcher since she came to power, but an important opportunity for the left to reexamine its role in the struggle for leadership in the unions.

Alan Thornett

NUR & the strike

(CONTINUED)

can only be met by agreeing to the extension of guardless trains, reducing the number of second drivers and getting rid of station staff. The Board is planning to chop 20,000 jobs in the next two years. On these conditions, the Board is offering 4 per cent of the total wage bill. In other words improvements in the working week, annual leave etc can only be met by taking it out of the 4 per cent 'on offer'. Railworkers must pay for their own wage increase. ASLEF and the NUR refuse to negotiate a wage deal based on productivity deals. Certainly the NUR is under that instruction from its own Annual Conference.

But the Rail Federation nationally has still not decided what if any action is to be taken by the membership despite the fact that the anniversary date for the pay claim is 16 April.

We can show the real strength of the trade union movement united against this government in support of the miners. But it is not enough for our union leaderships to wait to see the outcome of the miners' strike. The rail unions can play a decisive role in determining that outcome, not only through stopping all movement of coal but taking action in defence of our *own* jobs and living standards.

That would show what the Triple Alliance really means in action. That would show this government that finally we have said 'Enough is enough'. This time we stand together. This time we *will* win.

Tessa van Gelderen
Marylebone NUR
Brent South CLP

GLASGOW: FIGHTING GARAGE CLOSURES

Glasgow's transport workers staged a 24-hour strike on 17th March in protest at the decision to close three of the City's nine bus garages. The closures of the Ibrox, Langside and Maryhill garages will involve the loss of 140 jobs and redeployment for the vast majority of workers. George Petrie of the TGWU's Regional Office explained: *"We are fighting to save jobs and this is just the first phase of a campaign to meet that end."*

So what is the background to this action which brought Glasgow's transport to a standstill? Ten years ago the City's bus services were incorporated into the Strathclyde Region. Since that time the City's bus workers have suffered job losses and worsening conditions. The unions themselves tried to accommodate the cuts by accepting various productivity deals. The result is that the number of buses in operation has been reduced from 1400 to the present 650. However, this latest attack is regarded as completely unacceptable. The TGWU and the AUEW, the major unions involved, have begun to organise a campaign to retain the garages which together employ over 1,000 people.

The success of the campaign can be seen at Maryhill Garage. This is the largest employer in Maryhill. Seventy per cent of its workforce live locally. Right from the start the union went out to explain the issues to the local community. Speakers were sent to the tenants associations and community organisations.

Each garage has organised a public meeting to get the message across. In Maryhill a further public meeting was called by local demand so that Regional Councillors and Strathclyde Regional Transport Executive directors could explain their decisions to the busworkers and the local community. Only two Regional Councillors attended (Lawrence McGarry and John Gray) and both these Labour Councillors had already declared their opposition to the closures. The other councillors refused to attend on the grounds that *"The decision had been taken and would not be altered."*

However pressure is mounting on the ruling Labour Council. All the District Councillors

NO GARAGE CLOSURES Freeze Fares!

oppose the closures and representations have been made to the Highways and Transportation Regional Committee from every level of the Region, although so far to no avail. What rankles the unions is who is taking the decision and the authoritarian manner in which it was made. As Bobbie Stewart, full-time shop steward at the Maryhill Garage put it: *"All the thanks we get for Maryhill's total commitment to Labour in the whole of this century is this stab in the back . . . We are being closed by a Labour Council."*

The local Liberal Alliance has not been slow to fill the political vacuum and has thrown its resources behind the campaign, giving assistance with the printing of handbills. It has even helped prepare a policy statement on behalf of the union for presentation to the Regional Council.

The intransigence of the Regional Council will make this a hard fight but the unions are under no illusions about the difficulties they face. They know that unless they put up a fight now to save these garages they can expect worse to follow. Indeed, there are proposals to close two more garages within the next two years.

The problems Glasgow's busworkers are facing can be put down to both the reduced funding to local authorities and the favouritism shown to private bus operators. The Scottish Bus Group (SBG) which notched up a handsome £10 million profit last year runs over many of the same roads as the City's buses. Recently the SBG and other firms received permission for 88 route extensions compared with 16 for the City! Perhaps the best example of this favouritism is the response to the unions' proposals for route extensions. Management estimated this plan would bring in £800,000. The scheme was duly presented to the Regional Council. The response? The Council rejected the plan with the advice that the unions should confine themselves to the City boundary and think of other ways and means of raising revenue. Here in London the Regional Transport Bill is presently wending its way through Parliament. So we should be taking special note of the situation of our fellow busworkers in Glasgow – we will soon be facing the same attacks.

The final word however should go to Bobbie Stewart:

"Go back and ask for London Busworkers' full support, to see that the Council adopt a sensible attitude to our demand for the retention of all garages . . . What's more you've got Parliament on your doorstep, so you should take up the fight as far as Great Britain is concerned, and the fight should be expanded to show what is really happening to public transport. What we demand is, it's time to call a halt, a time to ask the Transport Minister for a reassessment of the whole of the bus industry. and for a fair crack of the whip as far as financial assistance is concerned."

ROBERT JONES
Conductor, Stamford Hill Bus Garage and Trade Union Liaison Officer Hackney South & Shoreditch CLP

Suggested Model Resolution.
This branch condemns the decision by the Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council to close the Ibrox, Langside and Maryhill bus garages with the consequent loss of jobs and a worsening of the bus service. We pledge our full support to the union's campaign against closures and call upon the Labour members of the Regional Council to retain all garages.

Resolutions and messages of support should be sent to Bro. George Petrie, TGWU Offices 216 West Regent Street, Glasgow G2.

Workplace Branches and Trade Unions

It is increasingly clear that Labour Party Workplace Branches (WPB) are the future key to the political rejuvenation of the trade unions.
** A multi-union WPB can break down artificial barriers to communication.*
** Issues can be debated and followed through in the trade union branches.*
** Members can be recruited far easier in the workplace.*

The Trade Union Bill proposals to break the link between unions and the Labour Party can be countered by effective campaigning within the workplace. Unfortunately there are too few WPB's in existence for this campaign to be relevant — at the moment. It is a race against time. The NEC, Regions and CLP's should be working to establish WPB's everywhere.

** A full-time campaigner should be appointed by the NEC to carry through a rapid development of WPB's.*
**The Trade Unions political committees/officers should be promoting WPB's on all occasions, particularly in trade union journals.*
** Money should be made available by every union to finance these projects. Perhaps the slumbering TUC might wake up long enough to do something!*
** Trade Union Liaison Officers (TULO's) in the CLP's should be encouraging WPB's to speak to Party Branches, GMC's, Shop Stewards Committees and anyone else they can think of.*
** TULO committees in each town, borough, city and county should be established to coordinate this work.*

The Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) should spearhead this work. The NEC must provide the facilities for existing WPB's to spread the message and the experience.

Those of us in WPB's have had one conference (see March Briefing) and the Institute for Workers Control held a Workshop at the March 24th Conference in Nottingham. An interim report is available plus a draft document on "How to set up a WPB". We are now planning a further conference on May 12th at Camden Town Hall to develop the ideas.

There will be enough material to form a pamphlet with a practical guide to setting up WPB's, how to avoid pitfalls, what a WPB should be doing etc... The NEC should publish such a pamphlet written by those of us who have the experience of WPB's. They should provide us with the facilities to take the message to the whole labour and TU movement.

If *you* want futher information you can do one or all of the following:
1) Invite a speaker to your LP/TU meeting.
2) Write or phone for information on setting up WPB's and have your name and address added to the mailing list.
3) Come to the conference on May 12th or send a delegate (fee £1). Most importantly get your *Trade Union Branch* to send a delegate.

All details are available from Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherly Road, Sidcup; Kent. Tel:-01-302-7983.

Geoff Dixon

Black sections here to stay!

BLACK SECTIONS are here to stay! Plans for an historic National Conference for Labour Party Black Activists to be held in Birmingham in June are now well advanced. At a press conference held at County Hall on April 11th, comrades from black communities in the Labour Party from as far afield as Birmingham, Luton and Greater London announced that they intended to proceed despite all the obstacles and foot-dragging that appears to have beset their efforts.

At a press conference held by Neil Kinnock the day before in the House of Commons it was made perfectly clear that there were reservations at all levels of the party both left and right to the formation of black sections in the Labour party.

The ignorance that appears to pervade the party right up to the top is perhaps the result of the failure of the National Executive Committee of the party and the PLP's Shadow Cabinet to consult the ethnic minorities within the party directly. We seem to be controlled by surrogates who speak on our behalf without taking the trouble even to bother to inform us. The days of middle men, brokers and self-appointed spokesmen for the black communities are over. It is a pity that the media are trying to exploit the problems connected with the formation of the Black sections to drive a wedge between the black activists and the party. Contrary to misleading reports that have appeared in some of the newspapers it is untrue that Eric Heffer has refused to countenance the formation of black sections within the party. He has already assured a group of comrades who met him with me that he along with other comrades on the NEC will be willing to meet and discuss the issue of black sections within the party.

We are faced with opposition to our just cause from a number of quarters. And I think it is right to refer to them. First of all we have those in the party who are opposed to Black sections within the party because they are out and out racists. Fortunately these are a very small minority and we can cope with them. Then there are those who genuinely believe that the party embraces women, blacks and young people in one undifferentiated whole. Just as they objected and still object to the existence of women's sections on the grounds that women should play their full part in the CLPs so they feel that black comrades should have no need to resort to the formation of separate black sections. What these well-meaning comrades fail to understand is that racism pervades the party as a whole and that only by the formation of black sections is it possible to create a situation where black comrades feel they are participating in the party to which they are naturally allied. But most serious of all is the concealed opposition from those comrades who seem to see in the black sections, a threat to their own credibility and careers.

We have no doubt that the party has to seize the opportunity now to accept the principle of black sections at this year's party conference. Otherwise there is the danger that the black communities will draw their own conclusions. No longer will the black communities be prepared to be simply a voting fodder. Neil Kinnock's performance so far leaves much to be desired. And his advisers, whoever they may be, had better seek advice of those who are in a better position to know what's going on first hand, in the grassroots of the black communities in London, Birmingham, Merseyside and other cities in Britain.

Is it too late for Walworth Road to begin to tap the resources and much needed advice which is available in abundance in the black sections of the party which are now being formed?

Vidya Anand,
Chair (Personal Capacity),
Community Liaison Sub Committee of the Greater London Labour Party, Ilford South CLP.

STOP THE DEPORTATIONS NOW!
MUHAMMAD IDRISH MUST STAY!

On Wednesday 9th May, Muhammad Idrish appears before the Appeal Court in London to appeal against his deportation. A demonstration and rally are planned in his support. He is threatened with deportation if he loses this final appeal.

Muhammad came over from Bangladesh in 1976 to study at Bristol University. While there he married a Scottish woman and applied for permission to stay. After two years the relationship ended. Within weeks of this he was informed that his application to stay had been turned down.

Since leaving university Muhammad has worked as a social worker, voluntarily in St Paul's, Bristol and in Handsworth, Birmingham and also at Dr Barnardo's in West Bromwich where he was a founder member of his NALGO branch.

Muhammad's case is an illustration of the present government's offensive against black workers in their community and unions. Over 250 black people are deported each month as a result of current immigration legislation. All such cases must be taken up in the labour movement as part of the struggle against racist laws.

NALGO passed a resolution in support of Muhammad at its national conference. They have backed his defence campaign ever since, giving practical support by building a 3,000 strong demonstration in Birmingham and by printing thousands of explanatory leaflets. No other union has gone so far in backing a deportation campaign.

Muhammad's defence campaign has taken the issue into the labour movement and the inner city areas where he worked. Many Labour Party branches and trade unions have backed us.

★ *Coaches leave the SHAHEED UDAM SINGH CENTRE, Soho Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham at 8.30am on Wednesday 9th May and also from Bristol.*
★ *Assemble for march on 9th May at 11.30am at Temple Underground, London. Rally at Jubilee Gardens at 1.30pm. Speakers: Ken Livingstone, Clare Short, NALGO speaker and victims of racist laws.* ★ *For further information contact:*

Barry Lovejoy, 30 Antrobus Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham 21 Tel: 021-523 8923.

Graham Reid, 62, Bedminster Parade, Bristol 3. Tel: 0272-667933.

NALGO, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ. Tel: 01-388 2366.

LETTER

Dear Editor,

While I think that National Briefing gives a good coverage of the current debates of interest to the left of the Labour Party, and acts as an organiser in its own right, I feel that I must point out a deficiency which has become apparent to me.

It seems that there is underway a tendency for black people to begin to organise themselves inside the labour movement, which shows signs of deepening over the near future. This is manifest in such structures as the BTUSM, the Black Activist Group, etc. This is a significant change from the methods of organising that black people used to adopt before, where much emphasis was placed upon propaganda and pressure politics from outside the main structures of the labour movement, and the main aim was to achieve a measure of black unity and awareness. Now it seems that the accelerating tempo of political developments in general are posing new objectives before the black community in particular, releasing new forces in consequence.

If continued, I feel that this could be one of the most dynamic aspects of the future development of the labour movement and Labour Party in particular, and should be addressed as such by journals inside the Labour Party such as Briefing.

I look forward to some further coverage on this theme,

Yours sincerely,
M.A. Wongsam
Manchester.

ROOFLESS DETERMINATION BY GREENHAM WOMEN

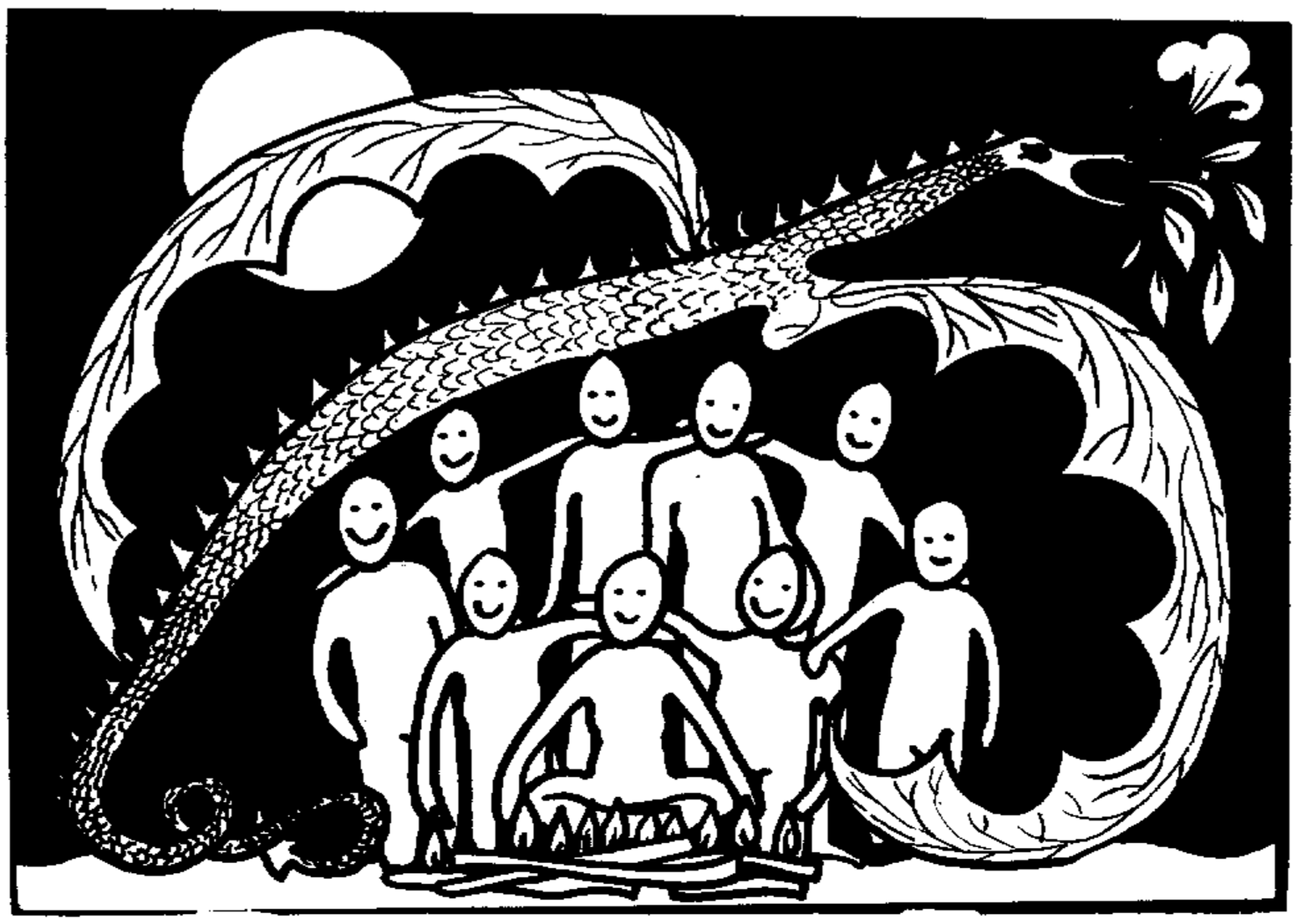
At dawn on Wednesday 4th April, the British Government attempted to wipe out the most famous anti-nuclear protest in the world. There were more than 100 women outside of the Main Gate USAF Greenham Common when the Under Sheriff of Berkshire, his bailiffs and 400 police arrived to evict them. The Women's Peace Camp has been protesting the deployment of cruise missiles for more than 2½ years.

Many Women were woken by this invasion, some refused to leave their shelters, others set fire to theirs rather than let the bailiffs demolish them, and everywhere women were singing. None of them were leaving Greenham Common.

NO SURPRISE

The attempted eviction was no surprise. On 22nd March, an injunction had been granted by the courts to Newbury District Council empowering them to remove the camp so that the land could be used for a road-widening scheme. Notices were put up at the Main Gate warning the women that builders would begin work on Monday 2nd April. The Government were billing 2nd April as the date they would close the women's peace camp forever. Consequently, entries were made in the diaries of women's groups and press people throughout the country. The Government had effectively invited thousands of supporters and the world's press to Greenham Common to witness the end of the peace camp.

What they actually saw was the Under Sheriff and the Assistant Chief Constable of Berkshire take one look at the number of women on the land (600) and the number of TV crews, and back down. They could not evict such large numbers, they admitted. The Government had not only failed to achieve their object, they had unwittingly promoted the camp and the issue to the headlines. The women held out for two days, a symbolic victory for which the women's actions are famous, was won. Once again the world was reminded that nuclear cruise missiles are being brought to Greenham Common by the US Government and that the majority of the British people



do not want them. By midday on Wednesday, the site had been cleared and a fence had been constructed across the land in front of the Main Gate of the base. More than 30 women were arrested.

During that day attempts were also made to evict women from peace camps outside other gates. Regular (sometimes daily) evictions of these smaller camps have been taking place for months. They have been strikingly unsuccessful. As soon as the bailiffs leave the site, the women return and rebuild their polythene homes. The women have been helped by thousands of others who have streamed down to Greenham over the past week with fresh supplies of equipment, food and moral support.

The official reason for the eviction of the Main Gate was a £150,000 road-widening scheme. However, many will remember a document leaked last December which gave details of a meeting between the Ministry of Defence the Ministry of Transport and the police. The object of the meeting was to find a way to rid the Government of the embarrassment of Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. The scheme to widen the road was dreamed up as a good excuse to remove the Main Gate camp with minimum fuss. That they believed that this would be accepted by the women was extraordinarily naive. It was a serious underestimate of the intent and determination of the women's peace movement.

How to increase womens' representation

The National Executive Committee has, at last, agreed that the London and Scottish regions of the Labour Party can implement rule changes passed last year and increase women's representation on their regional executives.

Needless to say this is only after much agitation by women members.

It was before the March 1983 conference that myself and Valerie Wise and others put forward an executive amendment to standing orders that had three main components. The amendment to add to the executive '8 members elected by the Greater London Labour Party Womens Conference from amongst their duly appointed delegates' was passed by the 1983 London Labour Party Annual Conference. However, the amendment was delayed at National level until it was too late for the Womens conference to nominate for the 1984 executive.

But the NEC did endorse the amendment early in 1984 after much lobbying by Greater London and Scotland and the 1984 Womens Conference will be electing the 8 reps.

Cynics may realise that as these were 8 extra members, men did not fear that they might lose their own places.

There were 2 further parts to the amendment which sought to ensure that at least 4 out of the 16 trade union places and 4 out of the 16 CLP places were reserved for women. These measures were not passed by conference but need to be pursued as they aim to change the present imbalance of representation more fundamentally.

Womens sections, CLPs and trade unions in all regions should start to debate the need to ensure women are offered full representation with 50% being the eventual target.

On the Greater London executive it has been noticeable that as more feminists have been elected onto the committee, womens rights gained a firmer place on the political agenda. Once again this proves, unfortunately maybe, that it is ultimately those who have first hand knowledge of discrimination that will have to fight for the right of representation.

Nadine Finch

LIVERPOOL MUST WIN!

Kevin Feintuck,
Liverpool District Labour Party

MARCH 29th was an important day in Liverpool. While the likes of Neil Kinnock and Len Murray were singing the praises of 'Democracy Day', more than 20,000 Liverpudlians were out on the street to show what a real fight for local democracy means.

Massive support from the council workforce and from many other sections including dockers, hospital workers, and busworkers, made sure that our Labour councillors realised that election pledges are meant to be taken seriously. Of the 50 remaining Labour councillors, 42 followed District Party policy and stood firm on a position of a 9% rate increase with no cuts in jobs and services – the illegal budget which the Tory media so feared and loathed.

Only the action of the "Scabby Six", misnamed the "Sensible Six" by Fleet Street, prevented Liverpool Council from openly challenged the Tories' policy of starving the city of the cash support which it needs so desperately.

If the establishment hoped that the delay on March 29th would force Liverpool Labour Party to retreat their fantasies will have been short-lived. The will to fight is stronger at the grass-roots in the movement in Liverpool than it has been for many years. Many thousands in the city understand the issues at stake.

For months the Labour Party has been explaining that the restoration of some of the £120 million taken from the city since 1979 is the only way to avoid disaster. On the other hand the opposition Liberals had been talking about a single figure rate increase coupled with clever financial management.

Liberals' Lies

At the budget meeting the facts behind the Liberals' lies at last came out into full view. Unless the government was prepared to retreat, the Liberals' good housekeeping really meant a 30% rate increase coupled with a total freeze on council recruitment which could only mean a collapse of services.

This message must be learnt throughout the Labour Movement. If Liverpool is allowed to lose this year there will be less hope for those councils pushed into the front line next year.

At the rally on the 29th one of the speakers talked of the Labour Party leadership having "equivocated" about supporting Liverpool. This discreet and parliamentary language might be intended to coax support from the current leadership, in which case there are no signs of any great success.

In fact Neil Kinnock and his proteges Straw and Cunningham have passed the equivocation stage many weeks ago. They are in favour of the Labour councillors betraying the party, betraying their election manifesto, and betraying all those in Liverpool who were beginning to think that we had actually got a Labour party in the city whose deeds would match their words.



John Smith (IFL).

Neil Kinnock and the Parliamentary leadership clearly find Liverpool council an embarrassment. Perhaps this accounts for their suggestion that Labour should propose a rates increase of 60%. Certainly such a move would guarantee that our Parliamentarians could get down to the serious business of losing vote after vote in Westminster for the next four years without the encumbrance of a Labour councillin Liverpool. The people of Liverpool need a 60% rate increase about as much as they need a Liberal-Tory council with a healthy majority. The proposals from Jack Straw would ensure that we would enjoy both these delights.

The election on May 3rd will be a crucial test for Labour in Liverpool. If we gain as few as four or five Liberal-Tory seats we will have not only an overall majority but also enough seats to allow the remnants of the Scabby Six to betray to their hearts' content without having any effect on the vote in the Council.

The Left must make sure that these seats are won. Afterwards we will have to make sure that both the national and local leaderships act on behalf of all those who want to see a Labour Party based on people's needs and not on maintaining a system which is prepared to countenance Liverpool's irreparable decline.

LIVERPOOL District Labour Party experienced its own version of the grand old Duke of York following the budget meeting on 29th March.

On Friday 30th the EC of the DLP quite correctly decided to withdraw support from Paul Orr, the only one of the six traitors seeking re-elections this May.

At an urgent ward meeting in the ward concerned, Vauxhall, on the following Sunday, some 24 members endorsed the EC action although the pro-Orr ward officers had attempted to block the meeting.

On Monday 2nd April papers were duly submitted for Chris Williams, the convenor at the local British-American Tobacco works, to stand as an official candidate against Orr.

Meanwhile Orr had appealed direct to the NEC and the National Organiser had subsequently contacted the President of the DLP to insist that Chris Williams be withdrawn and that Orr be recognised as the official candidate. This was argued on very dubious constitutional grounds.

At a meeting of the Riverside CLP, which includes Vauxhall, on Wednesday 4th, the CLP supported the decision to stand Williams by 60 votes to 6. At a further meeting of the DLP EC held later the same evening the decision of the constituency was ignored and the EC committed itself to withdrawing cde Williams' nomination, which was done the following morning. The final decision was endorsed the next night by a full DLP by a narrow majority.

The decision by the EC to leave the Vauxhall voters with no genuine Labour candidate left many on the Left in the Party angry and confused. It is of some concern that at the EC which made the eventual decision it was hard-core supporters of 'Militant' who successfully moved that the DLP should bow to pressure from the party bureaucracy and leave Orr with a clear field. In fact, only the casting vote of 'Militant' supporter Tony Mulhearn decided the issue.

This retreat has served one useful purpose. Many of those who have supported 'Militant' as a consistent and principled left wing will be keeping a keen watch for any similar strategic withdrawals in the fight against the government and against the traitors in our own party.

AUTONOMOUS POLITICAL ACCESS

Karen Newbury
Holborn and St. Pancras CLP

'*Autonomous political access*' – three words which appear in the Labour Party manifesto. The majority will take them to mean that there should be equal access to politics, but for some, myself included, they mean that there should be physical access to meetings and conferences.

It was in this context that these words were written. In other words – on paper – the Labour Party has a commitment to enable people with disabilities to play a full part in the local community and within the Labour Party both locally and nationally.

But how seriously is this commitment taken? Certainly at last year's Annual Conference there was not much evidence of it. Delegates with disabilities were given the bare minimum support – a list of accessible hotels (all in the most expensive bracket) and a place on the floor of the Conference. Visitors did not even get this consideration unless pressure was put. A group of visitors with hearing difficulties were not allowed more than one interpreter on the floor at any one time, and the interpreters were not allowed into the hall prior to Conference starting so they could work out the best positions to stand to be seen by their deaf colleagues.

Perhaps the Conference organising committee could learn some lessons from the SDP/Liberals, who I understand take steps to see that both visitors and delegates with disabilities are made comfortable and welcome, and that provision is not given out of charity!

IS THERE AN ADVISER ON DISABILITY?

Conference certainly brought home to me that these three words need a lot of working on! For example, does the Party have an adviser on disability? If so, perhaps they could let local parties know about it, and if they haven't perhaps they should have! There must be members of the party who would be more than willing to offer this service in a voluntary capacity – hopefully members with a disability, since they are the experts!



Nick Oakes (Photon)

Karen Newbury meets Jack Ashley at lobby of Parliament by disabled people, 17th November 1983.

Not everything is as bad however. Some branches have taken this commitment to heart and are paying more than just lip service. My branch is one of them, and perhaps other branches and the national party could follow their lead.

It was all very simple and hasn't seemed to involve a great deal of expense or time. First the branch made it a priority to meet in a place that a person with a disability could have access to with ease and dignity. The branch then sent a motion to the GMC asking other branches and the GMC to follow their example, and asking the Labour Group to make sure that all the council committees had representation from the field of disability. When a vacancy arose, my branch voted me onto the GMC so that the motion would be put into practice there. Members of my party have shown solidarity in other ways too, for example going to the anti-discrimination lobby in November.

IT MAKES SENSE

Giving political access to people with disabilities makes sense. In London alone, it's estimated that there are between ¼ and ½ million registered disabled people, and whilst the Labour Party does not do enough, it is the only party which whilst in power has tried to do something. However unless the Labour Party makes efforts to positively discriminate, people with disabilities will be unable to participate in the Labour Party, because they will be doubtful as to whether physically they can get to meetings. Personally, I want to be integrated into the existing party machine, and not in a 'disabled persons' socialist group', though it's not to say that such a group does not have its part to play.

Does autonomous access mean you have to be fit and strong to be an active member of the Labour Party? I feel my branch and CLP are doing something to offer autonomous access for all, but what is your CLP or the Party nationally doing? Just think of the members you could gain. We need their support!



WHO TO CONTACT

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

Brighton: Dave Lowney, 35 Quebec Street, Brighton, E. Sussex (0273 607944).

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), or Stevi Jackson (0222 496792).

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

Strathclyde: Gordon Morgan, 59 Durward Ave, Glasgow G41.

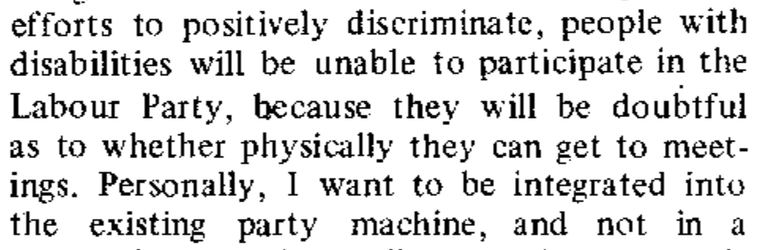
Preston: Karen Bradley, 128 Tulketh Brow, Preston (0772 727720).

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

Manchester. Dick Withecombe, 93 Ewan St, Gorton, Manchester 18 (061 223 4470).

NEXT NATIONAL EDITORIAL BOARD
Sunday May 20th at 12 noon in Stoke-on-Trent. For details ring Andy Platt on 0782 274815.

Next issue out: May 17th. Deadline for articles: Saturday May 5th.



LABOUR WOMEN AND FEMINISM DAYSCHOOL

The next planning meeting for this Briefing dayschool will take place on Saturday 19th May at A Woman's Place, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London at 4pm. All women are welcome to attend.

For further details contact: *Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1.*

The case of Sarah Tisdall

By John Palmer, a member of the National Steering Committee of the Socialist Society.

"I just felt that someone had to take a stand in view of the frightening things which I could see going on. Perhaps others will take courage from what I chose to do." This was the calm and measured way in which Sarah Tisdall explained to a fellow prisoner in Holloway Prison – a Greenham Common woman – just why she did what she did in leaking Heseltine's Cruise missile PR plans to The Guardian, when they met just after Sarah was sentenced to six months at the Old Bailey.

The fact that this courageous step was taken by a woman like Sarah – who freely admits that she is no political radical – is highly significant. It is one more reflection of the extent to which Thatcher's semi-Bonapartist style of government is driving more and more people into embittered opposition.

Of course the trial, sentencing and imprisonment of Sarah Tisdall is a major scandal. Of course the government reeks of hypocrisy as well as bullying as any journalist who has received 'authorised leaks' at the hands of ministers and service chiefs can testify. Of course the affair demonstrates what a myth talk of an independent judiciary really is. Of course The Guardian should never have even contemplated doing anything other than destroying the leaked document.

Real Significance

But the real significance of Sarah's imprisonment is more than the sum total of all of these points. Its significance lies in the pattern of growing and increasingly open repression being unleashed by the Thatcher government as its headlong drive to emasculate opposition to its strategy runs into growing opposition and resistance.

The Tisdall affair does link with the GCHQ union ban, with the impunity with which official murder gangs can 'take out' republicans in Northern Irelland, with the sweeping powers given to the police to make mining villages "no go areas" to pickets, with the arming of the police with submachine guns, and with the increasing use of the law against trade unions.



Labour Party Photo Library.

Sarah Tisdall arrives at Court, 23rd March.

We are now witnessing a major threat to our limited democratic and civil liberties. It is not an exaggeration to say that the offensive is reminiscent of the attack launched by the Conservative right in Austria during the early 1930s in the years before the fascists stepped in to finish the job.

That is what makes the muted protests of the Labour leaders such a scandal. They should be organising a massive national campaign in defence of democratic, civil and social rights and in support and solidarity with all those resisting the fist of state repression.

It was in the absence of such a lead that the Socialist Society decided at its recent AGM to initiate such a campaign and try and set up democratic rights "monitoring groups" to alert the wider movement to what is happening. The campaign looks for support to all sections of the left, inside and outside the Labour Party.

Of course no socialist can be satisfied to defend our present rights. The left must go on the counter-offensive by pressing demands for the radical democratisation of all state institutions (including the judiciary) but it would be a sectarian folly to conclude that defence of existing rights – to say nothing of bodies such as the GLC – was in any sense irrelevant to the struggle against the Tory government.

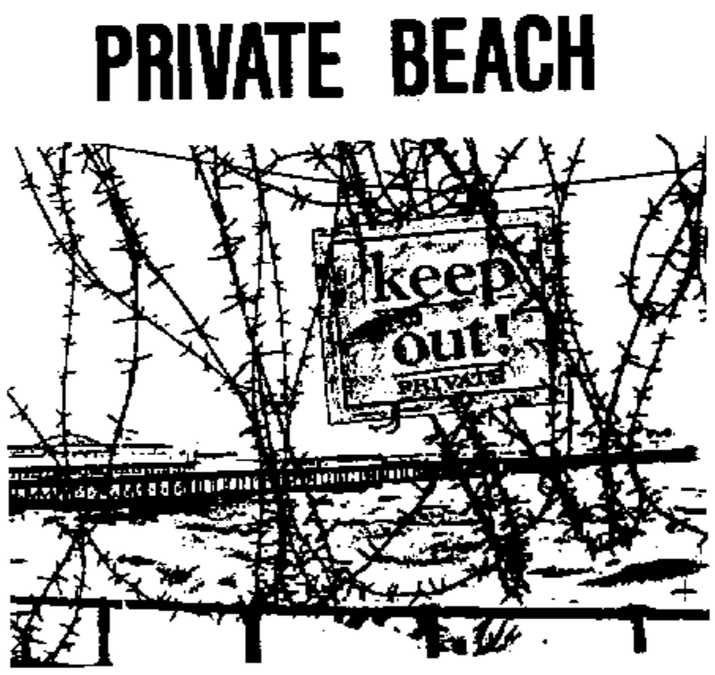
Anyone wanting to help the Socialist Society campaign or to help organise meetings in all the major localities is invited to make contact with our office at 9, Poland Street, London WC1. In the meantime it is vital that the left supports protests and demonstrations of solidarity with Sarah. Her example – she may rest assured – will inspire many others in the crucial months and years ahead.

Privatising Brighton beach

Last year's local elections in Brighton saw a swing to Labour with the party gaining 20 seats to the Tories 24 and the 4 of the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The Labour Group on Council then took the initiative proposing many innovative schemes, only to find that they were to be thwarted by the Alliance voting with the Tories. The Liberals have seen that their ineffectual grip on the town is dwindling and have reacted by exploiting the balance of power that they hold on Council. Not even the Labour Party fully estimated the extent of their panic until 23rd September 1983 when at a full meeting of the Council the Liberal leader proposed that part of the beach be privatised. The only explanation for this extraordinary moves is as a last ditch attempt by the Alliance to take the fore as the party with 'new ideas'! This was an opportunity that the Tories could not miss — a policy that they had long wanted to implement proposed by a supposed political opponent.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

What neither group accounted for was the public response the "private beach" was to evoke. The people of Brighton were not impressed by the idea of continental plage. They had seen how the Tories' delusions that Brighton is in the South of France and not England had failed — a Marina with nowhere to sail to, a conference centre which regularly loses money being the most notable examples of this policy. In a local paper an opinion poll registered that 19 out of 20 people opposed the scheme.



For the Labour Party the benefit has been twofold; in Brighton the alliance between the SDP/Liberals and Tories has been exposed, as has the self-interest of Conservative councillors (one owns a hotel opposite the site of the beach). More generally we can use this issue to educate the electorate about the Conservative motivation for privatisation and extend awareness from the beach to broader issues.

The graphic which accompanies this article (a poster designed by a member of Brighton Labour Party) provides the catalyst for an emotional reaction which can be channelled into a political response. The image of the pier with the barbed wire and barricades dramatises what the beach will be like.

Last bastion

The beach is the last bastion of public right, it is a simple pleasure which can be enjoyed by most. The Tories and Liberals have reacted to this accusation by voicing the standard reply that people will still have freedom of choice. But, as people have grasped, it is now that we can exercise that freedom. Many of the facilities which are supposedly going to make the beach special already exist (drinks, icecreams, deckchairs). At present one can still go on the beach and then decide whether or not to pay for these services. This argument maybe extended to the NHS, education and other services provided by the state whether locally or nationally that are being privatised — there is a difference between paying for extras on top of a basic service and paying for that service itself.

If the people of Brighton can recognise the self-interest of the Conservatives in selling off a natural asset it should not be difficult to extend that awareness to other areas. In Brighton the beach has become an emotive focus for such arguments, showing clearly that if we can relate Tory policy to everyday experience an effective grassroots opposition maybe mobilised.

Sarah Cullen, Brighton Labour Party.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Mitterand Threatens Polish Socialists

Eric Heffer and Tony Benn have protested to the French government against its plan to expel the prominent Polish socialist exile, Zbigniew Kowalewski, from France.

The French police have told Kowalewski to leave the country by April 28th on the grounds that he cannot prove he has the means to support himself. But the real reasons for the expulsion order are a good deal murkier.

The Socialist party daily, Le Matin, suggested 4th April that the order was connected to a new thaw in Franco-Polish relations following an exchange of official visits in February and March. Le Monde added (6th April) that the French government was hostile to Kowalewski's activities in France. A glance at the work of the former Solidarnosc leader suggests that both explanations may be correct.

Kowalewski was a member of the Solidarnosc presidium in Lodz, Poland's second largest industrial city and was well known within the movement nationally as a leader of the self-management movement and as the proponant of the tactic of the "active strike" — strike actions to impose workers' control of production. His writings on this tactic circulated widely and his ideas were implemented by workers in many regions of the country in the last months of Solidarnosc's legal existence. Kowalewski was also notable amongst the movement's leaders in being an avowed Marxist. This record makes him a serious threat to the Jaruzelski regime and his comrades on the Lodz leadership, Andrzej Slowik and Jerzy Kropiwnicki, received savage 6 year prison sentences under martial law.

When martial law was imposed in December 1981, Kowalewski was in France on an official visist sponsored by the CFDT and CGT printers' unions. He organised the French Solidarnosc co-ordinating committee and was elected its president. In the meantime both the AFL-CIO and the ICFTU were devoting considerable resources to drawing Solidarnosc exiles under their wing and there were efforts by the right in the West to use the symbol of Solidarnosc as a club against the Left. The Paris committee under Kowalewski cut across such efforts by reacing out to unions like the French CGT, the Spanish Workers' Commissions and left-wing unions in Latin American like those in El Salvador.

A smear campaign was launched against him by pro-American elements in the Polish emigration, accusing him of being a Communist, and on the suggestion of some Solidarnosc leaders in Poland, he withdrew from the Committee in Paris. But some forces in the Right are clearly interested in pursuing the hunt against him, by getting him expelled from France. The Solidarnosc Committee in Paris has denounced the expulsion order.

In February 1982 Kowalewski came to London to speak at the Labour Party's rally in support of Solidarnosc and he was a visitor to the party conference that autumn.

Both Eric Heffer and Tony Benn have sent telegrams to the French Interior Minister expressing shock at the expulsion order and urging it should be rescinded. The Bertrand Russell Foundation has also expressed its deep concern over the case. Further protests are urgently needed. They should be sent to:

Monsicur Gaston Deferre,
Ministre de l'Interieur,
1, Place Beauveau,
Paris 8,
France.

Oliver MacDonald

Blood in The Gulf

Tony Greenstein

The toppling of the Shah of Iran by a mass uprising of the Iranian people in 1979, was greeted enthusiastically by the Left inside and outside Iran. The Shah, supported to the hilt by Labour's Foreign Secretary David Owen, was the only overt supporter of Israel in the region. The Palestinian movements also welcomed the Shah's overthrow as Yassir Arafat was Khomeini's first foreign visitor.

HOSTAGES CRISIS

When in the midst of the hostages crisis, Iraq invaded claiming sovereignty over the Shatt al Arab waterway, the Left supported Iran perceiving correctly Iraq's attack as being a cover for US attempts to reverse Iran's conflict with US imperialism. Iraq's supporters included the Gulf states, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, who feared the spread of revolution in Islamic clothes. Iran was also under a trade and arms embargo.

But 4 years on the situation has changed. The main threat to the revolution comes from within. Western trade links have been resumed, the Bazaar is back in business and the Left and Mojaheddin have been crushed as the most reactionary aspects of Islamic law are used to legitimise a regime which uses religious coercion and nationalistic rhetoric to survive. Although banking and much trade has been nationalised, capitalist property relations remain, as even the most limited bourgeois democratic reforms have been abolished. Bani Sadr, Barzagan and Sadeq Ghotzabeh (ex President, PM and Foreign Secretary) have fled, been deposed and executed respectively. The execution of homosexuals and the flogging of adulterers and prostitutes have accompanied mass executions and torture in Tehran's Evrin prison. Because virgins cannot, in Islamic Law, be executed, they are raped before being killed. The Workers Committees, whose strikes helped cripple the Shah, have been taken over by the Mullahs as basic trade union organisation is driven underground. The first victims of Khomeini were the Kurds who have fought a tenacious battle against the Revolutionary Guards.

MORE STABLE

In human rights terms, Khomeini's regime is not only worse than the Shah's but is also more stable, with a petit bourgeois base not unlike that of a fascist regime, except that it arose in opposition to US imperialism and multinational capital. Today imperialism is divided with France (and the USSR) supplying Iraq and Britain and Israel supplying Iran and the US hedging its bets. Iran's tame Communist Party, Tudeh, and the Fedayeen Majority act as the main apologists for the regime's barbarities as they pursued the line that the Islamic Republican Party was divided into 'progressive' and 'reactionary' wings. Just as in Iraq and Sudan, both wings of the IRP turned on the Tudeh. Since the initial Iraqi attack and Iran's counter attack, the Islamic regime in Tehran had considerable opportunity to settle with Iraq. It has refused, using the war to crush its opponents internally, settle scores with the Iraqi regime and re-establish Iranian supremacy in the area.

But there are signs that as the casualties mount, resistance to recruitment is growing as the ruling IRP itself is dividing with the Majlis Speaker, Rafsanjani, leading the pro-war wing (one of the Tudeh's 'progressives'). But whichever way the war goes, and stalemate is most likely as the war ironically reinforces Iraq's regime, the attitude of socialists should be resolute opposition to both bloodstained regimes and support for the opposition in both countries. In short, revolutionary defeatism.

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

POPULAR POWER IN NICARAGUA

by Geoffrey Sheridan

Labour party members often cast a sceptical eye over revolutions, anticipating the party monolith which reduces mass organisations to meek mouthpieces, and the mass of the people to a sullen subservience. Nicaragua has proved to be something else.

The 41 of us — mainly Labour Party members — who journeyed out in late February found ourselves enveloped by the Sandinistas' revolution: by its social achievements, by the growing sophistication of its political practice, by those prepared to die to defend it.

Our visit coincided with the announcement of the governmental elections to be held on 4 November. In Managua's Plaza de la Revolucion, where 100,000 gathered to hear the news, the square echoed to *Sandino Vive* and *Poder Popular*, popular power. It was the first time, said a young woman in our group, that she had ever demonstrated *for* something.

The election (when did a revolution last have one?) will be held two days before the citizens of the United States vote for their president — the relatively few who bother to vote. And its timing indicates more than the Sandinistas' sense of humour. Once the election takes place, the White House will be extremely hard pressed to concoct a pretext to invade.

The word in Managua was that the election is primarly for foreign consumption. It has been on the Sandinistas' (FSLN) agenda since shortly after they came to power, but the government and their supporters state a simple message: Our election was on 19 July 1979 — the day of the Triumph of the Revolution when the insurrectionary general strike finally despatched Somoza and his cohorts to Miami.

The bourgeois parties, lacking a grass-roots organisation, never mind popularity, are deeply upset about the election.

They have railed against the vote going to youth, though the minimum voting age of 16 could hardly have been otherwise when so much of the revolution has been by and for young people. They resent the fact that the army and militia will have the vote. Yet since the government has brought to life Sandino's dictum — 'We don't have an army, we have a people in arms' — it would be absurd to hand out guns but not ballot papers.

They decry the official censorship of the media. which is mainly on military and economic matters. It will be lifted for the election.

A boycott of the election by the opposition parties could be on the cards. But this ploy has already been weakened by the fact that the Independent Liberals, one of the three parties which together with the FSLN make up the Patriotic Front government coalition, has declared that it will stand in its own right. As it happens Sandino was a Liberal, and the party anticipates a healthy vote.

The irony of all this is that the Sandinistas wish they had a decent opposition. Voting — for the president, vice-president, and 90 deputies — will be by PR, so that small parties don't get wiped out.

To underline the point, when we asked Sergio de Castro, editor of the FSLN's weekly paper *Barricada Internacional*, whether he considered that the existence of *La Prensa*, a rabidly right-wing daily, was of some benefit to the government, he commented: 'It represents a sector of society (mainly the business community) which wouldn't cease to exist if the government shut the paper down.

'Pluralism means allowing the people as a whole to express themselves. The limits,' he added, 'are that they must recognise the fact of the revolutionary process, so this freedom isn't extended to the Contras, who seek the military overthrow of the government'.

The Sandinistas' magnanimity is remarkable. Their first act was to abolish the death penalty. Then, towards the end of the last year, they declared an amnesty for everyone but senior officers of Somoza's National Guard and Contra leaders. Nearly a thousand have taken the opportunity to return to the country.

None of this, of course, has been sufficient to deflect Washington. Large-scale raids, kidnappings, and bombings are now being supplemented by the mining of the ports. Outside the Ministry of the Interior in Managua a banner reads: 'What they're afraid of is our joy'.

Whatever reservations the Sandinistas may entertain about the value of an election to the revolutionary process, there's no doubt that it will advance the standing of the Sandinistas and deepen political discourse — Reagan's worst efforts allowing.

The trip was organised by the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and New Socialist. Watch out for a forthcoming pamphlet 'Nicaragua Impressions!' For a speaker, contact the campaign at 20 Compton Terrace, London N1. Tel 01-226 7647. Individual membership is £5, organisations £10.

There is an urgent appeal for supplies for the many thousands of people displaced by the Contras' activities. Donations payable to 'Nicaragua Support Fund', to the campaign address.

GUYANA: COMBATTING THE

In Guyana, on the South American mainland, the People's National Congress government of executive President Forbes Burnham has performed the remarkable feat of turning that country of less than ¾ million people in possession of extensive mineral and agricultural resources into a destitute land. Historically and culturally a part of the Caribbean, Guyana's debt of £1 billion makes it the most indebted country per head of population in the Americas, ahead of such debt dinosaurs as Mexico and Argentina.

Forbes Burnham, in power since the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States helped propel him to power in 1964, has intimidated his opposition by considerably expanding the armed forces and police and simultaneously securing their loyalty to his ruling party rather than the state. Just as important, and even more operational, has been his subtle manipulation in his sole favour of all elections since then, through legislation that effectively removes any possibility of free and fair elections under his regime. This has also meant that Guyanese have been burdened with a government which they can neither speak to nor sack. A government which greatly irritates its workers and near 40% unemployed, with its insulting claim to be acting in the interests of the country's development while precipitating a total and crippling production crisis and food shortage by policies conceived in the narrow interest of the ruling clique.

THE PEOPLE PUNISHED

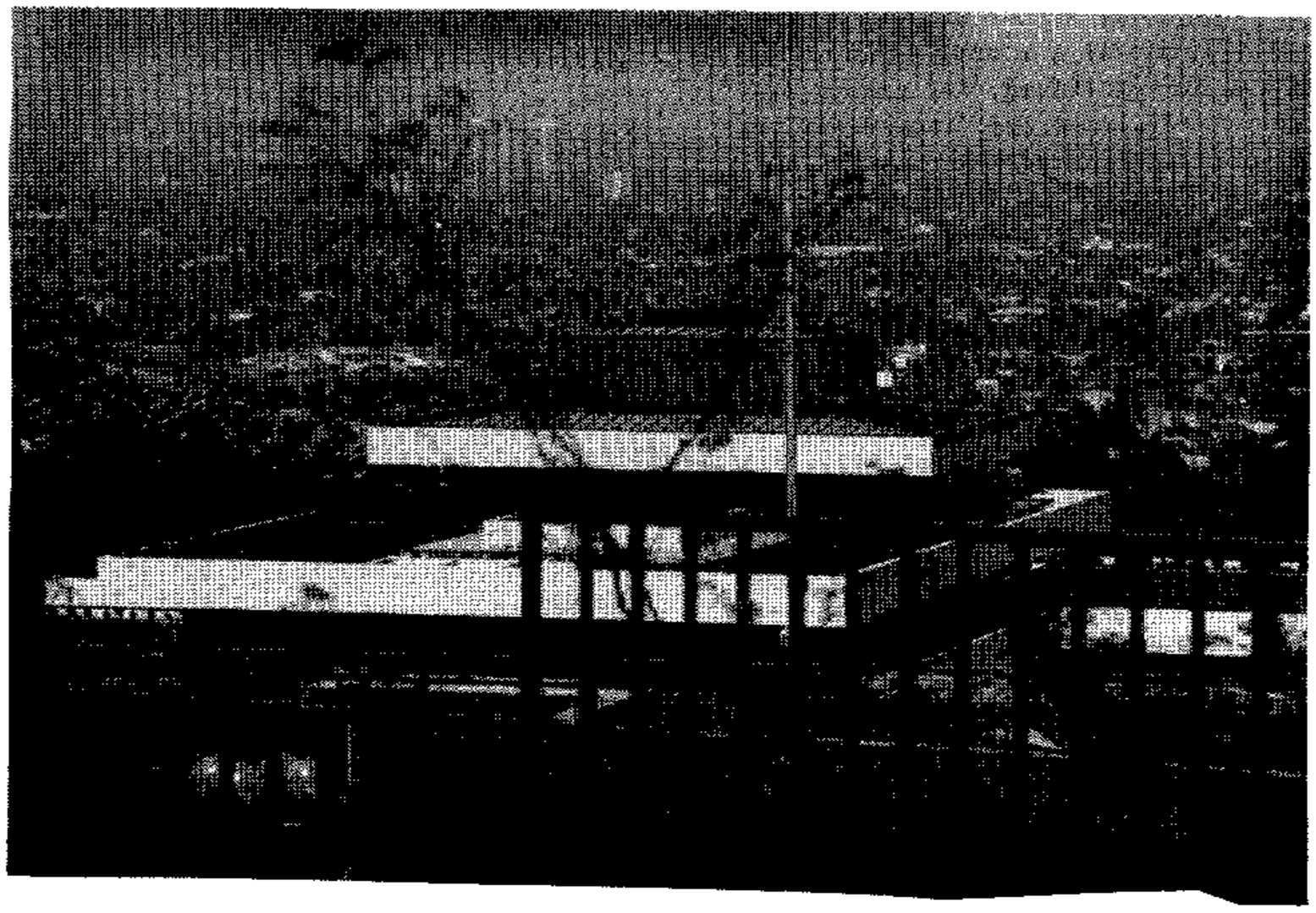
Starting eight years ago the government has 'completely prohibited' an impractical and exhaustive range of imported but essential food items supposedly to conserve foreign exchange. Under the same guise, local agriculture has been starved of fertilizer and imported machines while imported foods and liquor, luxury cars and lavish foreign trips have been retained for the elite. Today malnutrition afflicts half the child population – those who die are relegated to statistics of Guyana's infant mortality rate recorded as the highest in the region for 1983; those who survive, doctors say, would have resulting physical and mental problems lasting a lifetime.

To survive, the population relies entirely on the 'parallel market' – the source from which they must garner scarce commodities all imported at a price. They constantly expose themselves to harassment by the police, provoked by a ruling party anxious to blame the society's problems on this non-state importation of essential items, whilst being noticeably silent

CHILE'S DEEPENING CRISIS

by Jeremy Abrahams
(recently in Santiago)

HIGH ON a hill overlooking Santiago, General Pinochet has built himself a new Presidential Palace, surrounded by security cameras and an electrified fence. Built at a cost of US $20m, the scandal has so embarrassed Pinochet that the 'house' remains empty.



Jeremy Abrahams

Lo Curro, Pinochet's empty palace

Only a few weeks ago, one of Chile's popular opposition magazines suggested that the vacant property could serve as a retirement home for the Chicago Boys, the monetarist economists who have taken Chile's unemployment rate up to 40%. They did not appreciate how soon it would be needed. In the first week of April the Chicago Boys were cursorily sacked for the government, and replaced by industrialists intent on reflating the economy.

Illusory Boom Ended

The dramatic switch in policy does not mean that Pinochet is a new convert to the cause of social welfare. The real conversion occurred when Chile's illusory economic boom ended in 1982. As industries collapsed dragged down by a bankrupt and corrupt banking system Pinochet's support amongst the ruling class began to be eroded. Isolated from the interests of the ruling class and confronted by dissent within the armed forces, the threat from popular protests for democracy has loomed ever larger in Pinochet's eyes. A new alignment with the ruling class represented Pinochet's only chance of survival.

The switch in economic policy may provide a temporary respite for Pinochet. But the political movement for democracy has acquired a momentum of its own. Pinochet's response to this can only be to increase repression.

Day of Protest

On March 27th a day of protest was organised by the Workers National Command an umbrella trade union organisation. Behind this organisation were two political organisations, the Popular Democratic Movement (MDP) an alliance of Socialists and Communists and the MIR, and the Democratic Alliance a coalition of Social Democrats and Christian Democrats.

Fearful of the growing strength and courage of the protest movement, the government resorted to heavy repression in advance of the day of protest. An opposition leader was brutally attacked by the secret service, the number of arrests rose considerably and the level of policing in the shanty towns became ever more conspicuous. Three days before the protest a state of emergency was declared and as the troops moved into Santiago a curfew was announced.

Heavy Repression

The heavy repression produced the effect the government desired, and the protest passed off far less combatively than had been expected. Nevertheless, four people, including a 12 year old boy, were shot dead by the police

With a general strike planned for May the conflict between the popular demand for democracy and the repression of the government can only intensify. Still, it is commonly said that the last act of every dictator is to build a bunker. Underneath the house on the hill lies one of Pinochet's several bunkers...

Labour Day Solidarity with
Workers in Guyana

CARIBBEAN WORKERS RALLY

Sunday May 6th 1984
10.30am–1.30pm

Film Premiere: In The Sky's Wild Noise
Documentary of Walter Rodney and his analysis of Guyanese Workers' Struggle.

Speakers: Donald Rodney
Richard Hart
on Caribbean Workers' Struggles.
Fr Malcolm Rodrigues, S.J.
and Clive Thomas
(WPA Executive Members)
on the current crisis in Guyana.

Poetry: Mark Matthews
accompanied by Pan

at: Ritzy Cinema, Brixton Oval, SW2
Admission: £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

FRAUD

on their own excesses.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Meanwhile, the foremost and extremely difficult task of a political opposition committed to restoring democracy in Guyana, is to tread a path of formulating and pursuing a campaign against this virtual dictatorship whilst operating in a constant state of police emergency. They have to battle against an electoral system that offers no wins for the opposition, and work with an electorate bewildered and demoralised by recurring 'election victories' by a patently unpopular regime.

The next date for general elections in Guyana is December 1985, and the Working People's Alliance (WPA) of Guyana – a political party which since its formation in July 1979 has had three of its members assassinated by the police, or agents of the ruling party – is of the opinion that appropriate efforts to avert another fraud by the PNC should begin immediately.

WPA Support Group (UK)

The WPA conceives the first essential element of such a campaign to be a statement of professional legal opinion on the effect of post-independence electoral laws accompanied by an investigation in Guyana by a team representing states or recognised important international organisations into whether free and fair elections are possible under those laws. The other important element is a full disclosure of all the findings to Guyanese at home and the international community at large as a basis for a demand for entire reform of the corrupted electoral laws of the country.

The Guyana government has always regarded any interest in its elections from outside of Guyana as interference in the internal affairs of the country. However, since last October when President Burnham recommended a fact-finding mission for sovereign Grenada the inconsistency of his policy has been displayed.

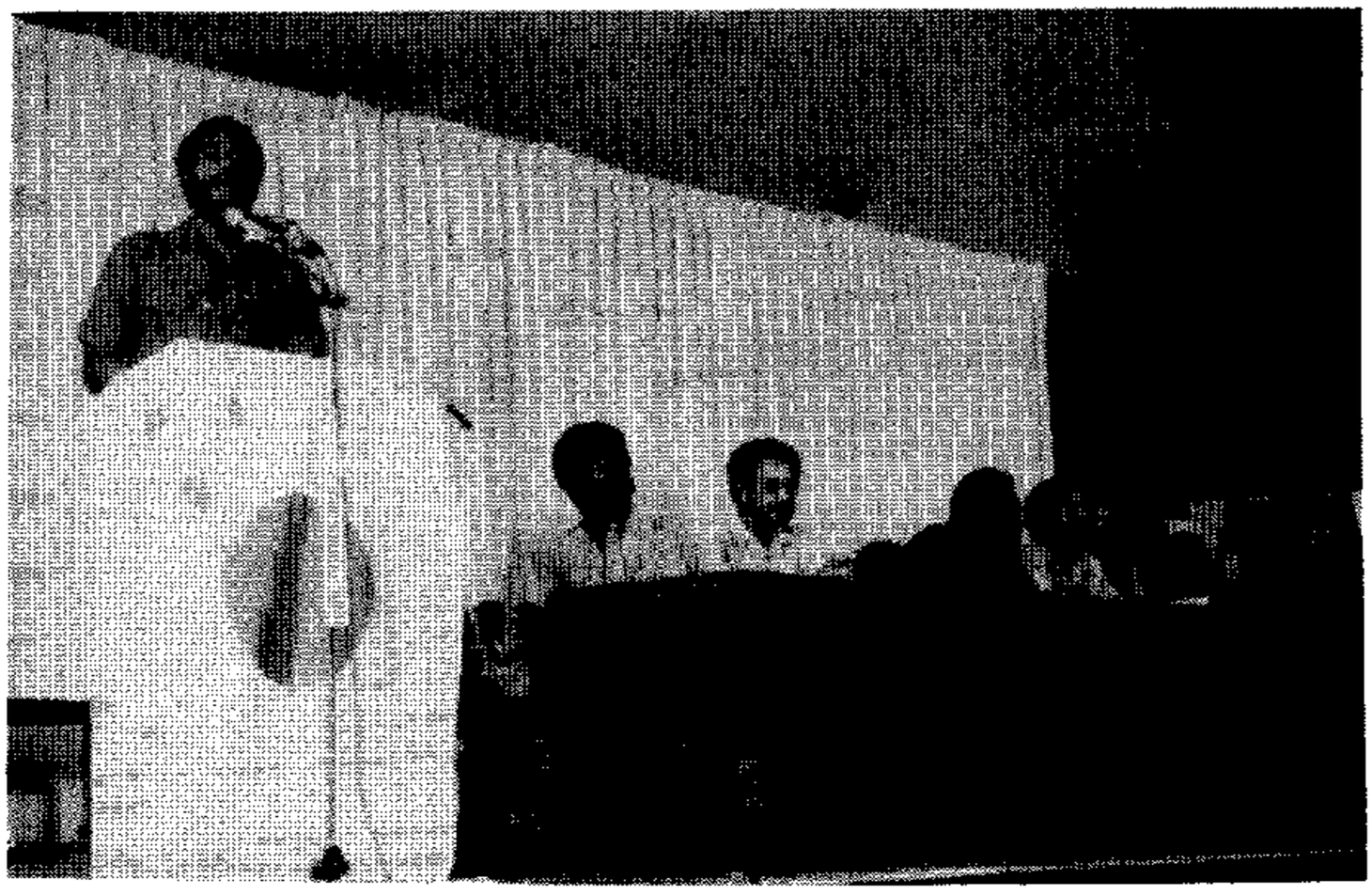
The Working People's Alliance has already called on the Guyana Bar Association to provide a preliminary professional opinion on the electoral laws of Guyana as they stand. It further appeals to individuals, political, human rights, and labour organisations inside and outside of Guyana to join in this most important lobby for a fact-finding mission into what concerns the vital interests of a disenfranchised and victimised workforce and population of Guyana against a fraudulent and discriminatory regime.

The Working People's Alliance Support Group, a group of mainly Guyanese living and working in Britain in support of the policies of the WPA, would be pleased to hear from individuals and organisations interested in contributing to the lobby for a fact-finding mission to Guyana.

The Support Group may be contacted at: *BM Box No. 3898, London WC1N 3XX.*

Socialism on Trial in Grenada

On April 4th the preliminary hearings in the murder trial involving Bernard Coard and 19 others were held in a small private room in Richmond Hill Prison. The prison, high on the hills above the harbour of St Georges, the capital of Grenada, is under the fierce regime of Mr. Maloney, a Barbadian police officer. Beating and torture are regular occurances and detainees are denied access to visitors, letters and lawyers.



Members of the PRG at the Budget Presentation in 1982

BLATANT ABUSE

The abuse of normal human rights is blatant. After her first court appearance, Phyllis Coard was taken from the prison to a nearby police station and beaten, despite defence lawyers following by car. The 39 detainees have been held since October and it was only the embarassing presence of internationally known lawyers, such as Tony Gifford and Sarah Burton, and the fact that they applied for habeus Corpus that 18 of them were finally charged on 22nd February.

Seven ex-members of the Peoples Revolutionary Army were charged with the murder of Bratt Bullen, a local businessman who had taken militia weapons to defend Maurice Bishop. Eleven members of the New Jewel Movement Central Committee were charged with conspiracy to murder Bishop and three others.

It is interesting to note that these charges were brought under the 1980 Terrorism (Prevention) Act, passed in fact by the Peoples Revolutionary Government. This is despite the fact that the present Interim Government and the Americans maintain they have reverted to the 1974 constitution, with Sir Paul Scoon as the Queen's representative giving legality to the unelected interim government.

But, then, very litte of what has happened in the investigation so far has been to the benefit of anyone except the CIA and Caribbean security forces leading the enquiry. Prisoners have been interrogated principally about their political beliefs. Those questioned have been those politically active under the Bishop government, not those present on October 19th.

LITTLE ACCESS TO LAWYERS

The prisoners have had little access to lawyers. Jacqueline Samuels-Brown from Jamaica is defending 18 of them. British lawyers have been denied permission to help with the defence, although a British lawyer was retained by the interim government to prepare the prosecution case. The defence have now 3 weeks to prepare their case with only one hour or two for each prisoner.

There is every possibility that hearings will continue to be held in private, thus depriving Grenadians of even their rights to hear the evidence and accounts of the events. This will be a final repudiation of any chance for those most affected by the deaths to have any part of the proceedings. Grenadians are not in charge of the prisoners, the investigation or the trial proceedings. It now seems they will not even have access to any information coming out in court.

Visiting human rights' activists deny that the detainees are in danger from the Grenadian people, which is the excuse for holding proceedings 'in camera'. But is is very difficult for ordinary Grenadians to make their views known with the US and Caribbean Peacekeeping Forces continuing to patrol the island with jeep and helicopter. Any question about human rights would be seized upon as a confession of 'communism' and complicity in murder.

It is therefore very important that questions are raised over here. For no matter what did lie behind the deaths of Bishop and others, the suppression of thet truth will not aid the Grenadian people or any attempts at socialist government.

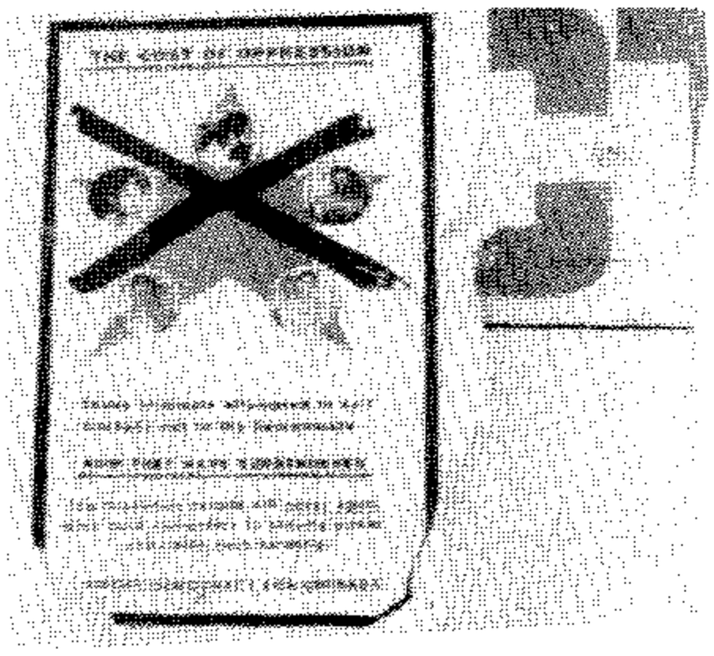
NO RIGHT

The US have no right to be trying Grenadians for crimes against their own people. The call for the US to withdraw and for the trials to be held in public with full human rights for the detainees must be made. This is not to say that support should not be given to other progressive initiatives such as the Maurice Bishop and October 19th Martyrs Fund. But the fact of the US occupation and their consequent control of the law and information distort all the events past and future.

There must also be a continuous analysis of the actions of the US. Why for instance are they so keen not to have a public trial? Despite the enforced confessions, their control of the media and their physical control of the island, they still appear to be afraid of these 20 prisoners. It begs the question of US involvement in the events leading up to the 19th that they do not want to be exposed in open court.

A Committee for Human Rights in Grenada has been established and can be contacted c/o Co-op Hall, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QQ. Offers of material help and requests for speakers are welcome.

Nadine Finch
Islington North CLP



National Campaign Against the Berufsverbote

265, Jersey Road,
Osterley,
Isleworth,
Middlesex TW7 4RF

Dear Editor,

This year has seen GCHQ, Official Secrets trials, suggestions that political activity is incompatible with being a member of the Civil Service, the vast threat to basic civil rights to follow trades disputes and the attack on local democracy.

All these issues relate to BERUFSVERBOT in one way or another. In West Germany, every public employee can be expected to be vetted to see if they are loyal to the constitution. To ensure loyalty, the Secret Police have assembled over three million files on employees which has been used in over one million court hearings. Over five thousand people have been dismissed from teaching posts, railway driving, postal workers and even gardeners and swimming bath attendants.

We are holding a delegate conference in London May 12th and Glasgow May 19th to discuss the wider issues. Speakers in London include a Berufsverbot victim, Richard Balfe MEP, Tony Bunyan and two trades union speakers. May we appeal through your newspaper for branches interested in sending a delegate to contact us at the above address so we can forward the requisite papers and details.

Yours Sincerely

Jack Tyrell
(For the National Campaign against BERUFSVERBOT)

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