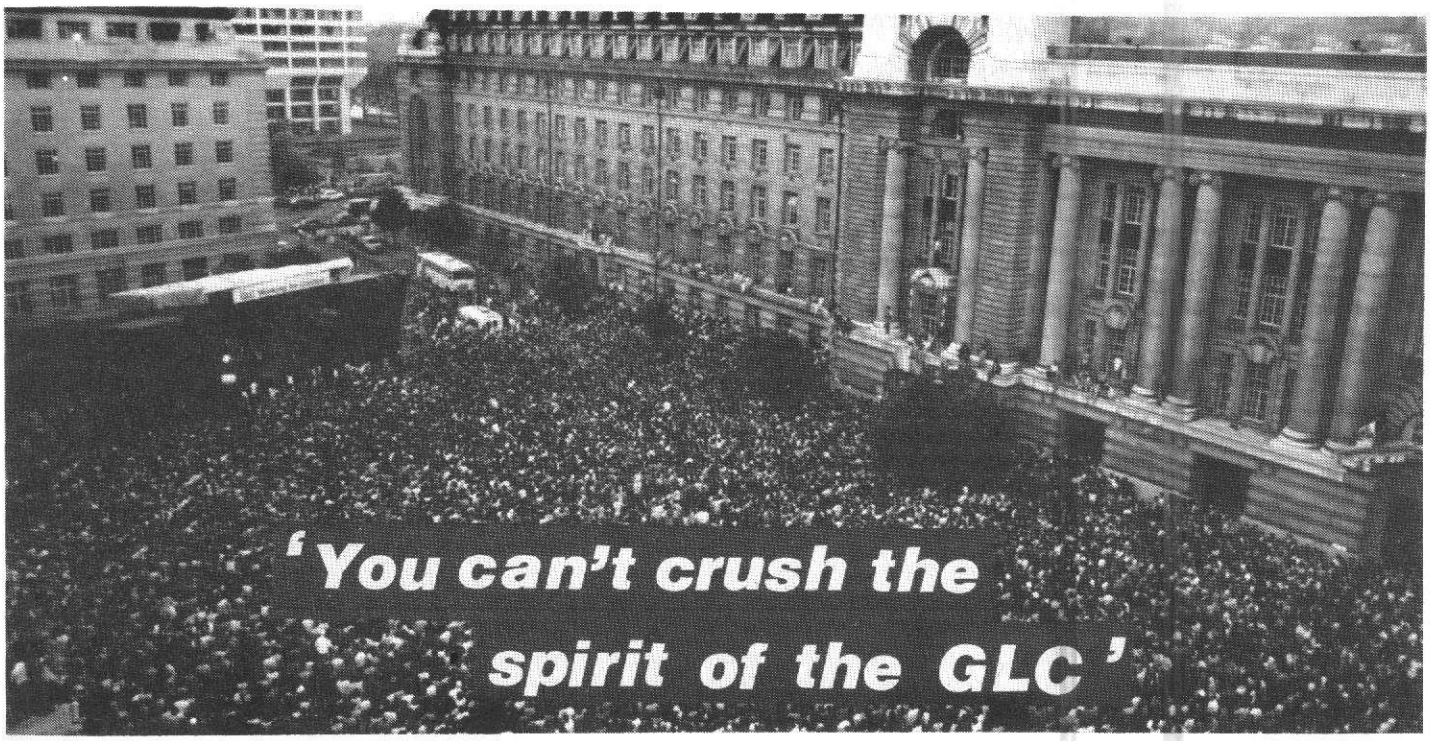
LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING 40p
No 41 JULY 1984



'London's Ours' said *Briefing* on its front page after the GLC election of May 1981. On June 10th this year, tens of thousands of London's people reclaimed County Hall. The car park, closed to traffic, was the scene of the massive rock concert at the heart of the GLC's 'Jobs for a Change' festival. Many more thronged the South Bank, Jubilee Gardens, and County Hall itself. The concert was one vast sea of faces, as people packed in to hear the bands, climbing walls, sitting on window ledges and even on the roof.

'Jobs for a Change' is the slogan of the GLC's Industry and Employment work. It emphasises that our jobs policies, worked out and agreed by the Party before 1981, are not simply about numbers of jobs: they are about using our economic powers to promote change. We aim to promote new forms of industrial ownership and controls, to use technology to enhance working lives rather than to de-skill jobs, and to take positive action to support the rights of women and black people. We set out, through the encouragement of popular planning and industrial democracy, to make economic decisions more accountable. We see the power of elected representatives, not as a licence to dominate other people's lives, but as a resource to be used in support of those trying to defend and create jobs.

And on June 10th the coalition of groups involved – many of them funded by the GLC's Industry and Employment Committee – came together. There were childcare groups, promoting jobs from childcare; projects seeking to liberate other areas of domestic work, such as laundry. There were the co-operative development agencies and the unemployed workers centres. Other left local authorities – Merseyside, Islington, Southwark, Sheffield, Leeds, Lambeth, West Midlands and others – took stalls to explain their policies. There were the new enterprises aided by the Greater London Enterprise Board, and the new products developed in the GLEB technology networks. All the catering was whole food or ethnic food. There were displays on alternative health and energy policies.

For the first time the large range of forces that together make up part of the economic alternative to the government met, saw each other's work and could draw strength from it. The government believe they can crush the spirit of the GLC beneath their feet simply by closing the institution. June 10th showed how wrong they are.

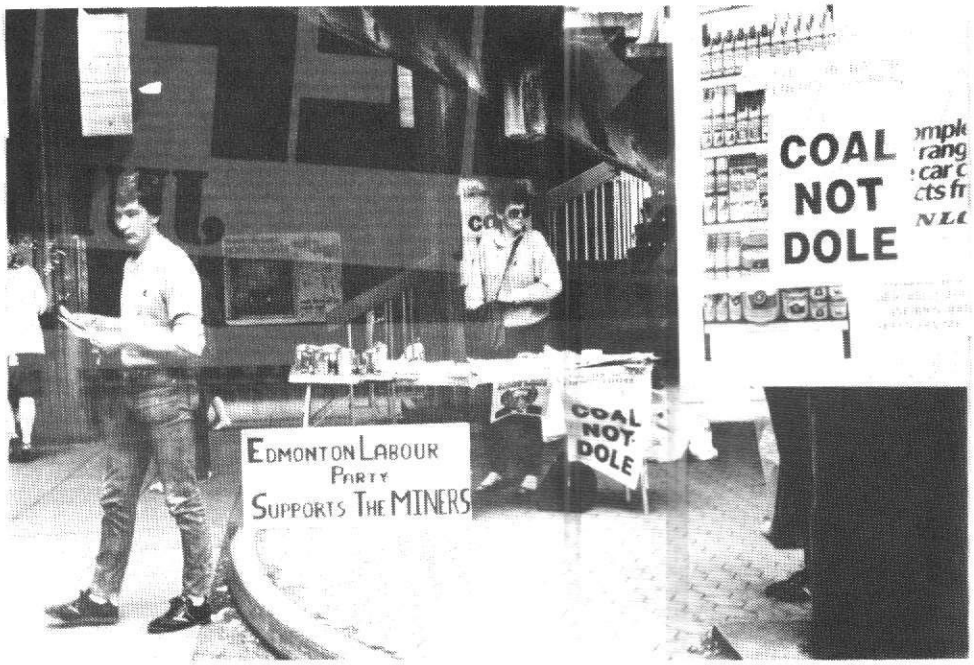
One of *Briefings* great contributions to the labour movement has been to take the range of demands formulated around personal politics, in the women's movement and elsewhere and place them firmly on the political agenda. 'Jobs for a Change' was about linking the demand for *Economic* Change to personal life – to culture, to music, to health. Many on the left have been alienated from economics: the festival was about reclaiming employment and economics as part of the core of our platform. And it puts the issue of unemployment into a central position in the fight against abolition.

Michael Ward Chair GLC Industry and Employment Committee

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

LONDON SUPPORTS

EDMONTON



BRUCE GODDARD

All food and money collected by Edmonton CLP is going directly to the Bolsover NUM following a decision to adopt the pit.

At a public meeting held recently which was addressed by Terry Harrison from Kent NUM and Geoff Poulter from Bolsover NUM, the problems faced by miners and their families were highlighted. Both speakers feared that many men would consider returning to work in the near future unless they received financial help from the Trade Union and Labour movement. Bolsover is one such pit where the assistance currently being received is barely adequate, partly because of its location in the Notts coal field. There, an injunction has been granted to stop area funds being used to support the strike.

Having forged links with the pit, party members in Edmonton have embarked upon a programme of action which includes regular collections of contributions from members, street collections of money and food and a benefit disco planned for early July.

In the last three weeks the Party have been able to send Bolsover over £500 in cash and have delivered personally a considerable quantity of groceries. On our visit to the area we were able to see at first hand the hardship being experienced by the families. However, partly funded by our donations, the strike committee have now opened up a day centre at which a daily meal is provided for all those on strike.

We are all determined that the miners will not be starved back to work.

Bruce Goddard (Vice-chair Edmonton CLP)

For further information please contact B.Goddard, 84 Huxley Rd, N18 (807 9357).

VAUXHALL

The NEC's unanimous decision to ask Party members to pay a levy of a minimum of 50p a week to support the miners' strike was greeted by most of us as a surprisingly imaginative and necessary act of solidarity. Whilst the decision itself may have seemed out of character, however, its implementation by Walworth Road is entirely in line with normal practice!

A letter went to CLP secretaries about a week after the press had informed us of the NEC's decision, exhorting CLPs to collect the levy – and totally ignoring the organisational problems this unprecedented action would create. I'm not knocking the decision – the reverse – but some support, e.g. levy cards, model letters for members, would have been helpful – and is probably still needed in some CLPs, particularly those where the political will of Party officers to take on additional work for whatever reason is open to question. (Briefing's Editor tells me Lambeth has been exemplary in collecting the levy – I find that worrying!)

In Vauxhall, as soon as the levy was announced in the press, we produced a letter signed by the Party Officers to go to each Party member. The letters were distributed to collectors in each ward with instructions that they should personally visit each member on their round giving them the letter, encouraging them to contribute and working out the best method of payment for the individual, i.e. weekly, monthly, standing order. The letter had a slip on the bottom for filling in with the collector's name and address if the member was out. Money is passed to ward treasurers who pay it in to a special account we've opened, and tell the CLP Treasurer how much, from whom, etc.

Problems

That's the theory. In practice, of course, there's been all sorts of problems. The exercise has revealed large gaps in ward organisations (which, of course, we had suspected because of the discrepancies between the number of members "on the books" and those whose subs got collected in). Some collectors have found it difficult to keep going back either to collect more money or to find those members who are always out and don't respond to notes asking them to phone. We've had one resignation (a welcome one!); and a number of members have given up waiting to be called on and posted cheques to me directly. The problems we've found are slowly being rectified and branch secretaries are using this opportunity to get new collectors and "sack" those who just haven't got the time to do the job properly.

Unlike many CLPs, Vauxhall didn't close down during the Euro election campaign so we've been able to use branch, EC and GC meetings to review how we're getting on. That's probably why I'm so aware of the difficulties! On the other hand, several hundred pounds has been collected through the membership levy, regular street collections and collections at all meetings.

The general enthusiasm amongst most members to look for ways of supporting the miners is great. One of our wards is organising a fund-raising social to get even more cash.

The levy is an important initiative which has produced a double-edged result – it has brought in badly-needed cash, thereby allowing Labour Party members to show their solidarity and preventing the miners being starved back to work; but it has also revealed some of the organisational problems the Party has in getting its act together. I hope other CLPs are using the experience of the levy to make changes!

Joan Twelves
Secretary, Vauxhall CLP

THE MINERS!

BRENT

The Brent Miners Support Campaign, jointly organised by members of Kent NUM, Brent Labour Party and Trades Council, meets weekly.

The regular local activities include the collection of money and food on Saturdays in the main shopping areas. Many Labour Party members who had combined GLC stalls with material and collection points for the miners are continuing to run them. The Campaign Group has decided to handle police harassment of street collectors by using look-outs. The process of applying for official permits is too lengthy, cumbersome and politically unacceptable. There are plans to get hold of collection boxes and place them at strategic points around the Borough. This should make for a relatively economic use of people's time and energy.

Workplace contact and liaison has been fairly patchy. Therefore a special meeting was organised to bring together shop stewards and workplace reps. As a result a small activities group has formed to organise more systematic contact with workplaces, to arrange collections, meetings and distribution of publicity material and to encourage workplace stoppages on 27 June Day of Action.

DAY OF ACTION

There is dissatisfaction that SERTUC which is organising the Day of Action seems to be producing only 50,000 leaflets for the whole of London. As Brent alone could take that number, the Support Campaign has decided to arrange its own production of an initial 20,000 for local distribution.

The Support Campaign has suggested that Kent NUM base more miners in Brent to help build support for the Day of Action, and this seems to have been accepted.

Links with Kent miners and their families were strengthened when two coaches came to Brent for the multiracial Carnival at the end of May. Jack Collins spoke, and also Ken Livingstone and the London NW Euro-candidate, Pat Healy. They stressed common themes such as the activities and behaviour of the police against the miners on the picket line and black people on the streets; and the attitude of Tories both nationally and locally towards pit closures and school closures.

Although there are strong links with Kent miners, Brent has also welcomed and assisted miners from Staffordshire and Nottinghamshire.

Further local activities planned include a picket of Rhodes Boyson's Wembley surgery on 7 July. The MP for Brent North is the Minister for Social Security and therefore seems a particularly apt target for expressing one's anger at the way the Government attempts to starve miners and other workers on strike back to work.

People in the Campaign Group are beginning to consider that if the local papers continue to ignore the press releases sent them, then there may be a picket of their offices in the near future.

Emma Tait, Chair Brent East CLP
Co-convenor Brent Miners Support Campaign

The Brent Miners Support Campaign can be contacted c/o 375 Willesden High Road, NW10. Tel. 459 2835.

Wednesday 27 June Day of Action
Called by SERTUC,
Kent NUM & GLATC
asking for stoppages
Tower Hill: 1pm speeches
2pm march via Fleet Street to Jubilee Gardens

Message of support from Nicaraguan miners via Pedro Roque V from Mina El Limon.



Regional office cracks down — or cracks up?

What a joke! For the second time in the last six months, Regional Office has written to our LGC to tell us that we are following the wrong procedure with regard to our Panel of Candidates for the by-elections and the 1986 elections; for the second time we are told that this is in response to a complaint (and for the second time the 'complainant' remains anonymous); and for the second time the Regional Officer concerned has his facts wrong.

As comrades will be aware, sitting councillors, regardless of how appalling their attendance or behaviour might be, are automatically included on the panel from which candidates for local elections are selected, as we were instructed by the NEC in 1983. (However, in some areas such as Tower Hamlets, councillors trying to implement Party policy may find themselves excluded from the Labour whip, with no objection from the Regional Office!)

When our LGC raised this matter with the Labour Group on Ealing Council, we secured agreement that councillors should voluntarily go through the interviewing procedure — and this policy has the support of the Leader, Deputy Leader, Group Chair, Chief whip, Education whip plus over half of the current Labour Group. The aim of the policy being, of course, to see which councillors consider themselves to be (superficially, at least) accountable to their local Party. However, as the rules stand, we are compelled to place back on the list those councillors unwilling to be interviewed by the local Party and we have never attempted to do otherwise.

To make matters worse, we are informed that we must include all sitting Councillors on the 1986 Panel. This means that even those who wish to stand down must be included, according to the Regional Office dictat! I can think of no better way to stitch up a shortlist than to include three invitees who have no intention of standing!

Also, if a sitting Councillor refuses to complete a nomination form and then fails to be selected, you can bet that Regional Office will blame the local LGC for not circulating as many details on that nominee as on those who completed forms.

We would be grateful to hear from other LGCs with regard to the procedures they have adopted for the 1986 selections and whether they have secured agreements with their local Labour Groups. If you think this position may arise in your area, we will let you have copies of the relevant correspondence — both with our Branches and with the Regional Office.

by Kevin Veness

Secretary,
Ealing Borough LGC
(personally culpable)

LABOUR COUNCILS

Fortress Islington? Fighting the unions not the Tories!!



150 NALGO and NUPE Nursery Workers have benn on strike since April 16th for better pay and more staff. (see Briefing No. 40) For the Nursery workers it has been a concrete expression of years of anger and frustration over pay and conditions in the Children's Day Centres.

The workers have had to put up with the attitude that childcare was unimportant, womens work and therefore extremely low paid. The council have ignored staff shortages that created unfair, stressful and unrewarding conditions for the workers and provided inadequate childcare that was at times potentially dangerous. This anger has produced one of the strongest, best organised industrial actions ever known in the borough and this from a section that few believed would ever come out on indefinite strike!

TORN UP MANIFESTO

This dispute has exposed Islington Council's position on much wider issues. Not only have they torn up their manifesto, which made specific commitments to improve pay and staffing in the Children's Day Centres, not only have they ignored decisions of the Labour Party, but they have chosen to use the dispute as a test of strength with NALGO. A councillor at Labour Group commented that if the council could beat the nursery workers they could also win decentralisation (an area where Islington NALGO has a large number of disputes with the council).

When asked in negotiations why they weren't making an increased offer, given the financial savings from the strike so far, they replied that they were worried about the effects on next year's spending. This implies that they have no intention of seriously fighting rate-capping.

Neighbouring Hackney however, has recently agreed to increase staffing in its nurseries by 65 posts (an increase similar to our claim), Camden is reviewing its staffing levels, already higher than Islington's following the enquiry into the death of a baby in a Camden nursery which had criticised staffing levels.

NOT OF OUR MAKING

At the time of writing Islington NALGO is conducting ballots (required under national rules) in selected sections to extend the indefinite strike action. This is not a conflict of our making. Islington Council should implement the policies in the manifesto. It should work with the trade unions to end low pay, improve services and build the fight against rate capping.

What you can do.
— Invite a speaker to your Labour Party or trade union branch.
— Write letters of protest to Margaret Hodge, Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, N1
— Send a donation to the strike fund (needed to help pay NUPE strike pay).
Strike Headquarters, 35 Arvon Road, N5. Tel: 01 609 4622 weekdays 9-5.

John Godfrey, Nursery Workers Strike Cttee.

Advertising rates for London Briefing:

Whole Page	£110
Half Page	£60
Third Page	£45
Quarter Page	£35

... AND TOWER

On Monday 11th June NALGO members in the libraries department started a campaign of industrial action to protect the library service. The Council's Amenities Committee has decided to close two libraries in Tower Hamlets. One in Roman Road and the one in Poplar. Library staff concerned about the lack of amenities for the local people started a campaign to try and get the Labour Council to stop the cuts in local library facilities.

In a mass meeting the library staff decided:
(a) Non co-operation with any work to help in the closure of the Roman Road or Poplar libraries.
(b) Non collection of any monies in the libraries, eg, Fines, reservation fees and sale of local history publications.
(c) A campaign with the people of the borough to fight the closures.

Management's [over] reaction to libraries' staff decision was to issue a letter to selected staff informing them that they were in breach of contract and were suspended without pay. All the library staff immediately walked out in support. At a meeting at Central Library the staff resolved to withdraw their

VERSUS NALGO

Socialism in Southwark — The farce continues.

The strike in Southwark has finally ended, but not without various councillors seeming to want to punish those who had been on strike. The strike was over the sacking of Siobhan Stokes, a residential worker, who had refused to comply with an unreasonable demand from Soutwark management. (For a fuller picture of this and subsequent events please see 'Briefing' - Issue No. 39)

Having been closeted with a representative of the Conciliation Service for several days, supposedly looking for a joint solution to the strike, managment, without any warning, withdrew from these discussions. The 'Joint Secretaries' of the 'Greater London Whitley Council' were called in to adjudicate. These two persons represent the two sides of the council-staff side and managment, and are normally called in when all other ways of settling a dispute have been exhausted.

By Friday April 13th the Joint Secretaries were nearing the end of their investigations and were taking a short recess when, upon leaving the Peckham Town Hall they were confronted by a march of 1000 people demonstrating their support for Siobhan Stokes which had been organised by Southwark Trades Council. Also on the march along with Southwark NALGO, were local community groups, local union branches, the banners of the Southwark Labour Parties, and a delgation of the Kent Miners. The rally heard from all of these groups and also from one of the Labour councillors.

Having seen this march the Joint Secretaries returned to the Town Hall and gave their conclusions, of which the most important was that Siobhan should be reinstated. There were also a number of other points made, some of which could be construed as being critical of the union (but then one expects some amount of horse trading in such matters).

However, being mindful of previous disputes with this council we remained on strike until we had obtained a satisfactory return to work agreement from the council. Initially the council wanted to count the period of the strike as a break in service which would have meant that, especially, the women who had been on strike, would have had problems over their maternity rights, but everyone would have lost service related benefits.

Eventually the council came to its senses and came to an agreement that no-one would lose anything as a result of being on strike. This only took two hard weeks of negotiations. The negotiations over the terms and conditions of the Mobile Care Officers took two weeks, to commence but eventually arrived at what was thought to be a satisfactory conclusion.

However Southwark NUPE (Officers) Branch, for their own reasons, decided to withdraw from these talks (as they had removed themselves from all action that involved Southwark NALGO). At the last meeting of Southwark Labour Group it was decided that these negotiations could not be agreed to without the consent of this branch of NUPE. It is perhaps a coincidence that a number of the leading members of this union branch are Southwark Councillors who have also expressed a certain amount of hostility to NALGO.

RETURN TO WORK

On April 27th at a mass meeting of the branch, Southwark NALGO voted to return to work. It has yet to be decided what to do about this latest betrayal of our trust. Why is it that when all sections of the working class are under attack these particular 'socialist' councillors want to attack their employees. It couldn't be that they want a nice docile workforce when they want to implement the Tory cuts, with the least resistance. This is however the conclusion one is forced to consider given their actions. If a united front is to be formed then Southwark is going to have to accept their Socialist manifesto and act on it and not seek to divide its workers.

Southwark council does not have a monopoly on socialism and should start listening to its workers, and not dictating to them. Dictatorship of the proletariat means the working class deciding; not an elite deciding for them.

Dick Larkin
Dulwich CLP

HAMLETS

labour until the above conditions were met.

On Wednesday 13th June a meeting was held of ALL NALGO members that work in Tower Hamlets. The meeting voted 601 in favour (232 against) the following resolution:

'This branch condemns the Council for suspending library staff for taking limited official industrial action. We agree to support the library staff in their action against closures by withdrawing our labour from 3pm Wednesday 13th June until the following conditions are met.':
1. All suspended library staff to be reinstated without victimisation,
2. The Council agrees to take no further action on the closures of Roman Road and Poplar libraries until the results of a review of the Library service have been agreed by the Library staff.'

It is a pity that staff have to strike to protect services in a Labour controlled council.

Ann Flowers (Tower Hamlets NALGO Branch

Voluntary Sector backs GLC !

More than 95 per cent of 418 London voluntary organisations are against proposals to abolish the GLC – and more than half of these are *not* funded by the GLC.

These are the main results of a survey published today by the London Voluntary Service Council. Researchers Barry Knight and Ruth Hayes analysed the views of London's voluntary organisations and found that almost all the organisations concerned were traditional agencies working with the poor, the elderly and the homeless. They were not being party political in their views, but were simply worried about the effects on their client groups and about the administrative inefficiency and increased cost of alternative arrangements.

Paul Sommerfeld, Director of LVSC, commented: *'Voluntary organisations in London are desperately concerned that a vast range of their services to the most needy in our society could disappear. Because of restrictions on their own spending, London boroughs will be unable to pick up funding lost from the GLC. In addition there will be no London forum to take action on racism, homelessness, drug abuse, alcoholism and other issues that cross London borough boundaries'.*

For further information and comment: Barry Knight (home tel. 567 5561, office tel. 388 0241), or Leslie Marks (office tel: 388 0241).

LEWISHAM: THE SPECTRE OF RESIGNATION

The decision at a Joint Lewisham Labour Group Local Government Committee meeting last month to go for confrontation with the Government next year on a 'no cuts, no rates/rent rises' policy, using resignation of all Labour councillors and by-elections as a preliminary tactic, provoked a strong reaction among other London Labour Group leaderships. Other London boroughs moved quickly to try and shelve the resignation option at joint leaders' meetings and by pressuring Lewisham Labour councillors and Party activists into reconsidering.

They seem to have succeeded, for Lewisham's Labour Group has put the resignation option 'on the table'. But Lewisham, in raising the spectre of resignation, may have helped Labour councils intent on defending services in the face of rate-capping and/or increased penalties on Government grant. With luck, others will realise that all the tactical manoeuvring in the world won't do a bit of good if the confrontation strategy fails to take account of the need for popular support. And that means a mandate.

RISK SURCHARGE

It also means entire Labour groups prepared to risk surcharge. Both these needs are met by resignation and the fighting of by-elections on a no-cuts platform, with the commitment to no rate or rent rise ensuring maximum support.

The reasons cited by Labour leaders for opposing resignation could be grouped as follows: 1) don't hand power to the Tories, however briefly; 2) council unions would never support it; 3) the mandate sought through by-elections might not be achieved; 4) declaring the council's hand should not be done before councils had had time to work jointly on common tactics.

Handing power over to the Tories for a three-week period in the Autumn while by-elections were in progress would confront the Tories with the choice of doing nothing, and alienating their hard-line support, or making cuts and handing Labour the tools with which to win the elections handsomely. Only councils with a very small majority would run the risk of losing, and there is no recent evidence that councils prepared to take a stand actually lose votes.

Of course, council unions will need a good deal of persuading, but then they're going to need a great deal of involvement in whatever choice is made over confrontation. No matter what the tactic, union officials won't be easy to persuade, but then it's their members whose jobs are at risk and whose support is needed.

MANDATE

The mandate argument is vital. Councils such as Lewisham had already implemented cuts, while others have raised rates and rents at levels which once again penalised traditional Labour support. These councils need a new mandate before going into confrontation. What really worries many group leaders is whether they can carry the rest of their groups over a confrontation strategy based on a 'no cuts' commitment. What really concerned them, I would argue, is that resignation is the one tactical option which makes it impossible to compromise later on the 'no cuts' issue, surely the bottom line for all Socialist councils. By declaring it publicly and campaigning on such a clear cut policy, there would be no subsequent room for manoeuvre — besides, it would allow those who could or would not risk surcharge to stand aside.

POLICY GOALS

It is now imperative that Labour councils recognise, whatever joint tactics are adopted, it is the policy goals on which the common strategy is founded that count. Defending services without further penalising our supporters is inviolate. That's why confrontation is looming and why Labour groups must not shy away from it behind a multitude of tactical options. If that is realised then Lewisham, in singling out the least complicated of all the options, will at least have achieved something.

Jim Mallory,
East Lewisham CLP Chair
(writing in a personal capacity)

Lambeth: By-election band-wagon rolls on

Geoff Bender

On Tuesday July 5th voters in Lambeth will be going to the polls for the third time this year to vote in a Council by-election. The fourth by-election will follow on the 19th in Streatham South.

In March, community and Labour Party activist Kathy Connelly regained a seat from the Liberals in Bishops Ward (Waterloo) with a 500 majority and an almost 10% poll increase.

In May, Irma Crichlow, a worker in the black community, retained a Council seat in the Ferndale Ward in the middle of Brixton with a campaign aimed at the black electorate and strongly supported by Vauxhall Labour Party's new Black Section.

Both campaigns have greatly increased Party membership in their areas — there are now over 200 members in Bishops Ward.

Now voters will have the chance to vote for two new Councillors in the Stockwell Ward. One of the candidates is Amelda Inyang who has been active in the black community for nearly 20 years, and hopes like Kathy and Irma to strengthen the representation of black people and women on Lambeth Council in a ward which has traditionally been represented by white males.

The other candidate is Des Atkinson, current chair of the ward, who has worked tirelessly over the past 2 years to increase the membership and direct the ward outwards towards a more campaigning role.

A previous Labour Councillor in the ward is tipped as SDP candidate for the by-election.

The ward which is made up of nearly 80% Council housing has never been as well organised as it should be. Recently, ward members have been trying to remedy this campaigning in support of the GLC, against Health Cuts and collecting for the Miners.

We hope not only to win but to build a strong, active, campaigning branch organisation through the by-election.

Come and help us: Campaign starts June 18th. Election Agent: Geoff Bender, 170 Wandsworth Rd., SW8 720 2328 (h) 821 1612 (w)
Canvassing from 35 Lansdowne Gardens, SW8

THE ABOLITION BILL AND RATE-CAPPING

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ILEA, THE GLC, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

And what attitude should the Left be taking in the short and long term to recapture the political initiative?

BRIEFING DISCUSSION MEETING

7.30, Monday July 2nd at County Hall, with Frances Morrell, leader of ILEA, Andy Harris, GLC member, Kate Flannery, GLC employee/NALGO member, Reg Race, GLC employee/NUPE member

WESTMINSTER BRIEFING

PRIVATISING DEATH

The Westminister City Council Tories, under their leader, the Tesco Millionairess Lady Porter, having sold off almost everything else in sight, have now embarked on one of their strangest experiments – the privatisation of death. They are selling off the St Marylebone Crematorium.

At present the crematorium employs seven people. The Tories have promised, for what it is worth, that a condition of sale will be the retention of all the present staff, but there will be no guarantees on wages. These are not particularly high at the moment, but a private buyer will be free to cut them as much as he likes and if any of the staff leave, the employer will not be required to fill the vacancy, so ultimately jobs will be lost.

Cooking the Books

The exercise is being presented as a way of cutting expenditure, but their case is somewhat spoiled by the fact that the Tories appear to be blatantly cooking the books. They are handicapped by the need to prove, for the benefit of the public and the Labour opposition, that the costs of running the crematorium are unacceptably high, but to attract a private buyer, they need to present the charges as modest and reasonable.

To this end they have produced a set of estimates for 1983/4, which show the cost of wages to be £127,300. This seems high, but under questioning from Labour councillors it was admitted that the estimate had been inflated by the inclusion of unrelated elements, such as the wages of three gardeners at East Finchley cemetery. Even more important, the estimates bear no relation to actual expenditure. The Treasurer admitted in a written reply that the figures *"are what was provided in the approved estimates and that is not the actual level of spending. In many cases the actual spending in 1983/4 was considerably less than the budget provision"*. So much less, in fact, that the real figure for the wages of the seven staff is £44,254 and no doubt that was the figure given to the prospective private buyer.

When these discrepancies were raised at the environment committee by Labour councillor Andrew Dismore, the session was immediately declared closed to the public, although at the time the "public" included Mrs Jolliffe, the superintendent of the crematorium, who was there on behalf of the workers. She had to wait until the meeting was over before learning from the Labour councillors that the Tories had refused to budge.

Tory Attacks on Children in Care

Less bizarre, but even more tragic, is the Tory attack on children in care, in particular children over eleven.

The council has already closed one of its children's homes in Slough. Another, Killick Down in Hertfordshire is to be closed shortly and the site sold off for development. Two of the remaining homes for the over elevens, at 4 Shirland Road and Darlington House, are to be amalgamated to form a home for children under eleven.

Shirland Road is at present home to six emotionally disturbed children. One of them Ahmed, told Madge Cavalla, Labour leader on the social services committee, that he had been in 22 homes before coming to Shirland Road, but none had been able to help him. Now he has finally found the help and support he so desperately needs. He has been at Shirland Road for 18 months and regards it as his home. Other boys have been cured of glue-sniffing there.

Darlington Hall has three children, of whom one is a sixteen year old girl with her baby. None of these children want to leave nor have they been consulted about their future. With some of them, their history of emotional disturbance will make it difficult, if not impossible, to place them in other homes.

Madge is convinced that the Tories simply want to wash their hands of children over eleven. *"They just don't want to know"*, she told me. Madge needs help from the London Labour movement in her fight to save these homes. The Shirland Road children have written to Ken Livingstone asking for a visit to show his support. I very much hope he will find the time. These children need to know that people care. Anyone who would like to help should contact Madge Cavalla, Tel: 828 3618.

Paula Watson,
Westminster South CLP

NALGO Fights On

In early April members of Westminster NALGO and local residents successfully occupied and kept running Portland Library. The Library was closed as part of the Council's £5 million cuts – that is £5 million more than even the government guidelines asked for.

The occupation worked because of the alliance made between workers and users. Neither group could have made the 'sit-in' a success if they had acted alone. We had the moral support of the *local* Tory councillors and the physical presence of all the Labour councillors.

Because of this success the Council decided to discipline two members of staff (myself included) with 'prejudicing a Council decision' by occupying the Library. This was obviously a political attack on a member of staff's right to protest at a Council decision.

What made such an attack worse was that all staff who took part did so in their own free time. In fact the other member of staff disciplined was a member of the local residents association in the Portland Library and got involved in the campaign as a member of the public.

'Gross Misconduct'

I was suspended and charged with 'gross misconduct' which is a sacking or final warning offence. This caused an immediate walk out and indefinite strike in the Libraries Department, and it is certain that the rest of the Branch would have followed if the Council had not backed down. At the disciplinary hearing the 'gross' was dropped and both myself and the other person involved got a slap on the wrists.

Despite this, many members feel we lost because we appear to have conceded the principle. The vote not to go on indefinite strike was lost by fifty votes at a mass meeting of 750 members. Over 300 people felt we should fight the principle with action rather than to negotiate.

We are now formally talking to the Council on the principle and despite many Tory councillors thinking they control us 24 hours a day we are hopeful that some agreement can be reached. The Council were forced to have another vote on opening Portland Library. Although this was lost by a narrow margin it was a considerable achievement to have the issue debated more heatedly than six weeks before when it first closed.

The Branch leadership has learned to have more confidence in the members' willingness to stand up to the Council and also we are holding a ballot to set up a compulsory strike levy. In the meantime, we have another couple of children's homes closing and a big battle over vacant posts.

Ian Wingrove,
Branch Secretary – Westminster NALGO

PS. Can I say Thank You to all those people who helped stop the Council from sacking me and also helped me dodge the Council's court injunction.

HACKNEY CONSTRUCTION WORKERS RESIST

Recent events in East London will give heart to those who believe that the fightback against the Thatcher cuts can be won now — not in four years time after the return of the next Labour Government. The successful resistance of Hackney's construction workers, in alliance with tenants and other trade unionists, to plans to run down the Council's Direct Labour Organisation and their defence of the St John's Area Maintenance base (see June 'Briefing') has demonstrated the potential for defeating cuts in services ordered by central Government with the supine acquiescence if not enthusiastic support of local authority officials and right wing labour councillors.

The decision of Hackney council earlier this year to accept its Director of Housing's recommendation to divert building and construction programmes to the private sector 'to save money', with a consequent loss of at least 450 DLO jobs, came as a stunning shock to the system of those of us who still thought we were living in a socialist borough.

Acted Quickly

The response of those most directly affected was not just to cry in their soup and design a few protest leaflets. They acted quickly to get the decision overturned. Construction shop stewards immediately formed an alliance with the local tenants' association and began touring labour ward meetings promoting a model resolution demanding a reversal of policy on the DLO; this was then accepted by both Hackney labour parties and became official policy at the Labour Borough Conference in April. That conference also saw the emergence of a new Council leadership and Hilda Kean became leader specifically pledged to protect the DLO and accept no redundancies. Not that her predecessor Anthony Kendal had actually said that he would accept redundancies — but then he hadn't said he wouldn't either and by that time there were plenty around who thought they had his measure.

The new improved Hackney labour party now flexed its muscles and Hackney Council officials suddenly discovered ways to do things they had previously found to be impossible. The new leadership told them to go away and devise a planned flow of suitable work for the DLO, to maintain jobs, and a joint working party made up of unions, architects and builders has nearly completed this task.

Meanwhile the 16 week workers occupation of the St John's Area maintenance base in Shoreditch was also coming to a happy ending — thanks again to a combination of direct action, purposeful alliance between workers and local people and newly found labour group self-confidence. Tenants and council building workers had taken over St John's one cold Monday in January — because of the growing frustration of tenants and workers at lack of progress in repairs and maintenance while workers were being told there was nothing for them to do.

The intention of the occupation was to try and de-centralise the construction operation in Hackney to 'democratise, not bureaucratise' it and make it responsive to the needs and wishes of the local people. The reaction of the then council leadership and officialdom was sadly predictable — a stop in the wages of Hackney employees involved and dawn raid, led by senior council management, to sledge hammer down the door at a second occupation at the Bowling Green Walk supply depot.

'WE DIDN'T AGONISE, WE ORGANISED'

The St John's Area base, supported by the Hackney Labour Group is now developing a new organisational structure involving a working alliance of politicians, tenants and workers to control finances and work programme, and this concept hopefully will be extended to the other 23 area bases in Hackney. Alan Russell, convenor of the building workers shop stewards in the area is under no doubt about the reasons for the St John's success and the survival of the DLO *'We didn't just agonise, we organised. We forged alliances with Hackney's tenants and Hackney's labour parties. We didn't cut services and complain about it — we protected the building services and improved them. People won't fight to uphold theoretical complaints about the lack of services the Council has already cut, but they will resist attempts to remove services and facilities which they need.'*

The lesson from Hackney is clear. Labour Councils can fight the cuts but not if they are first trapped by their officials into helping to implement them. Russell notes that sixty years ago Councillors in Poplar went to prison for 30 days because against the wishes of central Government they increased their employees' wages, increased relief for the unemployed, and refused to pay the police precept. *'20,000 local people marched with the Councillors to the court when the baliffs came for them. You wouldn't get that nowadays, because people feel let down, sold out'.* What is needed is prompt action by the labour parties, trade unionists, tenants associations, working in alliance as they are doing in Hackney, to assert the supremacy of elected councillors over the deadhand of Council officials and to refuse to help the Tories out by doing their cutting for them.

Jonathan Stephenson

UCATT

FAIR COMPETITION?

THE CASE FOR DIRECT LABOUR

UNION OF CONSTRUCTION, ALLIED TRADES AND TECHNICIANS

UCATT HOUSE 177 ABBEVILLE ROAD CLAPHAM, LONDON, SW4 9RL

UCATT has published an extremely useful and clearly written booklet on DLOs entitled 'Fair Competition? The case for Direct Labour'. It describes what direct labour is, and how it protects the intersts of tenants and workers alike. It gives examples of some of the disastrous consequences of private-sector construction, outlines a model Local Authority agreement on DLOs and places the defence of direct labour in the context of the overall campaign against Tory privatisation. 'Fair Competition? The case for direct labour' is available from UCATT, 177 Abbeville Road, Clapham, SW4 9RL.

BARKING HOSPITAL WOMEN FIGHT ON!

The strike by 90 women cleaners at Barking Hospital has become a test case against privatisation. Briefing interviewed Barrie Neil, the Support Worker at the Strike Headquarters, to find out the latest developments.

Briefing: Can you tell us what stage the dispute has reached?

Barrie: At NUPE Conference, a resolution was passed unanimously calling for industrial action in support of the Barking strikers. Tom Sawyer, NUPE Deputy General Secretary, spoke and called for action across the country. The dispute is now entering its 13th week.

Briefing: Are the scabs that are being taken in by the contractors keeping it as clean as before the strike?

Barrie: Certainly not. Members of the Institute of Environmental Health have drawn up reports describing in detail the filth and lack of adequate cleaning taking place.

Briefing: What is the state of the hospital?

Barrie: For a start, linen is being bagged wrongly. Some infectious rubbish is being put in black instead of red bags. Some of the most strategic clinical areas — including the operating theatre — are in a state where they should not be used. Kitchens have been found to have dead and decomposing cockroaches. Toilets have been photographed in a disgusting state.

Briefing: How about support from local dustmen (sic.) Are they still collecting the rubbish?

Barrie: No. The GMBATU dustmen (sic) are solid in their support for the women, and refusing to cross the picket line. They have chosen to use private contractors to collect the rubbish, and what is notable is that they did not put out a tender for this — Pritchards muscled in and did the work. Those collecting the rubbish are of course put at risk by the infectious rubbish being in the wrong sacks.

Briefing: How have the police acted during the dispute?

Barrie: In the early days of the dispute especially, the levels of policing caused grave cause for concern. We do find that certain constables are unnecessarily provocative on the picket line. So far there have been around 15 arrests. Also, the scabs are often collected at Barking police station and ferried in with the police from there.

Briefing: Have you had any support from the Labour MPs?

Barrie: We had a press conference on the picket line today, with Michael Meacher, Frank Dobson, Jo Richardson and Jeremy Corbyn. They wanted to go to the back of the hospital and inspect the rubbish for themselves. The police attempted to stop them, saying there might be a breach of the peace. Michael Meacher did point out that he was shadow Minister and should not be regarded as irresponsible — eventually they were allowed through.

Briefing: What role has the local Health Emergency campaign played in the dispute?

Barrie: It has played a most significant role. It has given the fullest support to the National Union of Public Employees, given maximum support on the picket line, and assisted in advancing the dispute across the District, throughout the Region and with its parent body, the London Health Emergency, has had a very effective supporting role. The strike HQ operates from the campaign office, with two full-time workers specifically working on the dispute, and in organising the strike fund.

Briefing: Have you extended the dispute to involve Crothall's parent company, Pritchards?

Barrie: Pritchards, infamous for privatisation in **Wandsworth**, also have operations in South Africa, at the Inn on the Park, Hyde Park, to show their shareholders that their company's subsidiary, Crothalls, are trying to bring South African poverty wages to Britain.

Briefing: How have you responded to the van hire companies and other used by Crothalls to try to break the strike?

Barrie: We have felt that they have chosen to take a particular side in the dispute. We have contacted them and made it clear to them within the terms of industrial disputes there is always likely to be instances in which their property may be damaged. We make no apologies for such incidents as do take place. If they are crossing a picket line. They have been made aware of that and some companies have chosen to flout our warnings. Those companies have found themselves boycotted across the London Labour Movement as a scab company — Blue Line Minicoaches for example — and we seek to identify these. BRS we feel have taken a very irresponsible attitude to the dispute. They are allowing their vans to take infected waste from the back of the hospital. We feel that this should be reported across London as a danger to the community's health.

Briefing: How can Briefing supporters assist the strikers?

Barrie: We strongly urge you to join us on the picket line and support the Strike Fund: cheques to Barking & Dagenham Health Emergency, 588 Rainham Rd South, Dagenham Essex. The picket is being carried out 24 hours a day. It confirms the resilience of the women in the dispute — they have stuck it out all these weeks fighting an incredible campaign, and need and deserve the maximum supporting from Briefing readers and the whole London Labour Movement.

Briefing: How have you tied the dispute in with the miners' strike?

Barrie: We have had complimentary support. We have joined the miners on their picket lines, and they have joined us on ours. It is a bond which we wish to seal, and that has been done with the delegation of women going to the West Drayton coal depot picket, visiting the Kent coalfields and appearing on joint platforms at meetings. Yesterday, Kent South Wales and Yorkshire miners joined the picket line at Barking Hospital.

Briefing: How do you think the dispute can be won?

Barrie: The minimal demands of the women must be met — the 876 cleaning hours chopped from the rota must be restored, with sick pay and previous wage rates. This can be done by increased pressure on the District Health Authority, who hold the full responsibility of introducing the contract. They have chosen to abdicate their responsibility for signing the contract throughout the dispute, and the utmost pressure must be put on them so that they clearly realise the responsibility they hold for solving this dispute. This must be complimented by industrial action across London, leading on to national action in support of the women at Barking, ending with a conclusive success in the fightback against privatisation.

SUPPORT THE STRIKE
at Barking Hospital

BARKING HOSPITAL
CONTRACT CLEANING IS DIRTY BUSINESS
NUPE

Strike office telephone numbers:
01 592 5038 or
01 595 4252

Donations to: Strike Office: AUEW House, 588 Rainham Road South, Dagenham, Essex. Cheques payable to 'Barking and Dagenham Health Emergency'.

ACTON: not so much a Black Section ...

It felt a bit like being sent off to teach your grandmother how to suck eggs. Ealing *Briefing*'s May meeting had been addressed by three black comrades anxious to encourage the setting up of constituency black sections, with the ultimate aim of achieving the selection of more progressive black and women parliamentary candidates.

'Write something about the situation in your own party', they said. 'About Acton', I thought, 'what has Acton got to teach *anyone* about black sections?' A constituency of stark contrasts, between rich and poor, between Black, Irish, Pole and Jew. Nowhere could the consequences of structural racism in housing policy be better demonstrated than on the Vale Estate; nowhere could racism/sexism in employment policy result in quite such a top-heavy council work-force. And where else would a thriving multi-cultural school be sold off to the Church of England, to the eventual exclusion of its non-Christian pupils?

ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY WHITE

Yet in the face of hardship, where have local people turned? To the CRC or Housing Aid Service? Perhaps. To the Caribbean Action Group or Sikh Temple? Possibly. To the local, campaigning, anti-racist Labour Party? Hardly. Acton Labour Party is almost exclusively white. The problems of racism or racial disadvantage are almost never discussed, and there has certainly never been a formal consideration of ways of recruiting additional black members.

Our *Briefing* meeting guests were only too anxious to gain the active support of sympathetic white comrades, and in a Constituency like Acton with so few black members and no black organisation, it has to be progressive white socialists who will take the initiative, working towards not a black parliamentary candidate, not a black councillor, not even black party officers, but right down at the level of better links with the community, black registration, black recruitment.

The Party's failure to attract the confidence and support of the local black communities is of course related to our shortcomings as an outgoing, campaigning organisation. It has to be said that Acton is a Regional Organiser's dream of a party. Branches meet regularly, GC's run smoothly, correspondence is answered, deadlines kept. Come election time the machinery glides into action, as it has done so many times before: the same strategies, the same meetings, the same faces. The central team who run the Party have been in charge for many years. They have worked steadily, efficiently and conscientiously, and their contribution should not be underestimated. But they have consistently opposed innovative ideas, changes in committee structure, and the active involvement of new members. To cap it all, Acton has only three Labour councillors, and so many branch members are out of touch with the vagaries of Council life. The result is a party which is parochial in outlook and which lacks a political or campaigning perspective.

WOMEN'S SECTION

Evidently there's a need for a re-think. And there have been some encouraging developments, perhaps the first of which was the establishment of our Women's Section some two years ago. At first it was viewed with suspicion by many; it was divisive, unnecessary, a waste of time. But we weathered the storm, improved women's representation, and introduced a feminist dimension to party outlook and policy-making. Then a quarterly newspaper, *The Citizen*, was introduced, in the face of considerable opposition on the grounds of cost. The editorial collective meet at Party Headquarters, and distribution takes place throughout the constituency door-to-door. The paper's content and layout have improved with every edition, and its reception by the public has been so positive that its future now seems secure.

But to involve more members in a meaningful way we'll need easier access to Party Headquarters and its resources, a reassessment of committee structure and format of meetings, better internal communication, and the encouragement of organisational and campaigning initiatives from all sections of the Party. As a first step a new Campaign Committee was set up some months ago to improve communication within the Party and help co-ordinate our campaigning activities. Ideas like a telephone tree, a central index of local contacts, and the possible use of computers have been mooted, though the Committee has yet to get properly into gear.

Our three councillors have always been conscientious about surgeries and casework, and a Constituency Advice Centre is run by volunteers on a rota basis from Party Headquarters. But with so many wards unrepresented by Labour councillors, we should be establishing advice centres and street stalls in other parts of the constituency.

MANIFESTO STUDY GROUPS

After Labour's surprise defeat in the 1982 borough elections, a new progressive team took over the Local Government Committee Executive, determined to learn from past mistakes. A monthly Borough-wide Party newsletter, *LoGiC*, was quickly established, to improve links between Constituency Parties. Within the first year Manifesto Study Groups, now open to all party members, were set up to draft sections of the 1986 manifesto, which will go for consideration by the Party in the Autumn. The Study Groups have operated in an outgoing, campaigning way, with consultative meetings and even a Borough-wide women's survey. LGC members have been at the forefront of anti-cuts, GLC and Health Emergency campaigns. Campaigning and election activities have grown ever more imaginative, innovative – and fun – street stalls, street theatre, walkabouts, car cavalcades. Increasing number of Party members have become involved, along with trade unionists and community groups, and we've attracted much sympathetic public and media attention.

Increasingly, and perhaps cynically, such campaigns have targetted the black communities as obvious areas in support, with steel bands, Asian music and ethnic minority language leaflets. Fine, so long as we remember that gimmickry is no substitute for meaningful links with the community, appropriate consultation, and policy development and implementation.

It'll take a two-pronged approach in Acton. Individually, we'll be working on Party members, the converted preaching to the not-so-converted. We'll be working at policy level too. At our June GC, a pro-black section resolution, initiated by the Women's Section and passed by three Branches, will be considered for Annual Conference. Even if it fails – and I suspect it won't – it will have stimulated debate and raised the consciousness of many.

BLACK FEMINIST GROUPS

The second prong, the community prong, will be more problematic. Borough-wide, individual Party members have developed sympathetic and helpful links with local council and voluntary agencies and with the CRC. Ealing's three Constituency Parties have supported events organised by local black activists, such as the April 22nd/23rd Blair Peach Festival in Southall. Women members are gradually gaining the trust of black feminist groups, and have recently been invited to join their campaigns on jobs and domestic violence.

For 1986 we hope to use the experience and expertise of local people to get our policies right. The draft Ethnic Minorities section of the manifesto will be an amalgamation of papers written by community specialists and considered by a consultative conference of black Party members and community representatives. Attractive policies and the involvement of community groups in their formation will help to build confidence and may boost recruitment. But the current disenchantment of black activists and the disinterest of the wider community will not be helped by recent statements by the national Party's leadership nor by the legacy of the local Parties' past neglect. We may have content ourselves with improving our channels of communication and working in tandem with groups outside the Party.

So I'll end with an appeal to black comrades. Of course we wish the Black Section Movement and the parliamentary selection campaign well. But please spare a little energy and a lot of patiences to guide and support comrades in parties like Acton – and I'm sure we're not alone – where we've made a start, but we've such a very long way to go!

Ruth Clarke, Vice President,
Ealing Acton CLP

MAJOR CUTBACKS AT METAL BOX

Since "the year of the big squeeze", 1980 to 81, well over 10,000 (or 30% of Metal Box's [MB] workforce) has been thrown onto the dole. Over 20 UK factories have been closed or been the victims of massive redundancy, "in the interests of the remaining employees", to quote the company.

In 1980 MB was forced, because of a growing interest by the EEC and the US anti-trust authorities, to break up a trade cartel it had with its major US-based multinational packaging competitors. In a mature market with over-capacity in the industry, MB's geriatric, archaic management just did not have it in them to take on the competition on its own turf.

Its only answer has been a major attrition of jobs and a cut-back in its UK capacity. If any strategic planning is actually worked out in that big office block in Reading, it's not visible from the factory floor. The company is run like a chicken with no head.

Brutal Axing of Jobs

Even in capitalist terms this brutal axing of jobs has cost MB dear, and it has lost at least one major export order. In '81 they won an order for £40 m worth of soft drink cans for Saudi Arabia. It had to renege on the deal after it found it did not have the capacity to fulfil the order, due to massive redundancies at the Westhaughton plant.

My comparison with a headless chicken is not lightly made. In 1980, MB sent two trade missions to China in competition with each other! Neither knew of the other's existence until both lost the order.

However, when it comes to squeezing its workforce MB is not so dumb. Turnover per MB employee rose by 20% in 1982 and 13% in 1983. In 1983 employment costs rose by only 7.1% by comparison. The company is receiving more net revenue per employee than ever before. Yet in '83 its net rate of profit (profit from turnover) dropped to 3.8%.

So, whilst they have managed to obtain a big rise in labour productivity and financial contribution from its workforce, MB is unable to translate this into better business results.

Grants

MB milks the grant gravy train to the fullest extent. Last year (1982 to 83) MB made net UK profits of £18 m, yet its tax was only £0.8 m (about 4.4%). It received government and local authority grants of some £8 m, making a net "profit" of £7.2 m from the taxpayer.

These grants are supposed to increase and save jobs. The combine has calculated that MB received £4,100 in grant-aid for every job it has cut.

In addition, taking into account that the median length of unemployment is 35 weeks, and after calculating the loss to the exchequer of workers' income tax, unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit, the total cost of MB's 'strategy' over the last four years has cost the country at least £65 m. However, as most of the plant closures have taken place in inner city areas of extremely high unemployment the cost in human and financial terms are probably much higher.

We question the morality of these grants which create a sort of "socialism" for the already rich. How much longer are we to tolerate *our* money being handed out to multinationals like MB which throw thousands out of work creating even higher public spending – which is then "clawed back" by the government through cuts in social security benefits and social services etc?

Victories

Over the last four years, MB have not had things all their own way. When the workforce has either defended itself, or gone onto the offensive, it has won some notable victories. In 1982 the NGA won the 35 hour work week for us after a strike. This was a major breakthrough as it was the first victory for the 35 hour week in a major industrial company in Britain.

In 1982 there was the victory of the Shipley factory occupation against redundancies and victimisation of shop stewards. Last year the Clapton E.London successfully beat the company in a strike against loss of shift premium.

A significant breakthrough occurred last July at Clapton when the TGWU refused to handle a scab job from Bordens International Packaging (Eire) where the ITGWU were on strike. The Clapton workers took possession of, and then blacked £250,000 worth of tin plate. This action helped win the ITGWU strike for higher pay. This principled stand was taken in spite of ITGWU scabbing during the Clapton strike two months before. The matter of Britain's military occupation of part of Ireland was brought up on the Clapton factory floor. This was the first time MB workers had taken sympathy action with their class brethren overseas.

Passively Accepted Redundancies

Of course to counterbalance this there have been many defeats, particularly when the workers have passively accepted redundancies. Currently, though, MB lorry drivers are honouring NUM picket lines at NCB-owned bitumen plants.

At the moment, trade unionists working for MB face the biggest threat and greatest challenge to date. MB, under cover of a re-organisation, is all set to bring in further redundancies and attack the unions.

MB cynically has given this reorganisation the appellation "MB 2000", implying that it will take the company into the 21st century. The main question facing many of MB's workers is, "Will I have a job in 1985?" Not fancy names about the year 2000.

MB is not teaching its workforce the new skills as it moves out of traditional forms of packaging and into plastic, as a humane employer would do. It is using this change to implement a "greenfields policy" and move out of the traditional industrial areas with their traditions of union solidarity and open up in the green fields of rural England, with a one-union agreement and a no-strike clause!

Already using the cover of "MB 2000" the company is trying to renegotiate the current procedure and negotiating agreements it has with the unions.

In the company's proposals they are trying to drop status quo; remove the right of the appropriate stewards to be present at every stage in procedure, and they make no provision for time limits between stages in procedure. Any shop steward or union activists can see this for what it is, a blatant attack upon the workforce and their unions. By removing status quo for instance the company will be able to step up line speeds, implement redundancies, or whatever, in a unilateral manner with no negotiations.

Workers' Anger

The anger of MB workers is beginning to crystallise. Already this year there has been a nine week long work to rule and overtime ban throughout the engineering division. The company has already threatened to close a shift at the Tottenham factory in the London area. Clapton and Palmers Green look to be the next on the list.

The miners have shown us the way forward. MB should be taught a simple lesson: that we are their most valuable asset – and the one they cannot do without.

If one plant or one section moves into action and says, "Enough!", then every one of MB's 24,000 UK workers should respond and defend them. If that does happen, we should be able to count on support from the rest of the trade union and labour movement as of right.

In the meantime, unions and Labour councils who hold shares in this company – which by the way openly supports apartheid in S. Africa – should assist the combine in its activities around shareholders' meetings. Whilst Labour MPs and MEPs should, with the combine, look at the question of grants (dole) to multinationals like MB and ways to force it to take a more socially responsible attitude in its operations.

Jim Wills,
Chair Metal Box National Joint Shop Stewards Committee

Letters

GLC & LT

Dear Editor,

I reject the criticism in May Briefing that no GLC campaign material has been directed to LT workers, few mass meetings organised for them and that we have failed to get round the branches and the depots.

During the past 3 years the GLC Transport Committee has published hundreds of thousands of leaflets all of which have been circulated to the LT Trade Unions, we have organised meetings in every bus district to which all LT workers have been invited to discuss the transport issues facing us, we hold regular meetings at County Hall with LT Trade Union representatives to discuss immediate problems such as how to reduce fares, annual budgets, rate precept and LT Plans, our brochure explaining our policies for the past 3 years has been circulated to all LT Unions in quantity with the offer of further supplies and a complete edition of our Industry and Employment Committee's newspaper, "Jobs for a Change" was devoted to the specific issues facing LT workers and circulated just before the one day strike. We have also offered LT Trade Unions the loan of our 13 minute video which describes the success of our Transport policies.

The Campaign to Improve London's Transport and CAPITAL, two organisations which bring together workers and passengers have been funded by the GLC Transport Committee to initiate research and campaign. Capital's public meetings earlier this year were deliberately aimed at uniting bus and tube workers in the coming struggles. The GLC's Popular Planning Unit had also organised mass meetings for LT workers in County Hall.

My article in April's Briefing was not a complete record of all our actions indeed with the limited space available I left out several important features of our Transport policy. What Comrades on the left need to remember is that the Labour GLC does not have 48 left Councillors. 21 of the present Labour Group voted to double fares and cut services in January 1982. In these circumstances it has been almost a miracle for us to fight the Tory Government so effectively by cutting fares, introducing GLC Travelcards, subsidising BR in London, preventing LT's plans for further extensions of One Person Operated Buses, preventing thousands of redundancies, stopping the closure of bus routes and tube stations and increasing the bus and tube mileage.

The benefits of our policies in the past year have been LT making a £48m profit, 16% more passengers, 10% cut in car commuting and 3,000 fewer people injured in road accidents.

Finally I was acused of not getting round the branches and depots. I have in fact visited most depots and accepted every invitation to attend Branch Meetings. If there are more TU branches that would like me to attend their meetings then they have only to invite me.

Yours for socialism,
Dave Wetzel

Tremlett writes

Dear Sir,

Where would I be without the occasional peep at London Labour Briefing? Yes, I did coin that unhappy phrase "buggery on the rates" when describing how Tories generally view the Labour GLC's grants policy for Gay and Lesbian organisations.

That phrase says what many of them think, but that approach is not mine. I have long since realised that the Labour GLC leadership has been totally sincere in trying to help sexual minorities integrate within society, and it is a great pity that this policy was not better explained from its very beginning.

Still we all learn from hindsight.

Yours faithfully,
George Tremlett

Hasn't Jon Lansman Come a Long Way

A lament penned on the occasion of the publication in Tribune, the left wing newspaper of a Panegyric 'Why the Greater London Council needs the Queen' by Mr Jonathan Lansman until recently an executive member of the Campaign for Labour Party democracy.

Verse 1

'Jon Lansman is innocent'
This was the legend,
On the badges of the conference
recording the propulsion
to national fame
of the mild-mannered
Middlesex manicured
brilliant radical
Oxbridge graduate
Jonathan Lansman
Okay.

Verse2

Not Michael foot
Not Dennis Healy
E'en Vladimir Derer
Could not contain
This tousle-haired radical's
Zeal for democracy
But Elizabeth Windsor
Phillip Mountbatten
Kenneth and Ethel
Secured his downfall
Okay.

Verse3

Only three years ago
D Healey our Deputy
Confronted in Birmingham
A fearsome mob
'It was Jon Lansman
Benn's secret weapon!
I saw him clearly!'
The Deputy cried.
Coast to coast TV
Lans End to Jon O'Groats
Rang with the story of
Lansman's crime
Okay

(The fact that Lansman was out of the country at this time should, in no way, minimise the heroism of his contribution to the struggle on that day — Authors.)

Verse 4

Who at that time
Could have imagined
That the initiator
of these events
Would soon be sailing
in Royalty's entourage
Past Coin Street and Docklands
Thames Barrier-ward
!Woe!

Verse 5

May 8th 1984 always remember
Where one hero renounced us
Before the great crowds
Full 50,000 ready for leadership
Stood by the riverside
In full camera view
Our slogan was ready
Our hero was silent
'Mandatory reselection for monarchs'
Was not launched that day
!Woe!

Andy Harris GLC/ILEA member for Putney
Frances Morrell GLC/ILEA member Islington South & Finsbury
Bryn Davies GLC/ILEA member for Vauxhall

This poem was entered by the authors in support of their bid to become, jointly, the Oxford Professor of Poetry. They failed to win only because they were unable to think of a last verse for this lament of riperiam socialism.

COMPETITION: Best last verse. Entries to Graham Bash by July 9th

Prize: Lunch at Buckingham Palace or a headstart in the Brent East reselection.

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Deadline for articles: Monday 9th July.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

Challenging Our Racism

The main theme of this issue of the Streetlife Supplement is racism. Briefing has been no exception to the rest of the white-dominated Left in virtually ignoring the issue of racism. Yet racism is our (white people's) problem. Rather than simply describing black people's experience *of racism, we have therefore tried to concentrate mainly on how white people are racist and what we can and should be doing about it. We have also tried not to forget that racism isn't only a black/white issue – the results of imperialism can be seen right on our doorstep in our attitudes to Irish people.*

Jane Stockton

GLC Anti-racist year

Getting racism out of town

Ken Livingstone *is Chair of the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Committee.* **Sarah Roelofs**, *for Briefing, discussed criticisms and prospects of the GLC's Anti-Racist Year with him.*

Can you first of all briefly explain the structure of the committee?

We have an anti-racism sub-committee of the Ethnic Minorities Committee. There are about 20 working groups working to the sub-committee – on areas like immigration, deportations, employment, education, the media, and there's also a Black Women's working group.

How did anti-racist year come about?

Towards the end of 1982 – or it might have been the beginning of 1983 – there was a conference of all ethnic minority groups. One of the proposals to come out of the conference was 'you've had a peace year, so why not an anti-racist year?' It wasn't a GLC idea in other words. We took the proposal through full Council where it was agreed and we appointed an anti-racist year co-ordinator – a Black woman – decided a budget and began the ground work. We set up an anti-racist year sub-committee which is mostly co-options, ie people from outside the GLC, from the Black communities. It's about 40% women, 60% men. There hasn't been a lot of GLC – ie the Labour members – input, we've mostly just serviced it. It's quite broad in political composition from the respectful to the militantly radical. The only real controversy has been over the ad campaign.

Can you explain about that? There's been some criticisms hasn't there?

It's been very problematic. The first batch of posters, the ones you would have seen around London, were dire in my opinion. We first of all commissioned the Council's own ad agency, but they were taken over by an American firm with South African subsidaries so we withdrew our custom. The contract went out for tender, but no Black ad agencies applied – I don't think there are any. We eventually gave it to a radical white co-op just before Christmas. The strongest criticism of the first lot of posters came from some Labour Party branches – about the spaces that racists and fascists could fill in. All those posters have been withdrawn now and the ad people were told to sample opinion among Black people. They came up with further ideas and the committee rejected them. We want a harder message now and not just concentrating on individual racism, but taking up state racism as well. And we're only going to site them where they can't be daubed. There's been much unhappiness about the posters. It has to be remembered that



they were aimed at white people and to be effective posters can only have a very simple, short message. We were planning to change them throughout the year, building up a progressively sharper message. The posters are only one part of our antiracist year work though – if a very public part. I have always asserted publicly that Britain is institutionally racist – and so is the GLC come to that. We have never claimed to be able to work miracles overnight – miracles over five years maybe.

Continued on next page

'STREET LEFT' SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Getting racism out of town (continued)

Our administration defining itself as anti-racist does not abolish all the institutionalised racism in County Hall just like that.

It does raise expectations though.

Yes – but people, Black people, have a right to expect anti-racist policies anyway, and we are trying very hard to live up to our commitments.

What about the criticisms that anti-racist year is opportunistic coming as it does during the government's attempts to abolish the GLC?

No Black person has ever mentioned this to me. And anyway, as I described before, the idea goes back before the government's idea to abolish us.

In your view what are the other important aspects of anti-racist year?

That with the most long term significance I think, is the Contract Compliance Unit. We are working our way through all the firms who do business with us and dropping all those who don't have anti-racist and anti-sexist policies and who aren't prepared to initiate such programmes. It also includes trade union rights. We're checking for things like how many Black people and how many women they employ and what positions they are in. It's no good if a firm employs a large number of Black women, but they're all on the lowest grades. This seems to really hit where it hurts – the CBI has screamed in protest and MPs have raised it in the House of Commons. One third of firms on our building contractors list have been dropped for example.

A second important aspect is the impact anti-racist year is having internationally. We have declared London an anti-apartheid zone for example. This has meant disinvestment, not accepting South African goods and ending all South African connections. This policy has been raised in the UN and has attracted considerable interest in other major cities around the world. But it has been completely ignored by the white press in this country. We believe that the struggle against racism here is linked to the struggle against racism internationally.

So we're doing a major ad campaign against the Botha visit and the racist South African regime [*Ken was interviewed before the visit of Botha to Britain*]. We'll be having an anti-South Africa exhibition at the Royal Festival Hall and publicising how the South African security forces operate in London. We want to completely identify the GLC with the anti-Botha campaign. There'll be an anti-Botha banner on top of County Hall – facing the House of Commons. And I'll bet the white mass media ignores it all too.

There are a lot of cultural events as well during the year like the one organised against anti-Irish jokes and anti-Irish racism. And we're planning activities against immigration controls and deportations.

In terms of what the mass of people see, it's somewhat unfortunate that just as your posters came down, Robertsons posters with their disgusting racist golly appeared all over London.

I know. We've made a formal protest to Robertsons and have stopped buying all their goods, but it didn't amount to very much anyway. We don't have any control over those billboards though or the Advertising Standards Authority. I wish we did.



Stefano Cagnoni (IFL)

Ken Livingstone with members of ASWAD, AMAZULU, and Spartacus after the launch of the GLC's Anti-Racism Year

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STREET LIFE SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Review: White Man's Country- Racism in British Politics

This is a book which is aimed at whites and challenges our attitudes to the whole problem of racism in Britain.

'The problem is not the presence in Britain of people from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent, but the reaction to their presence: the problem is not 'them', but 'us'.'

The book traces the growth of racism in this country and places it in a context of capitalist exploitation of migrant labour and colonialism. By referring to the empire-building phase of British capitalism, it highlights the continuing belief in white man's (sic) superiority. By



Horror of Slavery
(Mary Evans Picture Library)

examining racism as an ideology it explores the underlying assumption that it is 'natural' to feel that black and Asian people are different (alien) because they are biologically different. Racism has developed as an ideology and a political force because it coincides with this 'common-sense' understanding of race. The book seeks to explode the myth of race as a biological determination of culture, intelligence and characteristics. It quotes from the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation of 1949-50:

'The scientific material available to us at present does not justify the conclusion that inherited genetic differences are a major factor in producing the differences between the cultures and cultural achievements of different peoples or groups . . . For all practical social purposes 'race' is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth. The myth of 'race' has created an enormous amount of human and social damage.'

The earlier 'scientific' demarcation of 'races' was not in fact objective, but arbitrary, and in the context of ideologies adhered to by those scientists, i.e. white man's superiority.

The book traces the racialisation of politics: the growth of the race-immigration line as a political issue while racism was being underplayed. The media assisted politicians in perpetuating this line by giving coverage to troubles in Notting Hill, and raising in the same headline the 'problem' of race-immigration, whilst giving no coverage to the racist attacks on black and Asian people. This resulted in racist laws being adopted by this country under both Conservative and Labour governments and the institutionalisation of racism.

An important part of the book is its attention to the role of migrant labour in capitalism. We are reminded that workers travel to centres where an expansion of capital is taking place, and that a mobile



(Photo source: Keystone)

workforce is necessary to that process of expansion. Workers forced to migrate because of economic conditions should be brought into the politics of the class struggle, not barred because of the colour of their skin. The last sentence in the book is:

'The problem is the racism that is generated in a capitalist society in which both people and wealth are forced to migrate for the sake of profit alone.'

Kate Sayer

WHITE MAN'S COUNTRY – RACISM IN BRITISH POLITICS
by Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea
Published by Pluto Press June 1984

Ealing Briefing discusses racism

On 28th May Ealing Briefing Group met to discuss how and why black sections should be set up. The discussion was introduced by Mark Wadsworth, Narendra Makanji and Paul Sharma.

Black people are at present treated like voting fodder. 80% of black people vote Labour but are in no way represented and will not get representation by being passive. In the last Labour Party manifesto, there was one paragraph about black people, which consisted of one sentence about legislation and the rest waffle. The Labour Party is seen as the least racist of the two major racist political parties.

The Ealing CLPs reflect the racism inherent in the Labour Party itself. Ealing-Acton GMC has two black members and Ealing North only one. Little attempt has been made to recruit or encourage the active participation of black members. Ealing-Southall GMC has a number of black delegates (all male) and only one holds a position at CLP level.

The setting up of black sections can be seen as part of a wider struggle to bring the Labour Party into the 1980s by making it more representative of the community at large and therefore more democratic. Yet already Kinnock has spoken out against black sections and the national working party has already decided it doesn't want them. However, like the growing force of the Women's Sections they are not going to go away – far from it. It cannot be a coincidence that the National Labour Party Women's Conference passed overwhelmingly a resolution in support of black sections against the advice of their Executive. The Labour Party needs to stick to anti-racist principles and policies in order to swing black voters away from the Alliance or not voting at all by creating real alliances with community groups. Black sections, like women's sections, are clearly a first step towards this.

Looking towards the next General Election, the likelihood of a black candidate standing for Labour in Ealing-Southall was discussed. The meeting felt it would be appropriate to have a black candidate, but the problem in Southall at the moment is that the majority of black people active in the local party have colluded with white racists in the past, are sexist (there are no black women active in Ealing-Southall women's section – why not?) and are more interested in their own individual careers within the party than making links with other oppressed groups in the community. Many of them are opposed to black sections too.

At the same time the genuine black political activists in Southall remain outside the party, and who can blame them? Hopefully the setting up of a black section in Ealing-Southall might pave the way for some of them to join the Labour Party and persuade Ealing-North and Ealing-Acton to take black people seriously for a change.

Black sections are not a panacea as far as racism is concerned, but are a way of starting to give black people greater representation at all levels in the Labour Party. It is obvious that locally in Ealing, they would have such possibilities.

Liz Cantell,
Ealing-Southall CLP

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

ANTI~IRISH RACISM

HAVE YOU HEARD THE ONE ABOUT.....?

Sheila *and* **Elaine** *are anti-imperialist feminists from Ireland. Sheila is 30 years old, from Dublin and a Catholic family, and has lived in London for six years. Elaine is 21 years old, from Derry and a Protestant family, and has lived in Manchester for three years.* **Sarah Roelofs**, *from Briefing, spoke to them about their experiences of anti-Irish racism.*

Why did you come to this country?

Sheila: To get a job and to get away from a difficult, constricting family situation. And I had a boy-friend living here. There was a tension between my needs and my loyalty to my mother and family pressures. I didn't intend staying – it just ended up that way.

Elaine: I came to go to college and escape the hassles at home. And I wanted to forget I was Irish – I was going to be British! All the pressures were too much – I was called a Fenian lover at school because I had friends in the Bogside, but I didn't really fit in anywhere. But living here has changed me a lot – it's clarified my Irish identity for me! I'm definitely going back when I've finished college – though it'll mean making a major break with my family. I'm better able to deal with my father now.

Sheila: I would like to go back to Dublin, but it would be so difficult with my family. And what would I do for a job?

When you first arrived here what was it like?

Sheila: Well, I wasn't a republican when I came over. I was a feminist and had been very involved in the Dublin women's movement. One thing that did really irritate me was that all the feminist books I had read were by women from the United States or England and they all assumed that the world is your oyster. They talked about the conditions they faced and the difficulties they had to contend with as if such situations were true for *all* women. This just isn't true and I knew my situation as an Irish woman was very difficult.

Living here has made me a republican. British people make you aware of your Irishness very quickly. They make constant references to your accent – whether it's the patronising 'oh isn't it lovely, speak some more, roll me an r' or the 'I can't understand you' line; they're always referring to it. And then there's all the anti-Irish comments – even the friendly ones that end up with 'well you're different'. English people think the Irish are all thick and stupid – jesus how many thick paddy jokes have I heard?!

I've always lived in an Irish area since I've been here and you become really aware of the class nature of Irish immigration to this country. Irish working class people are forced to emigrate for jobs. And how important Irish pubs and music and even the Church are, because of the social isolation and being in a foreign culture. We want to maintain *our* culture and the English just laugh at us, poking fun and making jokes about drunken, stupid Irish people.

And oh yes the bombings – we're always asked to justify the bombings. And can we get them to justify their wretched army beating the hell out of us? – Not a bit of it! They just don't think like that – it's always British first. What's British is always best. They become outraged if you turn the question back on them.

English people have got to start challenging anti~Irish racism wherever they come across it.

Elaine: Oh god yes – even with the so called politically right on. I was in a meeting just the other evening and this English person started on about the horses that were killed and how awful it was and how sad she'd been – oh god I was nearly sick. *People* at home have been living in those conditions for the past 15 *years*!

And I really agree about the accent – I didn't speak for the first three weeks I was here. And before I left it was one of the things my Granny said – about the r's and how to say film properly. And English people mock our accents – you know try and repeat things we say. And they *expect* us to fit in with them, with their culture.

And the jokes of course – like the one I discovered on a loo door at college. 'The Irish are as thick as the pus that comes out of the potatoes they eat.' I read that and just shut myself in a toilet and cried and cried.

Sheila: They make comments like 'that's a bit Irish' meaning it's stupid.

Elaine: And this English person said to me just recently that it's the Irish themselves who make the most Irish jokes.

Do you think there's an understanding here of anti-Irish racism?

Sheila: No, not really. For one thing anti-Irish racism is hardly recognised as existing and yet it's so prevalent. It makes it difficult to combat. And once you lose your accent, for example if you're born here, who's to know you're Irish? You can become completely assimilated – as white and English as the rest of them. Which makes the cultural things so important. And then there is the silencing of our political views by things like the PTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act). The British labour movement has just accepted things like that, which is why it is so good when people in positions of power like Ken Livingstone speak out. He – British people – can. But Irish people just get lifted under the PTA.

Does anti-Irish racism affect you as women?

Sheila: I don't think so. I don't think you have the sort of situation where white people, especially white men, have these racist ideas of the super potent Black man and the super sexual Black woman. Of course, we have to deal with sexism as well as anti-Irish racism. There is the thing about large families, but that's part of the 'Irish are stupid' idea: 'The Irish, women and men, just don't know any better and they are priest-ridden to boot.' There's a complete lack of understanding of Irish history and culture – appalling ignorance. The English just don't understand our family life, how close knit it is and how tight the bonds are – between aunts and uncles and other relatives as well. They don't see the positive things – only the negative aspects. They don't understand how Irish women can feel fondness and positive responsibility for their families even though it – the family – can be so repressive. English people can't understand why we don't just break with our families, and when we don't, it's interpreted as individual weakness. But if I were to break with my family like that (and they did make me really unhappy when I was living at home), they would be desperately and deeply hurt, not just angry or whatever. There would be real pain, not just guilt.

Elaine: Yes, it's the same with my family. And there's another thing – the English think all Irish people are Catholics, because – well – the Protestants are really British! And if you're a lesbian, like I am, it's because of those dreadful Catholic convent schools! I've found too a certain disbelief that there are Irish lesbians. There's this idea too, that the Protestants are more liberal, that the North is more liberal. It just isn't true.

Sheila: You see you have a secular society here. We don't and that is what is so oppressive for women – amongst other things! And why don't we have a secular society? Because Ireland was divided up into Catholic and Protestant mini-states thus preventing the necessity for a secular state – if you have one state with two religions then you have to have a secular state. And who divided Ireland? Britain!

Elaine: English people have got to start challenging anti-Irish racism wherever they come across it. It shouldn't be left to us to deal with. And that means understanding the reasons for its existence, and understanding the way Britain has for centuries tried to dominate Ireland. So the racism and the political struggle against Britain are bound up. Fighting the one should mean supporting the other.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

'You could be in the NF for all we know'

'You could be in the NF for all we know'. Thus I, white lefty 'A' level teacher at an FE College, was greeted by one of my black students, when I raised the issue of Patrick Harrington's exclusion from North London Polytechnic. That remark hurt, in the same way, I dare say, as those wet 'anti-sexist' men feel when they're told by feminists that their efforts just aren't good enough. In that classroom, 90% of them of Afro-Caribbean or Asian in origin, I the teacher, in a position of power, tried to explain the marvellous stand being made on their behalf just down the road.

Let me say right away that the staff and students who have opposed the presence of Harrington should have the full support of the left. The debate about the tactics of picketing and the rights and wrongs of denying a student access to academic study left me rather uneasy. There seemed to be no doubt that Harrington was not some young misguided innocent, as he was painted by some sections of the press, but a particularly nasty and experienced NF organiser with a local record of activity that he was proud of. Those who actively organise to deny black people basic freedoms, whose presence is a threat to blacks and anti-racists, forfeit their own 'rights' to education.



Brixton April 1981 Press Association

MORAL DILEMMA

The refusal of staff to identify students from photographs taken by Harrington's friends got more unqualified support. It was easy to be outraged at such a threat to the integrity of the staff/student relationship. But our concern needs to go beyond the remarks of one of the lecturers reported in the *Guardian* on May 26th after the High Court hearing: 'Unfortunately my colleagues and myself have been caught up in a situation which is not of our making. We're faced with a difficult moral dilemma.' For black people the daily incidence of racism is a reality, not a moral dilemma.

My black students couldn't get as morally outraged as me. Sure, they supported what the lecturers were doing, but cynically viewed it as an isolated incident of bravado. They didn't on the whole want NF students in their classes. They weren't too keen either on some of the less overt racists around the place. They wished that white teachers and students were seen more often confronting the regular occurrence of racism which is part of their everyday experience. 'The wider struggle against institutional racism' is what it's called. The left must give that a meaning in its practice.

There may have been 300-400 people silently protesting against Harrington's attempts to enter the North London Polytechnic. 200 people demonstrated at Heathrow when Afia Begum was deported. Why didn't the left mobilise big demonstrations in her support? And not just for Afia, but in support of hundreds of others deported or denied access. Over the past year two students at my college have been deported: not much fuss; they left voluntarily after the last appeals by solicitors and MPs had failed, both technically in breach of 'rules'. Exhausted, dispirited and in tears they went. I'm sure it happens in colleges all the time.

And does the left really consistently protest long and loud enough about police harassment of blacks on the streets of inner cities? Statistics cannot begin to tell the full story about the sheer numbers who have been picked up, picked on, abused and searched. Every young black person I know has a fresh story about their brother, their sister, their dad, the house next door – someone who yesterday or last week, or last month, had a heavy time with the police.

WOULD LABOUR BE DIFFERENT?

It also needs to be said over and over again that though most black people vote Labour, they don't really have much confidence that a Labour government would really be much different. My black students simply don't believe that a Labour government would repeal racist immigration laws. They're vaguely aware of GLC and other local authority initiatives but will remain sceptical until those policies are really seen to significantly change the complex web of social and economic disadvantage faced by black people.

I don't want to get trapped into counterposing the fight at North London Polytechnic to some broader anti-racist strategy. What has been highlighted for me is the paucity of our efforts to convince black people that we're really serious.

Jane Andrews,
N Islington CLP NATFHE member,

Self insemination; some issues...

Last time I wrote an article for Briefing it caused a backlash in the capitalist press. My last article was about getting pregnant by a different man to the man that was to be 'father' to the child. I lost that child at eighteen weeks of pregnancy. I got pregnant again (the same person/the same way!) and lost that child at 24 weeks, after she had lived a whole hour.

My life has changed direction now. The man who was to be 'kin father' has a relationship with a woman who could not cope with his commitment to me. I have no sexual relationship with anyone; except myself. The only way I can now get pregnant is by Self Insemination. One of the questions I had to face is why I was looking for a white man to provide sperm. Was it a form of racism to want a white child, was it racism to want a child of mixed race? I was very confused. I found the answer that articulated my feelings in 'Dyke Shorts', an American lesbian cartoon book. In one of the cartoons, about self insemination it said 'Race . . . ? Having a racially mixed kid means being responsible for two or more cultural identities for that child . . . given racism in this society and my own cultural background that's a difficult responsibility. So even though I still had ambivalent feelings, I decided not to try to provide a culture I wasn't part of . . .'

Naturally this answer is by no means a solution. It must be questioned why I am living in an all white women's house. Not having a child of mixed race reflects the fact that my whole cultural, living arrangements are 'white'.

On self insemination, I think it challenges the idea of biological links as the basis for a relationship between adult and child. It means women have more control over our bodies and takes the power away from men. Even in good old radical Briefing, we have had men who say they will only look after a child if they are the biological father! And they do not mean that they will provide the sperm for the woman's self insemination!

Some men do not like the idea of donating sperm because it means that their power to exploit women physically and emotionally has been taken away. Self insemination deals a blow at the power of the biological father.

Ann Flowers

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

HERE TO STAY

Two hundred and fifty people are deported (or 'removed') from Britain each month. Rashida Abedi is one of the growing number of those fighting to stay.

Rashida is deaf, but is learning the skills that will enable her to become more independent. The Home Office want her to return to Quetta in Pakistan where there are no facilities for the deaf and where there is no-one to look after her. She is now living in South Norwood with Syed, her elder brother, and other family members.

She is caught by a particularly nasty immigration rule. She is 'only' the sister of the person she is dependent on, and not the wife or child. She must not only have no-one at all to turn to in Pakistan, she must be financially dependent on someone in Britain AND still have a lower standard of living than most people around her in Quetta. No-one in the third world who regularly receives money from a western country will be poorer than their neighbours. This rule is apparently watertight. How can anyone meet its specifications? This is why the Friends of Rashida Abedi* call on the Home Secretary to exercise his discretion to allow Rashida to stay.



Rashida's supporters include not only her fellow students and teachers and the British Deaf Association and Croydon Liberal and Labour Parties, but her local Tory MPs – Bernard Weatherill the Speaker, and Humphrey Malins, who spoke up for her in Parliament.

David Waddington, the Immigration Minister, is still unmoved. So the campaign continues. Some campaigns are, after all, lost. Afia Begum and her daughter Asma Vinod Chauhan and the Hasbudak family were deported. But the Pereiras, the Sezers, Malika BenKhalifa and many more were allowed to stay.

As well as campaigns to stop individuals from being expelled there are campaigns to allow groups of people to enter. The Bangladeshi Divided Families Campaign works to reunite wives and children (mainly from Bangladesh as the name suggests) with men living here. These relatives are actually entitled to enter Britain – so the Government delays them and tries to prove they are not really the wives and children of those they are seeking to join. The Immigration Widows' Campaign fights for women's rights to live in Britain with men from overseas.

The Labour Party has an immigration policy under which Rashida, and most of the others resisting deportation, would have a right to stay. You may be forgiven if you haven't heard of it – either during the 1983 General Election campaign or since (see *Briefing* 26, February 1983 for summary). If this policy lacks credibility it isn't because Labour's proposals don't go far enough – they'll do very nicely for a beginning! – but because neither Labour Party leaders nor members have shown that they are very interested in their own policy. I'm sure Roy Hattersley is familiar with it. Gerald Kaufman the Shadow Home Secretary might also know about it – but does Neil Kinnock?

Action, as the old cliche goes, is what counts. Here are a few things your Labour Party can do to fight deportations:

★ **Get involved in existing anti-deportation campaigns in your area.**
★ **Invite those threatened with deportation, or someone to speak for them if necessary, to your branch meetings. Have a collection for their campaign and take their leaflets.**
★ **Publicise their campaign in your branch or CLP newsletter.** Take this opportunity to inform Party members and the general public about Labour's immigration policy.

It used to be that Labour Parties were either too racist or too afraid of the racism of white Labour voters to speak out against racial injustice. I'm sure that isn't still true – they're just not very interested! Well, that's how it seems. Prove me wrong!

★ **Encourage your local affiliated union branches to invite speakers to their meetings and raise money.**
★ **If you don't know of anyone local fighting deportation, look a bit harder.** Ask your MP or Law Centre if any of their clients wants to campaign against their deportation. Contact that person. Start a campaign.



★ **Get your Labour Council to make a declaration in support of the right of one of their constituents to stay in this country.**
★ **Support the Campaign Against Racist Laws and buy a few copies of their latest broadsheet** called *Here to Stay!* (A3, 4 pages). This graphically and simply explains how the immigration rules and the internal passport checks operate and suggests how to oppose them,. Worth sticking up on noticeboards in Labour Rooms, clubs, union offices etc. 10p each. 10 or more post free (otherwise add 20p). Bulk orders at a reduced rate.

The Home Office often argue that they are deporting people 'in the public interest'. We must tell them that we, as part of the public, consider it in our interests for our comrades, friends and neighbours – Asian, Cypriot, African or whatever part of the world they want to send them to (they sometimes even deport whites) – to stay here in Croydon, in Hackney or wherever. Teachers and fellow pupils of children threatened with deportation have responded magnificently. Why not Labour Parties? In so doing we shall be saying that black people are HERE TO STAY!

Bernard Misrahi

***Friends of Rashida Abedi,**
c/o 45 Wellesley Road, Croydon.
Phone Liz 01-686 8014.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

WHO CARES?

The stigma of living in a children's home or foster home lives with you forever. A ghost in your past to reach out and haunt you night and day.

Although my experiences were in Scotland with Children's Panels instead of juvenile courts, the system is still very similar in England and Wales.

My problems lay with my sexist, Victorian father who projected a caring, loving aura to my social worker and the children's panel, and I was labelled the 'delinquent'.

I never felt love in my home; plenty of regards for being 'a good little girl', but nothing for just being me. As a result I confused sex with love and turned to men for the 'love' I needed. Inevitably I became pregnant – my 'blood is thicker than water' father threw me out of the house. At this point I already had a social worker. I always thought of her as mine – my survival package.

IN CARE

In care I lived in a children's home, my first placement being in a home two hundred miles away from my parents. I was placed there because 'there was nowhere else'. This home, because of its location was not deemed suitable for me and I had no schooling in the ten weeks I was there.

Eventually, I was placed in a 'locked' children's home sixty miles away from my parents. It was hoped that my parents and I would regain contact and that I would move back home to live.

In a 'locked' home children are not allowed to move around freely. Girls and boys are separated and all children are constantly under supervision. This home was not deemed suitable because of the type of home it was but there was 'nowhere else' and I needed to get back to school. I was given the option of waiting longer in the previous home or going to the 'locked' home where I would not be moved to an 'open' home.

Most of the children in this home had committed some minor offences and had played truant and were extremely behind in the education system; many not being able to read and write.

THE LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE

I and one boy went out to the local comprehensive. I was excited about going back to school and was hopeful of achieving most of my 'O' levels.

But, from the moment I walked into the school the labels were there: 'bad'; 'delinquent'; 'disturbed'; 'the girl from home' – these came from the teachers as well as the children. I was the social outcast. The local community in general did not want the home in their neighbourhood and were totally against their children mixing with 'criminals'.

I had no friends – no-one wanted to know. I learned to be silent. I became a shadow agreeing with everybody and everything in order not to draw more attention to myself.

Within the home things were not much better. If you did not do as you were told, privileges were taken away and there were few enough of those as it was. Of course, there was always the threat of the 'cell'.

Having to wear sanitary towels instead of tampons, all wearing identical clothes that someone else had worn before, marching to the dining room for meals, bed at 9 o'clock, locked in your room at night – *a natural childhood*!

This system is designed to destroy a child's personality, take away individuality and maintain order and control at all costs.

WORSE FOR GIRLS

In my opinion, girls are worse off in a children's home than boys. I suppose it stems from the fact that girls get pregnant and are generally seen as more 'delicate'. The law in England even dictates that girls aged between 16 and 18 can be taken into care because they are 'in need of care and protection' this normally stems from young girls sleeping with their boyfriends or staying out all night etc. – the boys are left alone though.

In the home I was in, while the boys played in the gym the girls suffered the sexist, archaic structure. We had to wash and dry the dishes after every meal except after Sunday lunch – the boys got their 'treat' that day. We also had to scrub large pots that we could hardly lift. The girls had to repair the boys' jeans and iron all the sheets every fortnight. There were 25 boys and 5 girls in this home – 60 sheets – 12 sheets each to iron. The workhouse for the girls

Under Scottish law a child cannot remain in a children's home after the age of 16 unless serving in a young offenders institute. As I was staying on at school for further education I had to move yet again, to a foster home.

Here, I was a pawn in someone else's uphill struggle for social mobility. My foster mother, a shop assistant all her life, wanted a job like her husband's in a children's home so she fostered me. Within three months she had her job in a home for boys – she liked boys better than girls. Why did she ever take me?

My foster father already worked in a children's home and as a result of my foster mother's new job, I was left at home every sixth weekend alone with my foster father. Oh, how I dreaded these weekends. My foster father made good use of his weekends alone with me by trying to get me drunk so he could sexually abuse me. I was mute, I had no choice. I had too much to lose. I had already four 'O' levels under my belt and I wanted to make them into highers: if I spoke about the sexual harassment, I knew they would not find another home and I would have to leave school. The blame would rest with me despite the fact that I was left alone with a sexually frustrated old man every sixth weekend while my foster mother was on sleeping-in duty. All this of course was in my best interests according to principles of 'care'.

RADICAL REFORMS ARE NEEDED

The destruction of my personality is still with me after six years and I guess will always be there. For me there is nothing that can be done to change the system's effects. But, in my opinion, there should be radical reforms in the care of children.

Under the law foster parents have a duty to care for children in their care as if they were their own. A pretty vague statement but who, in the best interests of their child, would leave a sixteen year old girl in the house on her own regularly every six weeks.

Radical reforms need to be made in our children's homes. If the children within them were allowed to act like 'normal' children in little ways like expressing their own individuality by wearing their own clothes perhaps people in the community would not treat them like convicts.

In my opinion, the whole fostering system should be vetted more. Why do people foster children? In my opinion, they foster to fill a gap that exists in their own lives – selfish – not the 'caring for children' attitude that people take for granted. The problem is that people take for granted. The problem is that the reasons why people foster is not pushed when vetting because foster homes are in great demand.

Closer vetting of staffing and procedures within our children's homes are required and less of just keeping the children under control until they are old enough to throw out in the cold.

More organised after-care facilities are needed. These are just a few of the thousands of things that could be done for our children in care – the children who have to grow up to be 'responsible' adults. But, of course, all this costs money – public money – that is never available to alter the social problems within the society that creates these problems.

Jean Black
Finchley CLP

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Smalltown Boy

'You leave in the morning
with everything you own
in a little black case
alone on a platform
the wind and the rain
on a sad and lonely face

mother will never understand
why you had to leave
for the love that you need
will never be found at home
and the answer you seek
will never be found at home

pushed around and kicked around
always a lonely boy
you were the one
that they'd talk about around town
as they put you down

and as hard as they would try
they'd hurt to make you cry
but you'd never cry to them
just to your soul
no, you'd never cry to them
just to your soul'



This is the first single, 'Smalltown Boy', by the Gay group, Bronski Beat.*

When I first heard it I felt a little tingle speed up my spine. Not simply because of Jimi Summerville's wonderful, soulful voice but because, when I was sat reading the words, I thought this is me. It's a lot of other people as well.

I came out when I was sixteen in Coalville, Leicestershire. I knew I wasn't the only poof in the entire world. I'd rung London Gay Switchboard and spoken to a real live one, but for all the difference it made I might as well have been. I still don't know of anyone else at my (large) school.

CLASSIC SITUATION

I met my first live one at Leicester bus station, or rather was met. The feeling *is* impossible to describe. I contacted the youth group. What a classic situation! Windswept and lonely! Of course I fell in love with him. Sixteen years of guessing is he or isn't he, of fiddling with best friends, of h-e-t-e-r-o-s-e-x-u-a-l-i-t-y. The 'Phase' was over!

I can't keep a good secret down! So out with it to friends and eventually parents. Mother first, on a beach in Torremolinos. It took two years to convince them to ring Parents' Enquiry and five years to be able to *SAY* Gay!

ESCAPE

Escape became number one priority. Huddersfield was second best to London. At least it had a Gay club, and there were bound to be lots at the college! Like everyone else the inevitable move to London eventually happened. Where you can walk down the street wearing a badge, full drag – in fact, your gayness with pride. Some chance! Got beaten up within a year – doesn't do to be too out?

If I ever return there I *do* get stared at. Most people 'know'. Still even smalltown Leicestershire has changed.

This record being a big hit will help to change it even more. More than a million 'outrageous' Boy Georges or Frankies.

By the way, Jimi's in Peckham LPYS. Maybe they'll write about the delights of oppression in *that* next!

Paul Canning,
Lesbian/Gay Young Socialists

**Smalltown Boy is on London records.*

Politics of kinship

As you may already know, a conference is being organised for 8th and 9th September at Caxton House. A small mixed group has been planning this weekend for some time and has tried to approach it in a way that will ensure that the weekend is enjoyable and that all who come can participate fully.

We think that it is important that women are in control of this conference, and of its planning. It is important that although men will not be excluded, it is a *women's* conference. This means that it should be organised and planned on women's terms.

To this end, some of us have set up some women-only planning meetings, which it is agreed will have the final say on what goes into the conference and how it should be organised. These meetings are open to all women.

MEETINGS

Wednesday 6th June, 7.30pm. Katie Searle's house: 155 Grove Lane, Camberwell, SE5.

Tuesday 10th July, 7.30pm: Hilary Alton's house: Ground floor, 127 George Lane, Lewisham, SE13.

Monday 13th August, 7.30pm: Kate and Helen's house, 31 Kestrel Avenue, Herne Hill, SE24.

Write for the Streetlife Supplement!

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue of the Streetlife Supplement we will be taking up the main theme of the "Politics of Kinship" Conference – the family – as a prelude to the conference.

Articles, letters, etc., should be sent to: *Jane Stockton, 31, Cranwich Road, London N16*, by *Monday 9th July*.

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LABOUR 20p
BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 9 July 1984

TARGET: LABOUR GOVERNMENT

By Ken Livingstone

The results of the Euro-elections confirm what the media have sought to deny for the last three years. The Labour Party is the only alternative government to the Tories. Since the major struggles within the Labour Party and the creation of the SDP there has been a failure of will evident at all levels within the Party. In the run up to the 1983 General Election most MPs were seized by pessimism and the scale of our defeat demoralised not just the surviving MPs but activists as well.

But even an examination of the June 1983 election results showed that the Labour Party was the main opponent in over 90% of the 120 key marginal Tory seats. The much publicised seats in which the Alliance are runners up to the Tories are almost all seats with a huge Tory lead.

The May 1984 Council elections showed that Labour had recovered enough support to become the largest party in the event of a general election. The Euro-elections have confirmed this trend.

This puts a major responsibility on the Labour Party to prepare to take power and the only way we can understand what is required is if we examine the lessons of 1964–1979.



Jak Kilby

Demonstration against low-pay. 22nd January 1979.

FAILED TO TAKE CONTROL

Then Labour governments were elected pledged to expand public services, tackle the economy and redistribute power and wealth. But both governments failed to take control of the enormous wealth of British finance capital and use that wealth to fund the reconstruction of industry and the rebuilding of the infrastructure of the state. In the end both governments were forced to cut back their programmes and increase taxes and rates of ordinary families in order to pay for the social needs of unskilled and low income families. This alienated skilled workers whose disaffection Thatcher exploited to great effect in the 1979 and 1983 elections.

The more we promise to restore the cuts of this government the more we need to be able to convince skilled workers that they

Continued on next page

TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT (CONTINUED)

would not bear the burden of funding the relief of poverty. We must not repeat the mistake of Labour's 1983 manifesto which talked of reintroducing controls on the export of finance capital (which has reached the stunning figure of £10 billion exported abroad per annum) but left the main thrust of our economic argument during the election to the endless repetition of our commitment to borrow £11 billion in order to reflate the economy.

For ordinary families who know that they could not borrow to relieve their own domestic financial problems this policy never seemed credible. Borrowing has its place as part of an economic programme but the base on which that programme must rest is the direction of investment into the reconstruction of our industrial base. Without that direction Labour's policy would collapse as it did in 1964 and 1974.

Whilst many sections of the Party have learnt these bitter lessons no real consensus has emerged around an alternative policy. One bit of mythology which is still growing and needs to be challenged is that Labour's 1983 manifesto was the most radically socialist of all time. This is not the case. It was no more than a watered down version of the Alternative Economic Strategy which had been developed in the early 1970s at the tail end of 25 years of worldwide economic growth. Labour has never readjusted its policies to cope with what might be ten or twenty years of economic stagnation and decline. In contrast to Labour the Tories have rethought their policies with a vengeance. They have made their hard choices and decided which sections of society should bear the burden of harsher times. Mrs Thatcher is the result of that monetarist rethinking not its cause.

The reaction to monetarism has forced Labour slightly leftwards. Not enough to develop a fully coherent alternative but enough to cause the social democrats to realise that in the long term they would lose the battle of ideas to socialism. They jumped before they became irrelevant, and realising that they had to replace the Labour Party in order to survive they linked arms with the Tory press in a determined attempt to destroy Labour.

NEXT GOVERNMENT

Fortunately they failed and Labour is well placed to form the next government provided we learn the lessons of the last 20 years and concentrate on winning the confidence of ordinary people that there is an economic alternative to monetarism and that we have the political will to carry it out.

Between 1979 and 1983 some of the PLP reacted defensively to any criticism of past policy and in that period of doubt and upheaval turned their anger on the Party membership who were demanding democratisation in order to prevent a future Labour government repeating the errors of the past.

The pressures of the PLP majority to resist the Left led to the attacks on Peter Tatchell and the Militant Tendency thus placing a further potent weapon in the hands of our enemies.

Service under six different Labour council leaders has convinced me that it is better for the Party to be led by an ideologist who knows where they are going and what they wish to do with the post rather than someone who tries to balance the factions and fudge the difficult choices.

This is the lesson the left must learn if we are to ensure a radical socialist majority within the next PLP. We must begin to organise now in order to ensure that we have a Labour government which works with the party rather than against it.

During that process of candidate selection we must ensure that they know what is expected of them. We must ensure that we redress the racial and sexual imbalance within the PLP. The policies which we should put forward will be the subject of an article in next month's Briefing.

We have a duty to the people who have suffered under this government to ensure that it is defeated and to do that requires that we develop a clear and convincing economic alternative to monetarism and select candidates who will fight for that policy against all that the British establishment will throw at them.

The key to our success in winning the GLC was to concentrate on the marginals. The influx of radical socialists took place in the marginal seats we won from the Tories and in those seats where sitting members retired. Only three members were deselected in the run up to the GLC election.

BRIEFING SURVIVES IN EXETER

In March 1984 the GMC of Exeter CLP, acting on an EC recommendation, instructed ELB to cease publication, using the pretext that ELB was being confused as an official Party publication. Despite the addition of a disclaimer, the EC continued its witch-hunt and began discipline proceedings against the three editors of Briefing, culminating in an EC recommendation to the June GMC for their expulsion.

The CLP chairperson, Dr John Shepherd, for various reasons is personally opposed to our expulsion. He agreed to rule the expulsion resolution out of order, if we changed the name to Devon Labour Briefing, which we did.

The right wing EC was foiled in its expulsion attempt. Chester Long, however, who is leader of Exeter City Council, where a Lib-Lab pact is in force, showed his true colours by saying that he opposed Briefing, not because of its name, but because of the contents – policies and ideas – it represented.

Tony Benn wrote to us: "As you know, various editions of Labour Briefing are published in different parts of the country, and are widely welcomed because they help to broaden the discussion of problems facing the party". He went on to say. "With the party now working together so well, we really do not want to damage our prospects of victory in the next election by starting a series of expulsions".

For the moment at least, here in Exeter we have a breathing space in our struggle for socialism both inside and outside the Party.

Peter Bowen

NEXT ISSUE

Next issue out: July 19th. Dead- line for articles: Monday 9th July.

Next National Editorial Board Sunday September 2nd.

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EDITORIAL:

It is now one year since Labour's defeat at the polls. Since then, we have elected a new leadership team; a new front bench has been elected by the PLP; and the party's standing in the opinion polls has recovered from the 50 year low achieved at the election.

However it would be folly to regard the performance of the Party's leadership as being satisfactory to the millions of people who long to see a Labour Government in power, but one imbued with determination to implement socialist policies.

The signals *are* set at danger.

First, because of the outrageous abandonment of workers in struggle. The PLP leadership has played its usual dismal role in refusing to back the struggle of the miners without equivocation; and over the NGA dispute at Warrington, the main motivation of the leadership was to distance itself from events sufficiently in order to secure, as they saw it, Labour's electoral credibility.

Kinnock's backing for a national ballot, followed by the continued failure of the PLP front bench to argue the case for the miners, has exposed a major rift between the attitudes of the Tory leadership and those of the Shadow Cabinet. Kinnock, Orme, Hattersley and the rest have posed as honest brokers, ready to dispense tea and sympathy in pursuance of a negotiated solution that would shed miners' jobs and further undermine the NUM's credibility. In contrast, the attitude of Thatcher's Government is that it wants victory over Scargill and the NUM, almost at any price. This is not an equal contest. Labour fudges and hedges, whilst the Tories aim for victory.

Second, the new leadership has striven mightily to shift the balance of power in the Party towards the PLP and the Shadow Cabinet, and away from the National Executive Committee. To do this, they have played on the natural inclination of the party to minimise differences at a time of electoral threat from the Alliance; and their method has been to dismantle the policy-forming Sub-Committees of the NEC. They have been replaced with an *unknown* number of "Special Committees" consisting of members of the Shadow Cabinet, the PLP, and some (favoured) members of the NEC. The number of these Committees is wholly unknown; their composition is secret; and their minutes and papers are not published. The reason for this is that the leadership want to move policy formation away from the Party's open structures and towards secret ones that they can more easily control – the antithesis of accountability and democracy.

Third, the leadership has taken a reactionary, head-in-the-sand attitude towards radical issues such as Women's Rights and the formation of Black Sections in the Party. Less than a year ago, Kinnock expressed his hostility to the democratic demands posed by the Women's Action Committee as part of the campaign for positive action. He has now expressed the same bitter and ill-informed opposition to the creation of black sections in the Party, preferring to rely on the "certainty" of the election of a few black MPs at the next General Election to indicate the end of institutionalised racism in the Labour Party.

Fourth, there is the utter dependence on media stars, personalities (most of whom claim fees for appearing for the Party) and "communications". These things are important; but the reliance of the leadership on them is excessive and destructive. They need to energise the Party, and the enthusiasm and elan of party activists, if Labour is to win a General Election; but the signs are that they will use the Harold Wilson option – appealing to the voters via television, and over the heads of the Party.

Fifth, little indications has yet appeared of their plans to deal with the Whitehall bureaucracy when Labour is in power. This is a crucial omission – for it we do not control that bureaucracy effectively – packed as it will be by 1987 by Thatcher stooges – then the British establishment will eat Kinnock for breakfast.

There are two sorts of lessons to be learnt from all this. The left in the party needs to recover its nerve and start arguing hard for principles. And for Mr Kinnock, the lesson is that he had better mend his ways – or be remembered as an unsuccessful populist.

BRIEFING NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT: ONE DAY WORKING CONFERENCE

Saturday July 28th, 1pm-8pm, County Hall, London SE1.
Details from 54 Bow Road, London E3. Phone 01-980 7893.

YCND MARCHING STRONGLY FORWARD

Don't let anyone tell you CND is 'on the run'. Youth CND, at least, is growing, beginning to organise effectively on a regional basis, and preparing to relaunch our national magazine. New badges and leaflets have been produced and new groups are being set up all over the country.

With the Reagan demo behind us, our next major initiative will take place in August and promises to be one of our biggest yet! More than 200 young people will leave Cambridge on August 5th to walk 200 miles through nine nuclear bases, being welcome to London by a massive multicultural carnival on August 19th.

The themes of the march, 'Youth demand a Future – Jobs not bombs, No US bases', aim to highlight the growing US and NATO military presence in Europe (as well as elsewhere in the world).

Valuable Links

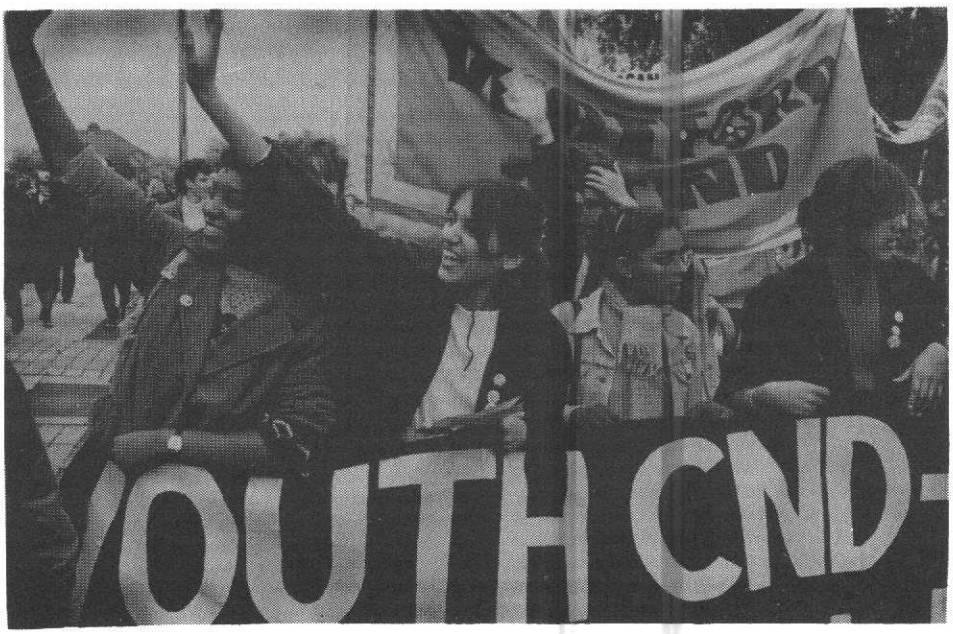
By inviting the youth of other European peace movements we hope to build valuable links as the first step to an international youth 'star march' converging on NATO HQ in Brussels next year. Similarly, we are aiming to get as many young women on the march as possible.

The carnival itself will focus solidly on the 'Jobs not Bombs' theme as well as attempting to strengthen the links between CND and ethnic groups. There will be stalls, speakers, music, steel bands, African and Caribbean dancers and singers, DJs – and even a funfair!

It is important that these events are built not only by YCND itself but by CND groups and the whole labour movement.

What you can do

Take sponsorship forms. Make donations. Organise meetings and rallies. Hold collections. Distribute publicity. Find young people willing to march.



Coventry YCND demo, 26th May 1984. Stefano Cagnoni (IFL)

We need £17,000 and 200 youth who don't mind blisters...

Join with us to build an event which can't be ignored!

JOBS NOT BOMBS! NO U.S. BASES!

Contact YCND at 11 Goodwin St, London N4 (01 263 0977) for publicity material, sponsorship and registration forms, details of your nearest YCND group and regional rep.

Tracy Doyle,
YCND National Committee,
Brighton YCND and LPYS

THEY BURN BOOKS, DON'T THEY?

Gay's the Word bookshop is the lesbian and gay communities bookshop in London. It stocks novels, feminist and socialist books, biographies, etc. It does not stock porn (or gay Christian material). The bookshop's coffee bar doubles up in the evenings as a meeting place for lesbian and gay groups such as gay black groups, lesbian discussion groups etc.

The bookshop was raided on April 10th by officers of HM Customs and Excise. They seized most of its imported (mainly American) stock, amounting to over 800 books. They also seized the bookshop's mailing lists, personal letters, minutes of meetings, etc. The directors of the bookshop had their homes searched and personal belongings taken, some yet to be returned.

OPERATION TIGER

The campaign set up to defend the bookshop has since discovered that the raid had a code-name – 'Operation Tiger', and had been planned for three years. During that time the shop had been under constant surveillance (by more staff than worked at the actual bookshop!), with its mail opened, phones tapped. Since Xmas no stock has been allowed into the country, over £11,000 worth, all paid for.

On May 18th, all but 34 titles were returned, it was expected that they would wittle this down to ten or so titles and prosecute these. This has not happened, Customs and Excise has decided to BURN 22 ttitles – over 200 books.

These books include 'The Joy of Lesbian Sex', 'One for the Gods', and 'Treasures on Earth'. More Mills and Boon than Mills and Boon.

The verdict of the state is clear. The magistrates that Gays the Word now have to appeal to have to decide whether *lesbian and gay sexuality* is *indecent* and *likely to offend!*

UNLIMITED POWERS

Even if the magistrates find Customs wrong then another magistrate could reverse the decision the same day. Customs can carry on raiding and seizing with their almost unlimited powers, doing what the real intention of the raid was – to bankrupt the already poor bookshop and get it closed. And what if they succeed. They can raid Sisterwrite, Collets, even the Labour Party bookshop (they stock 'Lesbian and Gay Socialist' – pretty offensive). They have already stopped books arriving for the International Feminist bookfair from a Lesbian and Gay bookshop in America.

WE WILL NOT GO BACK! LESBIANS AND GAYS ARE BLOODY ANGRY!

The campaign has already raised a large amount of money from the community for potential legal costs. It is the duty of the labour movement to match this. (At least.)

SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN

So far the reaction has been small. One of the best things that socialists can do to support the campaign is to get Labour councils to stock the banned books, in particular 'The Joy of Lesbian Sex', and, of course, to get donations and messages of support from all areas.

Contact Gay's the Word Defence Campaign, c/o GTW, 66 Marchmont St, London WC1 (278-7654), also 'Women's right to read and write' – set up by lesbians. Contact via A Woman's Place, Victoria Embankment, London WC2 (836-6081). Also Labour Movement Campaign, C/o 39 Chippenham Rd, London W9 (day 960-5599 or 278-6215). *DO IT NOW!*

Paul Canning
(Lesbian/Gay Young Socialists)



FIGHTING FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

Briefing has recently devoted some attention to the growing ecological crisis caused by rampant capitalist industrialism with articles by Peter Tatchell and the Putney CLP Science and Ecology Group.

Readers may be interested to know that there is an organisation for socialists who are concerned about the threat to the enviroment SERA (the Socialist Environment & Resources Association) has been in existence for over ten years now, working to persuade the labour movement to introduce an ecological perspective into its thinking — and also to convince environmentalists of the need for socialist approach if the environment is to be saved. We have over 700 individual members, and over 100 CLPs, national trade unions and union branches affiliated to us.

Though our main area of work is in the labour movement, in the belief that socialists and greens have much in common. Indeed, many greens are socialists as well. Others, however, are suspicious of traditional socialism, seeing it as bureaucratic centralist and statist — not, if we are honest, without some justification.

In November 1983 we held a conference, organised jointly with Green CND, on 'Socialism & the Green Movement'. We aimed to attract both socialists and greens, to initiate a dialogue. Over 150 people came, and the conference was a great success, managing to achieve a considerable degree of consensus.

We are following this up on the weekend of July 21/22 with a further conference, in London. Whereas the first conference was rather theoretical in its emphasis, this conference will look at practical ways in which socialists and greens can work together in struggles over environmental and related issues.

We will be focussing particularly on the importance of working with the trade unions. The recent blacking of nuclear waste dumping by the National Union of Seamen and other transport unions has demonstrated the enormous potential of working with the unions on environmental issues. Equally, the miners' strike has raised important questions, since it is clear that a central element of the government's strategy is the development of nuclear energy in order to weaken the miners. We will also, however, be looking at other forms of struggle, such as consumer campaigns and community actions.

Anyone who would like to have more information about SERA, and about the conference, should write to SERA, 9 Poland Street, London WIV 3DG (Tel: 01-439-3749).

Andy Roberts (SERA and Dulwich CLP)

MORE WORKPLACE

On Saturday 12th May the second consultation meeting of Labour Party Workplace Branches (WPB's) was held at the Camden Library.

There is a massive growth of WPB's going on and it is now quite difficult to keep up with developments. Several areas were discussed at the meeting under the heading 'Trade Unions and WPB's'.

It was decided to promote WPB's at various levels and in particular with the trade unions. It will be their money that can help to promote political activity within the workplace. As the political levy is under attack, existing political funds should be directly aimed at TU members in the workplace.

By expressing support for WPB's by resolution the Branch, Regional and National levels of the TU's will, at least, be able to incorporate WPB's within their general policy. SOGAT 82

BLACK SECTIONS CONFERENCE: AN HISTORIC EVENT

When it comes to disadvantaged sections of the Labour Party, Black people start from a very low base. Even though women had to struggle until 1970 before they could hold their first national conference, it took a further fourteen years before we could manage the same. Clearly, the Black Section National Conference in Birmingham on June 9th was an historic event for the movement. But, judging by the savaging we got days before from the Labour leadership on network television, you would have been excused for believing we were a bigger threat to Labour than the Tories.

Hattersley started the ball rolling by writing to the steering committee and telling us he was against Black Sections and, no he would not attend our conference. He added, tellingly, that the setting up of such sections 'certainly in my constituency, would be a retrograde step'. We countered with a news conference in Birmingham (where Hattersley is based). At the conference London Black activists were joined by Black City and County Councillors from the West Midlands. Hattersley, the chief beneficiary of a 36 per cent Black vote in an inner city constituency with under half a dozen Black people on its management committee, was described as the 'Baron of a rotten borough'. He used a Black radio show, a couple of days later, to denounce us as six fanatics. Thank heavens his intemperate comment was not picked up by our enemies in Fleet Street. Talk about disunity!

KAUFMAN'S ARROGANCE

Three days later it was Shadow Home Secretary Gerald Kaufman's turn to use a Black show (this time television's Black on Black) to rubbish our legitimate claim for an autonomous Black voice within the Labour Party. I am sure even Tories were shocked by the arrogance and contempt Kaufman displayed towards both the issue and his Black interviewer (a former NUS president). At one point Kaufman staggered viewers by accusing his interviewer of having a 'defective understanding'. Earlier he had scorned Black Sections as 'ghettoes'. It was a shameful display from a senior Labour leader who, because of his own ethnic minority background, we had previously believed would not be as insensitive as his WASPish colleagues.

Kinnock pushed the dagger in deeper the following night on television's 'other' Black programme, Ebony. He made the astounding comment that Black Sections would bring trouble to Britain's Black communities and increase our disadvantage. At this stage – after anti-statements from three top Labour Party leaders in four days – we realised we were up against an orchestrated campaign. The white male party barons of Walworth Road had conspired to use their majesterial might to crush the grassroots Black Section struggle for civil rights and no more platitudes.

Who advised them they could succeed? Certainly not Black comrades. None exist, at any level of influence, at party headquarters.

300 BLACK ACTIVISTS

Against this background of betrayal, our conference took place in Hattersley's Sparkbrook constituency. The turn-out was mighty – 300 Black activists from all over Britain including sole Black councillors from white areas like one from St Helens.

Though the opportunist blood suckers who have grown fat on the race issue may tell you they are not 100 per cent in favour because they know 'Black people' in their constituency who are opposed to Black Sections, the turn-out was a truer gauge of the support among Black socialists for our just cause. Here were grassroots activists who, year after year, had worked to get white people elected for little or no returns. On another note, the conference was boisterous. But then our spirits had never been liberated in such a way before. Nevertheless those committed to building a socialist movement which fully recognises the importance of Labour's million Black voters triumphed over the treacherous wreckers who inevitably turned up.



Andrew Wiard (Report)

What did we achieve? Well, we now have draft rules for CLP, regional and national Black Sections agreed as a working document. Next we plan to hold rules revision conference to weld the document into a constitution which does not ape the oft-bemoaned flawed aspects of the Women and YS rules. What is more, the unique nature of 'Black politics', and measures which will give us the framework for a non-sexist organisation will very definitely be incorporated. What we now need is for progressive white comrades up and down the country (whether or not your CLP is passing a Conference resolution supporting Black Sections) to let the leadership know how very wrong they are not supporting Black Sections. Just, if not more important, is the need to press the unions for their support. For, in the words of one progressive white comrade who wrote to us, 'Your struggle is our's too'.

Gladstone A.M. Wadsworth,
Vice-chair (Publicity),
Black Section Steering
Committee

PROGRESS ON BRANCHES

now has a policy of supporting WPB's since its May Conference. Interestingly the Scottish Graphical Branch who moved the resolution have no WPB's, although a few are in the process of being formed.

The political sub-committee of the National Executive of SOGAT 82 now have the task of promoting and funding WPB's. It is important to remember that in a multi-union plant *all* workers are eligible to be in the *one* WPB.

In order for such a development in the TUs to be successful it is also necessary for the Labour Party to provide the administration and finance to promote WPB's in conjunction with the TUs. However, they must use the existing lay experience of WPB's. It was very frustrating to see in the recently published TU member's pack from the Labour Party that there were only two lines referring to WPB's!

Our group are now in a position to produce a pamphlet on the subject of WPB's. We are promoting Regional Conferences for active trade unionists and Labour Party members so that the connections can be made and new WPB's established. We also expect to hold a fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool this year.

We will be holding a further consultation meeting of WPB's in the first week of September to further develop our work. Meanwhile there is plenty of work to be done by you.

For further information please contact Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent. Tel: 01-302 7983 where you will be put in touch with Regional Co-ordinators. Volunteers for some Regions are needed.

Miners take on the media

by Davy Jones, Islington South and Finsbury Labour Party

Media coverage of the miners strike has itself become a major political issue in the dispute. Last month the *Daily Express* failed to appear one day after a dispute between the Express journalists, their proprietor Lord Matthews and the NUM over a right of reply for Arthur Scargill. And a few days later the *Sun* appeared with a front page explaining that printworkers had refused to allow a picture of Scargill in 'Hitler-pose' under the headline 'Mine Fuhrer' to appear. What on earth was going on?

One short story perhaps sums up the problem rather well. On 22 May the same picture appeared on the front pages of the *Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*, and on inside pages of the *Sun* and *Daily Express* showing a Derbyshire miner crossing the picket line to go into work at Markham Colliery. Nothing unusual about that... except that the miner in question, Frank Branwell, was not crossing the picket line or going into work. He in fact spent the day on the picket line with his colleagues.

LIFE A MISERY

Needless to say, in the tense atmosphere in the Midlands mining areas, having his picture in four national papers as a scab made Frank Branwell's life a misery. When friends in the local labour movement together with the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF) took up his case with media workers on the papers concerned, he eventually received a small apology in the *Sun* and *Guardian*, but nothing from the *Express* or *Telegraph*. The newspapers' preconceived notions of finding a 'brave' scab prepared to cross the picket lines had blinded them to the facts of the situation. Frank Branwell is still trying to clear his name amongst his workmates.

For socialists, media trivialisation and distortion of industrial disputes is a truism. The importance of the miners strike coverage is that thanks to media workers this constant bias has not gone unchallenged. Back in January, before the strike began, the *Sun* carried a ballot form for miners on the overtime ban – 'the ballot that Arthur Scargill won't give you', it claimed. Printworkers on the *Sun* objected to this interference in the affairs of the NUM, and inserted a disclaimer beneath the form. Three days later Scargill was given an equal space right of reply after further pressure from the printworkers. A similar story occurred at the *Sunday Times* in February. Two thirds of a page was devoted to an article by Ian MacGregor justifying the pit closure programme. *Sunday Times* printworkers demanded equal space article for Scargill, which duly appeared two weeks later.

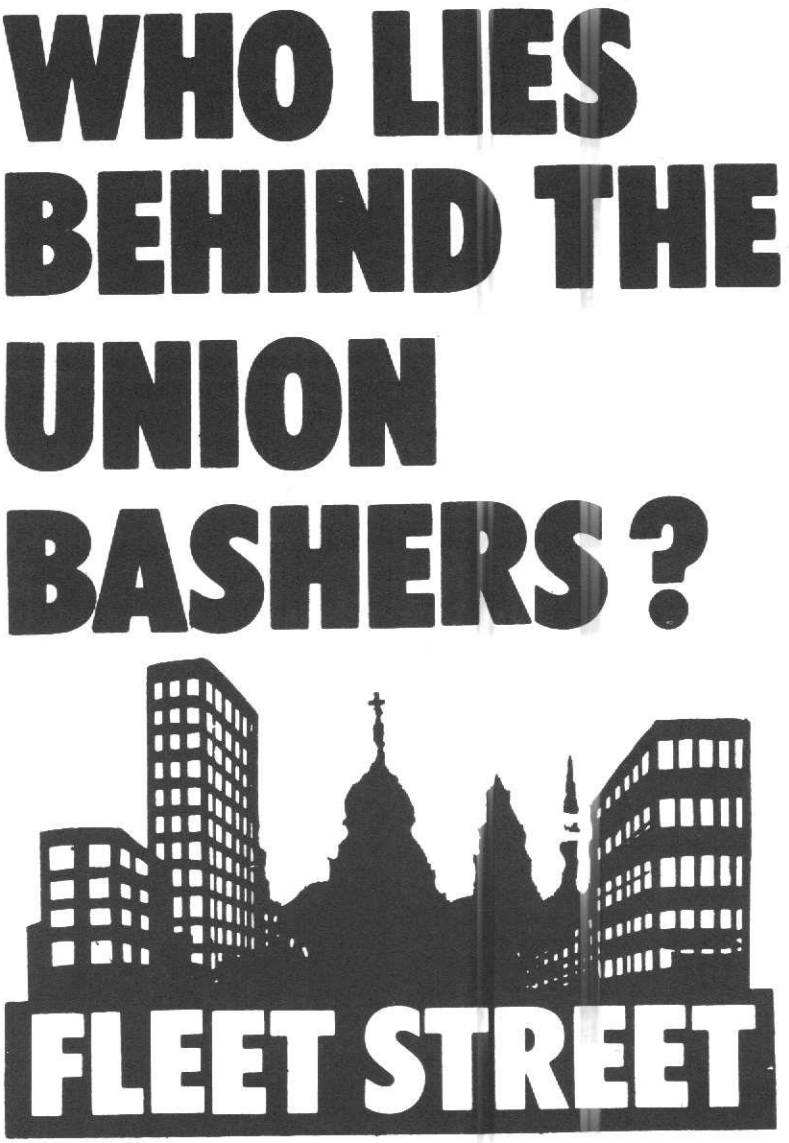
The well publicised rows at the *Express* and *Sun* last month followed on from these previous successes. Since then a meeting has been held in Fleet Street with printworkers and journalists and the CPBF to discuss coverage of the miners dispute, and miners have been toured round Fleet Street union chapels.

GAINING GROUND

In broadcasting too the notion of a right to reply to biased reporting has been gaining ground. Not only has the NUJ recently reaffirmed its opposition to the Press Council as a hopelessly inadequate safeguard, but also the two other broadcast unions, ACTT and ABs, have recently developed their policy on media bias. The ACTT has started a poster campaign aimed at its members to explain its policy of defending any member who refuses to work on anti-union material that does not provide a right of reply. And it is encouraging its members to contact the NUM to set up local media committees as has already happened in Newcastle. The recent ABs conference passed an emergency resolution calling for a vigorous campaign for the right of reply and encouraging contacts between broadcasters and mineworkers to discuss media coverage of the dispute.

Disquiet over media bias has even stirred Labour MPs. Austin Mitchell introduced a ten minute bill on 12 June on the right of reply for individuals who suffer media distortion. And a number of TV and radio programmes have examined the issue in relation to the miners dispute.

Labour activists should be doing two things. First, ensuring discussion on Labour's policies for the media. Labour should be committed to breaking up the press monopolies introducing a statutory right of reply, and facilitating the development of a more diverse media. Second, they should ensure that right now during the miners strike the media don't have it all their own way. They can and must be challenged. Every time you witness media distortion, complain about it. Contact the relevant media unions in the paper/TV or radio station and tell them your complaint. Make sure you include media monitoring in the work of your miners solidarity work. Tour miners round the union chapels in the local press and broadcasting media. And keep the *Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom informed at 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG, ring 01-437 2795.*



A STATE OF SIEGE — POLICING THE COALFIELDS IN THE MINERS' STRIKE

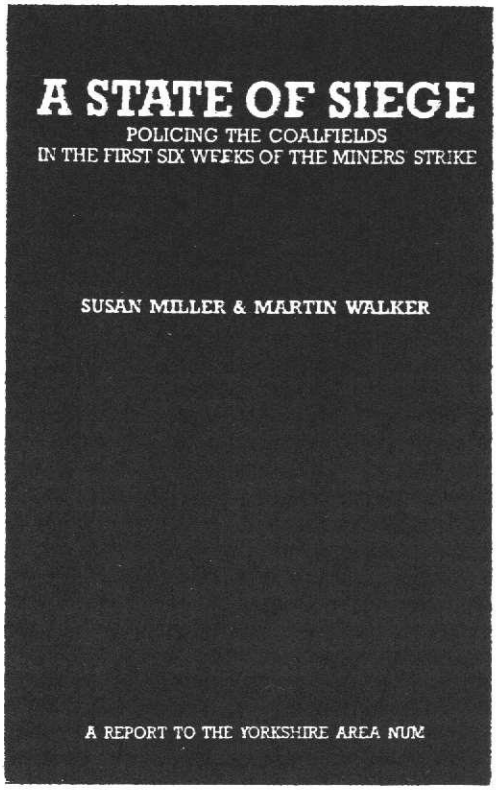
A STATE OF SIEGE: Policing the coal fields in the first six weeks of the Miners' Strike
by Susan Miller and Martin Walker
(A report to the Yorkshire NUM)

Long after the miners are victorious in their fight for jobs and against pit closures this useful report will continue to have relevance to the Labour Party's political demand for police accountability. The report represents the first serious look at the dangerous developments in policing methods which have taken place during the strike. As such the document should form the basis of a full labour movement Inquiry into the policing of the strike.

The study focussed on police activity in Yorkshire and Kent and was based on interviews with union officials, 35 statements from miners and interviews with the Chair and other members of the South Yorkshire Police Authority. It is this methodology that gives the report its authoritative voice and makes it the expression of how those involved in the strike have experienced policing. However to understand the thinking behind the policing it is important to understand the cause of the strike. Miller and Walker express it thus:

'The Miners' strike was a strike in favour of community, in favour of working class culture, a class strike against capital and its power to move families about or throw them into poverty.'

The strike is not about a conflict between Scargill and McGregor, nor is it economistic or about the terms and conditions under which miners labour. It is a class issue and an uneven fight between the state and the unions and working class communities involved. The police are a weapon being used by the state to break the resolve of striking miners along with the DHSS, sections of the media, the civil and criminal law and the country's political executive.



REPORT FINDINGS

Miller and Walker conclude that the state has developed and deployed a National Riot Force trained in para-military techniques and equipped with riot weapons. This force is operating around lessons learned from the north of Ireland experience and is answerable to the Home Secretary. Within this structure the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) are using mutual aid [*an abuse of the term? – typesetter*] procedures as a command network through the National Recording Centre. ACPO has effectively sidestepped the County Police Authorities to which the Chief Constables are notionally accountable.

Operationally the report finds that police officers have acted in excess of powers they currently hold, particularly in arresting men in Nottinghamshire. Many of their actions will however be legitimated by the passing of the Police Bill, thus the report gives us a picture of policing after the Act. As Miller and Walker state 'Witnessing . . . the first weeks of the miners' strike confirms in our minds what many people have already said, that the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill has little to do with crime and everything to do with criminalising the working class and those who dissent from the policies of the present government'. This campaign of mass criminalisation with over 3,000 miners arrested so far, was a political decision which senior police officers were deeply involved in. The police have been deployed in a partisan way in order to break the strike, not to protect the so-called 'right to work' of steel workers and other miners.

The criminalisation process has meant that many arrested haven't actually committed any criminal or common law offence and that the police have 'bent' the law and ignored and contravened the Judge's Rules, which are supposed to protect the rights of suspects. Specifically they found that the police have used:

Counter-Insurgency methods and agents provocateurs;
Arrested without 'reasonable suspicion';
Failed to caution men arrested;
Invented pretexts for arrests;
Taken photos using force;
Taken fingerprints and photos of men without informing them of their rights;
Used physical threats to obtain admissions;
Refused access to suspects of their right to a phone call.

Behind the scenes the police have used the Special Branch in an intelligence gathering exercise and for interrogation purposes. Miners have found themselves questioned not about offences but about their political allegiances and affiliations and their past voting record in union and general elections.

The major findings that have a very significant bearing on the future of policing following the Police Bill cause particular concern. Firstly the magistrates have failed to protect through the courts the rights of suspects, and yet these unelected officials are expected to supervise detentions after the bill becomes law.

Secondly the police have used road blocks and threatened arrests at County boundaries and the Dartford Tunnel in a way which assumes powers which will be granted under the new Police Act. This tactics will effectively end the fundamental right to freedom of movement and we now know what the removal of that right looks like.

THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THE REPORT

The policing of the strike gives a glimpse of where Thatcher's law and order campaign is taking us, and it is summed up neatly in the quoted words of Cllr. George Moores (Chair of the South Yorkshire Police Authority). 'We seem to be going down the same path that Germany went down in 1934, state direction, state repression'. A comment which stresses the importance of the Labour Party at its annual conference staging a major debate on policing, restating its commitment to accountability and control over operational matters and taking up across the movement an active campaign to press home the issues in the public mind. For without this the message of the Miller Walker report will be lost and it will become yet another document gathering dust while the Labour Party suffers another ideological and political defeat at the hands of the Tories. Law and Order is too important a subject to be ignored and it is essential that we place policing within a political perspective that challenges the whole legitimacy of the Thatcherite strong state. The Miller-Walker report begins that process, the movement must take it up.

Steve Bassam, Deputy Leader
Brighton Labour Group

Miners' strike: a view from Yorkshire

Garth Frankland
(Leeds City Councillor)

In "The Miner" the official journal of the National Union of Miners, Arthur Scargill leads with "Britain's miners are on the road to a crushing victory." This is certainly possible and the article lists the facts.

1. 90% of coal fired generating capacity has now been shut down in the North. Arthur Scargill should know as he has toured the power stations by helicopter checking on their stocks.

2. The dispute has already cost twice the money spent on the Falklands war – over £2,200 million.

3. The collapse in the FT index combined with massive balance of payments deficit.

The recent manoeuvres by Thatcher over the railway pay claim, the succession of increasing offers to the civil servants and the offer of arbitration to the teachers show that the government is *now* immensely weak. The miners can win and so can every other group of workers.

West Yorkshire

In West Yorkshire the support for the miners has been rapidly increasing from trade unions, Labour Parties and Labour controlled authorities.

The Leeds District Labour Party has organised a series of regular collections throughout the city concentrating on raising food for the 5 pits in the area. Over £1,500 a week is now being raised through dozens of different activities, i.e. concerts, collections outside supermarkets and door to door collections from Labour Party members.

The Leeds Trades Council Action Committee has concentrated on raising food through its "operation food force" for the three pits in the Hemsworth-Fitzwilliam area.

Trade Unionists and Labour Party members in Huddersfield and Halifax are raising food and money for the pits at Emley Moor.

North Yorkshire

The new Selby Coalfield has been "looked after" by York Trades Council. These miners in the North Yorkshire County Council area are living in a particularly hostile Tory environment and extra efforts are needed to overcome this. The British Library Lending Division IPCS branch is donating food to the Selby pit. A Leeds businessman Barry Baker has donated 200 pairs of shoes for miners' children in the Selby area.

Hull

The three pits in the Castleford area Fryston, Wheldale and Glass Laughton are being looked after by Hull Trades Council. Every Saturday the Trades Council brings a mini-bus along the M62 loaded with food for each of the 3 pits. Over £3,000 has been raised in Hull for their traditional Rugby League rivals in Castleford.

Many miners have now been to Hull going round the factories and docks collecting for the strike. Close friendships have been built which has aided the increasing size of the collections. Terry Harrison, an NUM member from Wheldale, said that this contact between these two large working class communities together had strengthened the strike immeasurably. There was no doubt that the whole trade union movement was now in conflict with Thatcher. He sympathised with those comrades who called for a General Strike to remove the government. However, he thought the TUC General Council were "practically the last group of men who would fight Thatcher. Their present record was to actively attack the miners rather than to support them".



Police push back miners outside Sheffield NUM headquarters Press Association

Crucial

Each week of this strike has been the most crucial one. There has always been the possibility of a stich-up based on rephasing the closures of a few pits. This is really inherent within the slogan "Coal not Dole". The jobs fight should be related to hours more clearly and not to some target of coal production which British capitalism will not be able to use.

The miners can win but in winning they are going to shake the very foundations of the British state and those on the left who support their struggle should make serious preparations for this. The Kinnock leadership has shown no sign of any real fight to mobilise the working class against the Tories. We should put our emphasis not simply on support work but on organising struggles alongside the miners and raising the question of an alternative workers government.

My experience of being

Alan Wassell works as a mechanic at Wheldale Colliery near Castleford. He has worked there for 7 years. On 12 June he was arrested at Bickershawe Colliery, Lancashire. Alan describes below exactly who are the real thugs on the picket lines.

Bickershawe pit in Lancas hire had three busloads, about 70 miners, going into work that morning. There were 500 miners picketing in protest and 5,000 police there to protect the scabs. Mounted police were present.

About 6.40am the police closed the road. They were two lines deep. The buses were arriving under police escort. The police began to push us back to allow the coaches through. We saw the coaches coming and we pushed too. We mastered the police presence and some miners burst through the picket lines. I was among them. I noticed a stand-by squad of 50 police who had big boots and special shin-pads.

Two got me, one by the hair, the other by the arm. Then they frog-marched me onto the coalboard premises. As we appeared from behind the police vans a police officer emerged in front of me with an instamatic camera. 'Smile', he said, 'I'm taking your picture'. 'No you're fucking not', said I. The officer *No 7337* of the Greater Manchester POlice replied by applying his fist hard into my mouth. 'Shut your fucking mouth'. He hit me twice in the face.

WOMEN GET ORGANISED

On May 12th 10,000 people marched through the streets of Barnsley on a demonstration organised by and for women supporting the miners' strike. The majority of those 10,000 were women, a response which overcame everyone's expectations. No-one quite realised the strength of the women's support for the strike. Since the beginning of the strike 11 weeks ago, miners' wives, mothers and girlfriends have been organising themselves into support groups throughout the coalfields of Britain. Some of us began to organise in the first week and others are just developing now, inspired and encouraged by what they've seen other women have been able to achieve.

Not all of the support groups have the same priorities – some are much more overtly political and militant than others; some of us have a whole range of activities which we are involved in, while others confine themselves to one major task. But in general there are three main areas of activity in which the women are involved – the provision of food, gaining support for the strike from other sections of the trade union and labour movement and the more public involvement in rallies, demonstrations and on picket lines.

Collecting food

In most cases the collecting of food and the provision of canteens has been one of the first jobs to be done. The government has made sure that the miners and their families will suffer for daring to engage them in this battle and making sure that there is food available for those most in need has been an absolute necessity. Setting up a canteen is in itself a major undertaking and involves a great deal of time and effort on the part of those women who are running them. It has meant going round local shops and businesses appealing for food, finding the premises and equipment and collecting the finances to keep the canteens running.

Some of the women's support groups see this as their major and only task and it is indeed a very important aspect of the strike. However there are many of our groups which feel that the other activities have equal importance and they can be seen regularly on the picket lines and demonstrations making a public statement of their support for the strike.



In the main, these are women who have never organised in this way before – they had no ready-made organisation, no funds, many of them had probably never been to a meeting in their lives, let alone stand on a picket line or carry a banner through city streets. These are totally new experiences and it is to their great credit that they have been able to organise as effectively as they have. They have acquired a new confidence through their involvement – a confidence that allows them to declare openly and sometimes against hostility, their strong feelings about the strike. It's a confidence which has enabled many women to stand on a platform and address hundreds of people, something that many of them would never have believed they were capable of. Because they support the strike so wholeheartedly and believe that these are jobs which have to be done, they are able to display their courage by standing on picket lines facing the intimidation and often outright brutality of the police. Intimidation appears to be general police policy to try to discourage women's participation in these activities.

Raising of consciousness

Being actively involved in the strike, no longer isolated in the home being fed media lies, has meant a general raising of consciousness of wider issues. From their own experience they can now view how the media distorts and misrepresents – when 10,000 of us marched in Barnsley and the press reported 2000. They are experiencing for themselves repression by the state, and although perhaps they would not express it in those terms, they are aware of it happening. They can begin to make parallels between the way the government is using the police and the army here and the way it uses these forces in other parts of the world, and perhaps more importantly, WHY it is using them. Standing on picket lines alongside the men, they are showing that they can play an equal role and therefore demanding that they be treated as equals. New issues are being discussed at meetings – chauvinism and sexism, the equality of women – subjects which many working class women have ignored or avoided because they previously haven't wanted to talk about 'politics'. They are becoming aware that we are not just having an argument with the NCB about jobs but that we're involved in a struggle with a government determined to destroy the trade union movement.

The rise of the women's support groups has dealt a severe blow to the traditional role of women as housewives and mothers, especially so in such a male dominated industry as mining. It has shown to everyone the great strength of organised women.

And the experiences gained through the participation in this strike will not be forgotten. Hopefully we are now paving the way for the greater involvement of women in political struggle.

Maureen Douglass.
Hatfield Main Women's Support Group, Doncaster Area

This article also appears in Spare Rib.

arrested

The same officer then put his fingers in my eyes and pulled me head back and then the chap with the camera stuck the boot in three times. He'd cleaned his boots that morning and he left most of the polish on my trousers. With three holding me up they managed to take a picture of me. Is this legal?

We were taken to Leigh police station at 7.45 am. We were given a drink of water but no food until 12.30. I was charged with Obstruction (Only because I'd objected to them photographing me), I pleaded guilty. They fined me £35 with £5 costs and I was bound over for 12 months. I'm supposed to pay this £2 a week. I'm not on social security and I've had no income for 15 weeks.' (Next day Alan went picketing again).

The Miners Wives — then and now

by Judith Arkwright.

'What we are doing as women, in this 1984 and possibly 1985 miners strike, is making history. We are setting a pattern for the future, for the involvement of women in political struggle which will show what a formidable force we can be ... '

These were the closing words of Maureen Douglass of Women against Pit Closures to the mass rally of 10,000 women from the mining communities in Barnsley. With active womens support groups now existing in most areas these brave and determined women will indeed make history — as a contribution to the women's movement and as a crucial factor in the struggle of the miners against this government.

1926

Their action however, is not without precedent in this country. Women were organised in the 1972 and 1974 strikes and this type of action started in 1926 during the nine months miners' lockout.

In her book, *Women and the Miners Lock Out*, Marion Phillips, the then editor of *Labour Women*, records how miners' wives, as well as organising food parcels and fund raising also spoke at public rallies and demonstrations. In July 1926 the 8,000-strong annual demonstration of the Labour Women's Committee was turned over to the theme of the pit strike and miners wives led the demonstration through London.

The miners' wives were not organised as they are today but the Labour Party Womens organisations nationally and locally worked closely with them. Marion Phillips records how she was approached by the Miners Federation after the general strike had collapsed to ask if she would set up a women's committee to organise fund raising. This committee was later to help in the fostering of miners families when starvation and hardship became intolerable. A great deal of money was raised (certainly more than the 50p levy asked for today from Labour Party members) and the committeee had close links with women in the mining communities. The women's department of the Labour Party was completely turned over to this work. Despite aspects of this reinforcing womens supporting role this kind of committment would surely be welcome today!

The link between the miners' strike and women was made in a lengthy report to Labour women's conference of that year. Attention was drawn to the suffering of women in the mining communities. A call was made for all housewives to support the demand for the nationalisation of coal as this would help generate cheaper electricity and more labour-saving gadgets.

The historical precedent for women organising in the mining community obviously does exist but also what exists today is qualitatively different, in two main respects.

MORE WIDESPREAD

Firstly, the involvement of the wives and other women in the mining community is much more widespread with groups starting up in all areas. In the Barnsley district alone there are fourteen different women's groups who came together at the Women against Pit Closures meetings. In Kent there is a women's group attached to every pit and they are now emerging in areas like Lancashire and Nottinghamshire who were represented by at least six groups at the national Barnsley rally on 12 May.

The second aspect is that the women from the mining communities are active, not just in raising money or other more traditional women's jobs, but are not on the picket lines — most often at their own suggestion and are challenging their traditional role. Furthermore the link-up with other women is developed as part of a common cause — with women in the Labour Party and others not just 'do-gooding' but working with the miners wives in struggle.

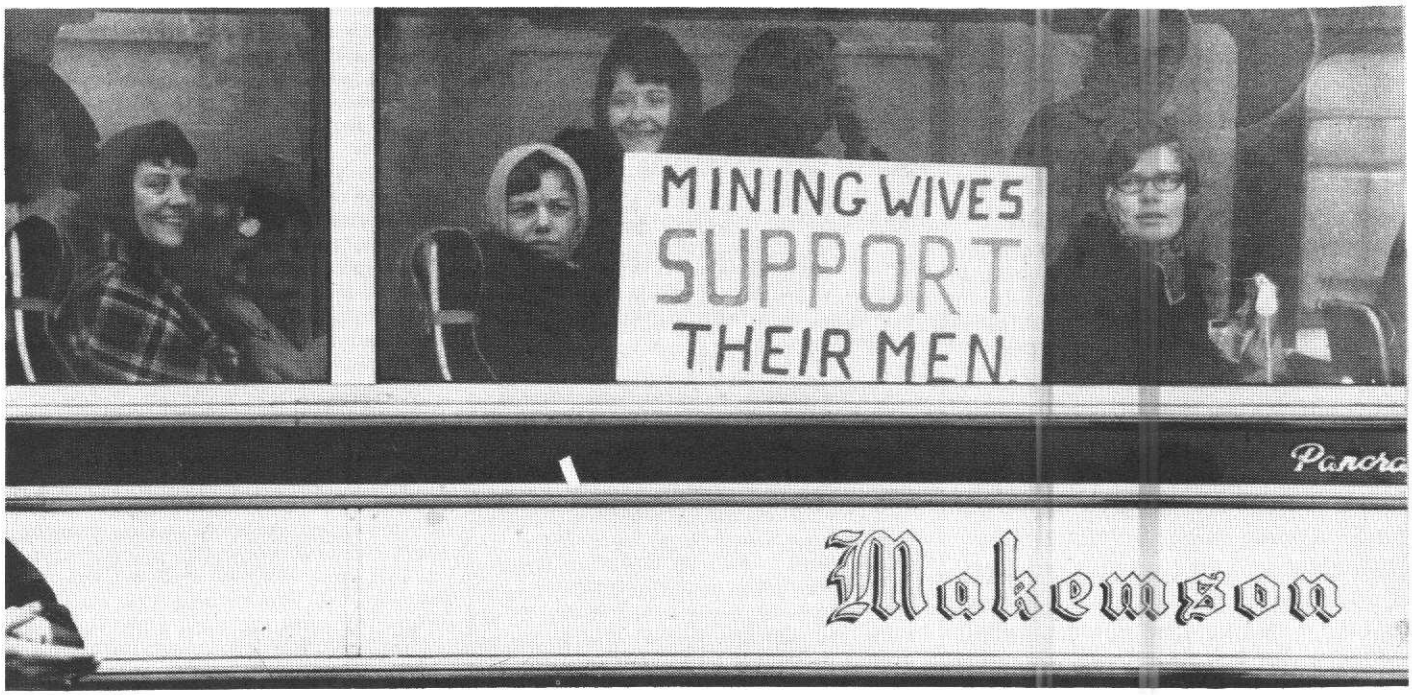
Explaining this new phenomenon Lorraine Bowler from Barnsley says, 'Its because of the women's movement — women are now more militant and informed. Some of our women would see themselves as feminists, some wouldn't. But women are growing through this experience. Many of our meetings are explicitly women only — after all the men have their branch meetings ...'

The organisation of the women in the strike is clearly more explicitly feminist and far stronger than ever before. As Lorraine put it, 'Yes. we support the men — but it's not just their fight, it belongs to us all.'

However, despite the advances women have made there are still many things we can learn from the past. In particular we must fight for the Labour Women's organisation and all its local sections to throw themselves into this fight with the same courage and determination of our sisters in the mining communities.

In London, women have organised factory tours, union and women's meetings for the miners' wives; there is discussion of organising womens socials to raise money. In Camden and Islington women from Kent were given mayoral receptions and raised large sums of money in street collections. This kind of action is more political and more feminist than that of our forbears in the Labour Party — but it must be generalised.

The women of the mining communities have already made history and Lorraine Bowler thinks they will go on doing so, *'The women's organisations will definitely keep going after the strike. We've got a lot to do yet.'*



Miners' wives arrive in London for a meeting and lobby, November 1972 CHRIS DAVIES

Grasping the nettle of political policing

Louise Christian
Streatham CLP

Policing and civil liberties should now be at the top of the Labour party's political agenda. All over the country the criminal law is being used as a political weapon to stifle and control the labour movement. In the miners' strike huge numbers of riot police have charged peaceful pickets. Picketing has been controlled and prevented by police roadblocks, detention without charge, bail conditions preventing picketing, the use of discredited riot laws and even house searches by the police. The Association of Chief Police Officers have assumed command of a national riot force through a National Reporting Centre. A month before the miners' strike began ACPO had a meeting with the Home Secretary and the Attorney General to plan tactics in advance.

Meanwhile in Barking, women hospital cleaners on strike have been arrested on the picket lines, detained in police stations and subjected to bail conditions forbidding them from picketing their own workplace. And at Greenham Common the women's peace camps have been evicted and women arrested, strip searched and imprisoned in an increasingly violent manner.

MUTED AND EMBARRASSED

The response of Labour party politicians to these events has been muted and embarrassed. The government has determinedly politicised the role of the police, and calls on people to support the brave police against the rioting miners as a constant slogan in government propaganda. But the Labour Party remains wed to the idea that policing is not really a political issue. The recent report by NALGO members to the Yorkshire Area NUM on the miners strike commented on the parliamentary debate in April about policing of the strike.

'So unsure were the Labour Party about their stand that Neil Kinnock, the leader, did not speak. The Government wiped the floor with Labour Party politicians who could not divorce themselves from the historical bi-partisan approach to the police.'

More recently the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, which will legitimise the use of police powers to suppress protest, passed out of the House of Commons with very little fuss. There were only six Labour MP's on the Opposition benches when the section of the Bill on roadblocks was being discussed. Few MPs apart from those who had been on the Committee bothered to take part in the debates in Report Stage. Surprisingly no member of the Campaign Group of MP's (with the honourable exception of Jo Richardson) has taken a consistent close interest in policing as an issue.

But this is not just a failure of the PLP. The NEC has also failed to take the issue as seriously as it deserves. No action has yet been taken on a motion passed at Annual Conference last year calling for a policy working group to be set up. The absence of policy on crucial questions such as stop and search and detention without charge has allowed the PLP to invent the basis of their opposition to the Police Bill themselves (eg they have not, like the Liberals, opposed the principle of stop and search). After much persuasion the NEC agreed to sponsor a conference organised by the National Campaign Against the Police Bill but then failed to provide any support or a speaker until at the last minute they sent Albert Booth.

FUTURE NOT HOPEFUL

The future is none too hopeful. When the planned joint Shadow Cabinet/NEC policy working group is set up, policies which should be unacceptable or which fudge the issues may be foisted on the party unless there is concerted pressure from the grassroots. If a Labour government was elected tomorrow it is doubtful whether its policies on police powers, civil liberties, public order, the criminal law and police accountability would be substantially improved since the days when Merlyn Rees was Home Secretary. After the Police Act a new Public Order Act is due from the government and is expected to create new criminal offences with long potential sentences of imprisonment. But opposition from the Labour Party may again be uncertain and tokenistic. Until the Labour Party is prepared to grasp the nettle of political policing and put forward proper policies, many people who are at the sharp end will simply not believe protestations about protecting civil rights.

The National Campaign Against the Police Bill is organising a half day workshop entitled 'One struggle, one fight' to discuss the common elements in the struggles of black people, Greenham Common women, miners, trades unionists, gays etc and the co-ordination of them. It is on Saturday 30th June at The Factory, Chippenham Mews, London W9 from 1pm to 6pm.



Police lead a picket away from skirmishes outside Coal Board's area headquarters, Doncaster. Press Association

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London Transport
TIME FOR RESISTANCE

Within a week or so of this article appearing the Thatcher government will have seized control of London Transport – the first major achievement in the government's campaign to destroy the GLC. The imposition of LRT means much more than a change of political control; it will open the way for drastic cuts in services, increases in fares and a frightening scale of job losses. The preparations for LRT under Tory control are well under way within the present management of London Transport. Senior members of LT management have been openly concerting their strategy with the Tory Transport Minister, Nicholas Ridley, in anticipation of the coming assault on jobs and services.

This became clear for all to see when a minority of the executive led by the LT chairperson, Keith Bright, openly attacked the LT Three-year plan adopted by the executive at the request of the GLC. This set out the two options open to LRT – to accept the drastic cut in subsidy sought by the Tory government or to go for the GLC policy of increasing financial support for LT.



ATTACK ON JOBS AND SERVICES

The former would mean 8500 job losses – increasing to around 16,000 as a result of other attacks on employment in the years ahead – as well as the closure of bus routes, rail stations, higher fares and a drastic reduction in the quality of the service.

Instead the LTE majority forced through a plan involving the GLC option. This involves no job losses (other than some arising from the appalling concession of one person operated trains agreed by some union leaderships), and calls for increased bus and train mileage (creating more employment) as well as a three year fares freeze (which would be a cut in real terms.

SUCCESS OF GLC POLICY

The pro-government minority LTE directors have described this as 'unprofessional'. But this is ridiculous given the fact that the GLC fares reduction policy has already resulted in the best results for LT in recent years, including a 16 per cent increase in the use of LT and a much better financial performance than budgetted for.

More to the point the lower fares, plus innovations such as the Travelcard have helped take traffic off our overcrowded roads and resulted in a 5000 reduction in fatal and serious accidents on those roads. The entire experience of the past year provided dramatic confirmation that a socialist policy of cheaper fares and better services makes transparent economic and social sense.

'PROFIT CENTRES'

The Tory strategy is to turn each part of LT into semi-autonomous 'profit centres'. To that end Ridley and the fifth column within LT plan an all out offensive to get one person operated buses and trains, even though this produces a worse service, endangers the security of passengers, and has serious health and safety implications.

In addition, management would like to close bus and train engineering plants such as Acton, Aldenham and Chiswick. Until now the GLC majority on the LT executive have been able to block moves to close Acton and Aldenham but LRT will persist with massive redundancies.

The left wingers on LTE can delay the offensive but only the mobilised strength of LT workers can defeat it and preserve jobs and services. GLC leaders such as Ken Livingstone, Dave Wetzel and Mike Ward and some LTE part-time members have made it clear that the time for action is now and that a determined campaign to explain what is at stake can win public support for LT workers.

ACTION ON JUNE 27

Industrial action now would also draw on the strength given to the wider labour movement by the determined struggle of the miners to defend their jobs and their pits. A concerted action by miners, LT workers as well as GLC staff defending themselves against abolition could provide the sinews of a potentially powerful resistence to the Tory government.

The immediate focus for action should be the one day 'Day of Action' being called by SLRTUC for June 27. But it is vital that any such protest should be clearly situated as part of a campaign aiming at all out action on London Transport if the Tory government does not give unambiguous undertakings on LT jobs and services.

UNITY WITH THE MINERS

No campaign of action will succeed unless a massive effort to explain all the issues both to LT workers and the travelling public is begun NOW. GLC Labour leaders and part-time GLC-appointed LTE directors have pledged to play their part in bringing the details of the threat to LT jobs to every bus garage, depot and workshop.

Failure to mount resistence to LRT and all that it involves will enormously weaken the prospects of resistence to the abolition of the GLC and the enormous consequent job losses next year. But the example which could be given by a strike to defend jobs and services is not to be underestimated.

Growing numbers of working people are showing how angered and embittered they have become as a result of the actions of the Thatcher government. A clear lead given now by LT trade union leaders together with the GLC – can help ensure the fight back against the government being led by the miners turns into a wholesale challenge to Tory attacks on the entire working class.

John Palmer
(GLC-appointed member London Transport Executive)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Reagan's Hired Killers Against Nicaragua

Since 1981 the United States Government has been waging an undeclared war on Nicaragua. Until recently most press reports have repeated the polite fiction that the attacks on Nicaragua are carried out by independent forces opposed to the Sandinistas, but in this article, **David Dixon** *of the* **Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign** *argues that these 'counter-revolutionaries' are simply US mercenaries.*

Five years ago this July, the people of Nicaragua, led by the Sandinist Front for the Liberation of Nicaragua (FSLN), overthrew the dictator Anastasio Somoza. For 45 years the Somoza family had ruled the country like a private estate and enjoyed almost complete support from successive US administrations.

Almost immediately after the triumph of the revolution, the CIA rounded up as many former members of Somoza's brutal National Guard as they could find and brought them to training camps inside the United States. Here they were instructed in guerilla warfare by US military and CIA personnel and equipped with weapons 'lost' by the US army. Their presence was soon discovered by the US press and was challenged in the courts as a contravention of the US Neutrality Act.

Despite this unwelcome publicity, the Reagan Administration was able to carry on with its training programme until, by late 1981, it had assembled a force of well-trained, well-armed mercenaries which suddenly vanished from the United States and reappeared as 'freedom fighters' (Reagan's description!) in camps in Honduras, just near the Nicaraguan border. Here their training was continued by US personnel and, until the demise of the Galtieri regime in the wake of the Malvinas war, by Argentinians.



Fighting against Honduran based contras.

UNDER ATTACK

And so after more than two years of virtual peace, the Nicaraguan people found themselves under attack again from their old enemy, the National Guard armed by the USA. Since 1981 attacks on Nicaragua have left over 2,000 dead. Initially the attacks were aimed at military attacks, but by the end of 1982 it had become clear to US strategists that the 'uprising' they had hoped to inspire against the Sandinistas was not going to materialise. On the contrary, support for the Sandinistas was growing after the dramatic success of programmes such as the Literacy Campaign, provision of basic health care and hygiene education, and subsidisation of basic foodstuffs. Once this was realised, the mercenaries were instructed to switch their attacks to economic and social targets, factories, farms, schools, health-centres, roads, ports etc.

It's worth emphasising that these attacks would not be taking place without the direct involvement of the US Administration since 1979. The 'contra' are armed, paid, trained and supplied by the CIA to the tune of over 100 million dollars since 1979. Their operations are directed by US personnel and their military intelligence is gathered by US spy-planes. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines a mercenary as 'a professional soldier serving a foreign power'. There can be no argument that this is what the 'contra' are.

EXCUSES

The Reagan Administration is constantly flailing around trying to find excuses for this completely unprovoked assault by the world's most powerful nation on one of the world's poorest. An assault which also includes economic sanctions such as blacking trade with Nicaragua and using US political muscle to block loans from world financial institutions and a ferocious propaganda campaign. At various times the US Administration has claimed that Nicaragua is (a) a Soviet puppet, (b) shipping arms to the FMLN/FDR in El Salvador, (c) threatening to invade Honduras and/or Costa Rica, (d) 'exporting revolution' (whatever that's supposed to mean).

None of these are true, not even partly. The Reagan administration has simply made them up to obscure the real reason why it has to destroy the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. This reason is very simple – Nicaragua is a popular, democratic *Socialist* society! Worse still, it actually *works*, and works very well.

A successful workers' and peasants' state is a dangerous example to capitalism everywhere, and as the capitalist state with the most to lose in Latin America, the US cannot allow it to continue. Simply by existing Nicaragua is providing inspiration for millions of oppressed peasants and workers throughout the region. This is true irrespective of whether Nicaragua actually 'exports' revolution actively, and to a large extent irrespective of the fine details of the Sandinistas' policies.

Nicaragua is under attack because of the socialist example it provides. We must defend it on the same basis.

When is 'consent' not a veto, Clive?

Dear Clive Soley,

In the April edition of Briefing you replied by letter to an article I had written the previous month. You raised a number of important points which I should like to answer.

Fabianism

1. *Fabianism*. You dispute my description of your policies as 'fabian'. Fabianism to me does not support people's *self*-determination and *self* organisation for their own liberation.

Your policies as expounded in The Guardian 27/1/84 and The New Statesman 11/5/84 and in the evidence you gave to the New Ireland Forum 19/1/84 appear to me to be fabian. Nowhere is there any reference to the Irish people's right to self-determination. There is much reference to a chummy London-Dublin alliance sorting it all out on behalf of the Irish people. If I may put it thus – managing to get some of the more 'enlightened' of the 'unenlightened' to work with the fully 'enlightened' for the rest of the 'unelightened's' liberation is *not* the same as self-determination of the 'unenlightened'.

"I see my task as trying to reunite Ireland", you stated to the New Ireland Forum. On whose behalf? The Irish people's? The British Labour Party's?

Sinn Fein were excluded from The New Ireland Forum because they defend the right of the Irish people to use violence. I assume you supported their exclusion as you did not protest or criticise the Forum on this point. The point is of course whose violence do you condemn? Whose violence do *you* consider justified? You condemn that violence defended by Sinn Fein. Nowhere do I read that you condemn the violence of the British army. Is *that* violence justified? Because the natives are rebelling?

I'm sure you don't need reminding that Catholics in Northern Ireland *did* try reasoned argument.

They, by means of reasoned argument, requested a few civil rights. Like the vote. And an end to discrimination in housing and employment. Simple basic things. And they got beat to pieces for their reasoned arguments. In Derry on 5th October 1968. At Burntollet Bridge on 4th January 1969. Thirteen civilians were shot for their reasoned arguments on 'Bloody Sunday' 1972. So I could go on.

I read in today's Guardian (13/6/84) that a former Colonel in the British army who served in Northern Ireland in the early seventies has said that "the violence of the late 1960s was started and then perpetuated by Protestant groups. These groups... were largely instrumental in the birth of the Provisional IRA... He asked about the Ulster Volunteer Force. The Special Branch were astonished and... replied 'What UVF? There is no UVF, there is no intelligence, we're not watching them'."

In your article in The New Statesman you acknowledge that "the division of Ireland without consent was a disastrous failure" and that "we have not been able to coerce the nationalists into the UK". If partition was a disastrous failure and we've failed miserably at coercing the nationalists to accept it, and the nationalists and Catholics have tried reasoning with us and failed, why do you still support the imposition of partition on them and condemn their violence in retaliation?

Realism

2. *Realism*. You claim that your policies are not fabian, but realistic. Britain divided Ireland without consent, so we must learn from our mistakes and put it back together again with consent. This means the consent of the unionists. A united Ireland is thereby *conditional* on unionist agreement. Actually there *was* consent about the original division – from the unionists. They consented all too forcibly – literally, Britain was threatened with armed insurrection in 1920. Now we've realised partition was an error we wish their consent to undoing our mistake. As their consent does not appear to be at all forthcoming we will go about winning it. By our deeds we will convince the unionists they have nothing to fear from a united Ireland. There's no other way because the unionists threaten armed insurrection (again) if Britain withdraws. Seemingly the unionists threaten us with violence an awful lot and seemingly we always give in.

Yet you also argue that you will not allow the unionists a veto on political developments, which makes your policy a realistic one. I can't follow this. It appears to me they are allowed a veto – their continual threat of violence, bloodbath, whatever. That threat has even been written in to British law.

In your submission to the Forum you expressed the wish that if only the unionists had included the nationalists in government and hadn't discriminated against them things might have been very different. Pigs might have flown if only they had been born with wings. The point is they weren't. Why? Was it an over sight?

I believe that those opposing the Northern Ireland state and the British presence have the answer. They know the link between discrimination against Catholics and the Northern Ireland state itself. The Northern Ireland state is *predicated* upon such discrimination. The border was drawn on a head count of Catholics and Protestants so as to ensure a Protestant majority. Subsequent local government boundries were gerrymandered so as to perpetuate Protestant majorities wherever possible. Protestants were given privileges, better housing, more jobs, better schools, etc., to entrench their support for the discriminatory state. How do you propose to convince the unionists to give up these privileges?

Don't let's throw dust in people's eyes by talking about joint citizenship. Such mumbo-jumbo cannot conceal the basic issue. which police force, which judges decide? The unionist Mr. M. McGimpsey who followed you in giving evidence to the Forum actually put matters quite clearly.

"I still say that it escapes me how I can be a citizen of the United Kingdom and a citizen of a sovereign Irish republic at the same time. It escapes me entirely."

Zimbabwe

3. *Zimbabwe*: You claim that comparisons with Zimbabwe are unwise – because there are so many more unionists in Northern Ireland than there were whites in Zimbabwe. In fact you say that there are more than enough unionists to make a united Ireland ungovernable without their consent, whereas there weren't enough whites to make Zimbabwe ungovernable. So is it all about numbers? If there were *less* unionists would you not require their consent? If there had been *more* whites would we not have pulled out? Moreover, your use of the word ungovernable brings me back to the unionist threat of violence. Their veto. It appears to me that you acquiesce to threats (and the fact of – see the quote from The Guardian) of violence from the one side only – though you accept that the other have major cause for complaint.

I think that my point still stands. There are ideological and political similarities between the "Rhodesian" whites and the unionists.

Disarming the Unionists

4. *Disarming the Unionists*: You ask how would we disarm all the unionist groups and ensure that they did not get any further arms? I am a bit puzzled by this – surely one merely takes away their arms? As there is some evidence to show that the unionists get much of their arms from various British sources, including the security forces, it seems to me, that a resolute British government could end supplies too. And anyway, do we feel so responsible for a supposed future Irish civil war when we ourselves happily precipitated one anyway 60 years ago?

May I refer you to a little book "The British in Ireland, a suitable case for withdrawal" by Geoffrey Bell, (pub. Pluto 1984) pages 107 to 113. I quote briefly:

The issues raised by the simple shout of "Troops Out" – specifically, the threat of a loyalist backlash – must be addressed. The changed realities of the 1980s must also be taken into account – for instance, by the end of the 1970s there were twice as many locally recruited "security" personnel as there were members of the British Army operating in Northern Ireland. Advocating the disarming and disbandment of the British-born but loyalist-dominated UDR and RUC would both recognise this new balance in the security forces and point to a way of minimising the loyalist capacity for violence in the event of British withdrawal.

What is being put forward here, then, is a programme for British withdrawal, which could be based on:

–Britain to renounce all claims of sovereignty over Northern Ireland.

–The ending of the Unionist veto on Irish unity; support for Irish majority rule.

–The disbandment of the UDR and RUC.

–The repeal of the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

–The calling of a 32-county constituency assembly to set the terms and time scale for a full British military, economic and political withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

Finally there are two other matters I would like to take this opportunity of raising with you. The first concerns the strip-searching of women in Armagh prison. Do you support the Northern Ireland office's position that this form of sexual harassment is necessary on security grounds? If so how do you justify it as socialist? How do you justify it given the widely acknowledged abuse of justice by the British state in Northern Ireland? Nearly all the women being strip-searched are remand

prisoners – i.e. they have not been convicted of anything. How do you justify the strip-searching of such women? On law and order grounds? Whose law and whose order? If you oppose the strip searches why have you not issued a public statement to this effect?

Position of Women

Secondly, I would like to bring to your attention a statement made by Mrs. Sylvia Meehan, Chair of the Republic's Employment Equality Agency, in her presentation to the New Ireland Forum. Mrs. Meehan was very concerned about the position of women in relation to a New Ireland. She said:

"... all policy, *first in the Constitution and also any kind of Government policy, economic, social and political, must be examined with reference to the* consequences *it would have for women. ... Unless this question is tackled ... there will be no change. ... Women are seen as a numerical part of the group rather than as a distinct entity with special needs. The important thing is that* the situation of women, and consideration of how any Government policy can affect this, is an essential prerequisite *before you embark upon your social, economic, and political planning and carrying it out."*

(Mrs. Meehan's own emphasis.)

Specifically I ask you this: have you incorporated such a principle into your policy proposals because I cannot see any evidence of you having done so? What is your position as to the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland? The Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign has recently renewed its efforts for the Act's extension *not* because they support the extension of British legislation to Ireland – they do not in principle – or because they think it is a wonderful piece of legislation – from women's perspective it is woefully inadequate – but because it would go some way to alieviating the daily misery of so many Irish women forced to travel to this country for abortions.

I appreciate that I have raised many issues here, but look forward to your reply.

Yours,
Sarah Roelofs.

Labour Zionism — Breaking the Links

On May 19th at County Hall, the first ever Labour Movement Conference on Palestine was held. Sponsored by one national union (AUEW-TASS) 11 MPs and national executive members from the POEU, NUJ, NUT, POEU, TGWU, FBU and Yorkshire NUM, the Conference attracted some 150 delegates and observers from 30 CLPs, 5 Trades Councils and branches from 10 unions. An understanding of the significance of the conference can be gauged from the fact that forged letters in my name on LMCP headed notepaper were sent to all the conference speakers, saying that the conference had been cancelled. Similar letters were sent to a number of organisations which sent delegates to the Conference. More by luck than anything else all the speakers attended though the chairpersons for the sessions had to be swapped around with Sue Lister (ASTMS) chairing the morning session.

The session was opened by a PLO speaker and then Uri Davies and Israeli anti-Zionist spoke on the Israeli 'trade union' Histadrut. Histadrut began as a colonising organisation open only to Jews and which campaigned for a boycott of Arab Labour amongst Jewish employers. Today although it admits Arabs into a special 'integration' department it continues wher ever possible to deny Arabs employment. Histadrut is also the largest employer in Israel after the state so it has a fixed stake in the continu a-tion of the market economy given that over half of its companies are joint ventures with private capital anyway. Only its building company, Solel Boneh, employs large numbers of Arabs.

LABOUR ZIONISM BUILT THE STATE

The next speaker was Moshe Machover from the Socialist Organisation in Israel, Matzpen. He described the course of colonisation in Palestine and how it had been Labour Zionism that had built the state. He showed how Labour Zionism had been more racist than its Likud counterparts and that it had forsaken socialism from the start for an alliance with imperialism.

The next two speakers were Palestinian trade unionists. One was doing a research degree in Britain the other, a woman trade unionist, Hallah Obaid, (see next months Briefing for an interview) from Cyprus. Hallah detailed the history of the Palestinian trade union movement up till the present day and the role of women within the liberation movement.

In the afternoon the Conference split into 2 sessions — one on the Labour Party and the other on the Unions. In the Labour Party session there was a wide discussion over questions such as twinning, Alan Clinton from Islington Council spoke on this. Richard Balfe MEP spoke on his experience in Labour Friends of Israel and the pressure brought to bear on those like Bernadette Devlin to change her mind on the issue. Peter Tatchel introduced the session and many delegates stressed the importance of differentiating between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism — something which the Zionists deliberately confused. The Trade Union session was taken up with a debate around the question of whether to break links with Histadrut or debate with it.

In the final session there were resolutions and a delegate from the Trade Union Friends of Palestine (a group which had refused to help organise the conference) moved an amendment deleting all references to a democratic, secular state and breaking links with Labour Zionism. The resolution was however, passed unamended.

Resolutions for submission to Labour Party annual Conference were given out by our own organisation and when the Conference ended most people agreed that it had been useful and informative. A steering committee consisting of 6 trade unionists, 4 Labour Party members and 2 representatives from Palestine Solidarity and the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine was elected to carry on the work of the committee, in particular organising a labour movement delegation to Palestine.

Tony Greenstein
Chairperson LMCfP

'In sisterhood and solidarity'
18 August Demonstration

c/o AWP, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2

Dear Sisters,

We are writing to ask your support for the 18 AUGUST DEMONSTRATION FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM IRELAND.

As women and feminists we believe that a British political and military withdrawal is necessary for a united Ireland. And that national liberation is inseparable from women's liberation.

Women's liberation is women winning control over all aspects of their lives – winning their right to self determination. The continued British involvement in Ireland due to partition is a major obstacle to Irish women's self-determination.

But Irish women are fighting back. They are as determined as ever to get Britain out. It is women who have frequently led the resistance to the British occupation. Women have organised in the communities, warning of raids, sharing child care, supporting each other.

Irish women set up the Relatives Action Committees and lead campaigns against the supergrass trials. Irish feminists organised a group called Women Against Imperialism. Irish women are fighting back against male violence and British state violence. Britain has no right in Ireland. Our army is oppressing our Irish sisters.

Please support the 18 August demonstration. There will be a separate 'Sisterhood and Solidarity' women's contingent so we can all march together as women. Wear green for Ireland and purple for women!

We would like there to be so many women on this demo that our message will be heard right across the Irish Sea in Ireland itself: 'To our Irish sisters, in sisterhood and solidarity – we support you!'

In sisterhood, Sarah Roelofs, for the mobilising group.

BANKS CRUSH HUMAN RIGHTS

Panic gripped financial markets around the world in late May when news leaked of the severe cash shortages being faced by two of the largest US based transnational banks, Continental Illinois and Manufacturers Hanover. Headlines speculated on billion dollar bank crashes, 1930s style depressions and widespread bankruptcies. Swift behind the scenes footwork produced a $10 billion rescue package for the troubled banks and the markets settled down once again. Yet despite soothing words from bankers and Government officials, and most recently the new flexible approach to the situation agreed at the seven nation summit in London recently, the major economic phenomenon of the 1980s, the international debt crisis, was coming back onto the boil.

Understanding the nature of the debt crisis from the statements of western political leaders is a process which almost defies logic. We hear President Reagan, whose country and financial institutions are at the very heart of the crisis, extolling the virtues of free trade if debtor nations are to recover. At the same time, the *Financial Times* reports that 'legislative proposals which would shelter American industry from foreign competition now swell the Congressional Record.' We hear the same President insist that debtor nations reduce their government spending programmes while the US budget deficit explodes to more than $1,300 billions and looks set to double again in the next five years. He demands balance of payments surpluses for others while the US runs a cool payments deficit of $80 billions a year.

MEXICO

We are presented with the supposed success stories of debtor nations that have 'adjusted' their economies and can once again meet their debt servicing commitments. Mexico achieved 'success' status after draconian import reductions left many industries without the materials needed to continue production. Unemployment soared and national production fell by 4% in one year. Even the IMF was forced to concede that 'only [a] short-sighted analyst can imagine that this is real success.' For the average Mexican worker, the adjustment process has left a real wage that is not expected to rise to pre-crisis levels for another decade. The case of Peru is even more startling. Repaying its debts is now possible as a result of reducing national output by no less than 12% and imposing austerity measures which, according to *Time* magazine, have created 'chronic malnutrition and disease [which] threaten to rob the country of an entire generation of its young.'

Although the situation is clearly a life and death crisis for the poor in the Third World, it is anything but a crisis for the transnational banks. They have profited handsomely from the chronic debt burden carried by many poor nations and it is clear that they aim to maintain that profitability.

BANKS IN DANGER

Faced with such lucrative markets, some banks have almost recklessly put their own liquidity positions in danger in order to maximise their profits. But now, as interest rates start to rise again and Third World debtors can no longer service their mushrooming debt, the dangers faced by such banks is being fully exposed. The Continental Illinois crisis illustrates the fundamental instability that now characterises the international banking community. It took $7.5 billions from other banks and a commitment from the US Federal Reserve (the US Central Bank) to 'lend, lend boldly and keep on lending' to the troubled bank to stem the run on its deposits. Another hole may have been plugged, but the dyke itself looks increasingly unstable.

The job of protecting the western financial edifice and within that the profit generating potential of the commercial banks, rests with the International Monetary Fund. The power of the IMF stems from the fact that it is the 'lender of last resort' for debtor nations facing balance of payments crises and that it is a supra-national organisation whose members comprise some 147 nations. When it speaks therefore, it is deemed to carry the authority of its member governments. Control of the fund however, remains firmly in the hands of the US and a small group of its western European allies, which together control more than 50% of the votes.

ECONOMIC BLUEPRINT

A debtor nation, with a severe balance of payments deficit, will eventually be unable to earn sufficient foreign currency to meet its overseas debts. It must then turn to the IMF for assistance. Although the fund provides only small amounts of financial assistance, being the lender of last resort it has the power to impose severe borrowing conditions. These conditions, which may include reducing government spending, eliminating price subsidies, devaluation, wage freezes and the removal of any restrictions on foreign trade, amount to an economic blueprint that debtor nations must follow. Once this blueprint or austerity programme has been adopted and the country concerned has won the IMF 'seal of approval' the international banking community will deem it safe to start lending operations once again.

The IMF now estimates that for debtor nations to show any improvement in their chronic situations, a 3% fall in interest rates is needed. Yet now interest rates are beginning to edge up once again and the frantic debt rescheduling operations of 1982 and 1983 look set to begin in earnest once again.

FUNDAMENTAL REFORMS

The fundamental reforms needed to restore some degree of stability to the financial system and enable third world countries to pursue authentic economic development plans have been clearly laid out by the Non-Aligned Nations. Any calls for reform of the IMF will fall on deaf ears if such reforms threaten the profitability of the transnational banks. And by definition, such reforms must contain that threat. It is left therefore, to the debtor nations, which are prepared to stand up and declare a coordinated default on their loans to establish a new basis for negotiation. As the governments of Brazil, Mexico and Argentina stated recently in a joint statement, 'Our countries cannot accept these risks [to democracy and economic security] indefinitely. We do not accept being pressed into forced bankruptcy and a prolonged economic paralysis.'

Martin Honeywell

SOLIDARITY WITH NICARAGUA— FIGHT THE BOYCOTT!

Nicaragua is under attack. Ambitious social and economic programmes launched since the 1979 revolution are endangered by a lack of equipment caused by the US economic boycott of Nicaragua and by terrorist attacks. Equipment needed includes medical kits, agricultural equipment, health and safety equipment, tools, water piping and life jackets.

War on Want and the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign are appealing for funds to buy this and other equipment and ship it to Nicaragua in a cargo container.

Express your solidarity in a practical way by raising donations from your Union and Party branch, friends and neighbours. We are also keen to receive donations of other equipment which might be useful in Nicaragua.

Ring 01-359 8982 for details, or write to Nicaragua Container Fund, Dept MTI, 20/21 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN.

Equipment needed includes: Medical kits for use by the health and literacy brigades and by the popular militias; Health and Safety equipment for use in factories and mines; Agricultural equipment; Life-jackets for the fishing fleet; Exercise books, pens, pencils, crayons, paper etc. for schools and the adult education programme; PVC water piping; Tools for the house building programme; Spare-parts for a variety of machinery; Sports equipment for schools and youth organisations; Basic office equipment for the popular organisations; Surveying equipment.

CONTAINER FOR NICARAGUA APPEAL

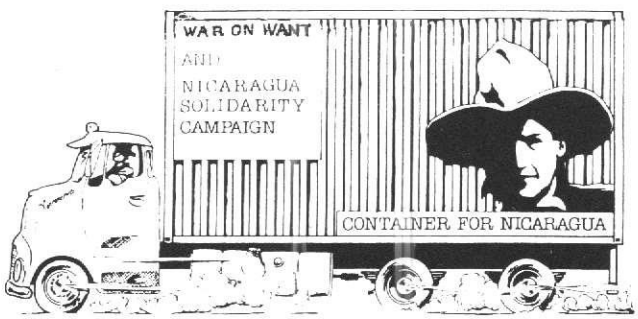
I/we enclose a donation of £____towards the CONTAINER FOR NICARAGUA APPEAL.

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ORGANISATION (if any):

Please make cheques payable to 'NICARAGUA CONTAINER FUND' and send with this form to DEPT NSO1, 20/21 COMPTON TERRACE, LONDON N1 2UN.



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