LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING 40p
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Miners and labour united can BREAK THATCHER'S GOVERNMENT!

by the Editorial Board

When the government provoked the miners strike in March it committed itself to a long brutal war of attrition. By the middle of July the balance sheet is obvious. Thatcher is losing.

It was symbolised by that wonderful Wednesday 11 July. In a single day the NUM openly flouted the high court, Liverpool celebrated its victory, the dockers came out on national strike, the pound fell to its lowest ever level on the foreign exchanges, and Thatcher's classic 'home buying Tory voter' was faced with the certainty of the biggest mortgage rise in post-war history.

There is no sign of the miners cracking. But the government's position is splintering.

The way Thatcher's position is cracking open furthermore corresponds perfectly to her government's own logic. Behind the distortions produced by the electoral system June 1983 showed Thatcher's government as far weaker than popularly supposed in terms of consciously organised social support.

The popular vote for the Conservative Party was the lowest for any government with a secure majority in Parliament in British history. The great holes in Tory support were the big cities, the working class areas of Scotland, the North of England and South Wales, and the loss of the Tories traditional preferential vote amongst women.

Economically Thatcher's government was based on a world capitalist economy unambiguously structured by the United States — and it is poetic justice that it is Ronald Reagan's armaments drive, reflected in soaring US government borrowing which has driven international, and British, interest rates through the roof.

It is exactly those forces which she could not integrate in June 1983 which are now punching holes through Thatcher's policies. First came the cities — with Liverpool's victory and the GLC success through the House of Lords. Then are the dockers and the miners — whose strike has been sustained not just by the labour movement but by entire communities and by an unprecedented mobilisation of women around a strike.

And the lessons for the left of all this? Never forget that once before, in 1974, the miners broke a Tory administration. It was followed, in 1974-79, by the most disastrous Labour government in history.

This time, we can't afford to let our leaders sell us out by getting into office on our backs. We are now in a position in which the question of power is once again — however incipiently — beginning to be posed. No-one is saving the Tories now except Kinnock and the TUC leaders – if they came off the fence and brought the whole weight of the movement behind the miners' cause, this Tory government could be brought to its knees. We say to our 'leaders': "Fight for those you are supposed to represent — or make way for those who will!" There is no reason why this government need survive its 'five year term' of office. The elements of a struggle to bring it down already exist in the present situation — and the labour movement has to fight for this.

The miners are turning the tide against Thatcher. The left must make sure that this is turned into a great victory throughout the entire labour movement as well.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Backward march of Labour halted!

Labour is in a clear lead over the Tories and Alliance in London. The results of the Euro-elections confirmed the outcome of several recent opinion polls; Labour received 41% of the total vote, an increase of 11.2% since the 1983 general election. The Tory share of the vote decreased by 4.8%, the Alliance by 6.6% whilst the Ecology Party increased by 0.7%.

An exercise carried out by the Regional Office showed that when changes within each European Constituency were applied to the Westminster marginals within their boundaries, Labour "gained" 19 seats, which would represent a total of 45 constituencies (out of 84) in Greater London. If the GLC elections in 1985 take place, Labour would be returned to County Hall with an increased majority of at least six. The exercise also shows that the following constituencies would be within our grasp: Streatham, Kensington, Brentford, Ealing Acton, Ilford North.

Council by-election results confirm the trend with Labour winning one seat off the Liberals in Newham and retaining another two with massively increased majorities. Tories are hanging on to their seats with the Alliance vote challenging strongly in south-west London boroughs such as Sutton and Kingston. Defeating the Alliance in Outer London must now be the priority for the London Labour Party.

In the coming months, the split between the Liberals and the SDP will widen as the policies supported by the younger radical Liberals come into conflict with the rag-bag of traitors and soft-Tories who make up the SDP. Party activists must make every effort to exploit these splits and put over the strong, united alternatives of the London Labour Party. In this context, the cuts in council services that will inevitably be imposed by the Alliance-controlled Richmond Council must be widely publicised and campaigned against by the whole of the London Party.

Campaigning against the Alliance opportunism in Southwark has resulted in Labour winning the Lyndhurst ward with a massively increased majority with the Alliance in a very poor third place. Despite a massive mobilisation by the Alliance – including the presence of Simon Hughes MP – Labour gathered 53.4% of the vote and the majority shot up from 200 in 1982 to 750 in 1984. The Alliance tide in Southwark has been checked and the task of reclaiming Bermondsey for Labour will begin.

Narendra Makanji

RECENT LONDON BY-ELECTIONS

Date	Borough	Con	Lab.	Lib/SDP	
7 June 1984	Sutton	-11.6	+0.7	+10.8	Con loss to Lab.
14 June 1984	Newham (2)		+6.2	-2.8	Lib loss to Lab.
					Lib hold
	Newham	-6.8	+22.7	-12.7	Lab. hold.
	Kingston	-20.9	-2.8	+23.7	Con. hold
	Merton	-11.3	+10.8	+0.5	Con hold
	Haringey	-3.8	+9.4	-7.5	Con hold
28 June 1984	Newham	-12.6	+23.5	-10.9	Lab hold
13 July 1984	Southwark	-11.0	+13.4	-5.6	Lab hold.

LONDON EURO-RESULTS

Constituency	Labour	Conservative	Alliance	Other	Swing from 1983 election
London E.	73870 (45.6%)	61711 (38.1%)	26379 (16.3%)		11.4%
London W.	79554 (40.7%)	74325 (38.1%)	36689 (18.8%)	4361 (2.2%)	8.4%
London S. & Su.E.	37465 (24.3%)	82122 (53.3%)	34546 (22.4%)		4.6%
London SW	63623 (37.5%)	70490 (41.6%)	32268 (19.0)	3066 (1.8%)	8.6%
London SE	61493 (33.7%)	81508 (44.6%)	38614 (21.1%)	969 (0.5%)	9.1%
London SI	77661 (50.9%)	46180 (30.3%)	25391 (16.6%)	3281 (2.2%)	7.3%
London NE	79907 (61.8%)	27242 (21.1%)	17344 (13.4%)	4797 (3.7%)	13.2%
London NW	62381 (38.6%)	69803 (43.1%)	29609 (18.3%)		7.9%
London N.	69993 (38.7%)	74846 (41.4%)	31344 (17.3%)	4682 (2.6%)	5.6%
London C.	77842 (43.2%)	64545 (35.8%)	30269 (16.8%)	7514 (4.2%)	7.9%
TOTAL	683789 (41.0%)	652772 (39.1%)	302451 (18.1%)	28690 (1.7%)	

LONDON LABOUR PARTY (REGIONAL COUNCIL)

Exercise in possible effect of European Elections on London Marginals. Changes within each European Constituency applied to the Westminster marginals within their boundaries.

Constituency	Lab.	Con.	All.	Change	Speculative Majority (%)	Speculative Majority (Votes)
Edmonton	47.6	39.1	11.3	Lab. gain	8.5	3,794
Feltham & Heston	50.5	37.8	9.6	Lab. gain	12.7	6,947
Westminster N.	49.3	37.4	10.0	Lab. gain	11.9	5,267
Lewisham East	46.3	36.3	15.2	Lab. gain	10.0	4,254
Dulwich	46.1	36.5	15.2	Lab. gain	9.6	3,652
Lewisham West	48.8	39.9	10.1	Lab. gain	8.9	3,946
Woolwich	46.6	15.2	32.4	Lab. gain	14.2	5,433
Hornsey & Wood Green	42.8	39.0	15.3	Lab. gain	3.8	1,999
Hampstead and High.	43.6	35.4	19.1	Lab. gain	8.2	3,653
Erith & Crayford	40.5	27.2	26.8	Lab. gain	13.3	5,478
Hayes & Harlington	41.5	36.7	22.1	Lab. gain	4.8	1,960
Putney	46.7	40.2	11.3	Lab. gain	6.5	3,054
Ilford South	50.3	38.6	11.8	Lab. gain	11.6	4,767
Fulham	43.9	40.4	8.6	Lab. gain	3.5	1,380
Ealing North	43.9	38.3	13.8	Lab. gain	5.6	2,872
Mitcham & Morden	39.6	36.4	22.4	Lab. gain	3.2	1,487
Southwark and Berm.	45.3	8.9	43.1	Lab. gain	2.2	758
Streatham	41.9	42.4	14.4	No change	0.5	196
Kensington	39.4	40.2	16.4	No change	0.8	248
Croydon NW	32.1	41.0	25.7	No change	8.9	3,510
Brentford	40.4	41.8	15.8	No change	1.4	724
Eltham	42.5	38.0	14.1	Lab. gain	4.5	1,835
Hornchurch	42.9	40.2	17.0	Lab. gain	2.7	1,228
Ealing Acton	37.8	43.6	17.4	No change	5.8	2,598
Enfield North	35.7	48.3	13.6	No change	12.6	6,203
Finchley	34.6	47.7	14.6	No change	13.1	5,033
Ilford North	41.3	44.5	15.7	No change	3.2	1,374
Hendon North	31.5	46.5	20.0	No change	15.0	5,560

Total 'gains' 19, which would represent a total of 45 Constituencies (out of 84) in Greater London.

Forthcoming by-elections

July 26 – Brent – Brondesbury Park ward. Phone: 459-6193.
August 2 – Sutton – Beddington South ward. Phone: 669-6109.

There will be no September issue of Briefing. The next issue will be the October issue, out on September 20th.

Next London editorial, Tuesday August 28th at 6.30 p.m. at County Hall.

London & the miners: Time to step up our support.

Support for the miners' strike in London is growing. But our response after three months is still not good enough. Miners' support groups and Labour Party levy collections are providing a focus for many Labour activists who were waiting for something to happen. At branch level, the interest is there — yet the Party leadership, many MPs, most councillors and a number of local Party leaders are continuing with the same round of committees and a notable lack of interest. Thatcher's majority in the House of Commons is unbeatable — MPs should take the opportunity to campaign in the constituencies and the coalfields. Kinnock and Hattersley's role is to be expected — more harm than good. Having stunned us all by introducing the 50p levy early on, the NEC has adopted a stance which could only be described as passive.

Those who came out for the South East Region TUC Day of Action on June 27th — teachers, print unions, town hall workers, post office employees — can see that at the moment it is the miners who represent the opposition to the Government — rather than the Labour Party leadership.

The NUM has given financial and political support to us in the Labour Party throughout its history. The Kent NUM banner has regularly come to London to support disputes and demonstrations. It is time for us to return this support — through door-to-door and street collections; branch and workplace levies; leafletting and poster campaigns; food convoys; speaking tours and above all on picket lines. The Greater London Labour Party can organise regular weekday coaches up to the major picket lines. If anyone says that they are too busy to join in miners' support work, ask them what could be more important? We want this government out now, even if Kinnock doesn't. And we want them out our way — through industrial action and a mass mobilisation of the rank and file. If the miners are beaten, let no one be able to say that they could have done more.

Supporting industrial action is obviously the key, and rail unions are now giving that backing, as were the thousands who took strike action on June 27th. After the police attack on the ASLEF picket line at Kings Cross, that support in London should be even stronger. One way such supporting action can be seriously argued for is by bringing other pay claims forward. Other disputes are already being tied in to the miners — Briefing has already reported the joint work of the Barking Hospital women strikers and the miners.

London MPs should be going up to picket lines to see police tactics for themselves. Have all the Campaign Group of MPs put their good words into actions? If the Parliamentary Party supports the miners, why haven't more of them joined the picket lines and marches. As thoughts turn to Party Conference in October, we should think how we can turn it into a week of support for the NUM. With constant TV coverage, the speakers should be backed by a huge banner 'Labour Party supports the Miners Strike' — and a plan for nationwide solidarity action should be mapped out.

London is often seen as the centre of Labour's 'radical left'. Will it live up to this reputation now that chips are down?

Kevin Flack
East Lewisham CLP



JOHN CHAPMAN

SERTUC demonstration, June 27th

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Ealing Trades Council visits Tilmanstone Colliery

The coach party had just been shown around the Tilmanstone Colliery and the children had been shown the canaries. It was on to the NUM offices and the room where the food is stored, sorted and distributed by the Wives Support Committee. It surprised us how low the supplies were running, apart from a gigantic stack of tins of baked beans.

"Fortunately the kids like baked beans!" commented one miner – and someone else mentioned their protein content! Back at the Elvington Working Men's Club it was announced that the delegation from Southall had brought £1,500 in cash and £200 worth of food. Between the speeches, drinks and samosas we managed to talk to some of the miners' wives.

A Woman's Place

They told us that in Elvington the women did not feel they were taking such a militant role as elsewhere in Kent. A few women were going on the picket lines but they commented: "Fifty per cent of the miners round here still think that a woman's place is in the home, we're having to fight that battle here. Our main concern as a Support Committee has been to ensure that the children don't go hungry – if we can achieve that then our husbands and sons can go off on picket duty without having to worry about them. We're really beginning to depend on donations of food to supplement what we can buy with our savings and social security."

Survival

While we were there, I noticed some people sharing out lettuce plants; it seemed that vegetable gardening was being taken up by many households. One woman told me that both her husband and eldest son were out on strike and all she got in social security was £16 per week. There were other households which had three men out on strike. Another woman with several young children told me that her family were finding it easier to survive on little money than many because her husband had only just returned to work a few weeks before the strike started after a year-long illness.

The support committee was meeting regularly to discuss the families in financial difficulties, arranging lifts to hospitals and doctors for women and children whose men were away, babysitting and so on. They were also being called on more and more to send speakers around the country and to go to the various demonstrations and miners' galas.

What a lot of women wanted to do was to meet the wives of the miners working in Nottinghamshire. "I'm sure they think our men have been promised other pit jobs if Tilmanstone closes – and that's just not true – there won't be any other pit jobs to go to. If we could only make the Notts women understand what MacGregor's plans mean for the Kent area, I'm sure they could get their men out on strike!"

The miners will win.

As we left, many women said how bowled over they'd been by the generosity of Southall people and that such support helped to boost their confidence that the miners are going to win!

Jan Stallworthy
Ealing Trades Council

STAFFS WOMEN FIGHT PIT CLOSURES

Miners' wives from Staffs are in the front line of the battle against pit closures. They realise the fight is about jobs — not just their husbands' job but those for future generations.

The women say their children may not understand when their friends go on holiday and they don't; when the TV has to go back, or when their clothes have to last a bit longer. But the women are convinced that in years to come when they have won this fight with their men, their children will realise that this small sacrifice now will ensure their future instead of a life on the dole.

The Staffs women have been standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the men on the picket lines. A break with tradition that has brought physical and verbal abuse from both police and scabs. In the strike-bound communities, too, the realities of life are hard for the women. Especially in areas like Staffs where the strike is weak and streets are divided.

During their weekend of action in East London, Dianne Urwin, mother of two with another baby on the way, spoke of the hardship, the police harassment and the solidarity of the women who are organising and fighting back.

How well is the strike organised in Staffs?
The biggest problem is that the strike is split. There are seven pits altogether in North and South Staffs, but only one is out. The rest have anything from 25% to 50% working. Some union officials are actually going in. The area NUM has been badly organised until now. That's why the women have got together and organised. We can't afford to lose.

BROKEN WITH TRADITION

What kind of action are the Staffs women taking?
We've broken with the tradition that women keep hearth and home together while their men tackle the real fight. Obviously, we've got to keep going, see the kids are fed as well as possible and that the bills are juggled — all on £25 or £30 a week. But we're also out on demonstrations and on the picket lines.

The men have had to get used to us doing picket duty alongside them. They didn't like it at first, but they're beginning to accept it now. Of course we get the same police harassment as the men. Our car numbers are taken and put on the computer list of stolen cars, so that the police can pick us up at any time.

Then there's the violence and abuse, from scabs as well as police. The press and TV cameras are turned off as soon as the police start putting the boot in. My husband was knocked out by the police, then dragged along the road. Another time he was trying to help a friend when the police kicked him between the legs. That treatment isn't only reserved for the men. One woman on the picket duty has also been kicked between the legs by the police.

As for the scabs, the papers are full of stories about violence from pickets — but never any mention of the violence from the scabs. They've been beating our men up, abusing the women — even flashing themselves at the women on the picket lines. But it's the scabs who suffer the real embarassment. It shames them to have to cross a picket line of women. The problem with scabs, of course, is that their wives are insisting they go to work. And there's no point in our trying to persuade these women. They just don't talk to us. No-one speaks to me in our area.

STREET COLLECTIONS

What about street collections for miners' wives and children?
The street collections for funds and food are essential if we're to keep the strike going and win. But Staffs is predominantly a Tory area and we get little support from the community, apart from the Labour Party and trade union movement. Local shops refuse to help. The Co-op doesn't want to know — even though the NUM banks with the Co-op.

At one place where we were collecting police arrested four of the women, confiscating the food and money they'd collected. Later they gave back the food, but they kept the money. About £30, it was. We still don't know what's happened to it.

We're getting support from Birmingham and Wednesbury have actually adopted us. But we've got to organise more widely. That's why we came down to London. You get a polarisation in the street markets. Either people tell you to piss off back to work, or they're saying they're with you and shoving pound notes in your bucket. The

Police crack down on street collections for the miners

As support for the miners' strike gains ground in London's street markets, police are under orders to crack down on street collections for miners' wives and families in a bid to starve them back to work.

Women in Walthamstow and Leyton Labour Parties report that police threatened them with arrest prior to a weekend of street collections in East London with miners' wives from Staffordshire on June 30 and July 1.

'We were warned by Chingford police that we'd be breaking the law if we didn't have a permit,' says Jo Hillgrove of Leyton Labour Party women's section. *'We knew the police would never grant a permit to collect for the miners' wives, but we applied for one all the same just to show goodwill.'*

After the weekend, Paul Boateng said: *'The police have now started harassing and prosecuting Londoners who collect money for the miners. This is the most blatant example to date of political interference by the Home Office.'*

Walthamstow and Leyton Labour women say the Staffs miners' wives raised more than £3,000 from street collections and miners' benefit over the weekend and collected two mini-bus loads of food.

But the women are under no illusions. In the weeks ahead the police are certain to clamp down harder on street collections for the miners.

police have given us a softly-softly treatment in London, compared with what we get back home. They just go in for a bit of harassment and think threats will do the trick. But as more and more support groups go into the markets, the police will undoubtedly toughen up.

D.H.S.S.

What kind of treatment have you had from the D.H.S.S.

Well, they've cut £15 off the social security we're entitled to, for a start. They insist it's for strike pay, but they know we're not getting any. We also get D.H.S.S. snoopers turning up regularly in our homes, questioning us about any "gifts" or food parcels. We've been warned that if we are given food parcels, they'll knock another £4 off our social security. We've got two boys and I'm expecting another baby and we're trying to get by on £30 a week total. I don't know how they expect us to exist on that. Yet some women are getting even less.

How long do you think you can go on?

As long as it takes. As far as the women are concerned, we won't stop — and won't let our men stop — until we win. Even then, we'll never go back until the scabs are out. That's the trouble. The community is so divided. Even families are split. It'll take generations to heal.

Anti-Apartheid picket: where's the Labour Party?

John Nunn
Drake Ward. Deptford L.P.

For two years the Anti-Apartheid Movement has been protesting peacefully outside the South African Embassy. Now the police are doing their best to stop the pickets — once again we have the ugly spectacle of the British police colluding with racists. The police say that they're only acting to preserve the dignity of the South African Embassy. What you've got to ask yourself is, just what sort of person thinks that these racists, spies and terrorists could have a shred of dignity? Funny too how the police suddenly became worried about the racists' 'dignity' just about the time Botha was about to come over here. It's amazing what can be done if you've got friends in high places.

The picket still takes place every Friday from 5.30 to 7.30 pm but now its on the steps of St Martin's on Duncannon St. Every week volunteers cross the road to protest outside the embassy itself. Most are arrestd and charged with obstructing a police officer in the course of duty (the duty in question being to preserve the 'dignity' of this racist embassy). When the picket of the embassy ends, most people march off to the police station where the comrades are being held. We wait there until everyone's released.

Hundreds of people from every sort of group have come along to the picket to show their support but there's one organisation that's conspicuous by its absence. Yes, you guessed it comrades, it's the Labour Party. Although there are a few individuals, where are our banners, where are the hundreds of our members who should be there? We seem to be very good at making well-intentioned speeches and passing wonderful resolutions, but when it comes to actually doing anything about racism, about police collaboration with apartheid and about defending our democratic right to protest, we just don't deliver the goods.

Come to this picket if you *really* meant those anti-racist motions you supported at your branch meeting, come to this picket to defend the right to protest, come to show your solidarity with miners in South Africa, come to show your solidarity with ANC & SWAPO, come for Nelson Mandela imprisoned since 1964, come for Benjamin Moloise falsely convicted and sentenced to death, but most of all come to show your complete disgust at apartheid and British collaboration with these racists.

END BRITISH COLLABORATION WITH APARTHEID. VICTORY TO THE ANC. PICKET THE SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY EVERY FRIDAY, 5.30-7.30pm. ASSEMBLE ON THE STEPS OF ST MARTIN'S, DUNCANNON St. NEAREST STATION CHARING CROSS.

Phone City of London Anti-Apartheid for more details on 837-6050.



Rob Scott

29th June. Anti-Apartheid demonstrator, Corrie McLean arrested on pavement in front of South Africa House.

HEALTH WORKERS

This year's £20 million worth of cuts in London's Health Service budget has been met by resistance from both health workers and community campaigns. The threat of privatisation has brought one-day strikes, such as the one in Hillingdon where over 300 workers took action, and seven London Health Authorities have now refused to put services out to tender. There are now four flashpoints across the breadth of London.

BARKING

As previously reported, Barking Hospital domestics have been on strike since March 16th against 40-60% cuts in pay, and loss of sick pay and holidays. Support is needed on the 24-hour a day picket line, especially at 7am when scab cleaners are brought in to the cockroach-infested hospital by Crothalls (Pritchards). Donations and messages of support to: Barking & Dagenham Health Emergency, 588 Rainham Rd South, Dagenham, Essex. (Tel 595-4252).

For details of health campaigns in your area, or for the latest London-wide situation, phone London Health Emergency on 833-3020 or write for a copy of the 'Health Emergency' bulletin to: 335, Grays Inn Rd, WC1.

WANDSWORTH

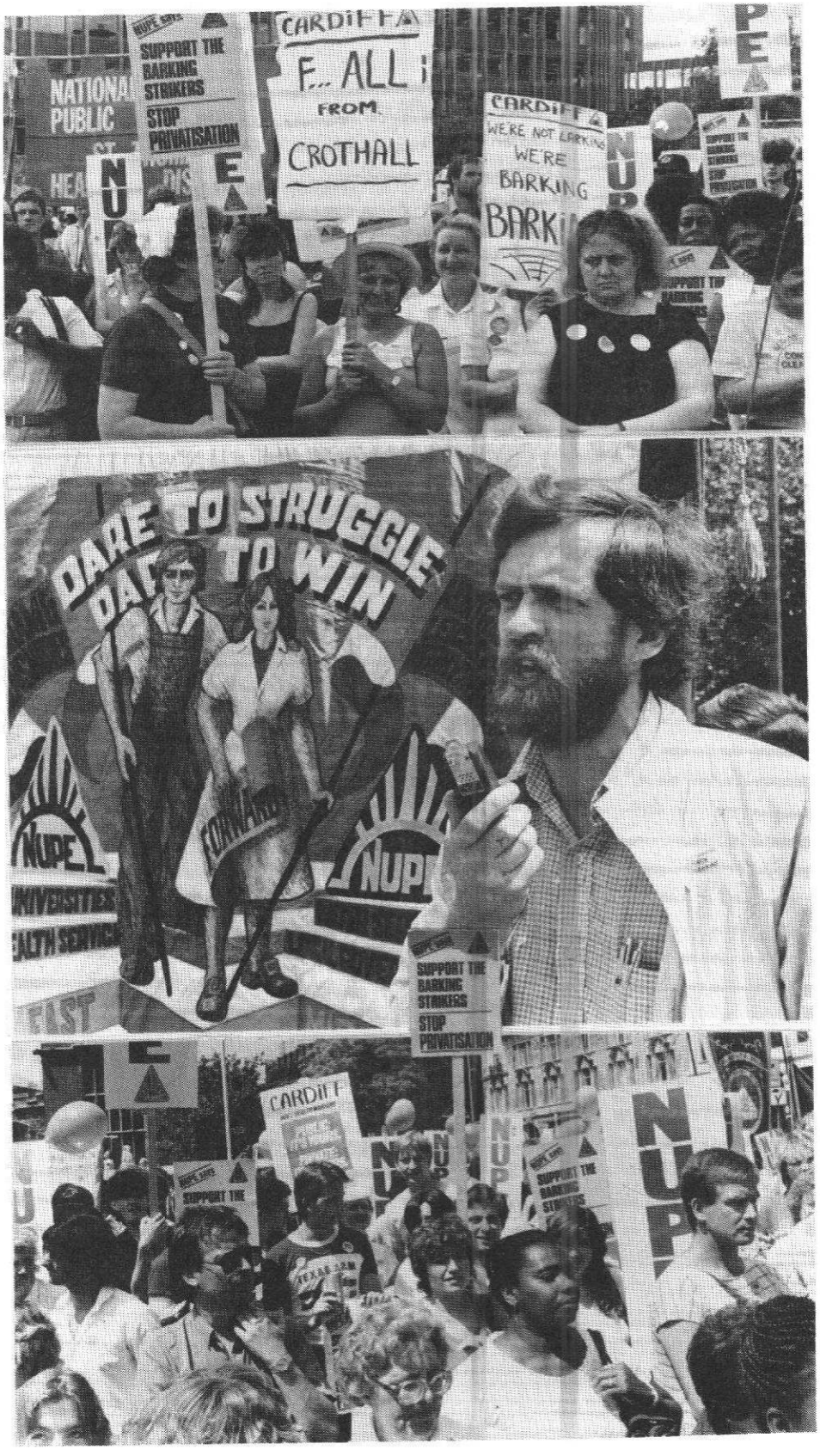
The South London Hospital for Women was occupied by staff and supporters on 29th June. Picket is 24-hours a day at Clapham Common South Side — opposite Clapham South tube. Messages of support and donations to: 19 Vardens Rd, SW11 — phone the occupation on 673-7788.

HAMMERSMITH

Hammersmith Hospital staff have been on strike since June 13th against the terms of management's 'in-house' tender for domestic services. This would have meant sacking nearly 40 people outright; full-time workers would be cut from 123 to just 15 and a 50% cut in pay (from £66 for a 40-hour week) Support is needed on the picket line and donations should be sent to: Strike Committee, c/o NUPE, 273 The Vale, Acton, W3 (tel: 743-4566).

HACKNEY

St Leonards Hospital, threatened with closure in August, was occupied by staff and supporters on 3rd July, in order to keep it open. There has been a St Leonards Hospital since the late 18th Century, but Government cuts are now threatening this and three other City & Hackney hospitals with closure. Help is needed on the 24-hour picket line, especially during the day. As we go to press, a court injunction has stopped all involvement of the National Union of Public Employees and four individuals involved — including people who work there. Contact: Occupation HQ, St Leonards Hospital, Nuttall St, N1. (Tel: 739-3576).



John Chapman

Protest against Privatisation, 26th June 1984

- FIGHTING BACK!

South London Hospital for Women occupied!

On Friday 29th June the South London Hospital for Women was occupied — a week before it was due to close by members of the staff of the local health emergency campaign. Since then both the support in the community and especially in the hospital for the occupation has grown. For a campaign that has lasted a year and a half, its good to see people overcoming defeatism and fighting to the end.

The first union to make it official was NUPE followed quickly by the Royal College of Midwives. The NALGO steward was against the occupation but some members are trying to convene a meeting to get official support.

The main battle has been trying to keep the patients coming in. All the admissions were due to stop on Sunday 8th July. Unfortunately the consultants despite expressing their sympathies have been unwilling to do anything about continuing the flow of patients to the hospital. This is despite the obvious gap that is going to be left in the service until wards are opened at St James and St Georges' hospitals in December.

FINANCIAL FARCE

The alterations to these hospitals combined with other expenditure that has been made to compensate for the closure has made the whole thing a financial farce. The original justification — that the closure would save £5m, some of which could be used to improve facilities elsewhere — has all but disappeared. The saving is now only about £2m, and the improvements elsewhere are more than negated by other cuts that have been made since.

As well as lying, management has shown how ruthless they can be. Only days before the closure they took all the midwives casepapers so they couldn't contact women who wanted to come to the South London. This could well put womens' health at risk. Also one patient was admitted the morning before the closure was due to take place needing emergency surgery. Despite the operating theatre being staffed and functioning the consultant took the patient to Charing X hospital. The ambulance staff thought this was crazy and refused to move the patient. She ended up being taken by car with an intravenous drip in her arm!

GLC WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The GLC Women's Committee has long backed the campaign and is helping with legal advice relating to insurance problems. Support has been flooding in from women's and community groups and from Labour Parties locally and across London. No one is under any illusion about the difficulties faced in winning the fight. Management's long term aim is to close all local hospitals, including St James' Balham, the Bolingbroke, and St John's Battersea, leaving only St George's Tooting — a half completed dump — open. Sites such as the South London will be prime candidates for reopening as private hospitals or for redevelopment as luxury housing. The campaign to defend the S. London has not been helped by Labour nominated Wandsworth Health District members Lillias Gillies and Sam Dougherty, (its chair) both of whom voted for closure. This has been widely condemned by local CLPs and demands made for their resignations. In the Wandsworth Health District both the Weir Maternity in 1977 and St Benedicts, in 1981 were occupied to prevent closure, without success, despite very lively community based support.

UNION LEADERSHIP

The central problem in both these cases has been achieving active union leadership to overcome the isolation of the fight. In the St Benedicts dispute, COHSE did virtually nothing, while NUPE gave passive support, calling one local demonstration by hospital staff. Labour, trade union and Health Emergency campaign activists will be pressing the unions involved to link the S. London campaign to the Barking and Hammersmith anti-privatisation disputes and for a co-ordinating campaign of action in defence of our Health Service.

NUM members have already visited the occupation and there are plans for a delegation of miners' wives to visit the hospital. Perhaps Neil Kinnock would care to visit the occupation in his famous ambulance and give support to those who are actually fighting the cuts in the NHS that he so loudly and correctly condemns?

Ian Wingrove
Pete Cooper

Support is needed on the picket lines round the clock. Resolutions and messages of support to South London Hospital for Women Occupation Committee, Clapham Common Southside, SW4. Tel 673 7788

Letters resolutions of condemnation to S. Dougherty, Chair Wandsworth Health District, c/o G. Gibson, District Administrator, St Georges Hospital, Tooting SW17 and to Kenneth Clark MP DHSS Elephant and Castle, London SE1.



Islington in crisis

Cllr. Pat Longman & Mick Sullivan

THE PAST three months in Islington has been the setting for an increasingly bitter dispute. The council nursery workers put in a claim last October for extra pay and decent staffing (see back copies of Briefing). After a delay of six months the council made a small offer. Nursery workers were not prepared to accept that they should wait until the Tories had been got rid off before they could improve their conditions. They decided to take strike action from April 16th.

On July 2nd 450 other NALGO members came out on indefinite strike and from July 16th NUPE members will be involved in a series of lightening strikes.

During this period there has been widespread discussion within the Labour Party about these issues. Despite attempts by the Council leadership at red baiting and other manoeuvres the party has consistently supported the strikers.

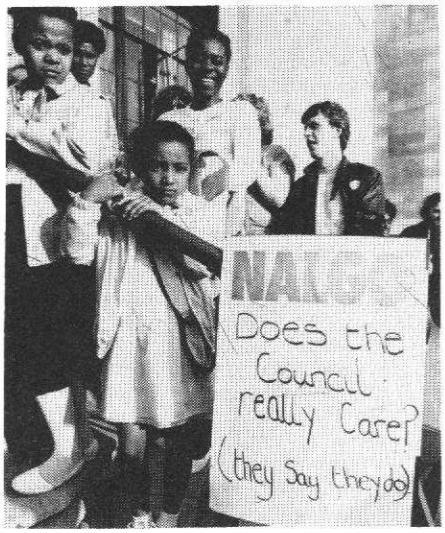
For many comrades within the party the issues have been simple: this is a group of low paid women workers working in bad conditions the council should meet their claim and get on with fighting the Tories.

Some people have argued that the claim cannot be met because of the budget strategy jointly adopted by the party and the council. But it is only through the dispute that most people have become aware of what that strategy was based on — that is no contingency funds and an assumption of major savings through high vacancy levels among staff. This means that claims, however justified, from any group of council workers or demands from any groups in the community for improvements in services could not be met without the sort of bitter fight we have seen over the last 3 months.

The draft budget which the council have just published includes only £1 million uncommitted growth which precludes major new initiatives in pay and conditions to the workers. The party was told that the draft budget was only a propaganda weapon against the Tories and that full discussion would follow in the party and with the unions. But the budget is being used within negotiations and in the party as the reason the council will not settle the dispute. There may be the money this year, they say, but with ratecapping on the agenda it would not be possible to fund the claim next year.

People in the party are asking what are the prospects of fighting rate capping? The so-called strategy of the council leadership consists of a series of propaganda initiatives combined with a notion of 'good housekeeping'. What is at issue for the party and trade unionists in the borough is whether the council will be with us or against us in the fight against the Government.

But perhaps the biggest irony of all is what happened on Friday 13th July. A special meeting of the Local Government Committee and Labour Group was called specifically on the issue of the strike. A motion which called on the council to make a substantial and significant improvement on its existing offer was defeated by 31 votes to 42. But that result would have been totally different if a substantial number of councillors had not broken with the position of their wards and their ward mandates.



ANDREW MOORE.

Given the history of Islington Labour Party this is irony indeed. The people who now sit in the Council chamber were selected by the party on the basis of their commitment to accountability. It is interesting to remember that it was in the wake of an industrial dispute of residential social workers and a big battle over cuts in under 5's provision that the present administration came to power.

And the questions raised by this are vital for the left as a whole. The headline in Briefing after the election results 'Fortress Islington' and the slogan 'The Socialist Republic of Islington' indicate that many saw Islington Council as a model to be emulated.

So did Islington Labour Party make a mistake over the individuals it selected? Or were there more fundamental political flaws in the attitude of the left to the role of councillors?

If we examine the recent history of the party in Islington it is clear that there is a political weakness which cannot be totally blamed on councillors.

The Manifesto Conference in 1982 failed to adopt a clear strategy around the question of the rates. The three no's position was defeated, and a high rate rise option was also voted down. A defensive muddle through strategy was adopted.

The left did not go out and build a campaign in the borough against the Tories attacks on local government. It did not understand the disastrous consequences of lo sing any working class base in the borough with the departure of the right wing and so took no initiatives to build up the party on the estates. It criticised the councils attitude to aspects of the manifesto around womens and gay rights but failed to build an alliance with groups active around these issues in the borough or fight for these issues in the community.

In relation to the structures of the party the left thought that by setting up the joint meetings of the LGC and Labour Group which would mandate Labour Councillors the problems of accountability and political direction in local government were solved. But hardly a single member of the party attended a meeting of the Labour Group, Council or committee meeting after the election.

Accountability can only exist if everyone has adequate access to information, and the left saw information about the day to day policies of the council as boring and diversionary. So while the left might criticise what the council said it was doing, behind the scenes committees were making major policy decisions which the party knew nothing about.

This, along with the failure to go out and campaign, resulted in a weakening of the The Local Government Committee itself so that one of the join meetings of the Group was inquorate because members of the party didn't turn up and the Council could rightly say the party wasn't interested in what it was doing.

So, the nursery workers dispute merely brings to the fore questions which have existed within the party for some considerable time. With the fight against ratecapping disastrously near it is vital that these political weaknesses are overcome if there is to be any real possibility of building a mass campaign we desperately need.

One fundamental problem was that after the election victory many people felt that their job was over and that carrying out the Manifesto could be safely left with the council; believing that the problem was basically one of replacing a bad right wing leadership with a good left wing one.

Many on the left also adopted a passive position. After the three no's position fell they waited for the council to make mistakes so they could reap the political benefits.

SOUTHWARK: When will they ever learn?

SOUTHWARK Council's Labour group is once again showing symptoms of its recurring neurological problem — cyclical severe victim blaming.

Although the new leader, Tony Ritchie, has embarked on a laudible and grand campaign of Tory-bashing his own aides are looking for scapegoats nearer home. The cycle of victims in the last year has been:- squatters, Nalgo, everybody, Nalgo, so now its squatters again.

The number of empty flats in Southwark is still the highest of any London Borough. This is despite the reduction obtained up to last Autumn through the open-offer scheme whereby tenancies were given on 'hard-to-let' flats to people with low housing points including many squatters. When the Council discontinued the 'Open Offer' scheme last autumn the level of voids stopped falling and is now once again on the increase. The short-sighted ditching of 'Open Offer' appears to have been mainly a device to stop the granting of tenancies to squatters, but as a result the number of squats has doubled.

To meet this 'new' crisis Nick Snow the new housing chair and his associates are again considering reintroducing use of the Criminal Trespass Law (PIO provision) despite the fact that this procedure can only be used in a tiny minority of squats, despite last year's decisive vote by local Labour Parties against its use and despite the manifesto committment not to use the police 'in what is a civil dispute'.

VICTIM BLAMING

When this came up at Browning Ward the standard reflex of the tired old right was wheeled out by none other than Jim Mortimer (Yes, *The* General Secretary — he is a member somewhere):- ' ... Working class people are rightly outraged by squatters ... they are just jumping the queue, like the queue jumpers in the Health service they are stealing from the public ... '

Mortimer's outburst was sharply countered by John Chapman Euro-Agent for Bermondsey who pointed out this was the same as the prejudice of the Sun and Daily Star and for Labour to travel along that road will have blacks and gays blamed for Labour's election defeat and the unemployed blamed for unemployment.

SOUTHWARK'S REVERSE EXOCET

A new Tenants and Squatters Campaign initiative has now been launched in Southwark to force the Council to stop scapegoating the homeless and to fill empty flats. The Council meanwhile intends to launch a campaign alongside tenants in the Autumn to call for more housing spending from the Government. The tenants movement however is so fed-up with the Council that it now seems likely that the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations will launch its own campaign and refuse to co-operate with the Council's campaign unless the Council takes real measures to put its own house in order with the current resources. If the Council leadership refuse to heed this there can be no doubt that the Tories and Liberals will torpedoe their campaign on day one.

Piers Corbyn, Burgess Ward Bermondsey and Tenants Representative on Southwark Committee for Peckham Housing District.

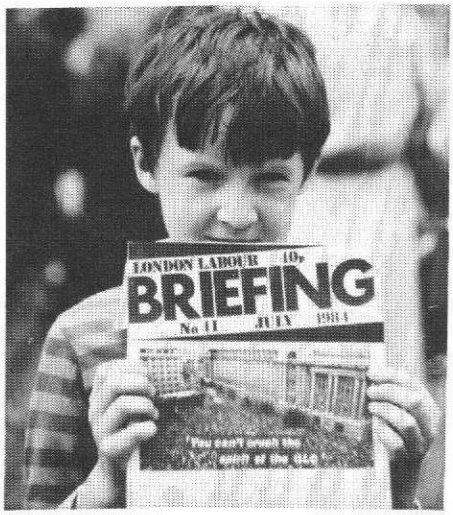
AROUND THE BRIEFING GROUPS

Wandsworth Briefing

Wandsworth Labour Briefing had its first meeting on 3rd July attended by over 20 people. Meirion Jones from Lewisham Labour Left explained the tactics of Lewisham Council under its new leadership.

The meeting then went on to discuss the situation on Wandsworth Council. It is generally felt on the left that the right wing dominated Labour opposition has made little impact on the fight against Wandsworth's neanderthal Tories, and has even on occasion effectively collaborated with them. For example the Tories recently introduced without consultation Abbey National Staff into the rent office in Roehampton — taking deposits only. This is an obvious first step towards "encouraging" tenants to buy. Massive and immediate tenant and union reaction picketing the office forced the Council to withdraw — a rare victory indeed! But Tony Belton, Labour's leader, merely compained about the lack of consultation — not about the principle involved — thus leaving the door open for Beresford, the Tory leader, to introduce the proposals, which he has duly done.

A further scandal has been the undemocratic behaviour of the Labour Group. Mike Barley, a left councillor was recently elected deputy leader under a new joint Local Government Committee/ Labour Group electoral college, only to have the decision overturned by the Labour Group meeting separately. This elected Francis Jones, the former deputy leader,



J. Pickering

and a right winger. Wandsworth Briefing is urging all the three Wandsworth Parties — Battersea, Putney and Tooting — to demand the reconvening of the Labour Group AGM in order to ratify the original decision.

It was agreed to adopt the name Wandsworth Briefing and a discussion took place about whether it should confine its role to purely local government.

The next meeting of Wandsworth Briefing will take place on Tuesday July 31st at the Court House, 1 Garratt Land (opposite the Arndale Centre) at 7.30pm. We will be electing a steering committee and discussing local government and the miners' strike.

Pete Cooper

Ealing

AS A life-long vegetarian, it has always surprised me that so few socialists show any interest in animal rights. I was therefore pleased that Ealing Briefing Group decided to hold a discussion on the subject.

Kim Stallwood, socialist, vegetarian and Campaigns Officer for BUAV, introduced the discussion, not in a narrow, emotional way but showing at every stage the links between the exploitation of animals and huge profits.

I would here like to mention the "Animals Film" and strongly urge all socialists to see it, and get it shown at their places of work. It is a deeply political film which sets out the issues very clearly and has an electrifying effect on those who see it. 90% of the arable land in the world is used for producing food for animals. The whole business of food and profit, the role of the multi-nationals and starvation in the third world is opened up. How many people are socialists when they go on their first peace march? Probably not many, but the chances are that they will begin to make the links. In the same way, the issues raised in this film have the potential to politicise large numbers of people and surely that is what socialists should be interested in. There are many routes to the same conclusion!

Hazel Sabey
Ealing Acton CLP

DISCUSSION

Does the left have an alternative ?

A Strategy for Equality

Anne Phillips

Debates on strategy seem best suited to a party in the ascendant, and with all the gains of recent elections, it would still be hard to describe the Labour Party as that. Even more in confident times, the so-called 'alternative economic strategy' was only the preoccupation of a few — and today it feels far distant to the average party activist. We have the miners' strike entrenched for the summer months, the future of local councils hanging in the balance, the threats to public services continuing apace. Working out ideal alternatives might be pleasant work, but right now they look an implausible dream.

KNOW WHERE WE'RE GOING

But we still need to know where we are going, and if the last general election proves anything, it is that few were impressed by our sense of direction. While the Tories weighed in against our spendthrift delusions, the Labour Party offered just more of the same: faster growth to mop up unemployment; public spending to generate demand; a battery of import, exchange, planning and investment controls to keep it all in order. Except for these last, there was nothing notably new. The basic objectives and the means to achieving them had been part of the small change of post-war economics. And this time round the package lacked conviction; the fatalistic principles of 'tighten your belts and wait for tomorrow' won out instead.

Further refinements to the alternative economic strategy are no longer the issue. The first task is to make *equality* rather than *growth* the central concern. We live in a society divided not just between worker and employer, but between women and men, black people and white, high paid and low paid — and economic growth alone will not eliminate these divisions. Women workers are increasingly concentrated into vulnerable and low paid part time jobs; their problems in caring for children or sick and elderly relatives weigh still more heavily on their shoulders as cuts in social services bite deeper. Black people are twice as likely to be unemployed as white people, and when they *do* get jobs they are much more likely to be in less skilled, lower paid manual employment. Low paid workers in general are growing in number: in 1979 one in ten of male manual workers earned less than two-thirds the average male wage, but by 1982 this was up to one in six; in 1979 two in three female manual workers were low paid, but by 1982 this was up to three in four. The problems of overwork, of poverty, of racial and sexual inequality should be central issues for any campaign.

CART BEFORE THE HORSE

In past years we have put the cart before the horse: we have talked first of the economy and only later of the people. It is about time to reverse this order, to develop our strategies for a decent minimum wage, for reduced differentials between one kind of work and another, for shorter working hours for men and for women, for shared responsibilities for caring for our children. This will inevitably precipitate us into debates familiar from recent years — how do you impose *your* needs on what is still a capitalist economy? But at least it will start us from the right beginnings.

Fighting for *our* priorities

The miners' struggle has been well supported with many CLP's holding collections and meetings. My own CLP has made successful weekly collections at our three street stalls and arranged a systematic levy of members. But is this material support sufficient? The Labour Party must not only express its solidarity in material ways but also politically.

The next Labour Government must provide a solution whereby popular control of the industry is exercised not occasionally and in a limited way by means of massive strikes. We need to establish the thoroughgoing socialization of the industry, to ensure that miners and the community have a real purchase on the uses to which their skills, energies and our resources are put. This socialist alternative to the imposition of the MacGregor plan, or rather the market, requires that the Labour Party puts its intellectual resources to that question. Unfortunately the politics of the struggle have focused on the massive and daily infringement of civil liberties. The real struggle for jobs, for control over the industry, for the possibility of miners together determining the future pattern of investment and development in the industry will remain, once this particular, more open phase of that basic struggle is over.

This question has received little attention as it raises issues across the whole range of Labour policy. The usual talk of renationalization, with or without compensation is not, yet, relevant.

UNDERLYING IMPERATIVE

Even with the abandonment of the current form of the MacGregor plan the underlying imperatives remain. The lack of any real positive control over the industry by its workers, its investors (us) and its consumers. The Party should use this struggle for what we might call, grandly, the transformation of the mode of production. Whilst essentially defensive institutions, the unions, may be excused for failing to have produced any longer term answer to the issue of who and whose interests shape the industry, we have no such excuse. We must have a strategy and not the essentially statist and largely incoherent AES.

Of course the next Labour Government should break the arbitrary and irrational power of the market, capital, which increasingly operates on an international scale impervious to any social interest. That much is clear. But what of the detailed working out of a programme of self-management within and between industries and the community. The energy industry provides a real test of our resolve. Not only must we not lose faith with the miners who are enduring terrible hardship in their and our struggle but the powerful nuclear sector of the industry must be tackled.

NUCLEAR SECTOR

The immediate run-down of the nuclear sector, is, I believe, a priority. The Government will meet major resistance for such a vital policy not least from those who will say that such a programme will cause massive dislocation and cost us votes. Delay on this policy will only lock us and our children into an increasingly hazardous future. There are powerful vested interests clustered around that sector which will say no to such a radical move. The issue though is one of how the run-down will take place and on whose terms. Capitalism is a constant series of dislocations but always they take place on its terms, so we must assert our interests over the economy and those necessary changes should take place on our terms. (The elimination of lead in petrol is a similar but smaller scale problem).

We must be developing a socialist response to the continual problem of economic transformation. The existence of increasingly marginalized and depressed sectors, regions and communities has to be tackled. The constant and repeated dislocations which shift people from one region to another, like many miners, like confetti in the wind have to be controlled. A different set of priorities to those of the market imposed. That government should begin to establish a range mechanisms for bringing together the often confused and conflicting interests of geography, tradition, scarcity and need.

Questions such as the economics of a pit closure are at once more complex than the narrow fiscal approach of the NCB allows. The dislocation of closure, the problem of geology, the alternative sources of energy and the level of demand and need interact in a myriad of ways. At present the calculation is performed by the market and we are mostly the passive subjects of its rules.

The Labour Party should use the miners' struggle to assert that we believe the constraints of capital will be replaced by other priorities and interests.

Laurence Spigel
Finchley CLP

What is happening in policing?

Barbara Roche
Battersea CLP

1984 is the year in which the police in London aimed, in the words of one officer in Hackney, to have 'a copper's nark on every street corner'. During the last year Kenneth Newman has been introducing his new policing strategies into London. The main plank of the strategy is that the police are unable to solve crime alone. The public are to be enlisted to help "the fight against crime". Neighbourhood Policing and Neighbourhood Watch are two methods of achieving this aim. The schemes are based on surveillance and intelligence-gathering techniques.

Hackney is one of the areas in London that has been selected for the new experimental Neighbourhood Policing scheme. The other pilot schemes are taking place in Notting Hill, Brixton and Kilburn.

In Hackney the scheme is confined to the Hackney and City Road police division. The area has been divided into 8 sections. Each section has 1 inspector, 3 police sergeants, 20 police constables and 3 home beat officers. The scheme relies on the introduction of management computer systems and a multi-agency approach to crime prevention.

Neighbourhood Policing is based on the work of two police officers, Inspector Ian Beckett of the Metropolitan Police and Inspector James Hart of the Surrey Constabulary. Hart and Beckett have been absolutely frank about what Neighbourhood Policing actually means in practise:

"Another important responsibility ... is for the officer in charge to ensure that the day to day activities of other agencies i.e. Social Services, Probation and after care etc., fully co-ordinate with the police strategy at the operational level. Additionally, the police policy formulated must be expanded to acknowledge and influence policy decisions made by all other agencies who provide any kind of service to the communities. Where the policies are incompatible, the police must make forceful attempts to convince the other parties as to the value of a co-ordinated approach. It is also considered that liaison with local political figures will be important at this level".

NOT A SUCCESS

The local newspaper has reported on the ill feeling caused on one Council estate by the introduction of Neighbourhood Watch. Although the police state that the schemes have to have the backing of at least 40% of local residents, Stoke Newington Police Station's Superintendent has only said:

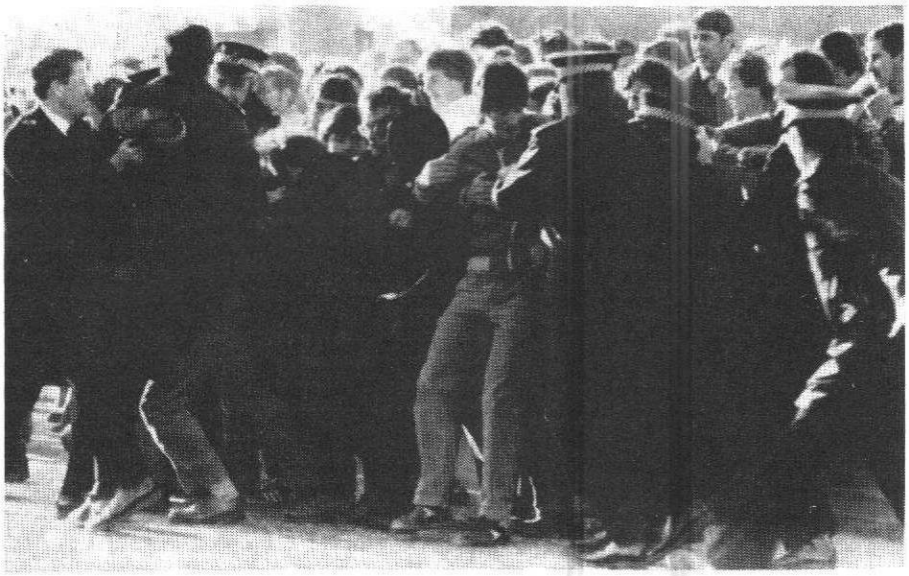
"I don't care if there's only two people in a road prepared to do Neighbourhood Watch — if they want our support, we will give it".

At last year's Annual Conference Battersea CLP moved the composite resolution on policing which committed the Labour Party to a policy of creating democratically elected police authorities in all parts of the country, including London, with statutory responsibility for policy and *operational* control of the police. This historic resolution also instructed the NEC to bring detailed proposals to the next conference on a socialist policing policy.

Unfortunately, as Briefing reported in the July edition, the NEC has not acted on the resolution. Instead a joint Shadow Cabinet/NEC policy working group is planned. There is no indication when this will be set up and it is now clear that there will be no detailed report to this year's conference.

The failure of the Labour Party to develop any sort of coherent response to current policing strategies comes at a time when the labour movement itself is under attack from savage policing policies. The conduct of the police during the miners' strike has only reinforced what we already know — that the Police Bill will simply legitimise existing policing practices. It is essential that policing is put on the agenda for this year's conference.

There will be many resolutions on the miners' strike. Make sure that your CLP tables an amendment to deal with the policing of the dispute. Also ensure that your amendment asks the NEC to report on its progress in formulating a socialist policing policy.



Labour Party Photograph Library

E. LEWISHAM SUPPORTS BLACK SECTIONS

The white population of this country are all by education and cultural dictatorship racist. We all have to overcome inbuilt prejudices to reach a basic position of avoiding personal racism. To reach a position of actively joining with black people in the fight against racism, and turning the labour movement into a leading force in the forefront of that struggle, demands new initiatives in education and an increased awareness of what racism really means to people who experience it every day of their lives. Where are these initiatives to come from? Not from the white-dominated hierarchy of the movement, to whom racism is just one of a hundred problems. None of the established organs of the Party are adequate for dealing with this vital problem, they have neither the time, nor I suspect, the inclination, to give it the priority it deserves. Even if they had both they would lack the personal experience needed to create the drive and urgency that the struggle against racism requires.

I believe that the progress made by Women's Sections recently, points the way forward. The concrete advances women have made may be limited, but the contribution of women's sections in increasing the Party's awareness of their problems is enormous. The greater involvement of women in the Party has strengthened it immeasurably and for some the realisation of the oppression that women face in our society, has given us a deeper commitment to socialism. Black comrades are now asking for the same rights, a little space within the Party to meet and discuss common problems. The room to generate ideas to force the pace of the fight against racism, something that this movement sorely needs. Do we have the right to deny such a simple request? If we do don't be surprised if black members turn away from the party to achieve their aims in future years.

We have much to gain if black sections are successful, not just in the narrow sense of more votes from the ethnic minorities, but positive ideological gains. Greater involvement with any oppressed group inevitably leads to joint struggle. White European culture is very parochial and gives us a limited perspective of international issues. The greater involvement of the ethnic minorities, if we protect and encourage the continuation of their cultural links with many different people around the world, can only result in a wider appreciation of international issues, and a greater perception of the struggle against international capitalism. The creation of black sections is the only way to intensify the fight against racism, and to begin the unification of the working class.

East Lewisham have supported the creation of black sections and have made their acceptance our resolution for this year's conference. We have also decided to implement this resolution immediately. A black section is being created and it will have delegates on the GMC. We intend to carry out this policy whatever the decision of the conference, even if we have to fight the NEC to do so. We ask all constituencies to follow the same course of action wherever there is a demand from black members. The time for fine words and pious resolutions on racism is over, our black comrades are demanding action, and we must support them.

Pat Waylett

EDUCATION briefing

The truth about ILEA

Briefing readers, well informed about ILEA's declining education service, will no doubt have read Chris King's offering (June Briefing) with wry amusement. His warning about misused statistics applies *a fortiori* to his own article, which attacked my criticisms of the ILEA.

Firstly the teacher numbers. The figures I quoted were for teachers assigned to and working in schools. From these the job loss in schools between 1979 and 1983 was 2,711 (9.4%). King's figures were for *all teachers* employed by the ILEA and gave a job loss of 1,478 (6%) for the same period. Whichever statistics you choose, the downward trend is the same. The discrepancy between the two sets of data arises because King's figures include teachers who are not teaching in schools. Many of these are employed on highly unsatisfactory contracts for limited periods.

VULNERABLE JOBS

The jobs they do support school-based teachers in many ways and are worthwhile. But the presence of these 'extras' does not meet the fundamental need in the ILEA for smaller classes. Furthermore, these jobs are vulnerable. See for example King's data for 1980/81 to 1981/82 when 949 jobs were lost in one year.

That class sizes are still too big when ILEA has one of the best pupil teacher ratios (ptr) in the country is a measure of the gap between our comprehensive ideals and the bitter realities of state education today. The steady improvement in ILEA's ptr since 1963 was clearly stated in my article although King's diatribe would suggest the contrary to anyone who had not read the May Briefing. What I also explained, however, was that ILEA's ptr of 13.2:1, (i) did not mean satisfactory class sizes across the whole secondary age range, (ii) was not uniform across the authority and, (iii) was not the ptr used by ILEA when computing cut backs in school provision. (ILEA always uses a notional ptr of 17:1 – a device that makes it more difficult for schools to argue in favour of keeping much needed staff since officers always reply that schools are overstaffed since their ptrs are better than 17:1!).

Chris King's quotation of ILEA's so called Net Revenue Expenditure was totally meaningless. Anyone who cares to consult ILEA's very helpful Finance Department will discover that those splendid figures were not money actually spent but estimated spending at the *beginning* of the financial years. They included underspend from the previous year (balances) and extra money needed for inflation. They were not, therefore, internally consistent and could not be used to deduce trends in *real* spending.

TRANSPARENT

The figures to look at are *actual* year on year spending adjusted for inflation to a particular year's prices so that they can be fairly compared. When this is done, the contraction in ILEA's budget is transparent. Courtesy of ILEA's Finance Department, here are the figures that compare GROSS EXPENDITURE in REAL TERMS. The effects of inflation have been eliminated by converting to 1978/79 itself. With the exception of 1984/85 (which inevitably must be estimates) the figures represent money *actually spent*.

	78/79	79/80	80/81	81/82	82/83	83/84	84/85
Primary	100	100.0	95.9	93.3	91.6	89.5	90.8
Secondary	100	99.0	97.1	94.7	92.4	90.3	89.5
Administration & Inspection	100	102.8	104.8	103.4	105.1	105.9	114.6
Total Expenditure	100	101.0	97.8	95.8	94.7	95.8	97.6

It should be noted that cuts over the six year period have been accumulating year after year. This, and not Chris King's eyewash, is the everyday experience throughout the ILEA.

ILEA will argue that the service contracted due to falling rolls. Note, however, that the contraction was accompanied by an increase in administration!

More subtly, many school costs remain much the same even though pupil numbers may have dropped. ILEA's cuts in *real spending* are biting deeply into schools' budgets and debilitating the service.

SIXTH FORM COLLEGES

The final point I would like to make is over the area where ILEA is planning its most significant economies, namely sixth form closures. ILEA's 16-19 Review is doing the spade work at the moment for massive cuts in the service. If their plans are not resisted, working class areas like Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Southwark will have in effect only secondary modern schools. A full discussion of this would require more space than Briefing will allow me in this edition. It is vitally important nevertheless. We may note in passing that the views expressed here were in effect endorsed by Hackney's recent Borough Conference when it rejected the Annual Report of ILEA's Deputy Leader (Ruth Gee) in its entirety – tantamount to a vote of no confidence.

Lack of space also prevents me from answering some of the other points in Chris King's article. I refer readers to previous Briefing articles by me and by a Scott Lidgett teacher. As for Chris King, I do find it surprising that after all his years as a Chair of Housing in Islington he has not yet learnt how to read budget documents. Of course they can be very misleading.

Keith Lichman

Witchhunt in the Socialist Education Association

Dear Editor,

Do people know that a witch hunt has been launched against leading left wing activists within the Socialist Educational Association? Two such members of the S.E.A., Michael Chalkley and Philip Cunningham have been suspended from membership. Both were and indeed are leading members of the Tower Hamlets branch of the SEA.

My concern stems from a long a close and close working associatiion with Comrades Chalkley and Cunningham and they remain in my estimation exemplary socialist educational campaigners and activists.

Michael Chalkley was the person who first suggested the idea of forming a Tower Hamlets Branch in 1980. Philip Cunningham is a locally born school governor and parent who has fought for a greater involvement of parents through the Labour Party in educational decision making.

Comrades Cunningham and Chalkley also devoted considerable time and energy over a period of five months in organising the Tower Hamlets Save The I.L.E.A. Campaign. This was highly successful.

One has to ask why the S.E.A. lead by its increasingly authoritarian General Secretary, Graham Lane, can dispense with the service of two of its best members. Labour movement members nationally have a right to know that such disturbing developments are happening in one of the nationally affiliated socialist societies.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Cowan.

NALGO broad left formed

After two years of struggling along the NALGO Broad Left has finally taken off in London. The left in London is numerically very strong and has a lot of depth. Our problem has been in organising people and coordination. The leadership of most of the local government branches are involved with the broad left and recent struggles have increasingly brought us together.

Our main problem has been in giving ourselves campaigning priorities and getting away from the idea that we are just an election machine. We have therefore adopted three areas that we should concentrate on:

Privatisation
Ratecapping
Abolition

We are now starting to produce a regular bulletin and we are due to hold a one day conference/A.G.M. on September 15th. There are also moves to set up a national conference and Broad Left, the proposed date for this is November 3rd.

If you want more information about the Broad Left please contact me at the address given below. If you are a NALGO member and want to receive our bulletin the annual subscription is £2.

Ian Wingrove 20A Graveney Road S.W.17 Wandsworth, London.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

WHAT ALTERNATIVE TO 'THE FAMILY'?

The idealised nuclear family composed of a male breadwinner, a housewife and mother, and (two) children has been seen to be the basic building block of British society and has formed the basis for domestic social and economic policy of all governments for decades.

The fact that this type of family no longer represents the structure within which most people now live has been seen by many Tories to be the cause of our 'present ills'. They blame in particular the 'bad behaviour' of young people — drug taking, sexual promiscuity, mugging, rioting — on a breakdown of parental discipline within the family, and harp back to the Victorian era and the moral values of that age.

This vision of the family has also enabled the Tories to carry their cuts in welfare services in a positive way, by appearing to srengthen the caring, nurturing role of the family. Their 'community care' policy which in reality is a euphemism for cuts and for returning the care of the handicapped, mentally ill, and the elderly into the unpaid hands of women relatives, has an attractive ring about it. For despite the fact that most people don't live in an idealised family structure, it is still widely accepted as the preferred structure and the 'normal' way for a civilised society to live.

In practice of course it is far from ideal. The exploitation and oppression of women within the family doesn't need to be spelled out. Perhaps not so obvious is the way the family fragments society, isolating us from each other sexually, socially and economically. Those excluded by the family, in particular lesbians and gay men are forced to the fringes of society and are denied their share of society's resources.

On the other hand as a structure which appears to offer a stable environment within which to raise children, and which appears to and in some cases actually does offer love and emotional security for the individuals within it, it has enormous appeal. The strength of the bonding between individuals in a family, that feeling of the total reliability of support from the family that many of us have experienced at times, is a very powerful positive force in society.

The Left's attitude to the family has usually been one of two responses. Many have just ignored it, accepting the status quo and viewing it as part of the personal, private sphere of life and not a political issue. Others have sloganised about 'smashing the family'. They have viewed the family purely as an economic unit of capitalist society, responsible for the oppression of women because it denies women the opportunity of competing equally with men in the labour market. Their solution is to invest the state with all the housework, cooking and childcare functions of the family, enabling us to live as independent individuals, thereby abolishing the need for the family.

Both these responses in my view are totally inadequate. The former ignores the role of the family within capitalist society and its oppression of women, lesbians and gay men, and to a certain extent us all. The latter considers only the economic and social role of the family and completely ignores the emotional and sexual relationships within the family.

So is there an alternative response? Is there an alternative to the family which can liberate us from its oppressiveness whist retaining a structure which can fulfill our emotional and sexual needs? This issue of the Streelife Supplement attempts to begin this discussion in Briefing. In such a limited space it can only be a beginning. There are many obvious omissions in the issues raised. In particular we do not deal with the specific oppression within the nuclear family of lesbians and gay men, or with the differences in family and kinship structure between British 'traditional families' and ethnic families, and how the issue of the family differs for people from differnt ethnic and cultural groups. We intend to take up these issues specifically in future issues of the Supplement. Many of the articles relate to a Conference which will be taking place in September on 'Feminism and the Politics of Kinship' and we hope that this Supplement will serve as an introduction to the discussions which will take place at this conference.

Jane Stockton

alternative HAPPY FAMILIES



Buy a pack of 'Alternative Happy Families' cards (you play it just like the traditional game) and help Briefing at the same time – profits will go to help alleviate Briefing's financial plight. Packs are available at £1.95 each (includes postage) from Briefing 'Alternative Happy Families, c/o Cath Tate, 39 Kingswood Road, London SW2 4JE. Please make cheques payable to Cath Tate.

The architecture

AS a woman with two children I am trying to care for them, trying to have my own life as well, keeping up a job and at the same time playing as active a role as I can politically and socially. Like most women though, I am also oppressed by the system in a spatial way which is so pervasive that we've only just begun to recognise it.

We've been so brainwashed that we've just never questioned that houses or flats should be built as little boxes "away from it all", cooping us up as individuals with our children. We've never questioned that buildings and flats should be surrounded by as much quiet and empty space as possible. Ever since the old London "rookeries" were pulled down and slum clearance began around the turn of the century, we've almost taken it for granted that what we want is to get away from the neighbours, to surround ourselves with empty, quiet streets or gardens, to put lace curtains over the windows (even if we are on the eighteenth floor of a tower block, where no one could possibly look in!) hedges all around the gardens, and walls with no doors in to shut the neighbours and their children out. Never mind the fact that women in tower blocks are often on valium and anti-depressants because the loneliness is driving them mad – we still cling to the same crazy assumptions about space.

I used to work in a psychiatric hospital in Southwark. In hospital social workers have an almost continual battle with the medics whose only answer to the so-called "psychiatric" problems of our clients is to give them pills, ECT or injections. But to us it's perfectly obvious as we go round to the places where the patients live, that the main problel lies here. People are all lumped together, but at the same time they are lumped together in such a way as to maximise the divisions between them. In these places you really get the worst of all possible worlds. you can hear the neighbours shouting and screaming and the kids bawling all around you through the thin walls – and yet the walls mean that you are supposed to be absolutely cut off and indifferent, and unable to do anything to help. To me it's perfectly obvious that men wouldn't abuse oppress or batter their wives so much if they weren't able to do it within the privacy of their own four walls. If women had a real community of neighbours – for example through helping with each other's children - men might think twice before throwing their weight around quite so much. If it was taken for granted that children could run into their neighbours' homes a bit more, and if responsibilities for child minding were more shared we wouldn't have so many children battered by parents in the privacy of their homes. I'm sure we can all think of examples where women are oppressed mainly because they are so isolated in the home.

Buildings and neighbourhood patterns aren't just objects out there – external things. They are us. They are where we live, where we eat, where we meet the neighbours and whether we meet them or don't meet them at all. They are where the children are, where the school is and where work is, and they are whether these things are in the same place or miles apart. These things are our daily lives.

Architects aren't just creating buildings when they change whole patterns of spatial organisation. They are tampering with our relationships, our everyday lives and even our psychology. To me the horrifying thing is that they've been doing this without having any inkling that this is what they were doing – they've gone on imagining that all they were doing was producing external things. buildings as works of art and that then you just add the people!

I am sure that if architects had really known the social consequences of what they were doing many of them would have refused to do the things they've done. In this sense it has been inevitable and necessary to those who rule us that architects should have been made unconscious. In all times and in all places ruling groups have oppressed other groups by creating boundaries to separate people from each other.

Before and during the First World War in Britain there was a real fear of revolution and in later years planners - inspired by people such as Le Corbusier consciously set about smashing up working class communities in inner city areas. They didn't want a repetition of what had happened in Petrograd in 1917 when women started the revolution and when workers and houswives massed on what was called the "Vyborg Side" of the city in one great industrial and residential community. From here the workers stormed across the bridges to take the Winter Palace and the main buildings later in October. In Britain and Western Europe the planners resolved to smash up this kind of neighbourhood solidarity by creating huge avenues of empty space for road systems, parks, car-parks and concrete wastelands where once had been thriving communities. As Le Corbusier himself put it, the choice was between "Architecture or Revolution".

But while many people have today recognised this, what they have failed to recognise is that the real victims of these planning schemes have been women. We are the ones who have been most isolated, and who have had almost all forms of kinship solidarity and community stripped away from us.

Now I think that what we've got to understand is how extremely unusual, untypical and I might almost say unnatural the modern isolation of women really is. We imagine it is natural to be at home alone with our children, but actually what we are doing is something which almost no women in the whole of human history have had to do before. Let me describe a picture of the ground plan of a dwelling built some 20,000 years ago by some Upper Palaeolithic mammoth-hunters in the Ukraine. The main thing you notice is all the hearths running down the centre. Quite clearly a line of women, probably sisters, mothers and daughters would have formed the nucleus of this dwelling, each woman with her fire but all of them sharing the food and other resources of the dwelling. It must have been quite a job carving up and cooking a mammoth, and women would have needed their solidarity to ensure that the men handed over the meat and that it got cooked and shared out properly amongst everyone including the children.

In fact, in virtually all tribal or traditional cultures, kinship solidarity exists and forms a

LIVING APART IS BETTER!

A YEAR ago, I wrote an article in City Limits which argued that living together was not a necessary part of a loving relationship, even if a couple decides to have kids.

The response was fascinating. I got several letters from people who wanted to know more about my personal circumstances and how we all coped with the situation. Some people said that while it seemed fine for us, they wouldn't want to try it; others were embarking on a similar course; and a few were concerned that we were 'messing up' our child.

There are undoubtedly problems but no more than in conventional relationships – simply different ones. And the advantages still massively outweigh them.

Here, I briefly sum up the City Limits article and make a few additional points.

The natural progression of heterosexual relationships has shifted from marriage to living together. Whilst many now question the value of going down the aisle, few hesitate before taking the 'common law' plunge. (The shortage of housing is frequently the catalyst). Whilst for some it may be ideal, for others the kind of daily drudge which sharing accommodation involves can be the beginning of the end. Dirty socks, unwashed dishes or even different sleep patterns can assume monumental importance.

On the other hand, living apart enables us to keep a freshness which after eight years is quite remarkable. We can keep our own sets of friends, belong to different Labour Parties (obviating the babysitter problem as well as that of being perceived as necessarily having the same politics), see each other more or less depending on mood or commitments, and retain an independence which is so easily lost in marital (whether common law or not) homes.

Then there is our daughter, now aged 4½. She has a bedroom in each of our houses and shares her time equally between the two. So far, she has benefitted enormously from that arrangement, by having two loving parents whose enrgy for her has been greatly increased by not spending every night under the same roof as her. This was particularly true when she was a baby as a night free of disturbance is a luxury to which all parents of very young children aspire.

By choice, we live near enough to each other to avoid the hassle of too much travelling, especially important now as our daughter is about to start school. We have been fortunate in that she had a full-time nursery place since she was two and in that we have had childcare and babysitting support from our respective two best friends, enabling us both to work full time and keep up with our political commitments.

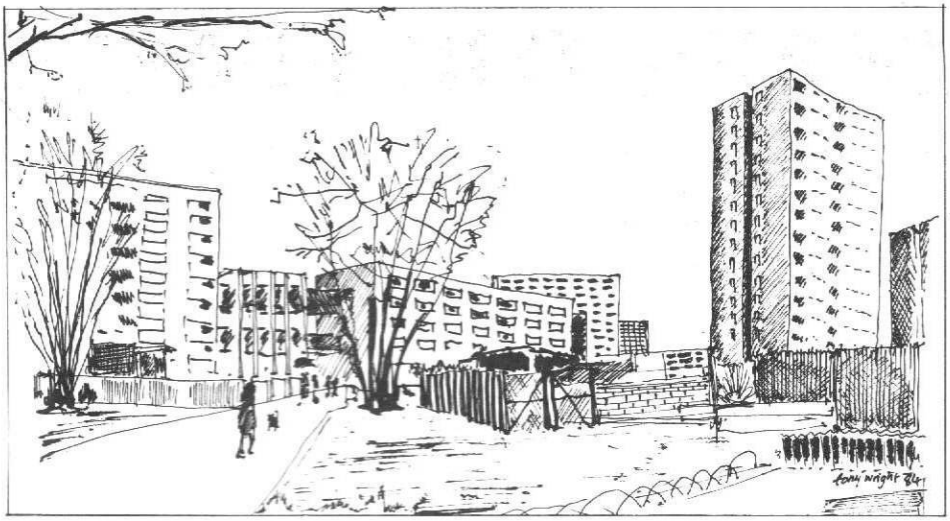
Personally, I know I would never have been as good a father if we had lived together. It would have been too easy to have fallen into the trap of providing 'support', rather than taking an equal share of the responsibility. As I wrote in City Limits, few fathers have experienced the buzz, as well as the fear, of caring alone for a tiny baby throughout a whole night.

Trying to take the argument a bit further than the City Limits piece, in subsequent discussions I have been made aware that while for me there are virtually no negative aspects of our arrangement, for my lover there are. By being a 'good' father, in making sacrifices, in occasionally missing work to look after a sick child, I get a large amount of kudos simply for doing things which a mother would be expected to do without comment. Yet my lover has, in a sense, abnegated her responsibility as a mother which, even in the supposedly enlightened circles in

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
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# of women's oppression

ANN BLISS



network of relationships between women at some level, and children have not one mother but many "mothers" who care for them to varying degrees. The very fact that in all tribal cultures a woman will call her sisters' children "my children" without distinction indicates how strongly this sharing of children is felt to be the norm.

However, in contrast, in our society my children are absolutely my children, my neighbour's are absolutely hers. The sexual and political pressures which produce these barriers are complex but it is because we are separated in this way that we feel so weak. The usual message from the women's movement to mothers and housewives is "Get out of the home". Obviously with things as they are, this is the only form of escape! We can only discover forms of solidarity and collective strength by going to work, meeting people, joining a trade union and so on. Consequently at the moment it seems that the strongest lever for change lies here. But leaving the home means that the home itself still remains a problem. Not all women can leave the home. And in a way it doesn't make much sense to call for more and more of our time to be spent at work when the trade unions themselves are calling for a 35-hour week or even shorter hours as an answer to unemployment.

The more successful the trade unions are in winning a shorter working week, the more time will be spent by most people – men and women – at home. Obviously we women must fight for the right to work and fight against unemployment on equal terms with men, but it is also important that the barriers between women at home are broken down.

The places where people live must be made once again into real centres of community life and power. It seems quite possible that in future the relationships between production and consumption, between work and home, and between so-called "men's work" and "women's work" could all be reversed. Consumption will become the primary motive force, which will mean production for need, not profit. Things should be produced because the consuming units – the community of families, children and people generally in the places where they live – want these things and demand that they are produced. But for these units to be strong and to become the centre of gravity for the whole community, they have got to be quite different from what they are now. Instead of being fragmented, isolated and powerless, they have got to be bound together by tight links of solidarity.

As long as women's primary loyalties are to their individual husbands and children, such solidarity will remain out of the question. This is why I say the sisterhood of the women's movement must have a sexual cutting edge (and I think this follows wherever spatial arrangements allow a real community of women to form).

What I shall conclude by saying is that there's nothing wrong with motherhood, nothing wrong with looking after children and even (dare I say it?) nothing wrong with centering life on the home. But not in our present social system. As long as home life and domestic work are peripheral to the life of the community, we must escape as best we can. But to me, one of the main objectives of the socialist revolution and of the women's movement is to resolve this dilemma for women by revolutionising the home itself. Everything will be able to centre on the home once the places where people live are real centres of power at the heart of the whole social and economic system.

Our communal living spaces should be the places where "everything happens" – where we help with each other's children, where we organise production and so on. This is what happened in the earliest periods of human history, although of course on a different level and in a different way.

Despite all the differences of scale and conditions, I don't think it is unrealistic to think of the future as promising a re-establishment on a higher level of some of the principles of social organisation of our distant kinship-based evolutionary past. Home life will be collective and will be the heart and centre of the economic and social system as a whole. Perhaps this thought can't help me much with my own immediate problems of combining work with looking after my children. But at least it gives me something to fight for and makes me feel stronger as a result.

A fuller version of this article appeared in the Chartist in May/June 1979.

which we move, is tacitly frowned upon. She has made a sacrifice by not holding onto the one area in which women have control – childcare.

There is one nagging doubt in my mind – what happens when our daughter gets older? Will she demand to live with one or another of us? I phrased that carefully because it would be futile for her to demand that we live together because we wouldn't be prepared to.

I must make it clear that the doubt doesn't arise only from the nature of our arrangements so far. Many people who have started off living together will, by the time their kids are eight or nine, have split up, causing much more ruction than our permanently living apart could ever do. Nevertheless, it may be, for example, that we'll have to try to live even nearer each other so that we're both in the catchment area for her school, so that she's always near her friends.

But then I used to worry what it would be like when she'd reach school age and so far there's been no problems. It's just we're in uncharted territory and there aren't any patterns to follow.

Chris Marlow

Benefit for miners' wives

AUGUST 4TH

Swiss Cottage Community Centre
19, Winchester Road, N.W.3
7.30 – 11 PM

MUSIC
SPEAKERS
FOOD
VIDEOS
DRINK

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

TAKING DOWN THE FENCES

I HAVE spent most of my years trying to keep the various strands and fragments of my life together. Politics, job, anthropology, relationships, children, friends – the opposing pulls seem unbearable at times. My instinct is to refuse to make choices – to try to change my living arrangements and the structure of my relationships so that I can be politically-effective *and* stay human, carry on with my anthropology *and* give enough of myself to the kids, form new relationships *and* stay in love on some level with those from whom I have been pulled apart. To me, it's like saying in politics that I refuse to accept the choices – cuts *or* massive rate rises, robbing the tenants *or* the rate-payers – which *this system* tries to impose on us as the only alternatives open to us. It's the system of choices I want to break, not one or other of the categories of relationships partitioned by the system. But in life as in politics, taking this course involves a risk. Either we break the system – or the system will certainly break us.

No choice but to fight

As I don't intend to be broken (not more than I have been, anyway!) I have no choice but to fight. Despite periodic strains, in the past few years some advantages have begun to accrue. Sharing a flat with two men (one of them my brother) is good. So is living five minutes' walking-distance from the mother of my two young daughters. So is living so close to so many people – many of them Labour Party members – who know our children and help look after them. Hither Green branch of East Lewisham Labour Party is one of the most active in the constituency – that's good, as is living so close to the Labour Club. And at a recent branch meeting we discussed our family lives as an item on the agenda – in a way which broke so much ice that I don't think we'll ever be the same branch again.

Recently a close woman friend moved into the flat downstairs, which is lovely. And the neighbours next door have agreed to take down the redundant fence between our gardens! For four years I have had a close relationship with someone who lives miles away, and that, too, is as strong as ever (although I sometimes wish she and I lived nearer!) And – perhaps most valuable of all – we all talk to each other. Shared friends (including neighbours) who take responsibility for each other's children, each other's domestic lives, each other's relationships – this, for me, is a part of what words like "socialism" and "communism" must mean if they are to have much meaning at all. None of us has "made it" yet – and we won't have done so until the whole rotten system of capitalism and class-rule has been politically overthrown, along with its roots in all of ourselves. But it's that kind of fabric of politically-constructed kinship and solidarity which could give us the strength to smash through the "choices" proffered to us if only we could get it strong enough and extensive enough to be able to take on and replace the state.

I was asked, in this article, to write as an anthropologist, giving a theoretical-anthropological perspective on "the nuclear family" and alternatives to it. I was also asked to keep to a page! What can I say?

Our modern family is an aberration

The most important thing, I suppose, is to recognise that our modern form of "ideal family" is an aberration. It is the *negation* of what traditional cultures – i.e. humanity for 99 per cent of our period of existence on this planet – mean by "family". It involves, after all, *abandoning* grandparents, abandoning the old, abandoning brothers and sisters once we are "married", selfishly looking after our "own" children to the exclusion of all of ours and each other's – and living in a socially-isolated and insulated home in a compact street or block of flats as if all the neighbours crowded around were on some other planet. It is an aberration, inseparable from the aberrations of capitalism and class-society itself. I am not denying capitalism's or its family's historical inevitability – but to imagine that it's "natural" or "normal" to live like this would be absurd.

A revolutionary process

The other vital point is to understand that our species evolved and became human in a dialectical, revolutionary process. The argument that "no revolution can change human nature" is absolute nonsense. The fact is that everything distinctively *human* about our "nature" – our capacity for language, for observing rules like the incest-taboo, for sharing and exchanging food, for co-operative labour etc., etc. – is precisely the product of that immense sexual and social revolution which anthropologists recognise as having been the process through which human culture came to be born. We became human and secured the evolutionary future of our species by overthrowing primate "dominance" – that principle of competitiveness and unchecked male aggression which tends to be the governing logic of ape and monkey "societies" – and learning for the first time to share. If we are to survive now, we must learn to do it again.

Chris Knight
(Department of Anthropology, University College, London)

Immortalising ourselves

DEATH is a fact of life but not a very acceptable one. Children are the parents' creative attempt to buck the system and achieve immortality. Since they are not really seeking to create new life, but to preserve themselves, priority is given to enforcing their own value systems on the next generation.

Cloning is a melodramatic illustration of this obsession. It is, however, only the desperate extreme of a common desire. It is also unnecessary. Most people end up as passable replicas of their parents anyway, even if they cannot claim to be exact DNA copies.

Conforming to the normal

This is achieved quite easily. Children, or indeed all people, have a strong desire to be accepted. This means conforming to the normal, i.e. acceptable standards within the group to which they belong. John Steinbeck wrote to the effect that if it became fashionable among children to wear necklaces of pork chops it would be an unhappy child who did not own one.

The group to which young children have to conform is almost exclusively the restricted family group – parents and their like-minded acquaintances. By adjusting their behaviour to win favourable reactions from this narrow group, they quickly become a reflection of its particular values. Parents who do not want the trouble of imparting these values themselves can pay trusted institutions like Norton Nannies and Public Schools to do the job for them

Damage is soon done

The damage is soon done. The Jesuits claim to "Give me a child until the age of six and he is mine for life" may not be a gross exaggeration. Values impressed early stick and cannot often be successfully challenged later on. This may be because the child never strays outside its original and limited social group, e.g. Prep School to Senior Public School to The City. Alternatively, the child may later come into contact with a wider range of people but the different ideas encountered sound alien and implausible merely because new. It is the old ideas, inculcated at a formative age, which will continue to have the ring of truth and remain stubborn to reason. First version usually translates as Authorised Version.

Even people who suspect the existence of a different text may be reluctant to explore any further. The chance to choose is not always welcome because it requires intellectual effort and might involve change which is stressful. On the whole, people prefer things to be settled, even settled unsatisfactorily, to continually having to grapple with and reconcile conflicting ideas.

This reads as a rather hopeless scenario, reducing people to the level of conditioned reflexes. It shows the true family saga to be concerned with the preservation of values – a vote for the status quo. If society is not to stagnate in embalming fluid, families will have to be restrained in their attempt to turn their progeny into memorials to their own lives.

Providing alternatives

This means providing alternative views in areas not exclusively controlled by parents – principally, the schools. Public schools must go as the perpetuators of privilege and so must the Safe-History-from-an-Establishment-point-of-view taught in State schools. The current trend is towards concern for children's physical well-being and perhaps, to a limited degree, with their mental health. In these areas, despite failures, society at least recognises that children have rights. They also have the right to freedom of information.

Margaret Douglass
Croydon South CLP

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

FEMINISM & THE POLITICS OF KINSHIP



A weekend event of workshops, talks, slideshows and children's activities.
8th – 9th September 1984
Caxton House, St. John's Way, N19 (Archway tube)

WORKSHOPS run by collectives, co-operatives and those with experience of alternative living arrangements on such themes as monogamy, jealousy, equality, collective child-care and mythology. Some workshops women only.

TALKS (including Elaine Morgan on women's evolution).

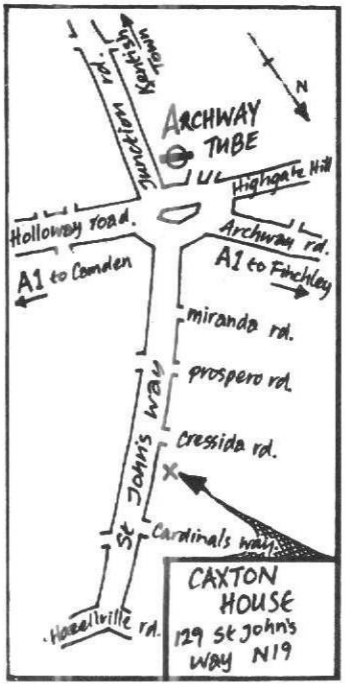
SLIDE-SHOWS (including Monica Sjoo on Images of Women's Power).

An opportunity to explore positive perceptions of female sexuality; reproductivity and alternatives to the nuclear family. An important theme will be making men accountable (this is why we would like some male presence).

S.A.E. for free programme to address below, or phone for further information 733-0861 or 267-2028.

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COST £6 waged, £2.50 unwaged – including evening entertainment.
Cheques/POs payable to C.L. Sayer and P.R. Davis, c/o K. Searle, 155 Grove Lane, London SE5.

IN planning this conference a great number of issues have had to be tackled. One of these was determined by a number of people's experience at another conference on the subject of 'Politics of the Family' held under the auspices of the Socialist Society. The experience at that conference told us that we did not want academic, theoretical lectures from the platform leading up to resolutions being proposed and passed or not. The central issues are the most difficult because they are the most personal. How people behave in their sexual relationships is still seen to be their business, and to be resolved (or not) by the individuals concerned. However, the very fact that when we do talk about our sexual and emotional lives many common strands emerge, should tell us that we are not merely individuals acting in a vacuum. What we do in our personal lives is determined socially and politically, and therefore should be on the agenda just as much as housing and unwaged labour in the home. It is difficult to know how best to provide the opportunities for people to talk about such personal issues. We hope to spend most of the weekend in smaller groups so that it will be possible to talk about ourselves and the politics of our experience.

This is a conference which has been planned by women, and although it is mixed it is important that women are in control. It has been too easy in the past for men to escape into theoretical statements and political rhetoric, and thus disguise emotions and attitudes to personal relationships. The importance of the emtional and the personal must be recognised, although this has been a domain considered 'women's' for too long.

We feel that it is important that the planning of a conference such as this should be open, and so we welcome ideas from everyone. The weekend will be shaped by all the participants, not just those who have been involved up to now, and should be stimulating, flexible and FUN!

If you want to contribute in any way before the conference, contact either Kate, Helen or Tony at 31 Kestrel Avenue, SE24, 733-0861; or Hilary at 127 George Lane, SE13, 318-5515.

There is a women-only meeting on Monday, 13th August, at Kate and Helen's house, 31 Kestrel Ave, to which all women are welcome.

Hilary Alton Kate Sayer

Taboo subject

THE organising of this conference has not been without its little ironies. From the beginning there's been an enthusiasm to put taboo subjects high on the agenda. But one word is guaranteed to cause pangs of embarrassment. It is a word which when mentioned subdues and silences an entire meeting. 'Fundraising

Behind every taboo, of course, there is a social explanation. In this case, the explanation is really quite simple – we haven't got any money.

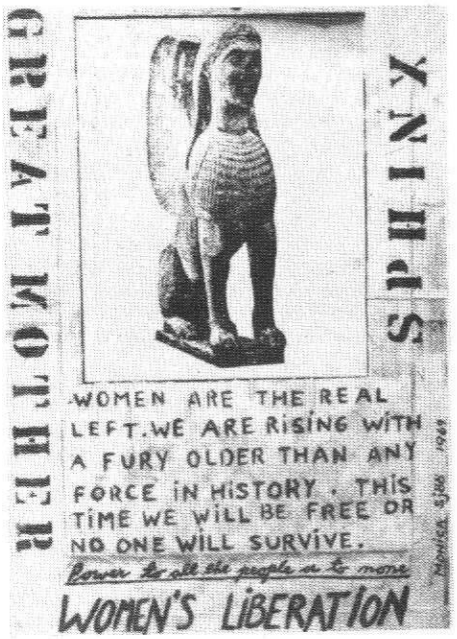
If you have, and you need a good cause to send it to, we'd really appreciate it. See above for where to send it!

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Some thoughts from

Workshop theme

Elaine Morgan *will be running one of the workshops at the conference. She is the author of 'The Descent of Woman' and 'The Aquatic Ape'.*



Monica Sjöö (who painted the above), will be running a slide-show at the conference.

Children's hour

I EXPECT that many parents are in the same old dilemma over whether or not, or how, to cope with their children if they bring them to the series of workshops and discussions which have been planned for Caxton House in September. We are trying to share that concern and make sure that we can all cope.

Obviously, for a conference about families and kinship it is important that parents and children are there to make their contribution and share in the whole weekend. In addition, adults and children should be able to enjoy themselves separately and together! The problems arise when very young people either do not enjoy creches or demand more than has been provided for. Given the opportunity though, children can have a very stimulating effect, as well as a capacity for being 'to the point'!

We suggest that the late afternoon on Saturday is given over to some time when adults and children can be together. The adults will be ready for a break from workshops, and the children ready for a break from the creche! If some of the children want to, they could prepare something together during the day to show the adults (e.g. a play or exhibition), or some 'family entertainment' will be happening (the alternative 'Crackerjack' maybe?). The children will not be excluded from the social on Saturday evening if they want to join in. There is some outdoor space, too, so weather permitting, there will be a chance for outdoor games over the weekend.

We have arranged for two paid women workers to be in charge of the creche, and suggest that all the men who attend the event participate in the care of youngsters for at least one or two hours over the weekend. This will have to be organised by rota as people arrive, so be prepared all you men! (Women are not excluded, by the way!).

Tony Wright

And as for men

IN encouraging men to participate in a feminist conference, an obvious fear comes to mind: will 'mixed' simply mean male-dominated/male-controlled? I expect that many feminists will already have made that assumption and will doubtless continue to direct their emotional and political energies towards women and women-only events. For men, sympathetic to and wishing to learn from feminists, this conference presents a rare opportunity for dialogue between women and men. So what exactly does that mean if you happen to be a man? Is it purely an exercise in emotional masochism? Are we to spend an entire weekend listening to how oppressive we are, and be denied the right of reply? Or, horror of horrors, will we be sent to the creche, the ultimate antidote to the intellectual banter which may have attracted us to the conference in the first place? Well, all this may turn out to be true, nonetheless I think there will be space for men to actively enjoy this event.

There's a basic premise behind the organising of the conference. the interests of women and the interests of men do not necessarily conflict. This premise is understandably under attack. Men, and particularly heterosexual men such as myself, have really got to prove that we're not a complete waste of time. It seems to me that there is an increasing onus to show that we can be responsible in our kinship commitments and honest in our sexual relationships. In short, be accountable. Having said that, I don't see the role of this conference as merely an elaborate courtroom drama, the men up for trial, awaiting sentence. Besides, accountability and enjoyment are not necessarily mutually exclusive. I think there's a lot we can learn, the issues at stake are painfully relevant, confusing and contentious. We've been offered the chance to take part, next time round we might not be invited . . .

Nick Barratt

Jealousy workshop

In planning this Conference we have already held some workshops as 'tasters' for the conference itself. This is a view of the 'Jealousy' workshop, which followed on from one on 'romantic love'.

A workshop on jealousy didn't seem as comforting to look forward to as one on romantic love. Talking about the latter opens up possibilities for all kinds of experiences and observations to be expressed. Jealousy, however, is the kind of issue which breeds its own suspicions when someone wanders off the subject or distances themselves from it. Can it only be talked about in the past tense because it is a reaction we are not too proud of?

To me jealousy usually feels like a test I'm bound to fail. How will I react? Will it silence me, make me seize up? Will I be confident that I won't be jealous because I was prepared for it, only to discover that I can't cope?

One problem when jealousy is around is that motives are likely to be questioned. It is not part of the language of acceptance, understanding and recognition, of feeling wanted and loved. What are we really saying when the arguments start about being badly treated, hurt, of lack of consideration and selfishness? But is there any point in acknowledging jealousy if you can't deal with it and no-one else wants to?

Like other emotional responses, jealousy needs a context and I am assuming that sexual jealousy is at issue here. Although it is possible to feel jealous in all kinds of ways – over someone's success in material or social terms. Sexual jealousy seems important because of the way it is tied up with power in relationships. Enmeshed with fears of loss, rejection and insecurity, it reveals our weakness and vulnerability. And making someone jealous often seems to have cultural approval – the ultimate proof of how much we are wanted.

How should we look at jealousy? A 'natural' response to the fear or reality of losing someone's affections or part of a culture in which we live out our sexual relations as discrete, personal and private?

The dilemma for me is this: is jealousy something we simply have to learn to live with or a reason for change? How hard it seems to redirect our emotions when we most need to, feeling helpless and impelled to cling on to a sexual partner who makes us do things we are ashamed of. Perhaps most difficult of all, how does it affect us differently as women and men? What is the cost of our jealousy and rejection? Is it turned inwards with feelings of worthlessness and guilt, or turned outwards with anger and revenge in our hearts?

Paul Davis



'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

those already involved...

Times change

WE ALL think in different ways, all I can do is try and make some points which seem to be linked in my head, but which on re-reading seem to be very disjointed. I actually find that trying to write this out is very difficult, so much seems to have happened that I don't think I can possibly make a good story from it, or even make it intelligible.

The actuality of an alternative has come to me at a time that is most appropriate, everything is crystallising for me. Although I had never really thought about it, every relationship that I had seemed to be very similar (in my expectations) to every other, and were always geared towards nuclearity, after all that was, in my opinion, the most stable (best of a bad lot) of the sorts of relating that I'd come across. I was reluctant to criticise 'the family' even though the experience of my own parents indicates some major faults with that system. I have always felt 'strange' at the end of a relationship, never quite sure what is supposed to happen next and always upset that "The End" meant "Never!!". What has actually happened is that most of the people that I have been sexually close to, I still have some social contact with, and particular people I still have much love for.

The communication between K and I has always been good, even before we had a sexual relationship, so even when we felt that we needed to turn ourselves outward a bit after having been a monogamous couple for a few years, we acknowledged that we would not wish to split up and move on to the next couple. The possibilities that this then allowed, actually meant that rather than being at the end of a relationship, we/I was at the beginning of a new dimension of our existing relations at Kestrel Avenue. I have no intention of trying to pretend that I wasn't angry, jealous, guilty, mad at various times, in waves, after K and I had been talking. The strength and support I received from the other people around me, as well as a sort of intuitive rightness about what was going on between K and I, meant that I knew it would be all right in the end. It was this strength of feeling that runs between us that gives me the confidence in kinship support as a 'way of life' that I might otherwise have never considered. The first step, having made the decision, on political grounds alone, was for K to take another lover. And then for us/me to acknowledge that sex made no difference to our relationship, we still have a commitment to each other and to the others in our home. In many ways it was made easy for us because we had lived together for a year prior to starting a more 'coupley' relationship, so in that sense a certain amount of backtracking to how we used to be has taken place. In addition to that of course we also have two years of closeness that makes it so easy for us to communicate.

I used to find it very difficult to communicate my feelings to anybody other than sexual partners. Now I feel that I've had a bit of practice at being open and find that it is so much easier, so much more rewarding, strengthening and supportive.

Nothing is easy, but as the weeks race by I feel that the problems are being identified, and sorted out, so I hope that we all won't make the same mistakes as our fathers and mothers.

Tony Wright

Women coming together

WOMEN have been meeting together in different sorts of women's groups for some years now. Initially, those groups were really important purely for the sense of unity which emerged, and the close bonds which come from sharing so much of our experiences. What was new for many women in those groups was that they began to see the world from a different perspective, because they were no longer perceiving it from a standpoint of isolation and guilt. It was not simply that men dominate in all the well-paid jobs and tthat women tend to stay at home looking after the children. It was not simply that the lower status of women in our society was made explicit in pornography, rape and sexist advertising. There were far more issues of a less public nature which the women's movement was only beginning to tackle.

One of the things which is far more difficult to confront is the very nature of the relationships between men and women. Many of the women in my old consciousness-raising group have changed their lives and the way they relate to men drastically, myself included. For some of us, it has meant cutting men out of our lives. For others, including myself, it has meant prioritising our relationships with other women in a new way. I really value the women I know and see them as important in a way which is quite different to the past. Nevertheless, I do still want to relate to men in ways which are satisfying to both, but at times it seems there is a huge gulf between our understandings of even the words we use to try and express our needs, desires and emotions.

Although we talked about our various sexual relationships (mainly with men) it was nonetheless assumed at the time we were meeting as a consciousness-raising group that the onus was on us women to change, and that we had to do that as individuals. We had the support of each other when we met, but our lives with 'our' men existed outside of the group, and as such we as a group could not affect them.

What some of us as individuals have come to realise is that it is not simply a matter of becoming stronger, more independent women. Whilst we may be financially and socially independent, and even to some extent emotionally independent individuals, some problems still remain. Why do I still feel that my identity as a woman must be validated by an emotional relationship with a man? If I don't want to be a monogamous couple, how do I cope with non-monogamy? How do I relate to other women when the rules of couples and monogamy do not operate? Women's solidarity seemed easy within the safety of women-only meetings when we did not even know the men in other women's lives. How easy is solidarity with women who may be seen as potential competitors?

One of the important things about consciousness-raising groups was that in coming together women realised that they did not have to be alone and isolated in their struggles. Similarly, I hope this conference can bring more of us together so that we may progress towards a new way of relating.

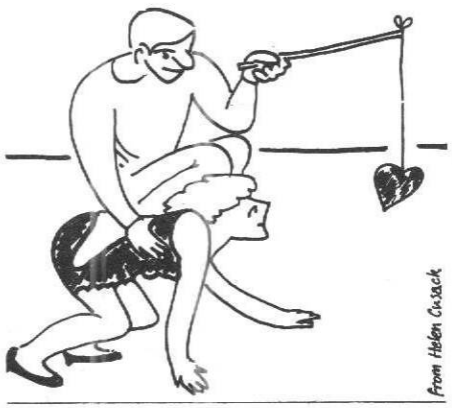
Kate Sayer

Friends...

FROM as far back as I can remember I have never wished or imagined myself into a nuclear family situation. My parents' home life has never been harmonious in any way and, despite enjoying the experience of living with my various aunts and their families in a 'real' happy family situation, I never considered that to be an option in my plan for 'growing up'. Consequently, I have never experienced any difficulty in rejecting what I now identify as an oppressive structure, in fact the rejection was almost a foregone conclusion.

At school I never felt the need to 'conform' (i.e. concentrate almost exclusively on boys) and most of my small group of friends felt the same (in fact we scorned the other girls and thought they were wasting their time). Later on, having discovered the value of good friendships, I did not allow any relationships with men to interfere with my social life or exclude my friends in any way. My first 'serious' relationship ended just when I had made myself most vulnerable and had, stupidly, thought I could trust in it, and, although I would never wish to go through that very painful experience again, it drove home to me once more the value of friendships above relationships, especially until I was stronger.

I think that for the most part heterosexual women are far more vulnerable in their relationships than men, and this is mainly due to men's abuse of power within those relationships. For this reason women have to break out of their isolation, as caused by those exclusive possessive relationships, and find a collective strength in the love and support of other women (and like-minded men, few though they may be!).



As a woman in an oppressive society, I have practiced this extension of my kinship network by necessity, as many women do almost as an automatic reaction. The one thing that this society does stress is autonomy and being in control of your own destiny, and many women are only just beginning to wake up to this and grab it. The main problem is recognising, admitting and finally naming this extended kinship as a legitimate alternative, because most people, although they practice this without even realising it, still would never consider it as a serious proposition to be relied on in the indefinite future. Being in a couple still seems to be the main option, for fear of isolation, even though that can be oppressing, isolating (!) and ultimately alienating. The significance of this conference is in that naming and recognising of something that is, I feel, widespread, if invisible, in this society.

Katie Searle

Putting Labour's house in order

The Labour Movement has a history of collaboration with racism. The Party/movement is without a doubt institutionally racist. It simply 'tacks on' a race element to its work whether the issue is housing, social services, employment, recreation, training youth, the elderly grant distribution, the environment, planning or any other aspect of life. 'The Race Issue' is, therefore, marginalised rather than an integral part of the movement's work.

There is a tendency for white workers to abdicate responsiblity when it comes to black people. The terms of inclusion of black people into the Labour movement have usually been the terms of white people. The terms of reference of the movement have usually been the terms of white racist society. This is tokenistic and patronising.

The movement needs to reassess its whole way of working. Organising must take place within the framework of recognising that:

1. Britain is a racist society with a long history of colonialism and imperialism.
2. Britain is a multi-racial society and has been so for hundreds of years.
3. Racism is a white person's problem.

The ruling class uses racism sexism and other forms of oppression to divide and rule the working class. The movement collaborates by not using its power effectively. In order to challenge effectively the movement must first put its own house in order.

White people must accept the following in order to begin to be anti-racist:

1. Black people must lead *their own campaigns.*
2. White people must accept *that leadership.*
3. White people should provide resources and servicing of those campaigns and act as catalysts for forging alliances with similar groups.
4. White people should actively support black campaigns under black leadership.
5. The freeing of black people from racial injustice is of central concern to white people.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM

Strong black working class organisation can only strengthen the working class as a whole. Sections of the Labour movement are attempting to challenge racism but the challenges are predominately to overt racism. Throughout every section and at every level of the movement black people are either inadequately represented or not represented at all. This is institutional racism in action. How many black people are employed by the movement? Again we see institutional racism in operation. Even the images the movement uses in its propaganda betray the level of racism in operation within itself.

The movement is much more likely to be protesting against the forced movement of black people in South Africa than it is against the 150 deportations taking place in Britain each month. We see protests against the prison system but not against the systematic criminalisation of black people's struggle within Britain. We see the unacceptable face of liberal racism when members of the movement condemn the setting up of black sections as a retrograde step.

'Once upon a time there was the "problem" of black people. Now there is the problem of racism. Once "No dogs, no coloureds." Now "we are an equal opportunities employer." That might seem like progress but the catalogue of injustice and inequality is still as thick as ever.

In the Labour Party, no-one on the Left is racist. Only other people are. We may be overwhelmingly white — with a few tokens — but we do support black people's rights. It's just that black people haven't yet realised it. We even support black sections — as long as their politics are the same as ours.

So think less 'What do we do about black people?' Think more about what it means to be white. After all if you are reading this you're probably white.' (N.W.Tasane)

There is no chance for socialism if socialists are seen to disregard the principle of equality for all. The Labour movement must recognise the role it plays in the oppression of black people and begin to actively redress the balance. Where would Neil Kinnock have got to if he'd been black?

Nazreen Subhan
(Deptford CLP)

Streetlife Letter

Dear Comrades,

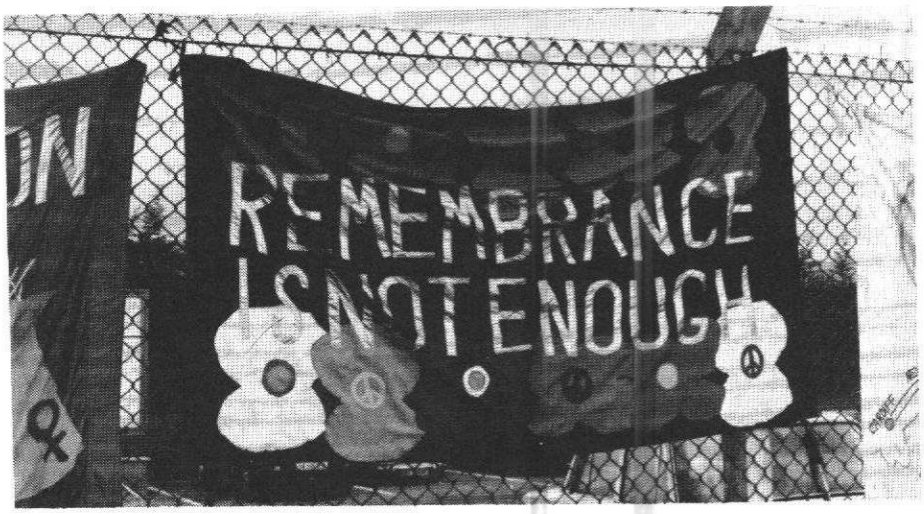
I was very disappointed by the Briefing special number on racism. My misgivings were summed up by the title of one article: 'Combatting our racism". This seems to me to embody two astonishing assumptions: 1) that no black person would be reading the article or be interested in your politics. 2) That any white person reading it would de facto be racist.

What prospect for real change is held out here? What is it but old-fashioned liberal guilt and masochism of the kind that black people have always found tiresome and pointless? Guilt, in personal life and in politics, always confirms the barriers it claims to be affronted by. It's an irrational assumption that by casti gating yourself for being white-activists-irrelevant-and-isolated-from-black-people you become less so. You become precisely more so!

I'm very sympathetic to Briefing's open, imaginative activism, and its questioning of many blind spots and blinkered assumptions on the left, hence my disappointment at this particular issue.

G. PARKER
Vauxhall CLP

Peace Banner Day



Nadine Finch

There is to be a procession and display of peace banners on September 15 in London to coincide with a ten day women's event at Greenham Common from 20th to 30th September.

If you have a banner or might want to make one, please let us know. Every kina of peace banner welcome. For further details, offers of help, donations, contact: Deborah Law, 1 Crowland Terrace, N1., 226 1474.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of the Streetlife Supplement will be on the topic of food. Do we know what we are eating? What is the social role of food and eating? Should we all be vegetarians? These are just some of the questions we can ask about our eating habits, which we hope to discuss.

Articles and letters should be sent to *Jane Stockton 31 Cranwich Road, London N16* **by** *September 10th.*

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LABOUR 20p
BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 10 August 1984

CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP!

by BOB CLAY, M.P.

Following the NEC's decision to campaign with the NUM to get the miners case across to the public, Bob Clay, MP for Sunderland North looks at Labour's role in the strike.



Labour Party Photo Library

In parliamentary terms, the leadership of the Party must take a more positive attitude in support of the NUM. To the best of my knowledge the Durham Miners Gala was the first platform of the NUM on which Neil Kinnock has spoken. If true it is extraordinary that it has taken 18 weeks before the Leader of the Party has appeared on an NUM platform. There are two key weaknesses in the leadership's attitude to the strike. The first has been the support for ballots. This is a reflection of demands by Thatcher and the Tories, which are also reflected in the press. The leadership should have aggressively countered these demands, by stating that this was an internal union matter, and that the Tories are the last people to speak about democracy. It would have been proper and useful to point out that those who run the media are not elected. In any argument about democracy we should be on the attack not the defensive.

Secondly, the role of the judiciary and the police have been of major importance in the strike. The Parliamentary leadership should have stated clearly and persistently that the decisions of judges and the role of the police have occurred with the partisan encouragement of Brittan and Thatcher, and have shown distinct tendencies towards an authoritarian police state. The leadership should speak out on these issues, and point out that the majority of violence has been committed by the police, or has been the result of circumstances created by police tactics and strategy.

Miners confront the state; class struggle reaches Parliament

The position of the Party leadership has flowed from the mistaken veiw that strikes are an embarassment to the Labour Party. It comes from the mistaken view that there are middle class floating voters we have to persue. Events in the miners strike, Liverpool, and the Met Counties show that militant campaigns on clear socialist policies are the ones which inflict most damage on the

Women in the South Wales coalfield

"We're not behind the men — we stand shoulder to shoulder with them"

Barbara Edwards, Hirwaun Women's Support Group

Women in the South Wales Coalfield are becoming increasingly active and are demanding that the miners accept them as equal participants in the struggle. Some who were initially doubtful about the strike are now very centrally involved in it. What initially inhibited women's participation — their exclusion from decisions taken by the men's union — now favours their greater militancy. They are not bound by the NUM's bureaucratic structures, do not need to go through the 'proper channels' in order to take action and are often more forthright in challenging area and lodge leaders than most men.

It is this, as well as straightforward sexism, which accounts for the opposition that some women's support groups have encountered. This comes mostly from the Right in the union. The Left, with some notable exceptions, seems far more willing to endorse women's full participation.

COMPLAINTS OF SEXISM

While there is evidence of increasing respect for women among the miners, I have heard many complaints of sexist and downright obstructive attitudes. Not all the support groups face these problems, but some find that while their activities are publicly welcomed, they are given low priority where transport to pickets and demonstrations are concerned and that strike centres are unwilling to pass on messages to them about meetings and transport arrangements. Some say that the men would rather they confined themselves to the traditional feminine role of organising food parcels.

In areas of Gwent where the support groups do not have this means of justifying their existence, since food distribution is controlled by a central fund, hostility is often overt. One lodge, on receiving a request for a woman speaker, initially said they were only prepared to send miners as speakers. When it was insisted that a woman was wanted they very reluctantly made transport available for two women to go to the meeting. Afterwards a lodge official complained that miners were being expected to support the support committee rather than vice-versa — this despite the fact that the women brought back over £160 for the food fund! The chairman of another Gwent lodge responded to a suggestion that more should be done to mobilize women by saying that they were 'just a nuisance'. The area leadership claims to recognise the effectiveness of women on picket lines and as speakers, but some women feel they could be doing more to enable women to participate fully.

AFTER THE STRIKE

Women are not deterred by these problems. Their organisations are becoming stronger and many say that their involvement in the strike has given them confidence, has increased their political awareness and widened their social contacts. Some are now talking about keeping their groups going after the strike as a continued focus for political activity.

Links are now being made between women inside and outside the mining communities. Recent meetings in Cardiff and Swansea have brought together miners' wives and women active in the Labour Party, the Women's Movement and around Greenham. A women's support group has been set up in Cardiff to organise solidarity action in conjunction with women's groups in mining communities. Plans are going ahead to bring together women from all over the coalfield to co-ordinate activities. Meanwhile women in Abertillery have organised an area rally on 27th July and elsewhere women continue to be active in pickets, demonstrations and in taking direct action to prevent miners' households having their gas and electricity cut off.

One miner said to me that once women start organising on an area basis they will become an 'unstoppable force'. I hope and believe that he's right.

Welcome to Kent Labour Briefing

A Labour Briefing group has now been established in Kent and has produced the first of its planned quarterly magazines. The first editorial sets out the aims of the new group. 'Kent Labour Briefing is going to be forward looking. We see that people struggling against the Tories need to be given a voice, and that this will be given by a fighting Labour Party. In this sense Kent Briefing is a response to the fighting spirit of many ordinary people who are, and have been, fighting back'. We welcome Kent Labour Briefing to the growing network of Briefing groups.

Kent Labour Briefing is available from Les Hartop, 69, Richmond Road, Gillingham, Kent. ME7 1LN. Or ring Rod Helps 0634 33789. Price 15p.

WHO TO CONTACT

London. Graham Bash, 31 Cranwich Road London N16 (01-980 7893).

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

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

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

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

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

Birmingham: Chris Palmer, 27 Montague Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 21 (021 523 3608)

Kinnock (continued)

Tories. Support for the miners would be even greater, and the strike won sooner, if the Labour Party had given a clear lead in supporting the NUM.

As far as the PLP as a whole is concerned, it is a remarkable thing that it took 3 months before a major debate in opposition time took place. The only other, was a result of a back bench application for an emergency debate. The government refused to find time for a debate and the PLP should have demanded with one voice a major debate in Government time. Our front bench has been as unwilling as the Government to debate the miners strike. If that kind of leadership had been given it would have encouraged the rank and file of the Party to react much faster and better to assisting the miners. In some areas the rank and file of the Party has been doing a remarkable job. They would be much more effective if Walworth Road provided model leaflets, posters, plus guidelines and suggestions on how to assist the miners. The Campaign Group of MPs has circulated a check-list of what Labour controlled Local Authorities have done to assist the miners. It would be much better if the LP did this nationally. For example, Labour controlled local authorities should state that they will remove from the approved tendering list any company whose vehicles cross NUM picket lines.

The next question is the LP/NUM demonstration. There have been two successful demonstrations in London, one by the NUM and the other by SERTUC.

A national demo called by the LP in conjunction with the NUM has the potential of being even bigger. However, there is a danger. Demonstrations in London draw very heavily on organisation and finance of the NUM. If they are too frequent they could be viewed as a distraction from picketting and other activities. The demonstration has been agreed in principle by the NEC, but the timing has to be in clear cooperation with the NUM, to ensure that it has the maximum impact on the outcome of the strike.

LABOUR BRIEFING NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

EDITORIAL STATEMENT:

BREAKING OPEN THE P.L.P.

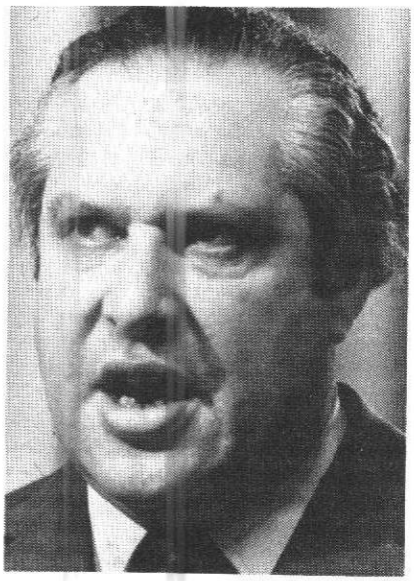
"Livingstone 'plot' to oust Labour MPs" – was how sections of Fleet Street last month greeted the Briefing-supported "Target Labour Government" campaign to explode the unrepresentative nature of the Parliamentary Labour Party and prepare Labour for governmental power. Briefing readers will be familiar with such scare-stories. Ludicrously ill-informed (the papers called it "Target '87" – a name dropped three months ago!), they are orchestrated by journalists in collusion with those right wing MPs who really do have something to fear from the accountability which is now for them such an uncomfortable fact of Labour Party life.

Yes, people like Shore, Silkin, Freeson and Barnett – to take London alone – doubtless do have cause for concern. Yes, we are out to break the stranglehold which the unaccountable right have held over us virtually continuously since the inception of the Parliamentary Labour Party itself. Overwhelmingly white, male, middle-class, and pro-capitalist, these kinds of MPs – particularly nowadays – are anachronisms utterly incapable of speaking the language or voicing the anger of the communities from which our strength now derives. They've got to go: the Party's future depends on it.

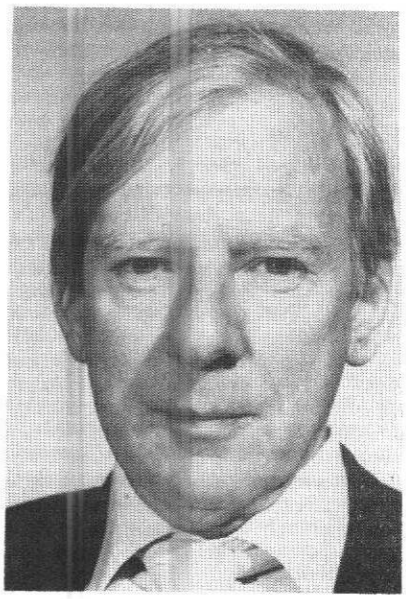
But we are not interested in plots or conspiracies. No conspiratorial group can try to get autonomous GMCs to select or deselect pre-determined individuals without being told where to get off by the delegates themselves. Such attempts have always backfired and will continue to do so. "Target Labour Government" is about something different. It is about aiming at governmental power, and winning it. It is about encouraging all those who have been most systematically excluded from the PLP in the past – that is, black people, women, manual workers and socialists – to take new courage from the present political situation and realise through collective support that they are precisely the kinds of potential MPs most urgently required to participate in the selection processes.

If you who are reading this have never considered yourself "parliamentary material" before – if you're *not* a careerist, *not* interested in a "job", but simply want to know how to be more effective in the struggle against *your* experience of oppression – then you should probably think again. The present PLP must be broken open, cleaned out, and revolutionised from top to bottom – so that it becomes an instrument of our movement instead of the opposite, and becomes habitable for ordinary people who have simply no stake in the present sexist, racist and capitalist structures of power.

If the power is to be taken nobody will take it for us. It is we – blacks, women, workers, socialists – who must grasp it ourselves.



John Silkin



Peter Shore

Andrew Ward (Report)

NEXT ISSUE

Next editorial board: Sunday September 2 at 12 noon at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham. Deadline for articles for the next issue: Monday September 10th.
There will be no September issue of Briefing. The next issue will be the October issue, out on September 20th.

BRIEFING LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE FRINGE MEETING, SUNDAY 30 SEPTEMBER AT 7.30pm, CLAREMONT HOTEL, NORTH PROMENADE, BLACKPOOL.
"TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT" SPEAKERS INCLUDE: TONY BENN, KEN LIVINGSTONE and speakers from WOMEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE, BLACK SECTIONS ORGANISING COMMITTEE AND LABOUR MOVEMENT LESBIANS.

Women and Blacks: Organising for Power

The Labour movement has for too long — indeed since Marx's time — maintained a blinkered view of the nature of Oppression. Because of its blinkered view, it has organised only a narrow section of the oppressed — the white, male manual section of the working class.

This narrow base has recently — owing to the attacks of the Thatcher government — declined steeply in numbers as Britain's manufacturing sector has been forced into decline; and unemployment has undermined the organised strength of trade unionism. As a result the movement has been forced to rely on an ever-narrowing base of support — a base which Ivor Crewe and other psephologists long ago predicted would be insufficient to sustain the election of a Labour Government.

It has taken two rank-and-file movements — the Labour Women's Action Committee and the Black Sections campaign — to force the movement into a broadening of its understanding of Oppression, so that the *majority* of the working class, women, but also blacks, could be included within the movement's organisation and could thereby *extend* its political strength and power.

The need to include *all of the working class* in current struggles; to rally *all* of the class against Thatcherism and its attacks on the democratic institutions of our class — appears eminently sensible and modest. Furthermore the *effectiveness* of such a strategy is currently being demonstrated by the women of the mining communities — whose inclusion in the miners' struggle has undoubtedly reinforced the strength of that fight.

PARTY CONFERENCE

Armed with this evidence, and greatly strengthened by the struggles of those women of mining communities, Labour Party women were preparing for this year's Party Conference with much greater confidence.

The confidence has already manifested itself in a number of ways. First, all over the country, women are successfully getting through their general committees WAC's resolutions calling for the inclusion of women within the party's organisation, and as importantly within its powerful decision-making bodies.

Because of the almost unanimous support of this year's Womens Conference for the WAC model resolutions, there is a much wider base of support for the demands. Already news is coming in of WAC resolutions being moved in Scotland, South Wales, the midlands, the Eastern Region and London.

SLATE

Secondly WAC is proudly and confidently supporting a slate of five women candidates for Labour's NEC — the first-ever slate of women committed to supporting and advancing the decisions of the Labour Women's Conference. This year may well see the first elections of women — openly committed to advancing the interests of women — on to Labour's NEC.

The women Labour WAC are supporting (after long and careful consultation amongst Labour women, and equally lengthy but often acrimonious negotiations with men who almost exclusively have the power to elect these women to the NEC) these women are well known for their records of struggle in defence of *all of the working class.*
They are:

Diane Abbott: The first black woman to be nominated to the NEC; the first to be elected as a Councillor for Westminster; an active trade unionist and well known for the leading role she has played in the campaign for black sections within the party.

Margaret Beckett: represents the railway-workers of Derby; fought a magnificent battle against the renegade Dick Taverne in Lincoln; and defended Women's Conference decisions during her brief period on the NEC.



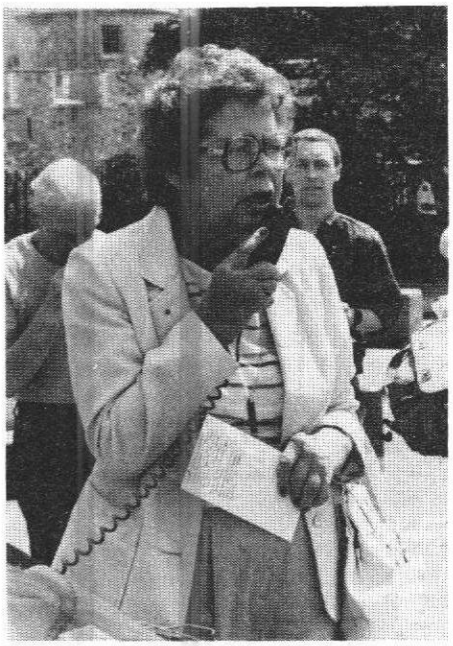
Labour Party Photo Library

JOAN MAYNARD

Joan Maynard: long-term campaigner on behalf of the low-paid agricultural workers and principled defender of the rights of the oppressed, she has been a consistent and stalwart supporter of Womens Conference decisions on the NEC.

Frances Morrell: a founder of the Labour Women's Action Committee as well as the Labour Co-ordinating Committee; currently leader of the Inner London Education Authority whose educational initiatives on behalf of girls, blacks and indeed all of London's working class children are widely praised.

Clare Short a sponsored MP for the women-dominated union NUPE and well known for her struggles on behalf of Asian women in her constituency of Birmingham and for her support for the women of Armagh.



John Chapman

JO RICHARDSON

In addition to supporting these women for the Women's Section, WAC are mounting a determined campaign to defend Audrey Wise and Jo Richardson in the constituency section. At last year's Conference *160 constituencies voted for a men-only slate.* Newcomers to the NEC like Michael Meacher and David Blunkett, bolstered by this support from the male-dominated consituency delegations (75% of constituency delegates to the 1983 Conference were men) leapfrogged over Audrey and Jo in that section, almost pushing them out. Men will look for any excuse to support men. We urge women in the constituencies to ensure that *their* delegates are mandated to support WAC's slate for the Women's Section and Jo and Audrey for the Constituency section.

Only sisterhood can challenge the powerful brotherhood that dominates our party and divides our class!

Ann Pettifor

GLC & Met.Counties: Jenkin gets hammered

by REG RACE

By 6.30 p.m. on the evening of June 28, it was apparent that something very remarkable had happened. The Conservative government had been defeated by a stunning 48 vote majority in the House of Lords on one of its most cherished policies – cancelling the 1985 GLC and Metropolitan County elections.

The amendment passed by the Lords to clause one of the Bill insisted that the power of the Secretary of State for the Environment to make the Order cancelling the 1985 elections should not be exercised until such time as the main abolition Bill had been enacted by Parliament.

The practical effect of this amendment was twofold. First, it ensured that the House of Lords would be able to give detailed scrutiny to the main abolition Bill before the elections were cancelled. This was an important argument for many Peers, who believed that the traditional rights of the House of Lords to scrutinise and amend legislation would be seriously undermined by the government's proposal to allow Patrick Jenkin to make the Order cancelling the elections immediately after the Second Reading of the main abolition Bill in the House of Commons. As it was known that it was the government's intention to introduce the main Bill in November 1984, it was likely that the elections would be cancelled four months before the Lords discussion of the Bill began: and it was this contempt for normal Parliamentary processes which incensed many Peers.

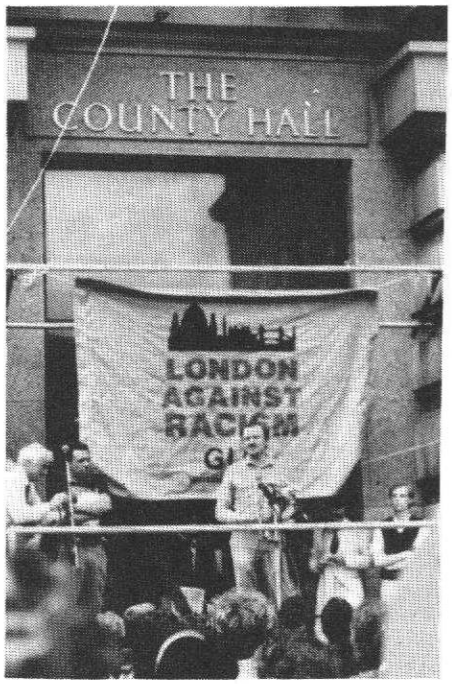
The first effect of the amendment was therefore to restore the constitutional position of the Lords. But the second effect was in practical terms, the most damaging for the embattled Patrick Jenkin because he could not now cancel the 1985 elections until after they had been held. The reason for this uncomfortable fact was simple: he could not make the Order cancelling the elections until enactment of the main Bill – and that would not happen until June or July 1985, two months after voters had gone to the polls.

The nature of the government's defeat and its scale caused panic amongst Cabinet Ministers. They knew that they had suffered a major strategic reverse, that Labour's popularity was rising rapidly in the big cities as a direct result of the GLC/Metropolitan campaign and ministerial bungling, and that there could be no certainty that the House of Lords would eventually agree to a face-saving compromise.

The ill tempered and hysterical reaction of the Minister who had authored the Bill was exemplified by some ill-judged remarks from Patrick Jenkin. Speaking to an audience of bigwigs in Bradford the following day, he lashed out at the Lords. "One of my colleagues had a party of local constituents from a mental hospital in the public gallery, and they watched with growing astonishment – and a growing sense of familiarity."

Following their setback, the government regrouped and made their intentions clear. They moved major amendments to their own Bill when it came back to the Lords on 16 July. In essence, these new proposals do four things.

*They maintain the government's long-held view that the 1985 elections must be cancelled.



JON PICKERING

*They remove the appointed, interim councils from the Bill: these bodies would have replaced the elected GLC and Metropolitan councillors on May 7, 1985, and – in London – it would have meant a change from Labour control to Conservative control without a vote being cast.

*In place of the elections or the interim councils, they propose to extend the terms of the existing GLC/Metropolitan councillors for at least a year "into 1986".

*As they will be giving dreadful revolutionaries like Ken Livingstone a further year in office, specific controls are to be introduced on council expenditure during that period. These controls will include restrictions making all payments under Section 137 of the 1972 Local Government Act (and now heavily used for funding payments to women's organisations, black groups and police monitoring groups) subject to individual project-by-project authorisation by the Secretary of State. The controls will also include controls on the divestment of council assets to other organisations.

It goes without saying that these proposals do not amount to a compromise that should be acceptable to the labour movement. It must be clear that the only people who can extend the terms of office of existing councillors are not the government or the House of Lords, but the electorate.

What the Tories new proposals amount to is abolition now. If the GLC and the six Metropolitan Counties wish to dispose of any land, they will have to obtain the approval of the Secretary of State. If the councils wish to enter into any contract worth more than £100,000 they will have to obtain the approval of the Secretary of State.

It is an attempt to impose abolition now, an attempt to introduce direct rule by civil servants and government ministers, rather than by elected councillors. Taken in conjunction with the powers to set budgets, and expenditure and rate levels contained in the rate-capping Act, it amounts to the abolition of elected local government in the big cities of Britain.

Some comrades may find it incomprehensible that the campaign is being fought so vigorously in the House of Lords – certainly not one of the natural allies of working people and trades unionists. The full story of how the campaign was fought in Parliament and outside it cannot yet be told: but it can confidently be predicted that nothing has been done which would undermine the Party's policy of abolishing the unelected and hereditary upper house.

The membership of the House of Lords consists of two classes. those who have inherited their titles by descent, and those who are there because of an act of Prime Ministerial patronage.

There is no justification for a second chamber whose membership is structured in this way, and the Labour Party will have no difficulty in persuading voters that abolition of the Lords enhances democracy, when it becoms a general election issue.

The government have now begun to lose arguments, to lose parliamentary support and to lose votes at the ballot box. The reason is simple: the GLC/Metropolitan County campaign has reached over the heads of the parliamentary leadership to the mass of working people, it has changed opinions fundamentally, and it has begun to persuade people that Labour is not only concerned to defend democracy, but that its policies in local government are correct.

There is much more yet to be won. The main abolition Bill is to be introduced in Parliament in November, and reliable reports indicate that it is so huge that it consists of over 300 individual clauses. A Bill of this size and complexity is enormously vulnerable to delay and ambush, but the most significant lesson that is to be learned from our activities on the paving Bill is that Parliamentary action needs to be continued with a vigorous extra-parliamentary campaign if it is to radicalise working people and achieve success.

So our next task is to organise a similar campaign on the main abolition Bill, and on rate-capping. But there must be major improvement too.

*Trades unionists must be mobilised directly by the movement in support of the campaign,

*Emphasis must be placed, not only on the defence of democracy, but on the validity of socialist policies.

This campaign did not originate from the PLP leadership. Instead the main obstacle to socialist change in Britain lies in the elitist parliamentary-dominated attitudes of the PLP towards the restructuring of society, and in particular to public expenditure and the social ownership of industry. Our next task must be to change those fundamentally reactionary views, for good.

Chicken pox versus Westminster

Cath Tate
Streatham CLP

Before too long reselection of MPs will start in preparation for the next election. There will be (apart from the cries of people being stabbed in the back) the call for more women on the left to come forward and to be selected. There will be resolutions passed calling for shortlists with at least 52% women candidates on them and still, at the end of the day, the preponderance of candidates most willing to stand and most willing to get elected will be men. To redress this imbalance one has to look at why the women do not come forward in the first place in sufficient numbers. And that requires challenging not just the way women are regarded (and regard themselves) in politics, but also at the job we are asking MPs/councillors to do.

There have now been several articles in Briefing, mostly in the London Streetlife supplement, about the pressures and problems involved when you try to mix any sort of family life with politics. As things are now, politics and children/families/friends do not mix. Meetings happen in the evening, at prime dealing-with-kids time; conferences happen at weekends and only the youngest of kids are daft enough not to realise that they have been plonked in the County Hall creche all day. In practice those most closely involved with children cannot participate in a full political life, i.e. stand for selection as an MP or councillor.

Of course the main childrearers are women. Women who want to succeed in politics have first to overcome the dominant ideology that states that our true fulfilment in life comes from being a wife and mother. This is still the *main* barrier to women coming forward in representative numbers to stand for selection. Some women *do* overcome that barrier though. Not all women have children, or live with men that have egos that need nursing, or if they do have children some women are willing to hand them over to someone else to look after for most of their waking hours. Is the answer, therefore, for women to refuse to serve men or become childbound in the home in order to discover their true potential in public? If we want to get more women in Parliament, it is.



THE PARLIAMENTARY FEMALE.

Father of the Family. "COME, DEAR, WE SO SELDOM GO OUT TOGETHER NOW—CAN'T YOU TAKE US ALL TO THE PLAY TO-NIGHT?"
Mistress of the House, and M.P. "HOW YOU TALK, CHARLES! DON'T YOU SEE THAT I AM TOO BUSY. I HAVE A COMMITTEE TO-MORROW MORNING, AND I HAVE MY SPEECH ON THE GREAT CROCHET QUESTION TO PREPARE FOR THE EVENING."

Cartoon from *Punch Almanack*, (1853).

BASIC PROBLEM

A basic problem still remains, though. If we had 600 women in Parliament as things are now, they still would be totally divorced from women (or men) who are bringing up children. Show me an MP who has disobeyed a three line whip in order to rush home to deal with a child that has just gone down with chicken pox. It's more important to get to Westminster to vote on a bill that the Government will have a 100 seat majority on than to get home to comfort a miserable child — isn't it? Is it? Vast acres of experience of large numbers of people in this country will *continue* to be a closed book for the legislators of this country. This is undemocratic, unsocialist and alienating both for the legislators and those affected by the legislation.

Briefing supporters must now start exploring ways that the lives of MPs and councillors, and indeed the whole democratic process, can become more integrated into the lives that normal people live. Once that happens, not only will you get a more representative cross section of the population coming forward for selection but you will also have a better structure in which socialism can operate. We must look at the conditions MPs work under, their hours, their pay, their powers, what pressures and pressure groups they are subjected to and who does make decisions and takes responsibility for those decisions.

BRIEFING SUPPORTERS IN PARLIAMENT

We must not forget that there are Briefing supporters in Parliament at the moment. Are they forerunners in any way for a new type and style of MP (apart from their mode of dress), or have they just got submerged by the pressures of work and Parliamentary tradition that they have been subject to? What will stop those pressures sinking them completely so that they also end up 'all the same as the others' as weary voters will tell us when we next go canvassing? If we want changes next time we have got to start exploring and implementing changes now. After all, think of the number of times in 1981 you had to explain to people on the doorstep what the GLC actually was! Changes have now got to happen in the attitude of people towards Parliament and those who work in it.

BRIEFING INTERVIEWS
ALF LOMAS M.E.P.

Alf Lomas, Deputy Leader of the British Labour Group in the European Parliament, was interviewed for Briefing by Jerry Hughes.

Jerry: What is your analysis of the election results in Britain?

Alf: The British results reflected the growing opposition to both the Tory Government and the Common Market. The danger is that it was largely a negative 'anti' vote for Labour Party policies.

Jerry: What is your analysis of the election results in Europe?

Alf: There was a drop in the vote in most countries, as people have realised how the EEC has failed to improve their living standards. There was a small swing to the left, but also the disastrous results in France where openly racist candidates won 10 seats.

We are now discussing with Socialists from France and other countries how we can minimise their effect in the European Parliament.

Jerry: You have always stood on a firmly anti-Market position. What reaction did this create in the election?

Alf: It undoubtedly won me support. I made no secret of my anti-Market position. I openly campaigned against the Common Market and the Tory Government. This resulted in a majority more than doubled on the 1979 election, the biggest swing to Labour in the country — 13%, and the highest Labour percentage of the poll in any constituency — 62%.

Jerry: What was the attitude of the Labour Party nationally to your position?

Alf: There was no reaction from the Party nationally nor any attempt to intefere in my campaign.

Jerry: Do other Labour Euro-MPs in London share your views about the Common Market?

Alf: It is a bit early to assess accurately the views of the new London members regarding withdrawal. Certainly they are all fairly critical of the EEC as it now is and I am sure that when they see it at close quarters they will realise the impossibility of radical socialist change. My colleague in the old Parliament, Richard Balfe, shares my views about withdrawal.

Jerry: Many will know of your support for the Afia Begum campaign. What happened when the Sari Squad visited the Parliament?

Alf: At first, the Parliament's bureaucrats tried to keep out the Sari Squad because they regarded them as 'undesirable elements'. Following my protests, they were allowed in as my guests and I organised seating for them in the special guests section of the public gallery. I also arranged a meeting with other Socialist MEPs and with the press.

The motion I submitted on behalf of the Socialist Group condemned the British Government's action in deporting Afia Begum as racist and sexist and called for her re-admission to Britain. This was lost, following a tied vote — one more Labour MEP there and the European Parliament would have carried a motion extremely damaging and embarrassing for the British Government.



Laobur Party Photo Library

Alf Lomas MEP

Jerry: At one stage you were expected to challenge Barbara Castle for the group leadership. Why didn't this happen?

Alf: The general feeling on the left was that as Barbara Castle had just led the Labour members in a successful election campaign following her leadership of the group for the last 5 years, she should not be challenged at this stage. It is expected though that she will stand down at next year's Labour Group elections.

Jerry: Who are the Group Officers and where do they stand?

Alf: Deputy Leader — Alf Lomas; Chair — Tom Megahy; Secretary — Janey Buchan; Treasurer — Richard Balfe;Whip and representative on the Socialist Group Bureau — Barry Seal. All are on the left and anti-Market.

Jerry: Would you say that Les Huckfield and Bob Cryer are the 'hard left dissidents' in the Labour Group?

Alf: No. They supported Party policy as the majority of the Labour Group now does. Any members who oppose it are the 'dissidents'.

Jerry: Will the larger British Labour Group have an effect on the Socialist Group and its policies? If so, what do you think will be the most likely and most important changes?

Alf: It should have a great effect. We are now the second largest national group, one fewer than the Germans. We should have much less jargon, a sharper campaign on major political issues, and we shall demand more resources from the Socialist Group for campaigning in Britain.

Jerry: Do you think the Labour Group should join up with the Greens?

Alf: No. We should continue to work with the Socialist Group, although there will be issues on which we can cooperate with the Greens, as we do with the Communists, for instance against nuclear weapons.

Jerry: What influence/effect can the Labour Group have on the lives of Londoners during the rest of the Tory Government's life?

Alf: We shall get more involved in the Labour Party's general campaigns for a better deal for our people and in the campaign to save the GLC. I have already raised this matter in the European Parliament.

We will continue to oppose harmful EEC policies and support those which benefit Londoners, i.e. equal pay and social benefits for women, more rights for workers in multinationals, etc. We shall continue to press for grants for job training programmes in London and to win more cash now we have more Labour MEPs.

Jerry: Can you see the European Labour Group playing a larger part in the affairs and activities of the Labour Party in Britain? If so, in what ways?

Alf: This is my firm intention and I will use my position as Deputy Leader to push the group in that direction. At the first meeting of Labour members, I moved a resolution pledging full support for the miners including financial donations. We have also called on the Home Secretary to refuse entry into Britain of the racist French Euro-MP, M Le Pen.

With the expected increase in resources for our group, we hope to have additional staff working here in Britain in order to campaign in support of the policies of the Party.

Jerry: Should/will the left of the Labour Group form an active campaigning group like the 'Campaign Group of MP'?

Alf: The left in the Labour Group are now in a large majority. There is no need to form a separate campaign group within the Labour Group, since it will now be our intention to turn the group collectively in to a campaigning body in support of Labour Party policies. Of course, members may join existing left groups in Britain, such as the 'Campaign' or 'Tribune' groups.

Jerry: Will you reaffirm your position that the next Labour Government must bring Britain out of the EEC?

Alf: The last annual conference agreed that withdrawal from the EEC must be an 'option' if we cannot achieve major changes. These changes would have to include a complete restructuring of the budget, an end to the present agricultural policy, and fundamental changes in the Rome Treaty, especially the clauses dealing with the free movement of capital and goods.

Since none of these will be achieved, withdrawal will have to be a major demand in our next general election manifesto. Without this we shall not be able to carry out our alternative economic strategy.

Jerry: Did you support or oppose the Labour Party's decision to call on Richard Balfe not to have a Sinn Fein speaker at one of his election meetings?

Alf: I opposed it. I understand that the reason given was that Sinn Fein was oposing Labour candidates in Ireland at the European elections. But, we have all shared platforms with spokesmen for parties opposing Labour at elections. I did so twice during my own election campaign, with Liberal and Ecology candidates who were oppposing *me!* This was at CND meetings. It was a panic reaction by Head Office to a fairly normal situation.

Debate

COUNCILS AGAIN

Deficit Budget strategy for Hackney

The much talked about unity of Labour Councils against the government over rates and finance has advanced in a way that was impossible over a year ago. The government's own planned legislation and the severe financial pressure of the last year have forced policy changes that were most evident at the recent local government conference in Sheffield. Although the success of Sheffield can be exaggerated, there is no doubt that there has been a definite shift towards a policy of confrontation. The choice is now whether not to fix a rate or to produce a deficit budget.

Both policies are said to guarantee confrontation but it is essential that local parties get the campaign set on the right political basis.

In Hackney the case is clear. The parties of Hackney North and Hackney South and the borough's annual conference all have an agreed policy of no cuts, no rent rises and no rate increases above inflation.

Right Way to Confront

Some argue that the government's rate capping means that there are only two nos, not three. To do so shows a lack of understanding of the policy which has been developed over the past two or three years. The three nos has always been seen as a powerful fighting policy. It is correct politically and is strategically the right way to confront the government and gain maximum support. People in Hackney cannot afford rent and rate rises and with 20% unemployment and low wages, cuts in services and jobs cannot be considered.

The policy not only provides the best defence when under government attack but also gives the Labour Party and Labour Councils the chance to state positively what they want and what their stand will be based on. It means the willingness to produce a deficit budget in which jobs and services are protected while tenants and residents are told they will not have to make up for government cuts by more rent and rates.

Not Fixing a Rate

The alternative of not fixing a rate does not give this campaigning base. It is a complicated procedure which smacks of being thought up in a council committee room rather than being one in touch with how people live.

The fight of Liverpool and the GLC has shown that the government is vulnerable on the issue of local government. Let it defend the fact that it wants to cut jobs and services instead of us saying we want the democratic right to put up your rates. Public backing essential for the stands of the GLC and Liverpool comes from local support built up carefully over a long time. It cannot be manufactured as a by-product of a council's budget making procedure.

In Hackney the pledge of no cuts, no rent and rate increases gives the Party the ability to regain the respect of local tenants, trade unions and residents following years of neglect and ever higher rates. There is no other way to gain support for a Coun cil whose reputation has recently touched an all-time low. In addition such a campaign will ensure that the Labour Group remains obligated to follow Party policy and is not allowed to retreat as it has done in the past.

For those of us that are to be rate-capped — and Hackney must be a dead cert — any such retreat this year will have desperate consequences. There will be no soft option of a rate rise. It will mean cuts, redundancies and a betrayal of all those we were elected to fight for.

by Martin Whitfield, Hackney Councillor writing in a personal capacity as a member of Hackney Labour Left.

Liverpool: Government defeated

DESPITE their attempts to suggest otherwise, it is clear that the Tories have been forced to retreat in the fight over Liverpool's finances. No matter how much Thatcher and Jenkin try to cover their tracks the facts prove that Liverpool Labour Party have won a significant, though far from total, victory.

The aims of maintaining jobs and services which were two of the three planks of the campaign have been fully achieved. Not only has the present workforce been maintained but also the extra jobs created during the last year have now been guaranteed.

As regards the third point in the campaign – "No rate rises to compensate for Tory cuts" – it is particularly on this point that many Party members and supporters feel less than jubilant.

A rate rise of 17% is certainly less welcome than the 9% which was originally included in the March budget proposals. Without going into the semantics of whether or not the increase in rates "covers for Tory cuts" or not it is the view of many in the Labour Party that such a rise is not an ideal outcome.

There were a number of other points in the budget package which were against the interests of working people in the city. Firstly, the abandonment of the £2 decorating allowance which had been used as an alternative to a reduction in council rents was definitely a setback. However this scheme would have lost its usefulness due to an amendment in Supplementary Benefit rules which meant that any further allowances were assessed as income.

The other most serious threat was the concern that "capitalisation" of building repairs could affect the new build policy.

Having pointed out these flaws it has to be stressed that the deal as a whole is very much better than anything which would have been achieved without the firm stand which the council has taken.

Whilst Labour supporters may baulk at a 17% rate-rise it is not many months ago that Cunningham and Straw were advising a rise of 60-70%.

Next year, councils throughout the country will be faced with ratecapping. There is no doubt that with a coordinated campaign involving the whole of the working class not only can Liverpool's success be copied but the complete Tory local government strategy can be defeated.

Liverpool has proved that with the backing of the trades unions and in particular the council unions, a single council can force the government to back down.

Kevin Feintuck,
(Liverpool District Labour Party)

London debates

AN ALL-London Labour Left conference called by Hackney Labour Left and Lewisham Labour Left and supported by London Labour Briefing was held at the Lewisham Labour Club on 14th July.

The conference was well-attended with representatives from a number of London boroughs including, apart from Hackney and Lewisham, Greenwich, Camden, Islington and Southwark.

The conference heard reports on the decision in Liverpool and from the Sheffield conference on July 7th and then had discussion on the strategic options for councils forced to defy the Tory government, with Hilda Kean for Hackney introducing what's popularly become known as the '3 Nos' — no cuts, no rent rises, and no rate rises above the level of inflation — and

IST RATE-CAPPING!

Uncharted territory — the pros and cons of not fixing a rate

One thing is perfectly clear about the options open to Labour councils next spring – the only option which has straightforward and certain consequences is to comply with the Rates Act. Any other option will lead us into uncertainty and uncharted territory. The probable consequences in political, legal and financial terms cannot be accurately predicted. What should be implicit for any socialist authority is that to comply with the government is not an option. We should therefore concentrate on working towards strategies of defiance which can achieve maximum unity in our movement.

In order to protect services and jobs, two main tactics are emerging: to fix a budget and not make a rate, or to fix a rate and not make a budget to match (deficit budgeting). Both of them have advantages and disadvantages and precisely because we are moving into uncharted territory their relative prospects of success cannot be accurately judged.

Whatever tactic authorities choose it is vital that we support each other in that choice. We also have to recognise that local circumstances may dictate that one route rather than another is more suited to a particular authority. The conference at Sheffield unanimously endorsed these principles.

Certain ground rules must apply to any tactic we employ:

a) we should make absolutely clear our commitment not to cut, i.e. to protect services and maintain expenditure on jobs and service conditions in real terms. We should also respond to increased demand for our services and other essential growth. Not to do so is to cut. The NEC should confirm its existing policy of supporting councils taking this pledge and should use its best endeavours to ensure all authorities do so.

b) We must all agree not to derogate when designated as a rate-capped authority – the process whereby the Secretary of State can interfere with our locally determined expenditure levels and lower them even further if he wishes. Under derogation we can be picked off individually and allow total central government control. Because Portsmouth will be rate-capped and will derogate and will get more, it is vital we explain to our electorate why we have not appealed.

c) We must plan and carry out campaigns aimed at maximum involvement by trade unions and local communities. This means altering our relationship with them, and with the trade unions it means reexamining and improving our industrial relations procedures.

We have to make it plain we are defending democracy, defending services and demanding the return of our rate support grant.

d) We should not go along with creative accountancy, 'judging and nudging' or hoping to make ends meet. Even though an individual authority may survive year one this way, it allows rate-capping to pass unchallenged into local government procedure and it ignores the government's long-term strategy which is to achieve 11% cuts over the next two to three years (about £2 billion). The cap will be fixed lower in subsequent years, more authorities will be caught, and the general powers of the Act bought into play much earlier.

e) The NEC must unequivocally support local authorities and individual councillors following strategies of defiance. The target of not fixing a rate has found favour with the leaders of eight London authorities, (Islington, Greenwich, Lambeth, Camden, Haringey, Southwark, Lewisham and the GLC), who signed a statement to this effect at Sheffield. During the conference it became known as the London option although it now seems to be finding favour further afield.

The tactic assumes an early preparation of budgets for 1985/6 which would pre-empt the Secretary of State's announcement of the maximum rate level for designated authorities in December of this year. It them assumes that authorities will refuse to fix a rate based on that announcement.

Its advantages are:

*Authorities can act together in not fixing a rate in set rate-fixing meetings within the same week and on the same evening, at which a rate is not fixed.

*It will potentially unite capped and non-capped authorities in a single extra-parliamentary activity of demonstrating opposition to Tory legislation.

*It can similarly unite those designated authorities with those threatened with abolition.

*It provides a clear and certain timetable towards which a campaign can be built.

*It can be simply explained as a refusal to fix a Tory rate until rate support grant is restored.

*It allows authorities to act as one group in relation to the Department of the Environment and not be picked off one by one.

*It takes the offensive and provides a quick early crisis to which the government must respond. The total outstanding debt of the eight London authorities already mentioned is £4.4 billion and the threat of these authorities 'running out of money' must provoke the City into action.

Its disadvantages are seen to be:

*The effect on precepting authorities, i.e. although districts and boroughs can fix a rate at any time during the financial year, the upper tier authorities (GLC, ILEA, metropolitan counties) must by law fix their precepts by a certain date in March. Failure to do so means that no precept can thereafter be levied and the point of illegality is reached immediately.

*The authority will still be receiving income from tenants. Do we really want tenants to be subsidising other ratepayers?

*Payment of rates will be delayed into the financial year and larger demands received later on in the year could have a detrimental effect on family budgeting, particularly for those ratepayers paying by ten monthly installments.

The disadvantages of deficit budgeting are that by fixing the rate-capped rate but not a budget to match, the opportunity to challenge the system at the time of its implementation is lost. The possibility of united action is lost, and authorities can be picked off as their resources allow them to continue spending for different periods of time. Should some authorities pursue this tactic, we should nevertheless support them.

Overall, not fixing a Tory rate uniquely provides Labour authorities with an opportunity of winning. In addition it does not exclude the possibility of making a deficit budget subsequently should legal or financial pressure cause an authority to fix a rate.

Claer Lloyd-Jones
Chair, Greenwich Labour Group

options

Ron Stockbridge speaking to the 'no rate to be set' option.

The conference voiced many worried about the real meaning of the 'no rate' position but also recognised that many who might be drawn to support it would be so on the basis of a refusal to pass on Tory policies in any way.

A consistent theme of contributions was the need for the broadest possible consultation both within the Labour Party — between Labour Groups and their parties — and outside it, with tenants, workers, etc.

Resolutions were considered and a straw poll was held on the essential political positions involved in fighting the Tories in this area. The essence of the '3 Nos' position, i.e. not making the working class pay in any way for Tory policies, was endorsed. It was proposed that local borough conferences should be called to further discuss the options and plan their implementation, and that a national fringe meeting be organised at the annual Labour Party conference along these lines. The following model resolution also came out of the conference:

"Following the recommendations made by the local government conference in Sheffield, we call on the Greater London Labour Party to set up a conference of London constituency Labour Parties, Labour groups and council trade unions, in November, to discuss options for defending local government services and democracy against Tory attacks".

Joe Murphy, Hackney South CLP

YOUTH BRIEFING

At the moment very few youth are involved in Briefing. Hopefully this page will encourage young people to get involved in local groups and come to National Supplement meetings.

We hope to discuss youth and Briefing further at the National Briefing Conference in London on July 28th — so, if you're active in Lesbian and Gay YS, LPYS, YCND, Greenham ... anything as long as you're young, come along!

LPYS activists organise.

'Southern Region Activist' is an unofficial bulletin, supported by members of 15 YS branches in the southern region. After a highly successful fringe meeting at the Y.S. regional conference, it became clear that there was a sizeable minority of YS members in the region who were in broad agreement on the way forward for the YS and who shared common differences with the present leadership. This was also apparent on the conference floor in debates on a number of issues including CND, gay rights, Ireland and women. YS members who came to the fringe meeting kept in touch afterwards and, after discussion about how best to organise, it was agreed to launch a bulletin.

The bulletin is run by regular open editorial meetings. It does not have a sharply defined programme or editorial policy. Every article sent in has so far been printed. However, there is general agreement on three main points. Firstly, that in order to build a mass campaigning socialist youth movement, the present policies of the Militant leadership will have to be changed in favour of a non-sectarian campaigning approach which links the YS with the mass movements where radical youth are to be found, like CND. Secondly, that the principle of independence for the YS is vital and that the way to take on the current leadership is through political rather than organisational (witchunting) methods. The third general area of agreement is that it is imporant for the YS to link up with the left in the labour movement as a whole, particularly Briefing, but also groups like the Womens Action Committee, the Black Sections, Labour CND, the LCGR and the LCI.

DAY SCHOOL

About 500 copies of the current edition have been sold, not only to YS members but also to older Party members, Labour Students, Youth CND members, and to young miners. There has been a very good response and Brighton Briefing have proposed having a 'Youth and Labour' day-school to be sponsored by themselves and the bulletin. Another proposal has been made by women supporters of the bulletin: to produce a 'Young Womens Action Guide' to be sold throughout the YS which would contain a womens movement contact list, and articles by groups and campaigns such as NAC, WAC and Labour Movement Lesbians about their aims and how to get involved.



This kind of experience is not limited to the southern region of the LPYS. At the national conference in Bridlington at Easter we met up with YS activists from Scotland and the West Midlands who have organised similarly on a regional basis around activists bulletins. At a fairly large fringe meeting towards the end of the conference people involved in the bulletins and also people interested in setting one up in their area got together and discussed their experiences and proposals for the way forward. One suggestion was that a national journal could be launched to link together the activists organised around the bulletins and to link them as a whole with the left in the Party in order to build a powerful minority movement for a campaigning LPYS.

For copies of 'Southern Region Activist' ring (0865) 247624.

David Shepherd, Oxford East LPYS and Southern Regional Committee member. Personal capacity.

YOUTH CND —

'Victory to the Miners — Jobs not Bombs!' This was the favourite slogan on the youth contingent on the June 9th Reagan demo. We marched into Trafalgar Square to the strains of 'Here we Go', and the YCND speaker at the rally ended her speech with 'a message for Reagan', Thatcher and McGregor — Jobs not Bombs!'

Yet at a time when Youth CND is reaching out to just those people who are the best fighters for nuclear disarmament — the unemployed, YTS trainees, striking miners, young women, gays and lesbians, blacks and asians — all of whom suffer police harassment and the attacks of the Tory government — the CND leadership is discussing how it can make the campaign 'more tasteful' to the SDP, Liberals and wet Tories. In reality, this means a new attack on unilateralism at CND conference in November — after the freeze comes (wait for it!) 'the nuclear cutback'! At the same time the right in the Labour Party are squaring up to push through their own changes to Labour's unilateralism. We must oppose these changes — we're *not* interested in an increase in a 'Europeanisation' of defence so that profits from the arms trade pour into the pockets of the bosses in Europe as opposed to those in the USA.

Yet, if these attacks are to be successfully repulsed, the left must develop an alternative strategy, based on mass action and taking CND into the working class. This is exactly what Youth CND is doing — and YCND has an important role to play as part of the left in CND — it was YCND Conference for instance, that first called for a demo against Reagan.

Our next initiative is really important.

Women and

AFTER many young women in the LPYS fought for over two years for a young women's conference, the YS finally called a weekend 'school' on women's liberation in Scarborough in June.

The school itself was restricted to 100 places and lacked a campaigning orientation. Unfortunately women who are at present engaged in struggle against the Tory government and its policies, such as the Greenham women and the miners' wives, were not invited, and concrete issues such as our right to work, abortion and women's participation in the labour movement were not taken up. Instead we were treated to historical accounts of the Suffragettes and women in America in the 1930s.

The most lively part of the conference was a discussion on positive action, introduced by Margaret Crear, author of a new Militant pamphlet on the subject. She emphasised the need to create the opportunities for women which would enable them to fully participate in the labour movement, and increase their confidence. Other women raised the point that the LPYS must begin to fully participate in mass campaigns such as YCND, to attract new layers of young women into the YS.

Most of the debate was taken up with attacks on positive discrimination and the demands of the Women's Action Committee. The reservation of five democratically elected places on the NEC for women was dismissed because it would open the door to similar

HERE WE GO!

Between the 6th-19th August, 200 youth will march 200 miles visiting some of the biggest US bases in Britain, ending in London with a huge multicultural Jobs not Bombs festival. The slogans of the March 'No US Bases, Jobs not Bombs,' are vital demands. *No US Bases* hits right at the heart of NATO, which is dominated by the USA and depending on Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe. It exposes the truth of US foreign policy, and links up with those fighting against imperialist intervention in Central America, the Middle East, etc.

The importance of *Jobs not Bombs* is also obvious! Youth CND is totally behind the miners -- and they're behind our march! The NUM keeps asking for more leaflets, young miners are coming on the march and we'll be visiting a picket line on route.

Women on the march will stay overnight at Greenham Common to build links between the camp and YCND. The women at the camp have led the movement for the last two years and need and deserve our support. *Youth from Europe* have been invited to form delegations -- the fight for disarmament is an international one and we hope to organise a European march on Brussels next year.

Through the multicultural carnival at the end of the march we want to build YCND among black and asian youth, who up to now have largely ignored by CND.

This is how CND should be built, let's prove it can be done! Help us find 200 marchers, thousands of youth at the carnival and the £17,000 it's all going to cost. Make sure your women's section, CLP, TU, LPYS, black section (etc!) sponsors a marcher and takes publicity. Registration forms, leaflets and posters free from YCND, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4, phone 01 263 0977.

Tracy Doyle and Sue MacDonald
YCND National Committee
(personal capacities)

the Y.S.

demands from the trades unions and the PLP, and therefore make it shift further to the right! Similarly, five resolutions at conference were dismissed as 'privileged'.

This view of the LPYS fails to grasp that women in the labour movement have always had to organise and fight to get their demands raised. Positive discrimination is attacked on 'constitutional' grounds, and no practical demands are offered to overcome the lack of women's participation. Also the school failed to tackle the 'myth' that women are adequately represented in the LPYS, where last year there was only one woman representative on the West Midlands Regional Committee out of 11! The two year fight for the conference by Selly Oak and other LPYS branches shows that the YS has to be forced to discuss women's liberation and is still a long way from fighting and campaigning for it. In this sense the conference was a step forward, but in future we want bigger, better and regular events, geared towards action and giving young women a real say.

Initiatives like Selly Oak women's dayschool as well as women only meetings in Gillingham YS and the proposed Southern Region activists women's action pamphlet are a practical example of ways we can work to turn the YS out to the struggles of women and build it in an area where it is weak.

No socialism without women's liberation!

Bernie Wilde Selly Oak LPYS

Save National Briefing

The National Supplement has proved to be a great success in providing local Briefing groups with a national forum and also in linking Briefing groups and supporters everywhere. However there have been financial difficulties, in its first year of production, that place the future of the supplement in jeopardy.

In order to put the finances of the supplement on a firm footing and to significantly expand the work of Briefing groups in the future we are setting up a 'SAVE BRIEFING FUND'. We are now asking all readers and groups to contribute to the fund or raise money by organising events locally. Every month the National Supplement will list the funds raised and the fund raisers.

The next few months will be crucial to the future of Briefing. We must all not only save the magazine but expand it and the work of Briefing groups especially for the Target Labour Government Campaign.

Donations to: Michael McKeever, 308 Dagenham Road, Romford, Essex RM7 0TJ. Cheques made payable to 'Labour Briefing'. Please mark the back of the cheque 'Fund'.

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Defend Ahsan

The West Midlands Low Pay Unit has sacked its only full-time black employee, amidst accusations of racism and a refusal to come off the fence over whole hearted involvement with a unionisation campaign amongst low paid Asian workers.

The sacking of Raghib Ahsan has created a tremendous row in Birmingham where he is well-known as a trade union and Labour Party activist with a long history of work in the Asian community. The consequences of Ahsan's sacking could be serious both for the unionisation campaign amongst Asian women clothing workers, and for the Low Pay Unit.

LOW CREDIBILITY UNIT

The Low Pay Unit has steadily built a reputation in recent years as an articulate lobby in Parliamentary and media circles over the issue of low pay. It has been a useful source of information for trade unions and socialists. But its behaviour leading up to the sacking of Raghib Ahsan raises serious questions marks about its future role.

According to Low Pay Unit Director Chris Pond -- who handed out Ahsan's instant dismissal, the cause of such disciplinary action was Ahsan's refusal to abide by collective staff decisions. According to Pond there were 'no policy differences'. As for complaints about the Low Pay Unit's disciplinary behaviour, Chris Pond told the Unit's West Midlands Consultative committee that he 'had consulted a lawyer' before taking the sacking action.

At the June meeting of Consultative Committee in the West Midlands only one speaker opposed the calls for Ahsan's immediate reinstatement -- the representative of the Confederation of British Industry. The reasons for this become obvious on examining the real issues behind Ponds woolly explanations to the New Statesman and elsewhere.

Two issues were highlighted as of serious concern by the West Midlands Consultative Committee members. Firstly, Ponds approach to staff discipline departs from the norms one would expect from a body like the Low Pay Unit campaigning for employees rights.

Ahsan was sacked instantly without previous written warnings and just after being offered a three year extension of his contract. His dismissal was then lifted under intense pressure. Pond them offered to take him back on a one year contract, with a three month probationary period on condition he was seconded to another organisation. But although seconded because the remaining staff refused to work with him, he was to attend weekly staff meetings *and be bound by their decisions!*

The second cause of concern was the reluctance (to put it mildly) of the Low Pay Unit to support Ahsan's involvement in a unionisation campaign amongst Asian clothing workers. After a period of research and organisation, a public campaign was launched by the Low Pay Unit and the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU).

The campaign was launched at a public meeting attended by a large number of Asian (mainly women) clothing workers. Ahsan then followed this up with a press release announcing the joint TGWU and Low Pay Unit campaign. To his astonishment he was asked to withdraw the statement.

Since the press statement only confirmed the existence of an already agreed policy, Ahsan refused. In the days that followed he was instantly dismissed for refusing to allegedly 'accept collective staff decisions'. Since the Low Pay Unit is now denying that there are any policy disagreements, it is not clear, from the Unit's point of view why he was sacked.

From the point of view of local trade union, community and black activists, however, the reasons are clear. The Low Pay Unit accepted West Midlands County Council cash without being clear how it would need to adjust to working outside London. Three inexperienced white Unit workers found it impossible to accept that an experienced black activist with deep local roots have superior knowledge of how to conduct a unionisation campaign amongst Asian women.

Having now sacked on a dubious nature their own black full-time worker, the Unit now faces the threat of a highly embarrassing campaign against co-operating with the Unit by local trade union and black activists. Unless Ahsan is reinstated, as the seven members of the Consultative committee of the West Midlands Low Pay Unit put it 'irreparable harm will be done' to the Unit's reputation.

In Defence of Mandatory Reselection

HAVE *you* noticed it on the doorstep or on the picket-line? According to John Evans MP (Guardian, June 29), "Fears are being expressed" that the possibility of a few Labour MPs being deselected will have "a devastating impact on the future prospects of the Labour Party" and "an enormous uplift to the fortunes of the Alliance" – particularly in the event of what he describes as "an atmosphere of acrimony, division and allegations of foul play".

Such gloomy predictions from our MPs are not, of course, unprecedented. But just what evidence has Evans got for his assumption that any deselected MPs will start throwing tantrums like Reg Prentice – rather than honourably accepting their General Committee's decision like Frank Hooley?

Euro-Results

And what does Evans make of the recent Euro results in Leeds and in Yorkshire South? In both cases sitting MEPs were deselected. In both cases they accepted the democratic decision. And in both cases excellent swings to Labour were recorded on June 14. Perhaps the British electorate is less appalled by mandatory reselection than Westminster gossip would have us believe.

The danger, however, remains that a few MPs may unconsciously subordinate our Party's crying need to attack the Tories to their personal anxieties about mandatory reselection. As any such anxieties will be fuelled and fanned by the media, rank-and-file Party members must prepare to defend their own rights and alert themselves to what to expect.

Less conspicuous opposition

Frank "Rainbow Coalitions" Field has openly threatened to stand as a "PLP candidate" if not selected as the Party's official choice. But most opponents of our reselection procedure will seek to oppose it in less conspicuous ways. They will apply every possible pressure on CLPs to voluntarily waive their reselection rights in the interests of "unity", "loyalty" and "not rocking the boat" – even if this means subordinating the needs of thousands of constituents to the personal convenience of an individual sitting MP.

There will also be pressure for selection conferences to consist of shortlists of one, even where more than one candidate has been validly nominated. This procedure not only ignores the chance to use shortlisting as a means of positive discrimination in favour of disadvantaged groups. It also flouts the existing reslection guidelines of the NEC itself.

One member, one vote

Most immediately dangerous, however, is John Evans' plan to undermine mandatory reslection by taking it away from the properly elected delegates on each CLP's General Committee. The GC, with its vital role of month-by-month monitoring of its own MP's performance, would be replaced by some kind of ad hoc "one member, one vote" procedure wheeled into action once every five years. Real accountabiiity would fly out the window.



UNIVERSAL PICTORIAL PRESS

Kinnock – supports one member one vote.

Evans even argues (surely with tongue in cheek?) that a one member one vote procedure would strengthen links between the party and the unions! In fact, of course, it would remove at a stroke one of the strongest incentives for trade union branches to affiliate to the party at constituency level. Any change in mandatory reselection would seriously hinder, not help, us in the Tories' political levy ballots which face us all next year.

We must not let it go

Mandatory reselection took many years to win. Any attempt to undermine it now will not only divert us at a crucial stage of our struggle against the Tories. It will also remove our best guarantee of our own MPs' accountability. We must not let it go.

Francis Prideaux

How to Select or Reselect your MP *by Charlotte Atkins and Chris Mullin. Contains:*

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All immigration controls are racist

Labour's 1983 Manifesto was greeted as a triumph for the left. But when it came to immigration it said nothing new.

Labour's record on immigration has been to appease the racists. When Powell made his 'Rivers of Blood' speech in 1967, the then Home Secretary James Callaghan introduced the Kenyan Asian Immigration Act, which removed the right of entry to holders of British passports. This tore up the agreement made by Colonial Secretary Duncan Sandys at the time of Kenyan independence in 1962, when Asians were given the choice of British or Kenyan citizenship. On returning to Government in 1974, Labour ignored the manifesto commitment to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act. Merlyn Rees as Home Secretary began the process of state repatriation as Alex Lyon, a relative liberal, was ousted from the Home Office when Callaghan became prime minister. Labour's Green Paper was virtually identical to the Tory's own Nationality Act. This is the reality behind the moral posturing of Hattersley et al against the Nationality Act.

The first Immigration Act was the 1905 Aliens Act directed at Jewish refugees fleeing the Russian pogroms. Introduced by Arthur Balfour (the Zionists' friend) it followed the agitation of the British Brothers League led by Tory MP, William Evans-Gordon (another Zionist friend!). From 1962 onwards, a succession of Immigration Acts were passed directed at Black people. When the colonies gained independence, many people retained their Citizenship of the UK & Colonies which entitled them to unrestricted entry. This fitted in well with British capitalism's labour shortage.

Immigration controls are labour controls directed at a specific section of the working class. Black people came into this country from colonies whose economies we wrecked and distorted, in the 50s and 60s. With the rise in unemployment, black workers became the target of the NF & Monday Club and immigration became an issue. Increasingly the Tories under Heath began to take up the racists theme. If we restrict immigration, so the argument went, racial harmony would reign. The exact opposite was the case — by focussing on black immigration, black people already here were also seen to be a problem. IMMIGRATION CONTROL GOES HAND IN

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Women and Nicaragua

A delegation of women recently returned from Nicaragua. The women came from different areas of political activity, some from Greenham, another from CND, from trade unions and the black women's movement. The central purpose of the delegation was to further solidarity, to disseminate information and to point out why our struggles are linked.

At a time when cruise missiles have been deployed, the peace movements are embroiled with the issue of the way forward. Perhaps, at first glance, the role of Nicaragua in this process is not immediately apparent. Yet the questions are inextricably linked.

President Reagan has stood on a traditional American position towards central America; that the US has a 'moral duty' to 'keep the communists out of the region' and a valid strategic concern in the protection of the US from the ever increasing Soviet threat. The use of the East/West divide, of cold warism are unceasingly used to justify American interventionism in Central America. The way Europe develops will affect this area.

The role of the peace movements and the left in breaking the East/West confrontation will help create a space where countries like Nicaragua will be able to follow through a non-aligned position. For Europe, the Soviet threat has to be increasingly raised if intervention is to be justified which in its turn generates growing political tension undermining any possibility for detente.

WHAT SORT OF PEACE?

Further, the question has to be asked: what sort of peace are we fighting for? For both Greenham and CND, much of the campaign has centred around removal of nuclear weapons; understandably, if the issue is to enjoy immediate mass support. For Nicaragua peace is about radical social transformation. *'We need peace to develop our health programmes, our housing, our agriculture, the whole economy. We have to rebuild a country destroyed by civil war, an earthquake and decades of dictatorship,'* says Luis Caldera of the FSLN (the Sandinista national liberation movement). For socialists, peace has to be more than 'removal' it has to be set in a context of political change and unilateralism is just one step in this process.



For feminism the role of women in the revolutiuonary struggle has been crucial. It has been both inspiring and exciting to feminists here. Yet, in the highest political and military echelons, men predominate and are likely to continue to do so in the near future. For the women on the delegation, the experience of seeking to integrate women's demands in a nationalist struggle was something from which we could both learn and offer support.

It is all too easy to dismiss the Nicaraguan revolution because it does not meet a feminist vision. In Nicaragua, the women are the child carers, machismo is still prevalent, and lesbian rights are not discussed, for example. Whilst many criticisms have validity, Euro-feminism cannot impose its own position without recognising its own history and its privileges. In Nicaragua, there is a fight for survival. A woman, from one of the poorest areas of the capital, Managua, said *'I have suffered so much, I no longer remember what fear feels like. All I have left is anger. And I would rather that myself and my children and my grandchildren died a hundred times over then we went back to how things were before'*. The role of women in Nicaragua has to be set in this framework and not a western one.

Many of the debates in socialist feminism have been about the conflicts in ideology and practice and about how they can be balanced. For women, in Nicaragua finding their position in society is a daily struggle. In a country which is fighing a war, the capacity for ideas and new projects is immense and learning ways in which women can support each other is vital.

Heather Rabbats

HAND WITH REPATRIATION. If Black immigrants cause unemployment then repatriating those already here will help reduce it. The NF feeds into the racism of liberal immigration controllers.

Immigration controls (like import controls) divide the working class. The foreign/black worker becomes the enemy, not ones own boss. They cannot be other than racist in a capitalist society. The very immigration acts which stopped Black immigration made it easier for whites to come in under the patriality clauses. We have to fight the idea that there is any connection between unemployment, bad housing, poverty & immigration. It lets capitalism off the hook. At the very time unemployment soared, immigration had stopped. But with immigration control has come internal passport controls — black people are expected to produce passports at the SS, hospitals etc and now repatriation has begun. That is what the deportation of Afia Begum and others mean.

The 1971 Act introduced work permits. Work permits depend on the goodwill of your employer as the referee. It leads to a disciplined & docile non-union workforce. And trade unions, instead of demanding an end to the work permit system, call for a reduction in the quotas because they are being undermined! The Trade Unions have a disgraceful record when it comes to immigration. As socialists we should be clear about what we want. Labours commitment to scrap all immigration acts and no deportations. End Labours appeasement of racism.

Tony Greenstein — Brighton Labour Briefing.

LATIN AMERICAN records and tapes

Dear Colleague,

We are a workers' cooperative which works with the Latin American solidarity campaigns in importing and distributing Latin American music on record and cassette. We are at the moment producing a catalogue of the music available, which I am sure would be of interest to your readers. Send sae for free catalogue to LMS, 8 Bradbury Street, London N16 8JN.

Andy Brown

STOP STRIP SEARCHES!

Police in Britain are increasingly using strip-searching as a means to intimidate women arrested on political demonstrations and actions. Meanwhile, in Armagh Prison, N Ireland, the policy of strip-searching women prisoners every time they enter or leave contines — despite recent denials and contradictory statments by various people in authority.

The Armagh figures for the first five months of 1984 show a small increase in the average number of strip searches per prisoner over figures for the last three months of 1983.

PASSING THE BUCK

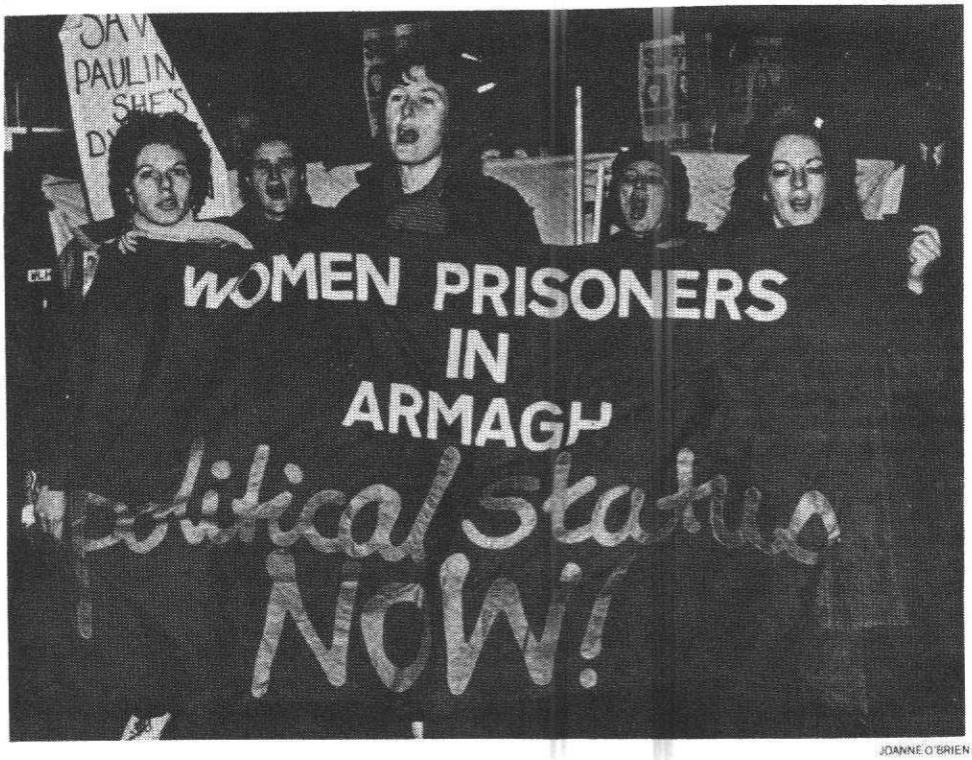
An RTE radio programme on 27 May brought to light the way the authorities are currrently trying to gloss over and pass the buck on what they now know to be a contentious issue. On the programme Nicholas Scott, N Ireland Office Minister with responsibility for prisons, denied that the British government has a policy of strip-searching. He said: 'It is up to the governor to decide the frequency with which he uses that particular search'. However, in response to the RTE programme, a Republican prisoner said that the prison governor, Thomas Murtagh, has specifically told the women that 'strip searching was a measure introduced in accordance with NIO policy' (letter to the Irish News, 20.6.84). And, in reply to letters of protest from MPs and members of the public over the past year, the NIO itself has said that strip-searching is 'routine' in *all* British jails.

The RTE programme included an interview with Dr Oliver Woods, a member of Armagh's 15-strong Board of Visitors. Woods had signed a letter which appeared in the British Medical Journal earlier in May claiming that strip searching was necessary in Armagh and was carried out in a 'humane' way. On the programme, however, Woods said that he would be opposed 'in principle' to strip searching, and that it was an embarassing and humiliating experience for the women.

INCREASE IN 1984

He went on to claim that, partly due to pressure from the Board, the frequency of strip searches was gradually declining, and that it now took place on 'only' ⅓ to ¼ of possible occassions. Again this statement is not born out by the official figures. While it is true that frequency dropped considerably in the course of 1983, partly no doubt as a result of public protest, the first 5 months of '84 have seen an increase on the last 3 months of '83. The monthly average number of strip searches per woman strip searched for Oct-Dec '83 was just over 1.3, whereas for Jan-May '84 it has been 1.5 (see Hansard).

It is true, however, that the total number of strip-searches has fallen considerably, as has the number of women strip-searched. Recent statements by a woman in Armagh and another who was released in May also challenges Dr Wood's position. They claim that Governor Murtagh takes no notice of the views of the Board of Visitors, who in any case have been content to accept without question the officially logged number of searches, which they believe do not correspond to the true figure. Linda Quigley released in May, said that during the Christopher Black trial, 3 prisoners had been strip searched twice daily going to and from court. This happened five days a week for months.



JOANNE O'BRIEN

During her own 18 months in Armagh, Linda was strip searched going to court every time and on return. She was strip searched 7 times in the first week and even when she was being released.

But even if the frequency of strip searching were to be reduced, this would be small comfort to the women. Nothing short of a strict ban on strip searches would improve the situation. Women prisoners told women from Britain who visited them on the International Women's Day delegation to Armagh in March, that the fear in anticipation of being strip searched is as bad as the strip search itself. For many women who have been in Armagh, the experience has been a serious trauma with continuing psychological effects. Some women attribute missing periods to being strip searched. Things were made worse by Murtagh threatening, on March 9, to subject the women to random strip searches during cell searches, which would include *internal* examinations.

DELIBERATE SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

There can be no doubt but that the authorities, both in the prison, the NIO and the British government, are aware what a cruel weapon against the morale of political prisoners strip searching is, whether threatened or actual. It amounts to no less than a deliberate policy of sexual harassment.

The experience of a woman from the North who recently visited her political prisoner husband in England, underlines this view. Geraldine Quigley travelled to London to visit Tommy Quigley, currently on remand in Brixton prison charged with 'terrorist offences'. She was arrested outside Victoria station under the PTA and held for 24 hours. During this time she was subjected to no less than *three* strip searches, including one internal search of her anus. Needless to say, she was eventually released without charge.

On the question of police strip searches of women in England and Scotland, several cases have occured lately. Miners' wives arrested on picket lines in Nottinghamshire say they have been strip searched. Some Greenham women arrested at demonstrations have been strip searched, notably two women arrested at Alconbury in May. They were strip searched by an American officer at Huntingdon police station. Black women are frequently strip searched when arrested. Late last year members of the Sari Squad the Asian Women's Group which has campaigned very actively against deportations, were strip searched after being arrested for obstruction. One of the women was made to walk past a row of male officers in her petticoat.

The Police Bill, soon to become the Police Act, contains a power of intimate body search of vagina and anus, which can be carried out forcibly by a police officer. The time is overdue for people in Britain to protest at the sexual intimidation of women by British security forces, whether prison officers in Armagh, or police in Britain.

London Armagh Group

For further information and or a speaker, contact the L.A.G. c/o 52-54 Featherstone St London EC1

Solidarnosc with the British Miners

Two Solidarnosc Organisations in Poland have now come out in strong support of the NUM. We urge our readers to reproduce these messages of Solidarity and ensure that they reach the miners, despite the blockade on such news by the Tory media.

The first statement, from the underground leadership of Solidarnosc miners in Upper Silesia, Poland's main coal region, was issued on 17 June. The second resolution comes from Solidarnosc's inter-factory network in the Mazowsze region, which covers Warsaw and the surrounding towns. This statement, issued on 26 June and published clandestinely in the Warsaw Solidarnosc underground journal CDN, is being published for the first time in English by Labour Briefing.

An NUM picket is now outside the Polish Embassy in London, demanding an end to Jaruzelski's strike-breaking coal sales. Resolutions of protest should be sent to the Embassy demanding an end to all sales of Polish coal to Thatcher and calling for the rights of Solidarnosc to be restored in Poland. Such resolutions should be addressed to:

The Government of the Polish People's Republic,
c/o The Polish Embassy,
47, Portland Place,
London W1.

Oliver MacDonald



RESOLUTION BY UNDERGROUND SOLIDARITY IN MAZOWSZE REGION

For four months the British miners have been on strike against a programme of mass closures of mines for economic reasons. The miners are threatened with unemployment. The government has rejected compromise solutions and has resorted to severe police methods against the strikers. Thousands of miners have been arrested; hundreds have been hospitalised and one has been killed.

The government of the Polish People's Republic, despite hypocritical condemnations of the activities of the British police in the columns of the regime press and by the regime's pseudo-trade unionists, is profitting from the export of coal to Britain. It sells dirt cheap coal which has been mined in scandalously neglected working conditions and with reckless exploitation of the labour force and the coal field. The slave labour of the Polish miner serves to break the resistance of the British miner.

British miners! The true sentiments of Polish trade unionists towards the authorities of the Polish People's Republic and their practices was shown in the recent electoral farce which was boycotted by the workers. In the prevailing conditions of terror, the Polish workers' movement is at present not in a position to undertake protest actions. But you may be certain that as you have supported and are supporting our struggle, so we are in solidarity with you. We strongly oppose every case where force is used against workers struggling for their rights and interests.

Long Live Trade Union Solidarity!

Warsaw, 26 June 1984

RESOLUTION BY UNDERGROUND SOLIDARITY IN UPPER SILESIA

The following Solidarity Co-ordinating Committee statement was read out at 10 a.m. on Sunday 17 June by the Solidarity underground radio station in Upper Silesia, Poland's main coal-mining region.

'The Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarity miners vigorously protests against the present policy of the Polish People's Republic on the management of our major source of wealth — coal. Selling it on foreign markets at competitive prices (ie. at less than world market prices) is first of all a violation of the Jastrzebie Agreements (August 1980) in which it was clearly established that coal is a national resource which must be used rationally. The above-mentioned pricing policy transforms investment in the mines into a straight economic loss.

Secondly, the Polish government's policy blatantly contradicts official propaganda which declares respect for the miners' dignity and endeavour. Thirdly coal distribution and trade is organised outside of any social control. The Polish government has no right to behave like a mine-owner and to dispose of the national wealth as it pleases. Only the damned capitalists and dictators act in this way. Fourthly, the Polish government's policy in this field affects the basic interests of brother miners from other countries who lose their jobs as a result of it.

We hope the Party authorities and parliament — who say they represent the people — explain what is really going on.

To the striking miners of Great Britain: The Underground Provisional Co-ordinating Committee of Solidarity miners sends you fraternal greetings and our support and solidarity for your struggle for the right to work. We know from our own experience what it means to lose a job. For this reason we will do everything possible to support your struggle, including in action. The protest we have sent to the Polish government and parliament is an initial measure taken in support of your struggle.

Israeli Elections — No Change

The results of the July 13 elections (not yet announced as we go to press) will make little difference to the internal and external policies of Israel. The Israeli Labour Alignment, widely tipped to win, was in government continuously from 1948 to 1977. It launched the '67 War of Expansion and the military occupation of the West Bank/Gaza. It has pledged not to dismantle any of the existing West Bank settlements nor to accept a freeze on new settlements. Its major difference with Likud is that it will seek a solution with Jordan whereby the latter assumes responsibility for the heavily populated areas of the West Bank over the heads of the Palestinians. Both parties wish to keep the West Bank but without the 'problem' of the indigenous population. Israel is a 'Jewish' state, and one million extra Palestinians threatens this. The West Bank/Gaza will not be formally annexed as this would then mean either granting political and civil rights to the Palestinians or making the apartheid nature of Israel explicit.

In the Lebanon there is little reason to believe Labour will depart from the policy of de facto partition and the creation of a quisling fascist militia in the South. Thirty years ago Labour leaders Ben Gurion and Moshe Dayan plotted the destruction of Lebanon and the creation of a Maronite statelet. Similarly Israel's role as arms supplier to the Central American dictatorships, South Africa, South Korea etc will remain unchanged. Internally austerity will be the order of the day. Given the link between the ILP and the Histadrut, Israel's corporatist 'trade unions', Labour will almost certainly have more success in depressing living standards and increasing unemployment. Palestinians being the first to be sacked.

The Jewish Arab progressive list which



Labour Party Photo Library.

Shimon Peres , Leader of Israeli Labour

was initially banned has gained much publicity from that affair. It is unlikely to end up with more than a handful of seats and it will be in competition with the Civil Rights Movement of Shalumit Aloni which holds one seat at present and Rakah (Communist), which now has 50% of the Arab vote, and four seats. It is not an anti-Zionist party but by calling for a repeal of Israel's racist Law of Return on which the rest of Israeli apartheid rests (under it any Jew may emigrate to Israel and claim citizenship whereas Palestinians born there have no such right) it is challenging the fundamental tenets of the state. It is what David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, called Canaanite. Led by Irgun fighter and Matiyahu Peled, a reserve General, its impact outside Israel is greater than within.

Another party likely to pick up a few seats is Ezer Weizmann's centre list. Weizmann, a Defence Minister under Begin, resigned over settlement policy. Also standing for election is Israel's own Nazi Party — Kach (Thus). Also initially banned, Kach supports the terrorist attacks on West Bank Palestinians and calls for their deportation. It also calls for the imprisonment of Arab males having sexual intercourse with Jewish women. Led by Rabbi Meir Kahane, it failed to gain a seat last time. It will be interesting to see whether, 50 years after the Nuremberg Laws, Hitler's mentors gain their first seat in the Knesset (parliament). Another fascist party, Tehiya (Resurrection) gained three seats last time and was part of the government. It is likely to improve on its position at the expense of Likud. Nuval Ye'eman, its Minister of Science, openly supported Zionist settlers on trial for terrorist attacks which crippled two Arab mayors. It is in alliance with Raful Eitan, the ex-Chief of Staff, who called the Palestinians 'drugged cockroaches' and gave orders for Palestinians to be harrassed.

As Israel enters its 36th year so the Israeli far right continues to grow in strength from its base in the West Bank settlements. The 'left' of the ILP — Mapam — continues to shrink with only Rakah holding its own. One wonders what Ahad Ha'am, the cultural Zionist who saw Israel as becoming a beacon and spiritual centre for world Jewry, would make of it all. One thing is certain — Israel will continue as a settler colonial state watching over the interests of the West in the Middle East.

Tony Greenstein

Women fight cuts in South Wales

36 people are due in court in Port Talbot on August 7 for taking action against cuts in school transport. In carrying out Tory spending policy, Labour controlled West Glamorgan County Council has made cuts in the education budget, which means that 6,000 children will now have to walk to school or pay to get there. Babs Walters, a member of Glyncorrwg Labour Party, and of the Upper Afan Valley Campaign Against Cuts in School Transport gave Briefing this account of the campaign.

When we started to protest against West Glamorgan County Council's plans to cut the education budget they told us that their decision was final and could not be changed. But the women wouldn't have that and we protested every way we could. We had marches and lobbies, blocked roads, occupied the County Hall and some schools and we kept our children at home.

This led to the council offering a compromise – they would pay half the cost of the transport if we would pay and collect the other half. We would be prepared to pay half as a temporary measure but we won't collect it – that is the council's job. And we will continue to fight for free transport.

The roads they want the children to walk to school on have no pavements or lighting. It costs 75p a day to send a child from Glyncorrwg or Avergwynfi to school in Cymmer and we just can't afford it. So the protests will continue – we have no choice.

When we blocked the road at the Graig, Abergwynfi, the police tried to get a juggernaut to drive through us. Then they forced us in front of the lorry and we had to pull women out from under the wheels. I never believed the police could be so violent. Then they arrested six women for obstruction and took them away. So we sat down in the road and wouldn't move until they were brought back. People came from all over and joined us – there were over fifty by the time we went home.

Now thirty more have been summonsed and have been denied legal aid. Someone made a video of the demo and the police actions. It has been said that the police offered to drop the charges if the video was given to them. This is what we get for refusing to accept cuts that put our children's lives in danger.

The council should oppose all cuts, like Liverpool. I'm surprised at the support here for what Liverpool Council is doing. West Glamorgan has not consulted people – we aren't being told what is happening. The council should not carry out cuts whatever the consequences. People in the valleys are suffering from the cuts already. Support for Liverpool and similar action here would win votes, not lose them.

Asking people to vote Labour is not enough when what they see are Tory cuts being made by a Labour council, for whatever reason. Local Labour Party members will oppose the selection of council candidates who won't fight the cuts. We've lost votes for socialism in socialist areas because people couldn't see the difference between Labour and Tory. Labour needs to put forward a socialist view otherwise people will look for another party.

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