LONDON LABOUR 40p
BRIEFING
No 44 NOVEMBER 1984

IT'S WAR!

WAR HAS been declared on the whole trade union movement. The £200,000 fine on the NUM means that the entire working-class movement must be placed on a war footing from now on.

Our position on the 'law' is made clear in this issue of BRIEFING in statements on other pages. Basically, we are insisting that no ruling-class court can have any jurisdiction over the status – official or otherwise – of a strike. For these purposes, the highest 'courts' in the land are the TUC and Labour Party conferences, and in this case both have affirmed the official status of the miners' strike. Since the Tory High Court disputes this, it is a battle between our law and theirs. If we were to allow the NUM to be destroyed, then the Tories' 'law' would rapidly reveal itself to be naked class dictatorship – naked violence by the state to crush all opposition from the organised working class.

In this situation, we must not allow the trade union leadership to stand idly by while the strongest union in our movement is smashed. The Tories are bent on all-out class war. We must respond in kind – including preparing for general strike action should this course be forced upon us in the very near future. It is the trade union and Labour Party leaders who have the responsibility to act – but it is our task, too, to ensure that they are not allowed to evade this responsibility. Resolutions demanding general strike preparations must be passed up from the grass roots of every union to the top. The 'contempt' declarations being circulated by the Miners' Defence Committee are a useful means of measuring support and of mobilising to give adequate political expression to such industrial action as can be pledged or prepared.

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

An open letter to Ken Livingstone

Strategy for the GLC against rate-capping

Dear Ken,

We need to be clear about what our strategy is to be over the next five months in constructing next year's GLC budget in combatting rate-capping.

What is the Objective?

My objective in this whole operation is quite simple, to do all I can to maintain the GLC firmly opposed to the government, protecting services and refusing to make cuts. In this way we can contribute to a united front of Labour and trade union opposition to defeat the government and to hasten its downfall. In addition it is crucial that in the long term we maintain the credibility of our administration as a major left socialist advance. We must pursue therefore a policy of non-compliance with government demands for cuts in services.

Can we survive by complying but without cuts?

Some soft left local authority leaders are examining the possibility of using creative accountancy measures in order to comply with the government and survive into next year without making cuts. Although in previous years I have juggled with the GLC's finances to maximise the resources available for growth in our programmes I am strongly opposed to attempts to cook our books to cling onto office for a limited period and for little purpose. If we seek to cling onto office in this way we will eventually be led into the drying up of resources to maintain existing or develop new policy areas and then into cuts in services. We would have submitted to rate-capping and the government would have effectively gained direct control over us.

The whole point of our administration is that we are a challenge to the central capitalist state. To accommodate at this crucial stage would be to accept without challenge our subservience to Tory class rule.

In addition, in my view, to cling onto office by means of creative accountancy at this stage will be seen as an act of betrayal by us, leaving the boroughs isolated and vulnerable to being picket off by the government. The whole strategy of opposition to rate-capping supported publicly by ourselves, Ted Knight and other comrades has been to maintain a united front of non-compliance thus bringing about a crisis for the government faced with 6-10 rebellious local authorities. If we are seen to be acquiescing at the first point of conflict it will be a massive blow to the confidence of comrades in the boroughs. We must push the GLC into joining forces with them. For us to be able to use financial devices to stay in office it would necessitate the government turning a blind eye to these manoeuvres. The obvious motive for the government's complicity would be to divide us from our borough comrades and thus enabling Jenkin to put down easily the borough revolt.

The effect of a defeated, acquiescent GLC on the morale of the left in the long term is also an important consideration for me. We will undermine the confidence placed in us by hundreds of thousands of socialists throughout the country if we are seen to be capitulating to a Thatcherite government and breaking ranks with other socialist councils and ducking the fight with the government by cooking our books. It is the difference between our GLC being remembered as George Lansbury and Poplar or Marshall Petain and the Vichy government.

The balance of forces on the Labour Group.

The main problem in pursuing the policy of non-compliance with government demands for cuts is that we can expect some members of the GLC Labour Group to vote for cuts if faced with the threat of surcharge (exactly as they did on the fares issue). To ensure maximum support in the Group I will be laying motions at the Regional EC and proposing a standard resolution for CLPs endorsing non-compliance and asking those councillors not prepared to risk illegality to stand down to be replaced by a supporter of non-compliance. If the issue is not properly debated in the Party we will find that in late February or March when the crunch comes we will not have the clear understanding or support of even Party members let alone the public. The final decision within the Labour Group should also only be taken after there has been a consistent period of discussion within the Party and then a Party view arrived at to direct the action of Group members.

We can win.

I am confident that if the Party is fully involved we can hold the Labour Group firmly against cuts and in support of non-compliance. There are a range of tactical questions which the Party needs to discuss and on which the Party needs to mandate the GLC Labour Group. For example, the question of whether we fix a rate, (I support the refusal to fix a rate); whether we withhold debt charges to the banks (I consider this the best means of hitting the Tories where it hurts them most), how we mobilise the trade union movement more effectively (this has been a weakness of all previous campaigns).

The next five months is so crucial for us and the labour movement generally I felt it important to set out clearly the line I will be following so that even if there are differences between comrades they'll at least understand why.

Ralph Miliband's latest book "Capitalist Democracy in Britain" usefully describes how the political system is used effectively to suppress working class power and to ensure the survival of capitalist domination both by repression but also, more typically in the case of Britain, by absorbing class pressure and conflict. Local government has traditionally been part of the state mechanism for incorporating and thus defeating class challenges to capital. I feel that we have effectively used our administration to mobilise, strengthen and increase the confidence of both our Party and our class in combatting capital, opening up local government as a terrain of class struggle. We have been successful both in and against the State. We must not falter at this vital stage in the struggle.

Yours

John McDonnell
Deputy Leader of the GLC

ALL OUT NOVEMBER 7th

The Democracy for London Campaign (DFL) was formed in mid 1983 as a result of the Tories' manifesto pledge to abolish the GLC. The GLC/ILEA (non teaching) unions of which there are 16, decided for the first time to unite and initiate a campaign committee.

The Campaign committee has organised a number of events over the past 15 months including the 24th January strike with the Save ILEA Campaign. This day closed most GLC departments and ILEA schools and attracted over 20,000 people to march from Hyde Park to Jubilee Gardens.

Democracy day was a more 'qualified' success following so closely on the heels of January 24th as it did, but again many GLC/ILEA workers struck for the day.

The DFL has organised a number of mass shop steward conferences and produced a limited numbers of newsletters and leaflets. The DFL has also joined with SERTUC and GLATC to provide a briefing pack on the effects of abolition and rate-capping which is proving most useful and is available from DFL at a price of 60p (approx).

The campaign to assert the role of the GLC and challenge the undemocratic measures of the Tory government has largely gone on with DFL supporting in principle, but with little active participation, because it has been a propaganda and publicity exercise aimed at Peers and MPs.

THE NEXT PHASE

The next phase of the campaign, however, will be concentrating on jobs and services and in this, DFL's role must be central. Equally the policy has been to initiate the setting up of Joint Shop Stewards Committees, department by department and area by area. The JSSCs will be able to control the direction of the campaign and encourage rank and file members to participate more fully.

Also DFL is trying to spread the fight into the broader Labour movement and community, by explaining the knock-on effect on jobs and the deterioration of services.

DFL therefore has set itself the task of activating the GLC workforce out of its complacency by reminding members that:

(a) There will be few transfers to the London boroughs.
(b) Privatisation will be rampant.
(c) Direct Secretary of State financial control of joint boards will mean cuts.
(d) There will be no 'golden handshakes' and the jobs aren't for sale anyway.

JOINT CAMPAIGN

We have also taken on board the fight against Rate-capping and have joined with the London Bridge Committee to organise a joint campaign. (London Bridge Committee is the coordinating body for the Joint Union Campaign in the rate-cap hit list London Boroughs.)

At the moment DFL is building for a major stoppage and rally on November 7th. This will be the start of the campaign against the Tories final assault on the GLC and their attempt to introduce rate capping cuts.

November 7th is the date when local government workers must begin to draw together to build an effective fighting campaign. We cannot await the TUC's proposed re-run of Democracy Day as it will be too little and too late.

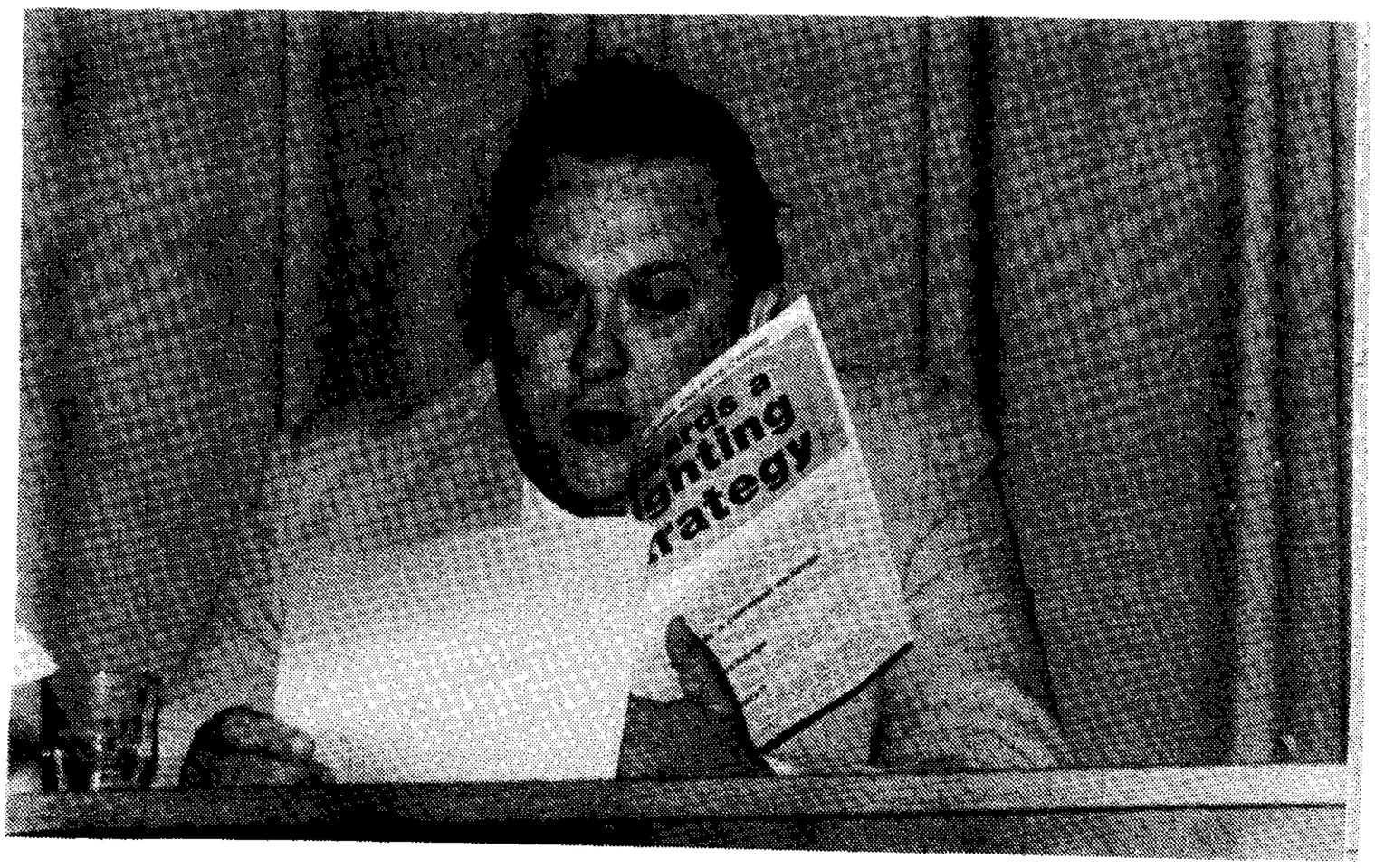
HIT LIST: SOUTHWARK RESPONSE

As the implementation of rate-capping gets nearer many people in the Labour Parties in Southwark are becoming increasingly concerned at the strategy of Not Fixing A Rate adopted by the Labour Group and LGC.

Briefing readers will be aware of the arguments against such a strategy. What has caused as much concern in Southwark is the way the decision has been arrived at. A paper, 'Towards a Common Strategy', by leader Tony Ritchie was brought back from the Sheffield Conference on ratecapping, agreed by the Labour Group and then pushed through the LGC 'as a basis for discussion' with only one speech allowed against, but with the promise of a Local Government Committee Conference on the issue, open to all members, as a sweetener.

WE WON'T LISTEN IF WE DON'T AGREE

When this LGC conference arrived its status as 'merely a consultative exercise' was stressed and its format was very suggestive of a rubber-stamping exercise. Despite being open to all party members it was not widely advertised and no Council union speakers were invited. The speakers on the platform were Tony Ritchie and Ted Knight, both Not-Fixing-A-Rate advocates. Despite this, the conference voted to reject this option and instead called for the adoption of a '3 noes/Deficit Budget' strategy, after an occasionally bizarre debate during which comrades Knight and Ritchie attempted to characterise deficit budgetting as a 'soft option'. Overall the standard of debate was high, however, and the non-viability of Not-Fixing-A-Rate as a fighting strategy was highlighted time and time again. Party members felt it was impossible to take such an unclear and ambiguous strategy out into the community and win people to it.



John Chapman

Southwark Council leader Tony Ritchie investigates 'Towards a Fighting Strategy', Peckham LPYS's leaflet supporting '3 noes'.

The leadership's response to the conference decision appears to be to ignore it and carry on exactly as before. Emergency motions supporting the 3 noes strategy are now being taken to wards, but the situation does not look hopeful. No serious action to involve the local community in building an effective campaign against rate-capping appears to have been taken. Indeed the Council ignoring tenants' demands and attacking those at the butt-end of Tory cuts – namely squatters. The possibility of building genuine unity with the community in a fight against the government is therefore being sacrificed for the sake of maintaining unity between the leaderships of hit-list authorities.

THE WAY FORWARD

The only way out of this situation seems to be for the parties in other boroughs to demand that their councils adopt 3-no's strategies. If a groundswell of popular support for this option can be created it may be possible to swing authorities like Southwark round. It would I think be better to have even a minority of hit-list councils seriously fighting the Tories than to have total unity on a weak strategy which will allow the government to characterise Labour Councils as high-rating and force them into selling out.

As far as Southwark goes, apart from the need for the Left to stop licking its wounds and start organising itself properly again, it's time the Council leadership and LGC were reminded of party democracy and the fact that policy is supposed to grow from the grass roots, not be imposed from on high by our 'wise leaders'.

Chris Bright
Faraday Ward, Peckham CLP

November 7th is tactically and strategically correct. Support local government workers, join the action, join the rally.

Jimmi Fitzpatrick
Secretary, DFL

It is hoped that all major public sector unions in the GLC/ILEA and London Boroughs will join the Day of Action. Make sure your union is there.

STRIKE AND RALLY

NOVEMBER 7TH

AGAINST ABOLITION AND RATECAPPING

DEFEND JOBS AND SERVICES

ASSEMBLE 11am Burgess Park
MARCH to Jubilee Gardens
RALLY 2pm Festival Hall

DEFEND THE GLC

Did you know that. . .

- The Government plans to abolish the GLC
- The Government has cancelled your democratic elections to the GLC
- The Government plans to give the GLC services to unelected Boards and civil servants
- The Government plans to cut GLC services.
- The Government will introduce the main abolition bill in the coming session of Parliament.

WHOSE LONDON IS IT ANYWAY?
JOIN THE LOBBY OF PARLIAMENT

THURSDAY 8th NOVEMBER
Central Hall, Westminster
2.30 to 7.00pm

Tell *your* MP what you think of these crazy plans.

PENSIONERS: Will be given lunch at County Hall from 12.30 and given transport to the Lobby.

WOMEN will be provided with a creche so that they can join a special women's lobby between 2.30 and 3.30. There will also be a women's rally at Central Hall, Westminster from 2.30.

RING 633 4400 for further details.

VITAL BY-ELECTION, Thursday October 25.
Last Chance to vote against Rate-Capping.
By-election in St. George's Ward, Tufnell Park.
Committee Room: 60 Crayford Road, N7.
Tel: 607-/887.
Candidate – Peter Rees.
Agent – Keith Veness
Committee Rooms on election day:
60 Crayford Road, N7.
20 Penderyn Way, N7.
22 Dalmeny Road, N7.
Canvassing: 6.30 pm Mon-Fri.
10.30 am Sundays.

STANDING WITH THE MINERS

By Chris Lent (Streatham CLP)

On 19 August, five members of Streatham Labour Party went on a delegation to the striking miners of Nottinghamshire. We are writing this article to urge members of other groups and organisations to do the same.

Along with many Londoners, we've spent the last 25 weeks collecting on the streets, organising public meetings, giving food and money. But after attending the women's march and rally on 11 August, and talking to miners at ward meetings (who told us that Nottinghamshire Labour Councillors were crossing picket lines), some of us decided that money alone is not enough.

Nottinghamshire is perhaps most in need of outside support because the striking miners are a beleaguered minority — some 2,000 against 14,000 scabs. Like any community suddenly divided, the people are in a state of shock. But for the strikers at least, that sense is deepened by the treatment they face at the hands of the police.



Sydney Richmond

Above: A small police snatch squad made up of members of the Notts and Gloucestershire constabularies. Minutes later they had pounced into the crowd of pickets and dragged someone away – apparently for no reason.
Below: Ollerton. Strikers' children in the soup kitchen at Whinney Road. This is where your money is going!



OUTRAGEOUS

The police operation in Nottinghamshire is outrageous. It could almost be Belfast; it could easily be Brixton. And among local people the connections *are* being made. By oppressing a community whose roots lie deep within the 'respectable' white working class, the police have radicalised the miners to an impressive degree. NCB-owned cottages are now festooned with 'Stop the Police State' posters. Women go on picket lines and marches, swapping their 'traditional' roles with the men who stay at home and look after the kids. A 'Mines Not Missiles' march (20 arrests) led by Greenham Common Women arrived in Mansfield from Liverpool while we were there. But this process of politicisation cannot and will not last without support from outside. The pressures of tradition are too great. Despite the activism of the women, for example, it is they who are left to run the soup kitchens.

We stayed in small village 7 miles east of Junction 27 of the M1 called Blidworth. The colliery dominates the centre with small houses laid out around it in grids. Only half the miners are on strike, which means that in their company you are barred from certain pubs and shops, shunned in the streets and occasionally abused. The strikers are denied access to the local NUM welfare centre and have to meet in a community hall next to the colliery. Police officers patrol outside and scrutinise us as we eat our morning baked beans on toast. If there is any intimidation in Blidworth, it is the strikers and their families who suffer it.

The village is most famous for the 'siege of Blidworth'. On 14 May, police broke into homes and forced their way into back gardens in Thorney Abbey Road in order to arrest Yorkshire picket leader Terry Dunn and others who were staying there. Seventy police vans and 1,000 officers then remained in the streets all night harassing residents over the loss of one police torch!

Things have been pretty quiet in Blidworth since then. Picketing is small and informal, with little shouting and only the occasional wry joke or ebuke as the scabs go unhappily into work. At least they do not look proud to be crossing the picket line.

It's hard work being on strike. The morning shift at the colliery starts at 6 am. The pickets are there by 5, and stay until 6.30. We then back to watch Breakfast TV until the strike centre opens at around 7.30 am. If you don't think the media is biased you should watch Nick Ross and Selina Scott in a front room in Blidworth. It's not just the glee with which they report the so-called 'drift back to work'; or the vocabulary they use to describe the violence in Yorkshire. Their whole manner and style of presentation belies a huge gulf in social and ethical values between them and the people whose

Brent Miners' Support Group

Support for the miners in Brent is as strong as ever. So far nearly £74,000 has been collected in the area — the highest in London. Further fund-raising activities are underway including an auction and a bonfire benefit, both organised by Brent South Labour Party. Money is being collected regularly at workplaces and union meetings. Food convoys are sent to Kent every month. Every Saturday morning groups of supporters collect in all the major shopping centres in Brent.

The recent harassment and arrests of street collectors has led to protests from all sections of the labour movement and an uneasy truce has been negotiated between the police and the miners' support group. The police will allow us to collect if we restrict our numbers, have lids on our buckets, do not rattle out tins and 'sell' *The Miner* instead of just asking for donations. Plain clothes police are known to be watching us. In the meantime the court cases of those arrested have been adjourned till a later date. At Cllr Graham Durham's hearing on 8 October, a request was made by his solicitor to have the £36 returned that was in Graham's collecting bucket at the time of his arrest. After much consultation among the two magistrates, the lawyers and the clerk of the court, with much reference to law books, the money was returned — but the police have been allowed to hang on to the bucket!

SWITCH ON AT SIX

The last two weeks in October will see workplace visits of delegations of black miners from Nottinghamshire and women's support group from Kent. Good links were established with the black miners during the Notting Hill Gate Carnival. Co-operation between the Trades Council and the Labour Parties in Brent in support of the miners continues — a fairly new venture in the area's history. Support committee meetings can sometimes get a bit heated but at least this means that political discussion does take place. Over the next period the support committee wants to highlight the 'Switch on at 6' campaign and to ensure that trade unionists do not co-operate with fuel saving schemes at work. Supporters from London are going down to picket lines in Kent every Monday.

There has been some concern raised in our Support Group (which is linked to the Kent area) about other areas coming onto 'our patch'. Hopefully this can be resolved in the near future, since it is really an internal NUM issue, but it has led to difficulties. It is hard to say no to miners who turn up at your GMC with heart-rending tales about their conditions. Miners and their families everywhere are facing appalling hardships but they are determined to fight on until they have won. That is why we have to give unconditional support to the miners. That is why the Labour Party must throw its full weight behind the strike.

Tessa van Gelderen
Brent South CLP

STANDING WITH THE MINERS (continued)

homes they have so smoothly entered.

The next shift comes on at around noon, with pickets assembling by 11.30 am. On our first day, we decided to go to Ollerton for the midday picket, 10 miles north of Blidworth. We had to pass through three police roadblocks to get there. They let us through — probably because we don't look much like miners. But we saw others being turned back. And far worse than that has happened.

Sidney Richmond is a 70 year old retired miner form Clipstone. He was stopped at a roadblock because he was wearing an NUM badge. When he refused to get out of his car, police dragged him out, hit him in the face, and handcuffed him so tightly that it aggravated the thrombosis he suffered in his wrists. He literally began sweating blood through the palms of his hands. When his son — who is not a miner — came to take him to hospital, he was arrested. Both men are now suing the police.

When we finally get to Ollerton, we visited the welfare centre, which is the unofficial HQ of the strike in Nottinghamshire. Here food parcels are distributed; meals provided; and a law centre, staffed by volunteers from the Haldane is busy five days a week.

DEFIANCE

The general mood is one of cheerful defiance. The miners are happy to meet visitors and anxious to talk. The main concern is for the children. School is starting soon and people report that they have been denied adequate clothing grants because they are on strike.

The next day we joined our first mass picket, at Mansfield colliery. You usually hear about these at very short notice through a strikers' grapevine. In a community where the majority are against you there is little room for trust. A sign at Blidworth reads: 'The walls have ears. So do the cops. Keep picket targets secret'.

The police find out about it soon enough, however. To avoid being stopped we had to park half a mile away, split up, and go through on foot.

The sheer scale of the police presence is the most nerve-racking aspect of a mass picket. We were herded together on a small patch of waste ground and completely surrounded. Once you've joined the picket, you are trapped. The police will not let you leave until *they* are ready. On this occasion they kept us for 1½ hours under a ferociously hot sun. After a small amount of pushing at one end of the picket, a squadron of police horses appeared from nowhere to reinforce the line.

The strikers are as scared as we are. No one is in any doubt as to what the police are capable of. No one is looking for trouble. They come because they believe in their cause, and because they believe they have a *right* to picket.

Bob Cooper is there. A Durham miner who moved to the Notts region 3 years ago in search of 'job security' — he laughs bitterly — he was badly beaten up by police at Orgreave: truncheoned on the head and knees; trampled by a police horse. He was back on the picket line the next day — on crutches and in a neck brace. Like Sidney Richmond, his is one of 12 writs issued against 2 Chief Constables on 20 August.

Above and behind us on an embankment stand a row of snatch squads, who dive in — apparently at random — to pull people out of the crowd. Just like fish in a barrel. There are three arrests on this picket. The casual display of violence by the police — a boot here, an elbow there — as they drag people away, is nothing short of appalling.

There have been over 5,000 arrests so far during the strike, mainly on the spurious charges of 'obstruction', 'threatening behaviour', 'breach of the peace' etc.

The intention behind the police strategy is plain: to harass and intimidate pickets; to take as many out of circulation as possible. People have been held in custody for hours, or even days, and then released without charge. There is even an 'NUM charge centre' specially set aside at Mansfield police station.

Those who come up before the magistrates are routinely placed under conditional bail until their cases are due to be heard. Conditions range from a simple prohibition of picketing, to curfews, to virtual house arrest. If you break these conditions, you are in danger of re-arrest and remand.

This has led to some ludicrous situations. One striker who was told not to visit the home of any working miner for the duration of the dispute, ended up camping in his own back garden because his father, who lives with him, is a working miner! Other people have been prevented by the police from taking their children to school because of the proximity of the colliery.

We were finally dispersed by the police shortly before one o'clock. We were marched away from the pit entrance like a large gang of prisoners. We went back to the welfare centre for lunch and spent the rest of the day talking to miners. The next morning, the routine began all over again.

It's not for us to say how much practical help our visit was. The strikers were undoubtedly pleased to see us. They took us into their homes. They shared their hopes and fears with us. They treated us as friends.

The position of the strikers is an unenviable one. They have been outlawed. Their sole 'crime' is that they object to an aspect of the government's industrial policy. But there is a growing awareness in Nottinghamshire that they are not alone in their plight. All over the country other groups are oppressed because they too are against various aspects of government policy: black people; the Catholic community of Northern Ireland; gay people; the Peace Movement.

Go up to Nottinghamshire. It's only 2 or 3 hours away. You could be making a major contribution to British democracy.

Greenwich backs the miners



Greenwich, now the closest Labour constituency to the Kent coalfields, has had strong connections with Kent miners since the 1974 strike. As soon as the present strike began it set up an office for the NUM in its Woolwich Road rooms, and stationed around 50 miners in party members' homes. It called a 1,000-strong demonstration in support of the strike, set up regular benefit concerts, and instituted the 50p levy even before the National Executive discussed it. Its weekly support committee meetings were established by the second month of the strike.

The Labour council, which also covers the constituencies of Woolwich and Eltham, was slower off the mark but has not taken a series of very important steps, which have galvanised a new round of activity to a great degree thanks to the hard and consistent work put in by the town hall trade unions, whose town hall support committee has met weekly for most of the strike. The council has agreed to put collection points in all council sites and has made a room available for use by the NUM.

On September 8th the council twinned with Easington Town Council in a public ceremony in Woolwich's main square, watched by a 1,000-strong crowd, most of whom had come on the Labour Party's march from Abbey Wood, and who included 70 Durham miners — with their colliery band — and about 50 Kent miners. Following the twinning, the council has seconded a full-time union appointee to its campaigns unit and established a regular liason commitee, attended by the council leader, which links up all the various support activities in the borough and co-ordinates them with council's work.

This is not to say there haven't been problems. A small number of hard-working activists have tended to leave the majority of party members to come to demos and dance at bops as their 'contribution', while street collections have been patchy and irregular, the most consistent collections being organised by the Communist Party. In some areas Labour Party 'street presences' have discretely refrained from publicising the miners' case or collecting for them.

If those concerned are worried that association with the miners could damage the party's standing, they should take a look at the recent council by-election result on the Ferrier Estate, where local candidate Serena Lovelace trounced the SDP's aspiring parliamentary candidate Bill Ford by 800 to 500. Over the last six months Greenwich's wards have grown by between ten and fifty per cent, and the CLP is already within reach of Walworth Road's 1984 membership drive target — even before launching its drive.

Nevertheless it will be vital to extend the numbers *actively* involved in collections, and also to take political initiatives against the criminalisation of the miners and the legal attacks on them, to play an adequate part in winning the strike. The recently-formed Greenwich Briefing has taken two useful steps. It has established a Women Against Pit Closures group, which is taking some 40 women down to meet Aylesham women on 18 October. And the most recent Briefing meeting heard Martin Walker, a co-author of 'State of Siege' (published and financed by Greenwich NALGO) and a council worker with Greenwich's Police Committee, talk on the role of the police in the strike. Of particular concern is the use of Greenwich peninsular area as a London-wide training ground for police training in riot tactics including, it is rumoured, banned anti-riot devices.

Greenwich borough's labour movement is well placed to face this challenge. Let us hope its elected representatives have the courage to do so.

LEWISHAM EAST ON "WAR FOOTING"

Lewisham East Constituency Labour Party has recognised that we are in a class war situation, and has responded by putting itself on a kind of 'war footing' where action on the miners is concerned. An appalling situation of paralysis, crossed lines, and committee-itis had led to 14 miners stationed in the Town Hall being left isolated and alone to try to cope – with little success – with the obstructive attitudes of the Town Hall bureaucracy. To cut a long story short, we resolved to cut through all the red tape. At our General Management Committee meeting on October 5th, we elected a single individual to act as the custodian of the GC's authority with full powers of instruction (consistent with the mandating structure of the Labour Party) to ensure that the miners' demands were met. A single member of the Labour Group was likewise appointed to convey to Group any instructions received from the three CLPs or from the Borough Local Government Committee.

Chris Knight, (Lewisham East CLP.)

Brent South CLP Miners' levy

SINCE we started our levy at the beginning of May we have raised over £3,300. Most of this has been raised through members, the rest through fund raising events such as jumble sales, barbecues and raffles. We have a major event on 3rd November taking place at the New Hall, Union Road, Wembley, Middlesex at 3 pm. This will be a public auction of Labour Party interest, NUM items and quality general interest items such as a photographic enlarger. Viewing will start at 1 pm, all proceeds will go to the NUM. If anyone has any items to donate please ring either myself on 452 4553 or Penny Witham on 965 2964. The more items donated will mean more money for the NUM. Don't forget to come to the Sale!

Peter Batkin,

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

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Housing Peace Camp In Southwark

"FIGHT THE TORIES, NOT THE HOMELESS!' demanded the Housing Peace Camp which sprang into action on Southwark Town Hall lawn and TV screens on Oct 8-12th.

The week-long round the clock initiative was organised by the Tenants And Squatters Campaign of Southwark to counter the hysterical squat-bashing campaign being conducted by South London Press, Hughes Liberal MP for Bermondsey and sections of the Council; and to stop the Council leadership's plan to bring in the iniquitious "PIO" procedure of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (known as the 'Criminal respass Law') against homeless people who have to squat.

TENANTS BACKING

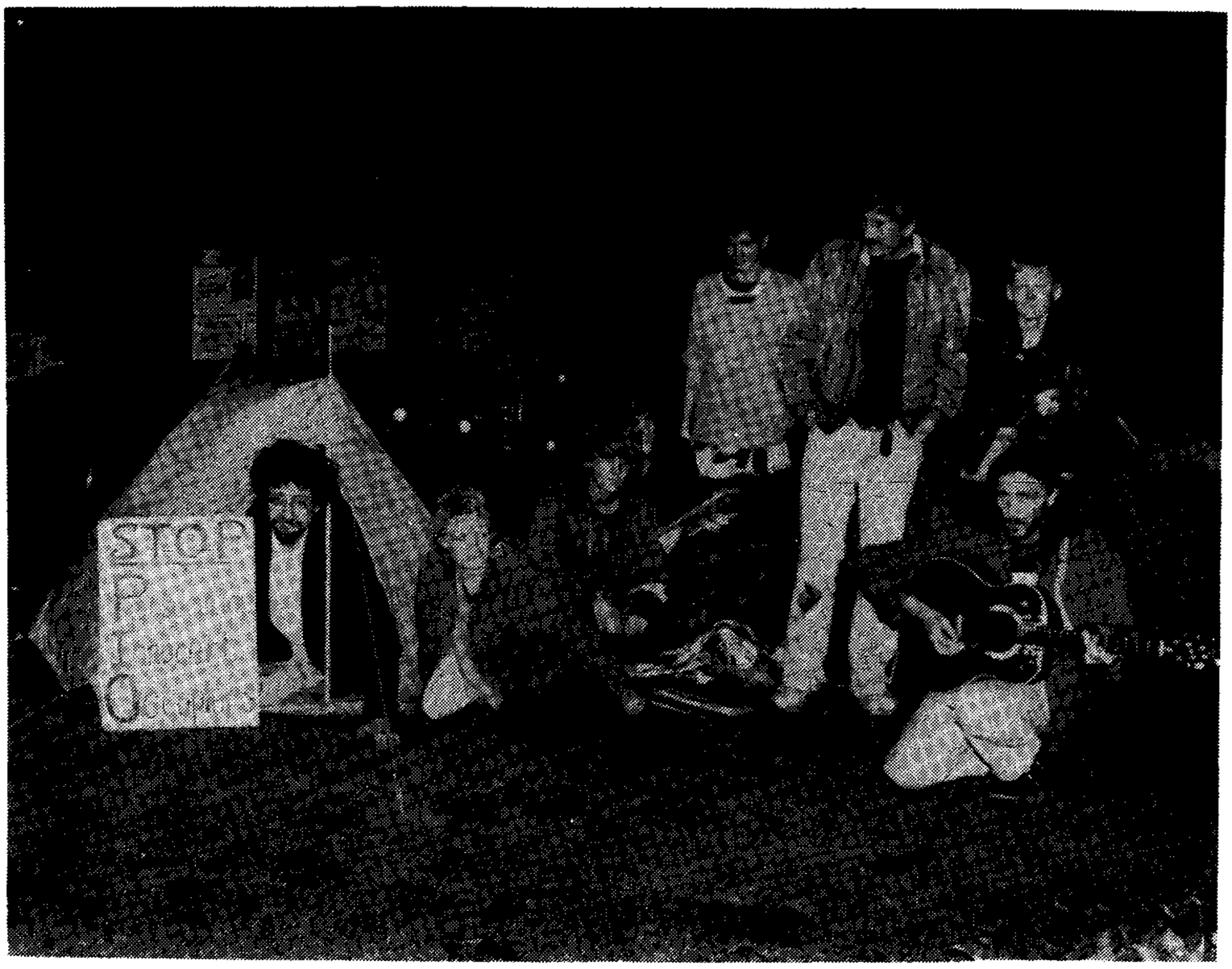
The camp was actively backed by two of the tenants representatives on the Housing Committee as well as many active tenants, squatters and Labour Party members. Passing tenants eagerly signed the petition opposing use of 'PIOs', and calling for the reintroduction of 'Hard-to-let' scheme whereby older properties are rented out more easily and many squatters would get tenancies.

Southwark has more empty properties than any other Borough. For tenants empty property is a more important issue than squatting.

LIES EXPOSED

Housing Peace Camp leaflets exposed the recent media/Council/Hughes bogey story of a family who supposedly squatted in a flat allocated to someone else. The TRUTH is the Council sent round a supposed intending occupier two weeks after the flat had been occupied by a family running from a violent husband who had first checked with the Council that no-one had agreed to move in..

However after a heated debate the Labour Group voted on Wed 10th to criminalise the homeless by introducing the Criminal Trespass Law. This is despite the fact it has been opposed by the Labour movement since its inception and despite the fact that it can only be used against the vast majority of squats in an illegal way by the creation of bogus 'PIOs' and their creation has already been exposed in a number of instances. PIO is meant to stand for Protected Intending Occupier but in practice it means PERSECUTION OF INNOCENT OCCUPIERS.



John Chapman

The Housing Peace Camp starting up. Police and Town Hall officials threatened intervention but backed off when 'campers' advised they were a land squat like Greenham Common and a High Court order 113 was needed to remove them. One of their number, a Greenham woman reinforced this point.

The concept of the PIO law was created to create divisions between all of those who are in need of better housing and to enable those who take direct action over housing to be scapegoated. Its practical use need only amount to verbal threats of police intervention to terrorise people out of their homes.

UNITY AGAINST THE TORIES

If Southwark is going to fight the Tories it must unite all deprived groups, not attack them. However the Council seems unwilling or unable to tackle the borough's housing problems: empty property, poor repairs and allocations system and a bureaucratic and unresponsive housing department; and instead is bashing squatters as a supposedly popular measure. This will NOT encourage a fight against the Tories and will NOT help in the next Council elections.

Fight the hatemongers not the hate objects! Fight the real criminals in our society, don't criminalise the homeless! **Fight the Tories not the Homeless.**

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP and a tenants rep on Southwark Housing Committee

Westminster Council Housing Under Threat

Tory controlled Westminster City Council plans to deal with its housing crisis by selling off its best blocks of council flats to private developers. Probing by Labour councillors on the housing committee forced the Tories to divulge the scheme somewhat prematurely.

The first development under threat is Wellesley House on the Ebury Bridge Estate, but more are to follow. Already private property speculators have been spotted in the area sniffing out the possibilities of quick profits for themselves and their fellows in the City of London. No doubt the Westminster City Tories can look forward to handsome donations from its grateful supporters among property sharks.

Meanwhile other council properties are being left to rot because the Tories refuse to spend money on proper repair and maintenance on those estates which are of no interest to private developers. No new council houses are being built and the waiting list, already at 20,000, continues to grow. Few, if any, of those on the list will ever be housed. The situation is desperate.

WESTMINSTER LABOUR COUNCILLORS

The Westminster Labour Councillors are trying to organise a fight back. A campaign has been launched against the Tory plans. One meeting has already been held and others are planned to alert the voters of Westminster to the danger. Meanwhile the tenants are being helped to organise against the threat to their homes and the local government unions are being mobilised to help in the fight.

The only positive side to the housing catastrophe in Westminster is the ammunition it provides for the local Labour parties in their fight to drive Lady Porter and her neanderthal Thatcherites into the wilderness at the next local government elections and the political experience the threatened tenants are gaining in organising themselves to resist the privatisation of their homes.

Paula Watson

Problems on the London Executive

'For a couple of hours on Monday afternoon, Labour became a working class party', was how one political observer described the debate on the miners' strike at Annual Conference.

From the Monday Club to the RCP, no-one has any doubts that the miners' strike is the single most important thing happening in Britain today. All other struggles have become dependent upon its outcome. If the miners lose, the fight against ratecapping and the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan counties will be that much harder. If the miners lose, organising opposition to Tory trade union legislation and the attacks on the political levy will be a massive task. Yet the agenda for a meeting of the London Labour Party's Campaign Committee less than a week after Conference manages to make no mention of the strike.



Tessa Howland (IFL)

LEFT IN A MAJORITY

The left has been in a majority on the Greater London Regional Council (GLRC) for a number of years. It has achieved much, particularly through its control of the GLC. But when asked to write on what the left can achieve at a regional level those past achievements have to be weighed against the present and the question is unavoidable: why has the GLRC not led the way in building solidarity for the miners in London?

In writing this I am conscious that what I write is very London-centric and that, while London is looked to by many on the left (the ones not looking to Liverpool), it is very different to other Labour Party regions and the tasks and traps facing the left in London may not be the same elsewhere. With the possible exceptions of Scotland and Wales, London is the only region which has a clear identity, a specific constituency and a major council – the GLC – to carry out its policies. It has major communications and transport advantages over other regions and organising region-wide initiatives is relatively easy.

Yet during the miners' strike the left has backed away from using the Party's regional structure to forge solidarity. The GLRC has been used solely as a sounding board and mailing list for activities taking place elsewhere. At the beginning of the strike, major rallies were organising in north and south London – the GLRC supported them, but in name only. CLPs have organised demonstrations, collections, socials. London borough councils have twinned with mining villages, provided hospitality, opened up their libraries and town halls as food collection points. The GLC has raised money in all sorts of imaginative ways and provided a variety of facilities. London trade unions have raised thousands of pounds; trade union resource centres have lived up to their name; and even the South East Region TUC has ground its cumbersome bureaucracy into activity. Yet comrades who have been leading these activities in every other political arena have not used the GLRC as an organising body. A couple of bulletins have been produced, exhorting CLPs to collect the levy – but very little else has been done.

ABDICATE RESPONSIBILITY

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee argue that the regions need an organisational upheaval before they can become campaigning bodies; most of their proposals for organisational change make sense – regional organisers are not campaigners, their job is to win elections and police the CLPs. But the very real problems of the organisation at regional level are no excuse for the left on the Executive appearing to abdicate responsibility for attempting to force that body into action.

During the brief six months I have been on the Regional Executive, the GLLP has fought the Euro-elections and four GLC by-elections, it has discussed at length strategies for councils fighting ratecapping and manifestos for the next GLC elections when the fight against abolition is won. At one level it looks as though it is doing a good job. But a close look at that list also shows its limitations – its main concerns are fighting elections and local governmen.. If other aspects of the class struggle don't fit into these categories, they get squeezed out.

Whilst much of that squeezing out is done by the regional staff, I believe the left must take responsibility for having allowed the GLRC to adopt such a limited role. Over the past four years, the GLC has become the key focus for activity. The left is rightly proud of what it had been able to achieve. But in focussing on the GLC, the left has lost sight of what else needs to be done. It may be easier to get GLC officers rather than regional staff to implement policies, but this has led to the GLC Labour Group becoming a substitute for the London Labour Party. The miners' strike has exposed the political shortcuts which have been taken. The GLC has won the support of 74% of Londoners; but what percentage of support for the miners has the GLC won?

My thoughts on the limitations of the left on the Regional Executive in relation to the miners clarified themselves at its last meeting. Two motions were on the agenda. One called for a delegation to join picket lines in Nottinghamshire – the debate was desultory and, while a few volunteered to join the delegation, there was no real feeling that the motion would produce the desired effect of galvanising the Executive into action. The debate was not used as a focus for other ideas for activity to be thrown up.

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The second motion led to a much more heated debate for two reasons. Firstly, because the General Secretary thought it was asking the GLRC to actually *do* something, and, secondly, because it came from the Women's Committee. We are organising a major benefit concert for the miners and using it as a focus for organising Women's Sections' activities. It is the only event in support of the miners which has been organised in the name of the London Labour Party. We asked the GLRC to support it. Panic set in. Where's the money coming from? Who's doing the work? What if it flops? The implications were clear – a bunch of women had dreamt up a madcap scheme and were forcing

Defending London's Education, Reject All Cuts!

Everyone concerned with London's education realised that this year is the crucial one for its continued existence as we have known it. Therefore the basis from which we should start any campaign is the need to create unity amongst the elected members, its workers, and the users of the service.

However, there seems to be an acceptance from the leadership in County Hall that the government can and will manage to defeat any campaign which the trade union and labour movement organises to defend jobs and services in London. This comes across initially in the ILEA Budget 1985-6 Consultation document, where the underlying theme is how can we make cuts with the least possible effect on the service.

Of course there are some worthy statements contained in the document such as 'We believe the quality of London's education needs improving' or 'This (£75m) is a substantial reduction and it could not be achieved without affecting schools, colleges and youth, careers and adult education services . . .'

However, what are the alternatives put forward for us to consider? *Option A* — Compliance with government expenditure level — a cut of £75 million. *Option B* — A budget agreed by the ILEA — which includes new developments and some cuts, indicated in Annex B of the document by one and two asterisks. The cuts indicated in Option B total in excess of £9m and would result in a loss of 714 full time equivalent jobs.

The Authority says that the new developments outlined in Annex A may offset the job losses in Annex B. However, a study of the areas for new development do not correspond with the areas to be cut, and still could involve job losses of over 500. This could have the effect of creating disunity between one trade union and another — one group fighting loss of jobs and deteriorating conditions, with another group of workers seeing the possibility of an increase in their sector.



Stefano Cagnoni (IFL)

FATAL SPLIT

More importantly however, it will create a fatal split between the unions and the Authority. Such a development would be absolutely fatal to the whole campaign to defend education in London. The ILEA Labour Group must reject *any* cuts — there is no point in making 'a saving of a less serious nature' in order to appear 'responsible'. The Tories couldn't care less. Ken Livingstone said at an election organised by Westminster NUT that he would vote for a 'no cuts budget' even of this were deemed illegal.

The NUT is not alone in making it clear that they are opposed to cuts of any kind and are prepared to fight alongside the Authority on a no-cuts position. The trade unions involved in the 'Save the ILEA Campaign' are organising a strike on 7th November — the Labour Group have not yet made clear their attitude to this call, but are organising for a lobby of Parliament on 8th November. Are we going down different paths?

The Inner London Teachers Association (NUT) have written to Constituency Labour Parties and the ILEA members outlining our position on the Budget. We hope that our request to speak to wards and CLPs will be taken up and give us the opportunity to put our case.

Carole Regan
Inner London Teachers Association

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the London Labour Party into action.

The Executive divided into its component parts – the trade unions, worried about money and political funds, they'd given everything to the miners already, the London LP was not the channel they were using – the male left, staring at their hands, pretending not to be there – and the women, who increasingly have been using the Women's Committee as their uniting focus, regardless of whether their position on the Executive is from the women's sections, the CLPs or the trade unions. When it came down to it the left had been unable to take on a unifying role across all sections of the Executive. If the trade union section did not wish to use the Party to organise around a trade union issue, other areas – like the GLC, which could relate to SERTUC on an institutional level – could be used. But this meant that those of us on the Executive who were not councillors or trade union bosses (ie. most of the women) were left unsupported.

The London left has fallen into two traps. It has assumed that it can use control of the GLC and a number of London boroughs as a substitute for organising the London Labour Party; and, while assuming it controls the Regional Executive, it has failed to attempt to make inroads into the trade union section. Thus when we are confronted with a major industrial dispute, the left has used many of the forums it controls but at the level where it has the strongest interaction with the London trade union movement, it has left it to the industrial wing of the Party, which in turn is concentrating on trade union structures, not the Party. Women tend to be less bound by tradition and political niceties. Those of us on the Executive tend to have fewer other forums we control (unlike the men), and we saw no reason why we shouldn't organise solidarity at a regional level and demand *all* sections of the Party support our actions. And as a consequence the limitations of the left – the male left – stood revealed.

What is ironic is that the NUM is far less hesitant about breaking down the separation of political and industrial. They did not hesitate in giving support at Conference to Black Sections and the demands of the women's organisation, unlike a leading London trade unionist who saw these as marginal diversions from 'organising the left' and whose union then supported the right wing in the Women's Section of the NEC.

The miners' strike has revealed that the left in London still has a long way to go – it has to stop concentrating on electoralism and local government; it has to start breaking down the separation of the industrial and political wings of the movement and stop organising in just one of those wings; and it has to stop assuming (still) that the left (and the working class) is male, white and heterosexual. Women are organised on the Executive, the 'left' as a whole is not.

Of course, one of the strengths of the London left is that it recognises most of these problems. The GLC's record of support for women, black people and lesbians and gays is second to none. The energy that has had to be put into the fight to save the GLC has, unsurprisingly, restricted work in other areas. And, let's face it, doing things in the name of the London Labour Party carries little weight compared with other forums that can be used.

However, the GLRC and the other regional councils should carry weight and bring together all sections of the movement and the left's task must be to ensure that they do. We cannot afford not to provide leadership within the Party at every level, and that leadership is all the more desperately needed as the class struggle moves into centre stage.

Joan Twelves

THE ISSUE IS SERVICES—NOT SURCHARGE

In the impending local government confrontation it is the socialist councillors in the rate capped Boroughs who are seen as providing the opposition to the Government. It is vital, if the conflict is to be won, that the emphasis of the opposition to the Government's proposals is switched away from the councillors to the communities in the affected Boroughs.

When Liverpool faced up the Government, earlier this year, the media attention, was focussed on the internal machinations within the Council. Much discussion also revolved around the possibility of the councillors being surcharged. When a settlement was reached the analysis of the outcome was almost entirely related to how well the councillors had done in bringing about a climbdown by the Government (albeit a limited one). The fact that the settlement still meant the community in Liverpool suffered through reduced living standards because of large increases in the rents and rates and through lost job opportunities raised hardly a mention.

I am not making this point to criticise the Liverpool Labour Group; indeed on the contrary I believe it was their stand that has enabled there to be such unity in support of confrontation now. The lesson to be learnt is that where the battle is simply between the Government and Labour councillors it is the councillors who decide when the terms are right for a settlement. Those terms may not be so acceptable to those in the community who face the consequences.

Imagine the following scenario. In my own Borough, Lewisham, we need in the region of £8m more from the Government in the form of Rate Support Grant if we are to meet the costs of our no cuts budget, without any rent increase. If we were to adopt the Government's expenditure limit we would have to cut our budget by 15%, including 1,000 job losses. Say our Labour Group refused to make a rate in March 1985 and then in early June, the Government offered £5m in additional RSG. It would take a brave person to bet that a majority of the Labour Group, facing the prospect of surcharge and bankruptcy on the one hand, as against a major victory against the Government and only having to implement 7% worth of cuts on the other, would vote in favour of continuing fight.

What is missing from this scenario is the people who would have to face the impact of 7% cuts, including perhaps 2/300 job losses and rent increases of £2/3.

The aim of rate capping is to cut the level of services and the number of jobs. It is the community that is in the firing line. The quirk that has allowed the councillors to face the possiblity of surcharge should not blind them to the fact that it is the community that is under attack and not them personally.

Why have the leaders of the local government unions, voluntary sector and tenants movement not taken a more prominent stance in the confrontation? Primarily they are suspicious of the commitment of councillors who over the past few years, have voted through major rent and rate rises and even some cuts. These suspicions are hardly being allowed by councils whose main strategy is based upon the principle of not setting a rate without discussing under what circumstances they would make a rate. The issue cannot be left hanging in the air, or once again the final decision of what is and what is not acceptable is left solely in the councillors hands.

In a number of Boroughs the Unions have asked the Labour Group for a commitment that they will not cut jobs. It is up to the Borough Labour Parties and the left members on each Group to ensure that the pledge is given. Similar pledges should also be given saying the Labour Group will not cut services or raise the rates or rents. Giving such a commitment councillors would not only be moving the emphasis away from the issue of surcharge to the issue of services, but would also be developing a bond between the community and socialist councillors to the extent that it puts both the community and their representatives at risk and each needs the others full support if the conflict is to be won.

If the Lewisham Labour Group gave these pledges the likely outcome of the scenario, described above, could be very different.

When considering the offer from the Government, the Group would know that to accept the offer would not only mean job losses, cuts and rent increases but it would also mean that they had broken the bond between themselves and the community which could result in the community refusing to cooperate with the Council by striking, refusing to pay rent, etc.

The Group would have to liaise with the representatives of the community to discuss whether the offer would be acceptable. Both the Group and the representatives would have a number of counterveiling pressures to consider but it would certainly ensure that the issue of preserving jobs, services and the living standards of the community was the item at the top of the agenda.

Winning this confrontation with the Government can only by measured in terms of preserving the level of services and jobs, without reducing the living standards of the community. I do not believe that can be achieved unless it is the community that is seen as being under threat and not individual councillors. It is up to us to ensure that the community feels this is their conflict and that any victory is their victory.

Martyn Day
(Chair of Lewisham Local Government Committee)

Next London Editorial Board is at 6.30 pm, Monday November 26 at County Hall..

Deadline for articles, Monday November 12. All articles to be sent to 54 Bow Road, London E3.

'Women in Politics' by Paula Watson and Vidya Anand. Cost 60p per copy from 54 Bow Road, London E3.

Liberals and police in cover-up

The new Alliance Council in Richmond and the Police have been involved in an elaborate cover-up of a civil liberties case involving a black man who was arrested twice in 24 hours, detained over-night without charge, and strip searched. His 15-month old daughter was taken from his wife and kept overnight in hospital by social workers.

The 'Bretagne Case' has become the most controversial civil liberties case in the brief life of Greater London's only Alliance Council and makes a nonsense of their 1982 Manifesto pledge which reads as follows: 'The Alliance believes that secrecy breeds suspicion. That is bad for democracy . . . Liberals and Social Democrats will expose council activities to full public scrutiny.'

Andre Bretagne, a black French national, was arrested by Richmond Police on the allegation that he had indecently assaulted two boys in Richmond. After being strip-searched and given a rectal examination he was released by the police who told him they had made a mistake.

Meanwhile his British wife Christine was told that if she did not co-operate with the police her 15-month daughter would be taken into care. A police doctor examined a bruise on the child's forehead and said there was nothing wrong with the child. Two hours later at the Bretagnes basement home two social workers and three policemen arrived. They produced a Place of Safety Order and demanded that the child be taken to a hospital. Mr Bretagne was arrested for breach of the peace in his own bedroom. In the struggle the police broke part of the bannister.

The following day the child was released from the hospital and the doctors confirmed that the bruise was consistent with the mother's story that she had fallen off a swing. Mr Bretagne was kept in the police cells overnight and the next day was bound over to keep the peace for six months. He has a very limited understanding of English.

When the story broke in the local newspapers two plain clothes policemen called to see Mr Bretagne to ask him 'why are you victimising the police?'. An official complaint was made to the police but although the police agreed to give an apology this was subsequently retracted. The Alliance Council was pressed to hold an inquiry but refused. The Council Leader declined to meet the parents, instead, as he later admitted, preferring to read the newspaper reports rather than hearing their version of events. They refused to review the policy guidance on the taking of a Place of Safety Orders.

The parents who are being assisted by local groups such as the West London NCCL and LAG have been accused by the Liberals of being 'politically motivated'. They belong to no political party. The Council have indicated that they now have a file on this family even though there has never been any allegation of neglect or injury. There has been no apology.

The parents have said they will carry on with their campaign until they see justice. With two by-elections pending in the Borough on which control of the Council rests, the Liberals are now desperately trying to find a fall-back position in an attempt to retain the veneer of being the party of 'Open Government'. But whatever they do cannot wipe away the totally inept handling of the case. What the case shows is that in government the Alliance civil liberties record is even worse than the Tories. Potential 'tactical voters ought to be warned.

Keith Vaz
Chair, Richmond and Barnes CLP

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

On children and political activity.... *from a woman without children...*

What I am going to say may be controversial but I want to involve myself in the endless debate about being a 'political activist' while trying to bring up children, from the point of view of a single woman without children.

One of the things that struck me while I was in the process of deciding about not having kids of my own was the enormous amount of time and energy it takes to bring them up. Many people who decide they want children (and perhaps this applies even more to men than women) only seem to find this out as they go along, and even those who appear to have thought about it and planned it often end up in a situation where they feel their 'freedom' has disappeared, and that there is a constant struggle to stay politically active, go to meetings and conferences, work, and also spend enough time with their kids.

CHOOSING PRIORITIES

I have found a curiously unexpected result from being politically active as a person who, in theory, has all the time in the world to spend at meetings, day schools, conferences and demonstrations, rallies and talks. Going home alone after these events, there is nothing to allevaite the sense of frustration that can be generated, the despair and disillusionment following an acrimonious GMC, or a conference that achieves little. Going to the pub afterwards with other people is one way out (though resulting for me in adding exhaustion to depression). Most of the time it's back to the flat for a mug of tea and some TV rubbish in an attempt to unwind before falling into bed.

I suppose what I am trying to say is that we all need an antidote to whatever we spend most time doing: for me, a demanding job and the pressures of the many political activities going on in the evenings and weekends, as well as putting in some long hours producing a Labour Party newsletter for two years, ended up leaving me feeling mentally drained, and with a constant feeling that life was rushing past without me having any control over it.

FEELING GUILTY

So early this year I made a conscious decision to give up some things, at least temporarily, so that I could try and find out if all those other things that had seemed out of reach really were what I wanted to spend my time on. The ultimate aim is to try and find a balance that allows me to be a whole and creative human being, with physical and mental health intact, as well as channelling my political beliefs to where they are most effective.

Needless to say, over halfway through 1984, I am only just starting to sort out this intention, and one of the major things making it difficult has been the huge sense of guilt at *not* having the very valid excuse of childcare for taking some time off.

I have found myself apologising to women friends who do have kids for not being present at events, telling them I feel pathetic for being unable to cope when they obviously have more commitments than I do, even pretending to be ill rather than yet again to explain my reasons for missing something.

LEARNING TO STAND BACK

But I am reaching a point where I can see myself taking on more responsibilities again, gradually, carefully, saying 'yes' only when I mean it, not going along with the guilt feelings just so that I will be seen in the right places. Meanwhile it has been a valuable experience to stand back and let myself be dispensable.

I *don't* think this is something only a person with no family commitments can do – it's something that is difficult for all of us. But maybe it would do us all good if parents sometimes took single friends and comrades at their word and asked them to take over the family for a whole weekend, not just the odd evening or afternoon. Yes, I know that children have their own preferences and you can't just dump them on people they may not care for. But it's my experience that parents are often reluctant, for mysterious reasons, to trust their childless friends in this way. Maybe risking we are *not* indispensable after all is threatening for all of us, whether it is to our local Labour Party or to our kids. There is nothing simple about making deliberate and far-reaching decisions about what you want out of life, and this applies just as much to women who choose not to give birth as it does to those who do. Any such decision has its penalties and anxieties, and can cause sleepless nights! Perhaps there is a tendency in all of us to imagine the grass is greener etc, but in a way each of us makes choices that must result in other things taking second place. The problem is deciding which things come first; but I don't see why it shouldn't be possible to change your priorities around when you need or want to – what *doesn't* seem possible for anyone, childless or not, is to have a total commitment to all the aspects of our lives, all the time.

For me, the things that have taken second place in recent years include finishing decorating my flat (which has remained unfinished since I moved in more than 5 years ago), taking time for regular physical exercise, getting involved in my housing co-op, seeing friends, having holidays, getting enough rest, reading all the books I never read, writing all the articles I'd like to write . . . Does this sound familiar?

MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

It sometimes feels as if there is a myth about the 'single childless political activist' that is as insidious as the myth of the 'perfect mother', both of these being stereotypes forced onto people in certain situations.

Like the 'perfect mother' (I don't include fathers as there is still not the same weight of social pressure on men to conform in this way) the single political activist is supposed to have an endless supply of time and energy to devote to the way of life they have 'chosen', without ever getting tired or depressed or lonely, or feeling they are missing out on 'freedom'.

But maybe it's something we should all face up to, in order to realise that freedom is something you make yourself, not something others take from you. To accept that fact, to believe that your life is continually a matter of making choices – surely is one of the most difficult, but also one of the most exhilirating discoveries there is.

NO MORE EXCUSES

Children are often a driving force in their parents' lives; a lot of campaigning activities make logical sense when you look at your kids. For people on their own, the driving force has to be found elsewhere. It's all too easy to let being busy take over so you are swept along constantly feeling 'if only I had time to . . . ' and believing you're the only one who doesn't have time to. You can let this sort of lifestyle become an excuse for not making any choices about anything. My driving force has to be myself, in the end, and when that starts to run out of steam – as it did at the end of last year, accompanied by continual bouts of an illness similar to glandular fever – it's time to set about refuelling, ready for the future.

For me this involves going back to some of the things that I have felt have taken second place for several years, including time to get more physically fit (no doubt in violent reaction to all those hours sitting in meetings) and time to do all the things I never seemed to have time for – playing with other people's children, for one.

Clare Mundy,
Consort Ward, Peckham CLP.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

.... and from a mother

This is a sister article to Clare Mundy's written from a different background.

CHOOSING PRIORITIES – SORT OF

I didn't 'choose' to have children but I wasn't very good at preventing them. I had 3 unplanned children. So when I became involved in politics they were already around. The net result was that because of the structure of society they got neglected. I don't mean from the traditional family point of view, I live on my own with them and they spend many evenings by themselves, bits of weekends too. Meetings, conferences, election times, etc all take enormous amounts of my time and energy. Lots of things happening to my children I didn't pick up on because I wasn't at home. More importantly, I wasn't there to influence and guide them. Too often I am too exhausted to do anything other than fall into bed after a hard day at work including involvement in my union followed swiftly by various labour party meetings etc and yell out 'make me a cup of tea', 'do the washing up', 'feed the cats'. I have never got involved in child care campaigns. Unfairly I suppose I have always associated them with babies. Fights for creches don't help to cope with three teenagers. I wanted my dilemma to be recognised but I was aware that women who campaign/complain about politics and children get labelled and tend not to be taken seriously. I fooled myself I could cope – that being active and not letting my children interfere with my activities that some people didn't know I had any and they were amazed when they found out I had 3.

It says something about the big distance between the sloganising to get more women involved and the reality of the minute numbers of women with children struggling to do so.

SEEING THROUGH THE MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

I used to view people without children as having a wonderful time. No limitations on their time and energy – they could be politicos 24 hours a day – no sweat.

Now I ask myself – should they? Should I be trying to achieve that either? I have recognised and argued that the way we organise must allow the involvement of everyone. A shorter political working week for all could be an idea we need to explore perhaps.

CHOOSING PRIORITIES

Recently I decided that spending time with my children is serious proper politics too.

Then co-incidentally (or was it?) I found I had *spare* time on my hands. 'What's this?' – I asked myself – 'Must fill it up' – then I stopped and thought.

Being involved in politics changes our lives and lifestyles. Some of us career from crisis to crisis resulting from the pressure these changes create. It's not until we intervene ourselves in this process and we have time to think, that we can look at what we are doing clearly and question 'Why?'

WHAT DO I WANT

I don't want my children to have a lasting memory of resentment towards politics. I want to involve them. It gives me a good feeling when they see through the media bias on the miners strike for example. They usually respond instinctively to situations. I vividly remember the riots of 1981. While I was speaking at the General Committee about the Labour Party needing to understand the frustration of young people which had caused the riots, one of my sons was being arrested in them. The police had phoned while I was at the GC. What irony. I spent the night and the rest of the next day trying to get him out of the police cell into hospital for his injuries to be treated.

All three of my children have a low opinion of the police. I don't need to explain the police's role – what they do need though is guidance to channel their anger and frustration politically.

I can't accept and don't accept responsibility for how my children turn out – a great deal is out of my control. But it is important to me that I have time to talk to them and persuade them about my political beliefs. 'My mum was a feminist nutcase' is not what I want them to have engraved on my gravestone.

LEARNING TO STAND BACK

I feel activists with children must stand back, positively with our sisters and brothers who don't have children. We mustn't denigrate being with our children as non-political.

We should also not use them just to create guilt in others. For anyone interested in reading about the last serious attempt, that I know of, to consider a comprehensive approach to dealing with socialism and the family in a capitalist society. I recommend Barbara Taylor's book 'Eve and the new Jerusalem'. It's about OWENISM. It was called utopian. 150 years have passed since it collapsed.

It seems to me ripe for people on the left to discuss the problems activists have in common, with or without children, as part of this very large debate.

Penny Newell
Liddle Ward – Peckham CLP

Editor: *Follow up articles on this issue would be gratefully received.*

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Write for the Streetlife Supplement!

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue of the Streetlife Supplement we will be following up some of the themes raised in the August issue of **Briefing** *on kinship and the family, as well as continuing this month's theme of motherhood, children and political activity.*

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

SUPPLEMENT MEETING

The next meeting of the Streetlife Supplement will be on Thursday 22nd November at 8pm at County Hall, London SE1.

KINSHIP CONFERENCE CATERING PRIZE

JOHN HARDY

YOU FED US BEAUTIFULLY!
FROM NOW ON WE'VE APPOINTED
YOU CHEF-IN-COMMAND!
(SIGNED)
DAVID THATCHER

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE FOR FEMINISTS AND SOCIALISTS

MORLEY COLLEGE, WESTMINSTER (NEAR LAMBETH NORTH TUBE)
WEDNESDAYS, 6.45 pm

(ASSEMBLE OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE EACH EVENING AT 6.30 TO BE INFORMED OF WHEREABOUTS OF LECTURE-ROOM).

LECTURER: CHRIS KNIGHT
Info: 852 2193

LABOUR
BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
20p
No. 12 November 1984

Only one way to stop more, worse outrages:

GET THATCHER'S TERRORIST TROOPS

OUT OF IRELAND!

ALL OF US in the Labour Party were stunned by the devastating bombing of the Grand Hotel at the end of the Tory Party Conference. A few may have regretted – in a moment's fantasy – that the bomb failed to remove this hated Government in one fell swoop (a result which, in reality, might well have produced a military government within weeks). Overwhelmingly, though, our emotions will have been of sympathy for the dead and their kin, and utter horror at the scale of carnage which modern bomb technology can wreak. Few of us, either, can have been unimpressed by the personal courage of those involved – including, yes, the composure and resolution of the Prime Minister herself. If only the leaders of our party could display courage like that!

The bombing will prove to be a shot of adrenalin in the ruling class's veins. It will (at least temporarily) strengthen the state. By stiffening the Government's moral resolve and fuelling popular sympathy at a moment when both were wavering, it may even prove to be a fatal new ingredient preventing any Government retreat over the miners' strike and propelling us onto a new plane of social and political crisis.

At a time like this, it is important to attempt to harness the murderous conflicts which we find all around us as creatively as we can, in the service of a political solution. By this we mean the election of a Labour Government which, by showing the same resolution in defending our class as Mrs Thatcher has shown in defending hers, takes the full power necessary to unravel all the knots (withdrawal from Ireland being the number one task).

We in BRIEFING are socialists and feminists. We refuse to parrot the ritual condemnations of 'violence' because we insist on placing responsibility where it lies. Yes, it so happens

BRIGHTON BOMBING

that we are people – like most in the Labour Party – who by our whole upbringing, and through all our traditions, abhor and are incapable of the use of violence as a substitute for rational argument and political debate. But exclude people from the political process, and they will inevitably explode. It is precisely because we hate violence that our anger is directed at Mrs Thatcher foremost among all.

Millions of the oppressed, in this country and around the world, may be hoping against hope that Mrs Thatcher's personal courage – under the impact of these events – might become transmuted into courage of a new kind. For it *does* take courage to question one's premises anew. Dare anyone hope that such a night in the Grand might have appeared to Thatcher as a premonition of the holocaust facing all of us unless the nuclear arms race is reversed? Dare anyone hope that there flashed through her mind, amidst the chaos and the rubble of that night, the screams of the Belgrano victims sent to their deaths with her single telephone call? Could it be that the cries and pleas of Nottingham miners' wives, their bedrooms violated by rampaging policemen in the early hours, mingled in her ears with the general din? Or that there came to her during her nightmare the screams of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the death-cries of the millions of tribal peoples shot, tortured, bombed and bayonetted over centuries of British and American imperialist savagery, or the agonised screams of those Irish men, women and children who have been the bloody victims of British state terrorism for longer than any other people on earth?

Probably it is too much to ask. But let our 'Iron Lady' know this: those who live by the sword, shall die by it. If she wants violence, then violence she will certainly get. Down that slippery road – pursued to its ultimate conclusion – lies the certainty of unlimited world war, nuclear exchange, and the switching out of life on this planet. Rather more – in other words – than the fate of an individual or even Cabinet is at stake. There is only one way to invert this horrifying logic: elect a Labour Government, remove all nuclear weapons from British soil, disband the new anti-strike police force, withdraw the Pit Closures programme, remove those terrorist troops from Ireland's soil and lead the labour movement towards victory throughout the world.

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

YOUTH BRIEFING

Benn speaks to Briefing on youth

The role of youth, and the youth section of the Party is often ignored by the Left in the Labour Party. Youth are in the forefront of the struggles against the government, yet there are many youth outside the Party who could be attracted to the LPYS. It seems ironic in this situation that the YS budget is now coming under attack from the leadership of the Party. This is a problem Briefing feels we all have to address ourselves to. In an interview with Briefing, Tony Benn argues it is important to link up all youth getting involved in politics for the first time.

Why do you think youth are important in the LP?

Many members of the LP have no idea what socialism is about. They don't understand basic principles of socialism, which is above all supporting people in struggle whether it be miners, blacks, gays, women, youth or for that matter, the people of Northern Ireland. We have much to learn from these struggles and from the people fighting to win them. Youth are involved in every struggle against the Tories, but as you said we have very few in the LP. We must support their campaigns, take on board their experiences, and in that way win them to Labour. We will not achieve this by trying to stuff a clear and over simplified view of socialism down their throat.

What do you think the LP leadership's attitude to youth should be?

Over and above everything, we must support the youth movement. We must understand, of course, that there is a terrible danger in our society today. With mass unemployment, the majority of youth feel they have no future and could turn to the right and you'd get a growth of the fascist element.

It is our responsibility to make sure this does not happen, we must campaign actively on the dole queues and in every big town throughout Britain. Young people willingly respond to the idea they should support us in elections if we are seen to be doing something for them and with them now.

So what can the left in the constituencies do to support the LPYS?

Basically, I think activists in the Party should be trying to bring the youth movement into the LP itself. We should be fighting for funds locally and nationally to be made available for the LPYS to enable them to organise. We must encourage YS activists to organise, to write contributions in newsletters, to speak on our platforms. Finally as I said earlier, we in the LP must give our full support to all the campaigns and struggles of youth, and believe you me that is not going to be easy.

YS praised for miners' support

Dennis Skinner, MP, long time ally of the LPYS spoke to Briefing at LP Conference about the role of young people in the miners strike.

'One of the things that was spoken about before the strike began, was that many young miners and their wives had got themselves up to their necks in debt with mortgages, videos and having a good time. People said they would not be able to strike because they had so much money going out each week. I'm certain the coal board believed that and I think it would be true to say that some in the union felt that as well. But one of the features of the strike, that no one can deny has been that the young miners and their wives have been amongst the strongest fighters in the dispute.

I think it is also true to say that the Young Socialists up and down the country have played a formidable role outside the coalfield areas where they have been predominant in joining the miners support group. One of the problems the YS has had is that it is not getting the money or the support from the NEC to really reach out to recruit youth. One of the things that this dispute has confirmed to me is my support for the LPYS, and my determination to continue to fight for support for the LPYS.'

Black Sections and YS

The campaign for black sections had a big impact at this year's Labour Party conference. Below, are some ideas on how to bring this struggle into the LPYS, from Niall Sookoo who is on the National Black Section Steering Committee.

It's very difficult for young black people to come in to the Labour Party because they're so disinterested in the whole of 'British Society' — for obvious reasons. But at the same time we've seen the campaigns like the one around the Deptford fire victims, involving massive demonstrations, mainly of youth. In Lewisham we have a campaign looking at why 44 per cent of children in care are black when there's only a 17 per cent black population.

These are issues young black people are interested in. We have to organise around policing, on employment, on positive action, on housing, on social services and so on. I think, as the debate on Black Sections and these issues continues, more black youth will become involved.

The Black Sections went to the Labour Party Young Socialist Summer Camp, invited be Colin de Freitas, a leading young black person in the LPYS. The debate really centred around personalities. The Militant tend to believe the Black Sections are just a fast lane for Black MPs, which it's not. It's a question of power — of black people getting the power, the same question as women and gays getting representation. But there were LPYS activists who supported us there as well and they organised a fringe meeting after the main debate.

Left wing members of the LPYS should get together and organise to get members on the regional and hopefully national committees with a slate based on real left policy supporting issues like Black Sections and the struggles of other oppressed people.

Next issue out NOVEMBER 22.
Next National Editorial Board is on Sunday November 25 at 12 noon at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham.

Deadline for articles, Monday November 12. All articles to be sent to 54 Bow Road, London E3.

LABOUR WOMEN AND FEMINISM CONFERENCE

Unfortunately the Labour Women and Feminism Conference has had to be postponed until next Spring. The response we have had from women has indicated to us the interest in and the importance of such a Conference and we are determined to get it off the ground next year. Watch this space . . .

A First Visit To Annual Conference

If ever you cherished illusions that radical changes are buffeting this great movement of ours, a first visit to Annual Conference as CLP delegate confirms your worst suspicions — that, while you are working yourself into an early grave for your local Labour Party, you are also propping up a mediocre collection of middle-aged men in their entrenched positions of power. As a woman delegate, the platform has a stark significance — less than a third of the faces up there are female and you are represented by Sisters Clywd, Dunwoody and Kinnock (who voted for her?).

John Chapman

Early impressions of conference are a series of bemusing contradictions. *Militant* support Neil Kinnock in opposing women/black sections (what's all the fuss about? White men have had their own section for some time — it's called the Labour Party). Being female, black and highly articulate do not, apparently, count as good qualifications for being on the NEC — otherwise Dianne Abbott would have taken her place with the NEC on the platform.

SCHIZOPHRENIC

Then there is the schizophrenic relationship with the media and press, epitomised by the impeccable but bear-like figure of Robert Maxwell, who prowled around the floor of conference, obviously gratified by the knowledge that the Labour Party is not too proud to take his money.

On Tuesday, an outraged conference expelled Larry Lamb and his hacks from the *Daily Express* — on Friday, the same conference gave Glyn Mathias from ITN a vote of thanks!

This split between what the Party says and how it actually conducts itself characterised the whole conference, even down to the venue. The Winter Gardens complex is owned by Thorne/EMI and the catering is done by Trust House Forte — the food was predictable, synthetic and overpriced. The staff, who are non-union, work for less than £2 an hour, though it costs £500 to hire a hall for a fringe-meeting, with a backdrop of what looked like pantomime scenery. Facilities for the disabled were practically non-existent. Anyway, what is the Labour Party up to, holding its Annual Conference at a Tory resort instead of a Labour-controlled city?

MOSS EVANS SELL-OUT

On Monday we had the seemingly endless speeches repeating promises of support for the miners; but this was followed by the carefully-contrived sell-out by Moss Evans and Neil Kinnock. The leader of Liverpool Council was applauded for the stand taken against the Government cuts — but no support was forthcoming from the leadership for other local authorities faced with rate-capping; no strategies, either.

Perhaps those of us who have been used to the carefully thought-out campaigns of the GLC over the past three years have come to expect too much in terms of good practice at Labour Party meetings; the accepted use of "Comrade Chairman" and even "Mr. Chairman" all the way through conference was extremely irritating, as was Eric Heffer's tendency to call fewer and fewer women speakers as the week wore on.

However, what goes on outside conference is as significant as what takes place inside; we perceived that conference operates on at least three additional levels.



Briefing fringe meeting at Conference, Sunday 30 September. Above, Jeremy Corbyn speaks on 'Target Labour Government', with Bryn Griffiths, Brighton Briefing, and the Chair, Mandy Moore, on his right. Other speakers included Tony Benn, Betty Heathfield, Sharon Atticus, Diane Abbott and Paul Canning. Over 200 people attended.

On the Thursday of Conference, Briefing organised a meeting in defence of the NUM, following the service of a writ on Arthur Scargill at Conference. 700 people packed into the Spanish Room, and we raised the biggest collection for the miners at Conference – over £1,200.

There are the 'closet' politics of compositing and lobbying, which require considerable expertise and intense competitiveness in order to influence the business which is actually taken on the floor of conference. Then there are the fringe meetings, pamphlets and publicity, which offer a marathon consciousness-raising, and heightened an already electric atmosphere.

MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

There is also tremendous socialising, which for us provided the opportunity to mingle with like-minded comrades from other regions. "Making connections" was the most positive aspect of conference — realising the links which are being forged between so many groups on the left of the labour movement — miners' wives, Greenham women, black activists, lesbian and gays — all of whom are now working together in solidarity to ensure that the Labour Party delivers for the working class, because they identify with each other as part of one struggle, one fight!

Robina Smith (Brent South CLP)
Emma Tait (Brent East CLP)

BLACK SECTIONS

LABOUR Party conference for the first time took the question of black involvement within the party seriously and although the votes went against us, there is no question that Black Sections are "Here to Fight, Here to Stay".

Remember, historically the labour movement opposes any radical change to its structure, but in nearly all cases the left always manages to win in the end.

There will be some within the old Establishment who will hope that the whole question on Black Sections and positive action will vanish. Those comrades have no idea of the fight that black people have had in beating slavery, indentured labour and racist immigration laws. The defeat at conference only gives us more incentive to fight, for what undeniably is our basic right.

The year ahead will be vital. It will be a year when black people are finally put on the Labour Party's map. A year when the Labour Party must stop talking about black people in a negative way. This will be a year when the Labour Party must tackle the whole question of race in a positive manner before sizeable inroads are made into the substantial one million black votes the Labour Party gets at the election.

Niall Sookoo, East Lewisham CLP

CONFERENCE AND THE MINERS

EXCERPTS FROM THE DAILY BRIEFING CONFERENCE BULLETIN

"TUC — PREPARE FOR THE GENERAL STRIKE"

Tuesday October 2nd

"GAOL US — AT YOUR PERIL!"

— Arthur Scargill

Emergency editorial statement:

At 4.30 yesterday afternoon, Arthur Scargill was served in conference *with a writ for 'contempt of court'. Shortly afterwards, four other leaders of the NUM were served similar writs. At a special meeting of the NUM executive last night, it was decided to defy the courts — continuing the official strikes in Yorkshire and Derbyshire — even at the risk of being gaoled within days.*

Let all of us here this week make our warning to the Tories crystal clear. If Arthur Scargill or any other NUM leader is arrested or physically violated in any way, the country may face an industrial and social explosion to put 1926 in the shade. Both the TUC and Labour Party conferences have now legitimised the miners' strike to the full in the eyes of our movement as a whole. There are no higher bodies — no sources of labour movement legality — higher than these. This strike is now our *strike; and it is our law or theirs.*

Any use of physical violence or draconic sequestration of our assets on the part of the state and courts in this context can only be met with the abandonment of all restraint in defending our class. IF SCARGILL GOES TO PRISON, IT MUST MEAN AN ALL-OUT AND INDEFINITE GENERAL STRIKE. The issue is now becoming far, far bigger than that of pit closures — vital and central though that remains. It is becoming — as the Tories are now themselves saying — 'Who rules?' Either we break the power of the Tory state — or they will break us.

Let every one of us here understand the implications. The balance of probability may well be that the courts will draw back from their folly; certainly they would be fools to send Arthur Scargill to gaol. But let them be warned: yesterday's events at Conference — the unanimity and intensity of support shown for the NUM in its Titanic struggle — shows that our movement is ready, waiting to answer in kind. Delegates should be considering the way in which Conference — the sovereign body of the whole labour movement — can respond to this historic challenge.

Thursday October 4th

CONFERENCE VERSUS THE HIGH COURT

THE HIGH COURT'S moves to sequestrate the NUM's assets or jail its leadership are an attack on every one of us.

The 'process server' who intruded into our proceedings on Monday afternoon entered without credentials, showing that the long arm of the state feels quite at liberty to violate our *legality at will.*

The Tories tell us to bow down before the 'law'. The source of this 'law' is the Tory Government and its ruling-class courts. We, on the other hand, recognise our own source of legality, which is of a different kind. Both the TUC and Labour Party conferences have now legitimised the miners' strike to the full in the eyes of our movement as a whole. There are no higher courts — no sources of labour movement legality — higher than these. Both have debated the issues and ruled that the strike is fully-official and legal in our eyes.

Any contradiction of these decisions is therefore a clash between two kinds of law. Their law — or ours? That is the issue which is now posed. If we were to allow Arthur Scargill to be jailed or the NUM's assets to be seized, then the Tories' 'law' will rapidly reveal itself to be naked class dictatorship — naked violence by the state to crush the many on behalf of the few.

It is therefore we, today, *at* this *conference who must organise our defence of the NUM. Conference still has the opportunity to remove any doubt which may remain that we stand shoulder to shoulder with the NUM in facing the onslaught of the High Court in the so-called 'contempt' proceedings. And the most urgent task is this. Jointly with the TUC, we must lay contingency plans to ensure that any seizure of the persons or property of the NUM leads to an immediate General Strike and a massive national demonstration and augmentation of the picket lines in support of the miners' struggle. Unless the Tories back down, our resistance must be transformed into* indefinite *generalised industrial action, backed with the full authority of the TUC and the Labour Party nationally. There is no other way.*

Ken Livingstone
Jeremy Corbyn, M.P.,
Ted Knight.

Abridged version of speech by Phil Holt to the Labour Briefing meeting on the miners' strike on October 4. Phil is a member of the POEU NEC and National Secretary of BLOC.

"FOR our delegation this conference has also been an historic one. For the first time we voted the full left slate. In doing so we helped reinstate Eric Clark (NUM) back on the NEC. We also supported those propositions giving full support to the miners including national industrial action in the event of the sequestration of the miners' property or funds. The ten Broad Left supporters on the delegation signed the petition identifying ourselves with the NUM's contempt of court. In addition to this the five Broad Left Executive members on the delegation have called for an emergency meeting of our NEC in the event of punitive action against the NUM over the current issue. Arthur Scargill has asked we stand up and be counted. Well, the POEU Broad Left is doing that now.

But it is not just the cause of trade union solidarity that motivates us. As with any issue of principle, there is also a definite material justification. In our case it is directly tangible. We, too, are faced with manpower surpluses not just created by new technology but by the setting of artificial financial budgets. This is producing "surplus" engineers, despite large social needs and despite massive profits and massive investment. As a result we are having to fight for jobs. We are putting to our conference in November that we should go in for a claim of a 32 hour, four day week and are seeking authority to take action if negotiations break down. If the miners lose our fight will be much more difficult. If they win we have hope."

County Hall, London S.E.1.

Dear Comrade,

Please make copies and circulate the following resolution, which has just been passed by Lewisham East CLP, and use it as the basis for an identical resolution (amended as necessary with regard to place, time and title of body) to be proposed at the organisation of which you are an officer or delegate. Please IMMEDIATELY rush copies of your resolution(s), when passed, to: Ken Livingstone, County Hall, London S.E.1.

'This General Management Committee of East Lewisham Labour Party, meeting at Limes Hall, Lewisham on October 5th 1984, repeats the statement by Arthur Scargill that



Arthur Scargill addresses Labour Party Conference. John Chapman

Mineworkers' Defence Committee

The Mineworkers' Defence Committee was established on Thursday October 4th during the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool. The occasion was a 700-strong packed meeting organised by Labour Briefing and chaired by Ken Livingstone. In addition to a £1,200 collection for the miners, speeches were made by Jimmy Knapp, Arthur Scargill, Tony Benn, Muriel Williams, Bernie Grant and Phil Holt.

Jeremy Corbyn, MP, read out – to general acclaim – a statement establishing the Defence Committee and defining its aims. These were stated to be the co-ordination of all the forces of the labour movement to respond adequately in the present crisis to the ruling-class onslaught on the miners and the working class.

In particular, with very few exceptions, every participant in the meeting individually signed a statement of contempt addressed to the High Court, and pledged also to go back to seek official endorsement of this from trade union executives and labour movement bodies.

It was made clear that the sinews developed through this on-going exercise would be used to provide adequate political expression to such industrial action as would follow any sequestration of the NUM's assets.

On the following day, a working meeting (representing a spectrum of political tendencies) elected a small provisional Secretariat which was entrusted with the task of responding adequately and quickly to events as they arose. This meeting was public and had been announced from the platform the previous day. Ken Livingstone was voted Secretary.

BELOW AND TO THE RIGHT ARE TWO URGENT STATEMENTS – PLEASE READ AND ACT ACCORDINGLY.

the current industrial action of the National Union of Mineworkers is an official strike, and thereby repeats and affirms the contempt of the High Court allegedly committed by the President of the National Union of Mineworkers.'

'This G.M.C. further requests the Labour Group to pass a similar resolution.'

Our aim is to present the High Court with the fact that the G.L.C., Liverpool Council, Sheffield, Manchester and many other City Councils, together with the Executives of a number of trade unions and other organisations the bulk of the Labour Party, are in 'contempt' of it. The resolution is being pressed in view of the failure of the Conference Arrangements Committee at the Blackpool Labour Party Conference to allow a similar (more moderately-worded) resolution to be moved as an emergency by the Transport and General Workers' union. The CAC's legal advice was that for the Labour Party to have passed that resolution would have brought the Labour Party as such into contempt, with the risk of all its funds being sequestrated. We feel that it is our duty in this situation to underscore our solidarity with the National Union of Mineworkers.

Yours in solidarity,
Ken Livingstone
(Secretary).

Our law —or theirs?

Mr. Justice Nicholls is now in receipt of a declaration of contempt of the High Court. It repeats the contempt allegedly committed by Arthur Scargill:

"We, the undersigned, in our personal capacities but with the full intention of involving where possible the organisations we represent, do hereby declare the present industrial action by the National Union of Mineworkers to be an official strike. As participants with Arthur Scargill in a meeting held in the Winter Gardens, Blackpool, on October 4th, 1984, we jointly repeat, with him, the so-called "contempt" of the High Court, by repeating collectively that this strike is official."

Signed: by over 500 people: MPs, Executive Committee members of major trade unions, councillors, Labour Party and Trades Council officers and delegates, including

Ken Livingstone, Leader GLC,
Tony Benn, MP,
Tony Banks, MP,
Jeremy Corbyn, MP,
Bob Clay, MP,
Merle Amory, Deputy Leader, Brent Labour Group,
Ted Knight, Leader, Lambeth Council,
Pat Wall, President, Bradford Trades Council,
Phil Holt, (POEU NEC)
W.J. Fry, (POEU NEC)
Dave Ward, (POEU NEC)
D. Macdonald (POEU NEC)
Peter Spalding, President, Greater London Association of Trades Councils.

In the light of the High Court's judgement, we will now seek immediate offical endorsement of the contempt declaration from every Labour-controlled public authority, trade union and labour movement organisation in Britain. The collective contempt statement will be presented to the High Court on November 8. This will coincide with the date of the GLC's mass lobby against the Abolition Bill, and follows a day of industrial action throughout London on November 7.

The High Court's ruling challenges the existence of trade unionism in Britain. We face a threat potentially as great as that faced by Solidarnosc in Poland. No Tory Court can override the decisions of the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Conference when what is at issue is the status of a strike. It is unprecedented for Tory Judges to usurp the functions of a trade union executive in this way. The TUC and Labour Party Conferences are, for us, the highest courts in the land, with sole rights to adjudicate on such issues. Both have ruled clearly that the miners' strike is official in our eyes. Any contradiction of these verdicts can only provoke a direct clash between our "courts" and theirs. We will take whatever steps are necessary to defend our legality.

Ken Livingstone

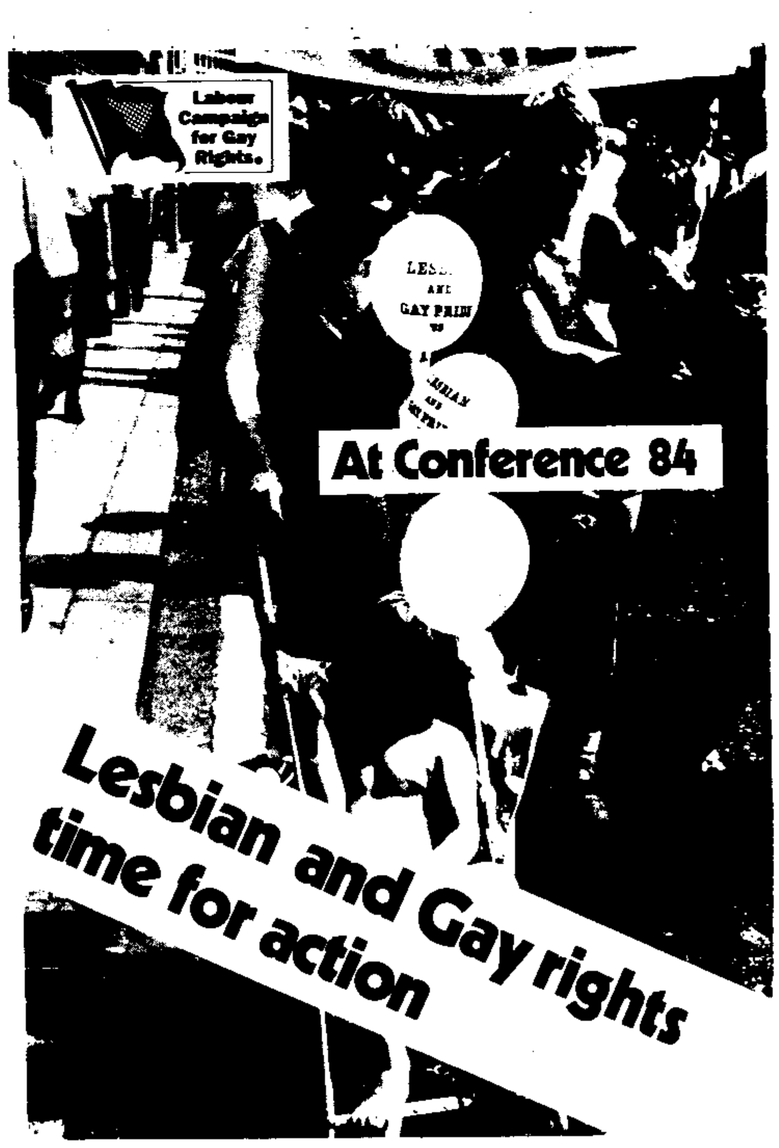
Gays, Blacks and Women Unite!

WHAT do the Sun, the Tory council in Rugby and the NEC of the Labour Party have in common? They all wish that lesbians and gays would go back to the closet and shut up and at times they act as though they want all women and all blacks to join us! Well, the message from Blackpool is that we are getting together, but we're not going to shut up. Conference 1984 was notable for the warm comradely support between our three groups in our separate struggles to be properly recognised within the labour movement and the Labour Party.

This was the first year when we'd managed to get sufficient motions and subsequent amendments to conference to give us a fighting chance of having a debate on lesbian and gay rights. But ours was the only one with that degree of support not to be included on the Conference timetable. We understand that this was because of the NEC's reluctance to allow the issue a public airing. Our principal supporting delegates went through the necessary motions of wasting time trying to get Conference Arrangements Committee to change its mind and narrowly lost a challenge to its decision on the floor. Instead of providing socialist leadership the NEC once again were on the defensive. Perhaps they thought that if they sat on their hands and smiled sympathetically but sadly, we'd go away.

Tories on offensive in Rugby

So once again the Labour Party let the Tories take the offensive. The week before Conference, Tory-controlled Rugby council had voted to remove the phrase "sexual orientation" from its dqual rights policy, and then announced that it would discriminate against gay men in its employment. Presumably they felt it was unthinkable that women had an interest in sex, as the Tories didn't mention lesbians. The Sun, while saying it "has nothing against homosexuals", declared that Rugby was its "Top Town! – let's all follow Rugby in fighting back!" The Chair of the Labour Group drove up to Blackpool to join us in demanding support and action from the Party leadership.



What we got was Conference Arrangements Committee refusing to allow time for an emergency motion.

But we were – and are – on the real agenda of the movement. Our own fringe meeting was attended by over 200 people. It was important for us to have the shadow Home Secretary on our platform, and for us to put forward a lesbian perspective from Labour Movement Lesbians. All our speakers – on the platform and on the floor – presented strong and reasoned points of view. It was evident that as a group we were far more assured than we had been two years ago. But just as important was the clear unqualified support we received from platform speakers at other fringe events, notably Labour Herald and the Black Sections meeting.

Working Together

Most, if not all LCGR/LML/GYS members fully support the demands of Women's Action Committee and for Black Sections. For those of us at Blackpool, the Black Sections meeting was a crucial event. It demonstrated yet again that we face a common opposition, an unholy nonalliance of the Party leadership and Militant.

We agreed that the fight for the Black Sections motion was of primary importance which, for example, should if necessary take precedence over our motion in daily Briefing bulletins. This is because the changes in the Party which could follow from recognition of Black Sections and that which will follow agreement to WAC's demands, will be of major significance in liberating the Party at the top from its current conservative path.

Chris Beer Putney CLP
Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

Women's Action Committee – Where to now?

As informed readers will know, the four Conference resolutions on women promoted by WAC were once again wiped out by the union block vote. Four of the five women supported by WAC for the Women's Section of the NEC were also defeated. The 14 members of the NEC who voted to recommend rejection declined to answer the debate, and it was left to Gwyneth Dunwoody to field the hospital pass and answer the angry women for the Executive.

Of course, it was not all bad news. We had solid support from CLPs on both resolutions and slate. The speakers in the debate were, as ever, excellent. We had successful fringe meetings, with our pantomime – a feminist cinderella – widely publicised on TV. And we got a free gift from Neil. Caught at the end of a Panorama interview by a question on women, he came out with a set of ignorant cliches: we were unrepresentative and irrelevant, and anyway it was fathers with daughters, like him, who would produce a bright new future for us girls. We made hay with this in the press and in the Conference debate.

FOR THE FUTURE

For the future, WAC as a whole must decide the way forward: a few personal thoughts follow. We must build on existing links with black activists, whose resolutions fell for similar reasons to ours. We must reach further into the party grass roots, championing issues of interest to women, eg NHS cuts and most particularly getting CLPs to adopt positive discrimination on short-lists as re-selection looms. We must continue to champion individual causes like that of Anita Gale, nearly passed over for the Organiser's job in Wales. We must improve our representation on the National Labour Women's Committee (what committee, as Mandy Moore said in her speech) and harry the NEC for positive policies for women.

And we must somehow shame the unions (the NUM as honourable exception) out of their staggering sexism and racism. Unions who pride themselves on impeccable left-wing views on all other subjects clearly prefer right-winger Anne Davies on the NEC than one of *those* women. We need to reach out to union women urgently, perhaps stressing our commitment to the block vote as a valid part of the democratic process at Women's Conference. Recently, casting around for something newsworthy for a TV programme, I offered my contact some definitive evidence of complete bigotry towards women in one particular union. 'But that's not news' he replied and I had to agree. A sobering thought to end on.

Josie Edwards, Press Officer WAC

The Labour Party's Defence Statement: What we should do now

Joy Hurcombe
Chair Labour CND
(personal capacity)

The NEC document passed by the Labour Party conference on a card vote of 5 to 1 is now party policy. The Labour Party is comitted to refuse cruise missiles, cancel Trident, remove US bases — the nuclear ones — and scrap all nuclear weapons including Polaris. Regretably, it is also committed to stay in NATO and to a policy of non-nuclear defence and increased conventional arms spending.

The task of the Labour Party members is to get the Labour Party to start campaigning on the politics that we have clearly won. We should expect Walworth Road to organise publicity material and campaigns to get the policies over to the voters. We should hear the party's spokespersons losing no opportunity to explain why we are safer without cruise, Trident, Polaris and the US nuclear bases. We should press for demonstrations and close cooperation with CND up and down the country.

It is very doubtful that this will happen. What will happen is that the pro-NATO Atlanticists in the party will have a field day. The Healeys, Shores and Callaghans will, unashamedly, put over their views on a strong, effective modern defence armed with every conventional weapon iun the book. At the same time they will attack the party's position on getting rid of Polaris and US bases. They will take about negotiating with America and they will insist that the programme is taken step by step.

Our best plan is to continue the fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament but at the same time take on the issue of NATO. We have gained nothing by trying to keep the policies separate. Gavin Laird (AUEW) was right. Unilateral nuclear disarmament doesn't mean very much if you belong to a nuclear alliance. It means even less now that we are aware of the consequences of the nuclear winter. But even this is not enough. We should start demanding that all bases, British and American are taken out of Europe. We should insist that all foreign troops are off our soil and the British Army recalled from the Rhine and from Ireland.



US base at Greenham: Will it be removed under Labour? Ann Flowers

We must demand a nuclear free zone around these shores and no visiting nuclear ships in our ports. We have to close down the nuclear research est ablishments at Aldermaston and the nuclear re-processing plants at Sellafields (Windscale) and Capenhurts.

MINIMUM DEMANDS ARE OUT

We need to build a mass movement and we have to start now before the right capitalises on their gains made at the Labour Party conference. Minimum demands are out. Any compromise on, say, the bases or Polaris will be exploited in the same way as our diffidence over campaigning for withdrawal from NATO.

We should insist that lower defence spending is the priority for the next Labour government and that we have conference policy to support this (Composite 40).

Most of all, we should insist that non-nuclear defence is a nonsense and a deception whilst we are in NATO. Outside of a nuclear alliance and in the context of our commitment to a socialist foreign policy, non-provocative minimum defence of our coast, territory and air-fields could be a demand of the party membership.

Ending the arms trade and making a 1% commitment to overseas aid and a demand for the closure of the Defence Sales Organisation are demands that the party has toned down in recent years. It is time that we campaigned for them in a broad programme of demands. Single issues or particular weapons systems are just pieces of the jigsaw. The fundamental pattern is our understanding of international socialism and the common cause of the working class throughout the world.



Dora Russell addresses the Women's Action Committee fringe meeting. John Chapman

BRIEFING'S GUIDE

Over the past five years, the Tories have made numerous attempts to reduce the level of local government expenditure. Some proposals, such as those for local referenda, failed to pass through Parliament. On 26th June, the Rates Act, the ultimate measure, became law. A month later Patrick Jenkin announced his hit list of eighteen authorities, including Tory Portsmouth. Perhaps of greater significance was the inclusion of Sheffield, a marginal authority for ratecapping, but whose leader was on Labour's NEC.

The selection of the hit list authorities had been a careful act of political judgement by Jenkin. The legislation required him to apply common criteria to all authorities. His choice was the criteria to select. Had his basis been the level of expenditure in 1984/5 compared with 1978/9, both the City of London and the Metropolitan Police would have been on the list. They share the distinction with only four other authorities of having increased their expenditure by over 150% during this six year period.[1] Jenkin selected rather those authorities whose expenditure was 4% or more over target, and 20% or more over GRE. Hackney only appeared on the list because Jenkin decided to ignore joint finance and Urban Programme projects.[2]

DEROGATION

The first option open to the hit list authorities was to apply for derogation. Applications had to be submitted by 1st October and include detailed information relating to expenditure and staffing levels. Jenkin was then obliged to review his proposed expenditure level in the light of his information. The catch was that should he permit a higher level of expenditure, he could impose any requirement on the authority's expenditure or financial management as he thought appropriate. The authority would become his mere puppet.

It had been suggested that Portsmouth had been included on the hit list merely to demonstrate how 'a reasonable authority' would behave, and how 'reasonably' Jenkin would respond to the application for derogation. The trap was so apparent that no authority applied for derogation. It is now too late for them to do so. This must cause acute embarrassment to Jenkin in view of the arbitrary manner in which he has fixed expenditure targets.

GRANT RELATED EXPENDITURE

The formula for distributing government grant to local authorities was changed in 1980. It is now allocated on the basis of each authority's Grant Related Expenditure (GRE). This is supposedly a formula whereby the government computes what it thinks that a local authority should spend. After the 1981 riots, the government stated its concern for the plight of Inner City areas. The GRE formula is strongly weighted against Inner City problems, and is biased towards the Shire counties.

Difference between GREs and Council Budgets 1984/5 (England)

	Excess of budgets over GREs
All London Councils	+34.2%
All Metropolitan Councils	+7.5%
All Non-Metropolitan Councils	-1.3%

(Source: CIPFA, Finance and General Statistics, 1984/5)

The expenditure levels fixed by Jenkin for 1985/6 have been based solely on net expenditure levels for 1984/5. The expenditure level for Camden is £117.4m for 1985/6 compared with a net expenditure of £118.5m for 1984/5. In fact, Camden's real expenditure for 1984/5 is estimated at £126m (when the use of balances and special funding are included). Camden's expenditure for 1985/6 on the basis of a tight standstill budget is £130m. No amount of juggling with figures could reduce £130m to £117.4. Camden, as with other Labour hitlist authorities, has no choice but a policy of defiance.



OPTIONS FOR DEFIANCE

1. REFUSAL TO FIX A RATE

The purpose of this option is to create a broad coalition between the hit list authorities together with their staff and voters. The authorities will refuse to fix a rate on the terms imposed by the government. A crisis would thereby develop to which the government would have to respond.

The manner in which this crisis would develop is unclear. Although the General Rates Act 1967 imposes a duty on local authorities to fix a rate sufficient to cover their estimated expenditure, there is no obligation to fix a rate by a particular date. Precepting authorities (the GLC, ILEA and metropolitan authorities) however are obliged to fix their precept by early March (at least twenty one days before the financial year commences). The consequences should a precepting authority fail to meet this deadline are unclear. Uncertainty would be created for all authorities under a duty to collect the precept. Should the City of Westminster merely collect its own rate, or wait until the precepts have been determined?

Should no rate be fixed by 1st April, no rate would be due. Tenants paying their rates weekly with their rent, would merely be liable to pay the rent element. It had been thought that any expenditure incurred by a local authority in these circumstances would be unlawful. The Liverpool experience would suggest that this is wrong. The Liverpool conflict was unique and is not one that can be relied upon.

The government could respond to the crisis by sending in Commissioners. Legislation would be needed (it was reported that draft legislation was prepared as an option in Liverpool). Recent experience suggests tha that the government would be loath to become involved in this way.

A local authority could default on its debts if it was unable to borrow. This would generate a major loss of confidence among city institutions, equivalent to a large city institution going bankrupt.

It is more likely that a state of increasing chaos would slowly develop as the authority found contractors increasingly reluctant to carry out work, or suppliers to provide goods. The cost of such contracts would increase, as would the cost of borrowing. Chief Officers could advise that such additional expenditure was caused by wilful misconduct or was unlawful. This would be the prelude for intervention by the Audit Commission with the prospect of surcharge and disqualification.

It has been suggested that the government has draft legislation available that would force Chief Officers to levy a rate at the ratecapped level (this would lead directly to the deficit funding option).

Issues relating to this option:

- ★ Would precepting authorities be able to adopt this strategy?
- ★ What will be the position of unions when their members' wages are at risk?
- ★ Council services to those in real need could be affected.
- ★ Would all Councils face insolvency at the same time. (Some have significant balances. Would the government still pay rate support grant to those still entitled to it?)
- ★ No rates would be payable for some months. Large bills would then arrive. Many vulnerable ratepayers who had not set money aside, would be acutely embarrassed.
- ★ Would this option be adopted by authorities who are not ratecapped but who face further withdrawal of rate support grant?

2. DEFICIT BUDGETING

For a rate to be lawful, it must be sufficient to cover estimated expenditure. Expenditure could be reduced by undisclosed savings to be identified thereafter. This is the tactic adopted

TO RATECAPPING

by the outgoing Liberal administration in Liverpool and which was a major factor in the subsequent crisis when the new Labour Group decided to increase expenditure instead.

A no cuts budget would be adopted, the ratecapped rate level would be agreed, and the equation would be completed by the appropriate level of unidentified savings.

The dilemma would then arise. How would the Council respond when asked if it intended to make the savings? Silence could be misconstrued by the unions and voters alike. Any admission that there was no intention to make the savings could invalidate the rate.

Any ratepayer could then seek to challenge the rate in the courts. Those least sympathetic to the Council would withhold their rates until a ruling was made. The council could be kept afloat by the most vulnerable in the community. The chief officers would probably refuse to collect the rate if they feared that the rate was illegal. Otherwise they could face surcharge for the wasted expenditure in seeking to levy an illegal rate. This option could be used to fudge the issues. Some authorities could survive the year without making cuts through use of reserves and accountancy techniques. The May 1986 local elections would then be in sight . . .

Issues relating to this option:

- ★ A stated decision to carry through a deficit budget would be a non-starter. It would not be levied by officers. It need not be paid. The rate would be illegal.
- ★ There is no consensus as to how this option would operate or how it would be presented.
- ★ Each ratecapped authority would be in a unique financial situation which would make unity difficult.

3. THE THREE NO's

The cry of no cuts in jobs or services, no rent increases and no rate increase has regularly been heard but has never been adopted. This option now envisages rate increases in line with inflation. The policy was advocated as the means of defiance against massive rate increases generated through loss of rate support grant through penalties. It is more difficult to envisage it as a response to ratecapping.

Members in Hackney have argued that this is a form of deficit budgetting. A budget should be drawn up on this basis and a rate fixed (and levied?) accordingly. The rate would be illegal on two grounds: (1) A rate increase in line with inflation would *exceed* the ratecapped level, (2) The rate fails to comply with the requirements of the General Rates Act 1967 in that the rate is insufficient to cover the estimated expenditure. This rate is not a valid rate. Effectively, the authority would not have fixed a rate.

It is unclear whether such an authority would attempt to levy this rate. Chief Officers would not willingly comply or they would face surcharge. They would refuse. Equally, no ratepayer would be obliged to pay the rate.

It is argued however that this option guarantees surcharge and disqualification for the members on grounds of wilful misconduct.

Issues relating to this option:

- ★ Is this a realistic option?

4. MAJORITY OPPOSITION

This option has been mooted in the past. It is not now realistically considered. Councillors are elected to assume power, not to refuse it. If the Tories were foolish enough to accept control in these circumstances, they would draw up a rate based on cuts. The majority opposition would vote it down. No rate would be fixed, and the majority would be exercising control. Were the majority group to boycott the rate fixing meeting, they would be permitting cuts to be executed.

5. SUBSIDIARY OPTIONS

These options are not strategies for defiance in themselves. They are however, tactics which could be used as part of a strategy:

- ★ Non-payment of creditors.
- ★ Non-payment of the Metropolitan Police Precept.
- ★ Default on debt repayments.

All these options would shatter confidence in local government and in financial institutions. In the short term the local authority would have some extra cash. Payment could be secured within a few days through High Court action. There is an express power for the Metropolitan Police to appoint a Receiver to secure payment of their precept.[3] All sums borrowed and interest due thereon are secured as a charge on all the revenues of the authority.[4] These actions would carry the risk of surcharge and disqualification. They could be used as warning shots across Jenkin's bows.

STAGED RESIGNATIONS

Mass resignations would merely hand over control for a short period to the opposition. The gesture would not be understood by the electorate. Staged resignations could be held on the GLC precedent to demonstrate that there was no local support for ratecapping. It would also provide an opportunity for those who were not prepared to risk surcharge to step down.

POWERS OF THE AUDITOR

An authority's account are audited annually. The experience in Poplar demonstrated how slow it is for this mechanism to deal with illegal expenditure. The Audit Commission can now direct an extraordinary audit either on its own volition or on complain from a local voter. The powers of the Auditor are twofold:

(i) losses caused by wilful misconduct
To be guilty of wilful misconduct, the person concerned must appreciate that he is acting wrongly, or is wrongly omitting to act, and yet persists in so acting or omitting to act regardless of the consequences, or acts and omits to act with reckless indifference to what the results may be. If the auditor finds that a loss has been incurred or a deficiency caused by wilful misconduct, he is under a duty to certify the amount and recover it from the persons responsible. They are liable jointly and severally. If the loss exceeds £2,000 they are automatically disqualified from holding office for five years. There is an appeal to the courts against the amount certified. The disqualification is automatic (subject to the loss incurred) and is merely suspended pending the appeal.

(ii) Expenditure contrary to the law
This is the procedure applied in the Camden Supplement case in which the District Auditor sought to argue that the minimum wage of £60 was so excessive as to be unlawful. The Auditor applies to the court for a declaration that the expenditure is unlawful. If the court accepts his argument, the court then goes on to consider questions of surcharge and disqualification (if the sum exceeds £2,000). The court has a discretion as to the period of disqualification. No question of surcharge or disqualification arises if the court accepts that the person acted reasonably or in the belief that his actions were lawful.

There is clearly a grey area where either procedure could be adopted. If in doubt, the auditor would apply for a declaration. Chief officers are equally liable to surcharge if they are responsible for the expenditure. Clear advice of illegality which was ignored, would absolve them. It is an open question whether someone who abstains or absents themselves from the meeting can be made liable.[5] Liability could be established for failure to take action to reverse an illegal decision.[6]

A surcharged councillor could face bankruptcy. It is suggested that it is more likely that such steps would not be taken in practice. Rather, any savings would be taken and a heavy weekly repayment would be fixed depending upon the financial circumstances of each councillor. Councillors could be forced to sell their homes. It is suggested that this would be unlikely particularly if there were children or an innocent partner. The larger the number of councillors at risk, the more public concern there would be. It is a political judgement whether a government could or would permit a united group from several councils to be surcharged or disqualified.

THE LIVERPOOL EXPERIENCE

The government bent over backwards to reach a compromise with Liverpool. It advanced payments of rate support grant without any deduction for penalties. Emissaries were sent round the money markets to assure them that Liverpool was creditworthy. The local auditor was kept at bay. Liverpool also compromised. A 17% rate rise was agreed, items were cut out of the budget and revenue expenditure was capitalised.

This time Jenkin is prepared for conflict. The timing is his.

CONCLUSIONS

Few Tories believe that ratecapping will work. The Audit Commission report in July castigated the GRE system as being ineffective and unfair. It had added £1.2 billion to the rates over a three year period through the uncertainties that it had created. The Audit Commission report into Basildon, one of the hitlist authorities, has killed the lie that ratecapping has anything to do with efficiency. Basildon was commended for its management of its services. Ratecapping is to do with jobs and services. The dangers ahead for councillors cannot be underestimated. Neither should the uncertainties facing the government in enforcing this legislation.

Cllr. Robert Latham

1. The GLC, Leicester, Camden and Hackney were the others.
2. Hackney's expenditure was 4.92% above target including these disregards, but only 3.89% without them.
3. s15. General Rate Act 1967.
4. The Local Government Finance Act 1982 introduced amendments aimed specifically at emphasising the creditworthiness of local authorities.
5. Surcharges were made against two Clay Cross councillors who were absent. The District Auditor concluded that they should have attended, knowing of the illegal resolution. They did not appeal, so the decision is untested.
6. The new batch of Clay Cross councillors were surcharged for their failure to end the continuing illegal expenditure.

LABOUR AND THE POLICE

THE level of debate at the Labour Party conference offered the press an easy opportunity to present the party as a load of manic demented police bashers. The Party leadership was running scared of the intense anger of its own members at the nature of the policing of the miners' strike. Despite an unparalleled number of resolutions on policing, the four composites on the subject (each containing a shopping list of policies) were timetabled in such a way as to allow no time for debate. Less successful, however, was the attempt to get two of the composites remitted, as Conference voted all four to be party policy.

Press Association

Neil Kinnock's speech showed that the Labour Party leadership are still trying to fudge the whole issue of the role of the police in the hope that it will somehow go away. Kinnock described the police as hapless stooges caught in the middle of the dispute between the NUM and the NCB – "the meat in the sandwich". Meanwhile the police themselves were well aware that he had got it wrong. Statements made by both the Chair of the Police Federation and the Head of the Chief Superintendants Association in the same week made it clear that the police themselves found it difficult to sustain this image. The hesitant condemnation of police violence finally made by Kinnock unleashed a torrent of police abuse in return.

The Labour Party is failing to come to grips with policing as an issue. The police are not the hapless tools of a wicked Tory government. The more frightening truth is that they are way out of control, even of a Tory government. And the charge against the police is not just one of incidents of violence (although they certainly exist) but of an ethos of policing in which violence has been glamorised, and racism, sexism, authoritarianism and a cult of masculinity is the norm. This police subculture was extensively documented in the case of the Metropolitan Police in a Policy Studies Institute Report of November 1983 commissioned by the Met themselves.



Police clear the way for a van leaving Messenger Group of Newspapers plant, Warrington, 23 November 1983 (NGA dispute).

Miners' strike

The vicious way in which the miners' strike has been policed has not happened suddenly; the techniques used were developed in Northern Ireland and have been used against black people for years. But the problem is not just the amount of riot gear or equipment or even the numbers of police. It is the assumptions and value judgements which underlie policing operations; and it is these above all that show that the police role is decidedly not neutral. In a Channel 4 television programme on July 31, the Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire made it clear that he saw his role as being only to serve the working miners (those who are being "beaten") and not those on strike (who he identified as doing the "beating"). Meanwhile, other senior police officers in Nottinghamshire have filed sworn evidence in a recent High Court hearing stating that is the "sole intention" of every striking miner on a picket line to use violence and intimidation against working miners. It is clear that the police themselves do not see their role as innocent stooges but as prime movers. The Labour Party must stop pretending otherwise. Nor would this recognition involve a purely negative approach. On the contrary it could be just what is needed to enable the party to promote a positive and wholly different view of the role of policing in our society, while having the courage of its convictions to publicise the present often ugly reality.

The system of values in the police force (its "occupational culture") can only be changed by a radical rethinking of the position of the police in our society. The police have become a "force" rather than a "service"; their supposed independence enables them to claim virtual immunity from both the law and from complaint. They must be made to change not just their priorities and concerns, but their whole role in and relationship to the community. The Labour Party should be arguing for a society where the concerns of ordinary people are made paramount. In the case of policing, this means not only protection and security for everyone (including black people, gays, lesbians and women) but also public confidence in the policing system to promote reconciliation and concern for people instead of violence and confrontation. The police will not learn how to treat the victims of crime more sympathetically unless they start to deal with crime itself in a radically different manner. This entails a view of themselves as the servants of the people which simply does not exist at present.

Police Accountability

The Labour Party has correctly identified police accountability as the policy most likely to provide an alternative means to law and order. But police accountability has to mean far more than setting up a few arid committee structures which may have little power and less effect. It means facing up to the political nature of the choices which have to be made in the course of law enforcement and demanding real control over them. There is a choice about the way in which industrial disputes are policed and a decision to stop using saturation special riot policing was actually made by Conference and equally quickly condemned by both Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley in radio interviews. Admittedly the wording of the motion in question was none too happy but the mover explained clearly that there was no intention to stop the ordinary enforcement of law during strikes. The problem is that the leadership do not recognise the distinction between ordinary and riot policing.

Reselection: a power to be used

'The Party must get selections and reselections under way'. This was the NEC's unambiguous undertaking given to Conference on October 1st by their official spokesperson, John Evans. But although Conference succeeded in defending its hard-won Reselection procedure, it cannot be assumed that CLPs will now be left to make free and open selection without interference.

In this respect there are clear lessons to be learnt from the previous round of reselections. Its many negative features included:–

* *Widespread adoption of 'Shortlists of One'* – even when more than one candidate was validly nominated. From Pontefract to Dunfermline, candidates with significant support were crudely eliminated without any contest. In West Bromwich West, Cllr. John Edwards was denied a hearing even though he received no less than 8 valid Branch nominations.

* *Failure of Party officials* to inform CLPs that Shortlists of One are, in such circumstances, not just at variance with natural justice but also in conflict with the NEC's own guidelines. Some Party officials, indeed, were alleged to have actively opposed any idea of alternative candidates.

* *Widespread failure to shortlist women, black people and manual workers* and other disadvantaged groups. A CLP's EC has always got the right to propose such additions to the shortlist for its GC's consideration, and to challenge the unproven prejudice that such candidates are 'unelectable'.

* *Failure by those unhappy with their sitting MP to get together* in promoting alternative candidates and build enough support for them in time to win their selection. Comrades need not be alarmed by predictable screams of 'Caucussing!', providing that such discussions are purely 'advisory' and are not themselves conducted in such a way as will exclude or alienate potential supporters.

* *Allowing the NEC to simply prevent Reselection occuring* (as in Brent East) – and then to pin the blame for this on the CLP itself! The Euro results in Leeds and in Yorkshire South present fresh evidence that deselection of sitting candidates can lead to excellent results at the polls.

* *Accepting the establishment's assertion that criticism of an MP should be based not on 'ideological grounds' but on 'constituency performance'.* The establishment would like us all to accept that a Labour MP should be allowed to advocate nuclear weapons and incomes policies till s/he is blue in the face – provided that s/he answers constituents' letters and keeps an occasional 'surgery'. We must not swallow this kind of rubbish.



John Chapman

John Evans sums up on reselection

All those CLPs with sitting MPs must now be prepared for a series of sanctimonious lectures, not just from the Tory media but also from the Party's own establishment.

The words 'rights' and 'loyalty' will be widely heard. What the Party must decide is *WHOSE* 'rights' and *WHAT* 'loyalty' is most important. The 'rights' of a single individual to pursue his/her parliamentary career for yet another 5-year period? Or the rights of a whole CLP to freely choose the candidate who it thinks will represent the Labour interest with the closest perception and the greatest vigour?

As to 'loyalty', there is always a higher loyalty than that to a sitting MP (however decent a person and however full of 'experience'). It is the socialist loyalty to the Party's policies – and to all who require their full and speedy implementation.

The whole purpose of Reselection is to assist the necessary 'shift in the balance of wealth and power'. We must not leave it rusting on the shelf. We owe it to all to use it to best effect.

Francis Prideaux

LABOUR AND THE POLICE

(continued)

The other composite which the NEC tried to get remitted called for day to day operational accountability of the police. Operational accountability is the only way to control the deployment of police officers. It does not mean control of individual prosecutions, but it does mean control of decisions about how many police officers should be placed in an area, as well as decisions about, for example, the use of panda cars and transit vans. Last year the Labour Party conference passed unanimously a motion committing the Party to operational accountability but by this year the NEC was recommending remission of a motion on the grounds that it rejected what should *already* have been accepted as party policy. Fortunately, the conference reaffirmed its position unequivocally.

Unrealistic

But, the discussions in the Party about real accountability are only just beginning. Many people reject accountability as an unrealistic policy because they argue that the present personnel in the police force cannot possibly be changed. I do not myself believe that the Labour Party can or should campaign on the basis of sacking any group of workers, even the police, but these things should be discussed. Radical reorganisation of the structure of the police; and of recruitment and training; are as essential as accountability in changing the nature of the police force. The most radical proposal in this area which has not even begun to be discussed by the Party nationally, was contained in "A New Police Authority for London", (GLC Police Committee Support Unit Discussion Document No. 1) which suggested that the police should become local government workers and that each local authority should be elected on the basis of a manifesto on the police, just like housing or social services.

Undoubtedly, the miners are going to win and by next year's conference the strike will be over. But the issue of policing will not go away unless more grass roots pressure is exerted on the leadership. Otherwise Labour will continue with a wholly negative voice on the police and with no alternative policies. One thing is certain, if the Labour Party continues to run away from this subject, it will lose more and more votes.

Louise Christian
Streatham CLP

British Telecom: Why the Tories are selling off

The planned sell-off of British Telecom in November is the biggest prize in the Tories privatisation programme and its sale has been carefully planned and prepared. Soon after taking office in July 1979 the Tories announced that the Post Office was to be split into two corporations: Post and Telecommunications. A year later in July 1980 the Telecommunications Bill was published allowing private competition in the supply and maintenance of telephone equipment. Now with the sale of 51% of BT for an estimated £3 billion the plan is complete.

The new private owners will receive an increasingly profitable company. The merging of telecommunications with the new micro-chip technology will create vast new markets. All much too lucrative for the Tories to leave to the Public Sector.

But the Tories are not just interested in transferring public assets to private profit. At its simplest the sale of BT, like all the other de-nationalisations, represent straightforward asset stripping. The sale of public assets gives short-term cash gains to the treasury in the hope of keeping down the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement and possibly even assisting the elusive promise to reduce personal taxation. But the Tories also have other more sophisticated political aims in mind.

REAL AIM

The real long-term aim of Tory strategy, stripped of its increasingly transparent cloak of monetarist 'theory', is to break the strength of the trade union movement and to re-establish the catastrophic levels of profitability of British Industry by driving down living standards. This is now openly admitted by the likes of Chancellor Lawson who speaks of the need to remove 'Labour Market Rigidities' (unions) and the only cure for unemployment being for those without work to take lower paid employment in the service sector. In relation to the well organised public sector industries like BT the *Economist* openly posed the issue in July 1982:

'Britain's unions are cowed but not broken . . . The union grip is strongest in the Public Sector monopolies. The most effective way to reduce public sector union power is to end the state monopoly or near monopoly in the services they provide.'



Competition and Privatisation are two important steps in this direction and the resulting reorganisation of BT over the past two years has aided the process. BT is now organised into a number of autonomous 'Profit Centres'. Each has its own separate profit targets and accountancy systems, and the pressure towards local wage negotiations, bonus schemes and redundancy agreements aimed at undermining the unions nationally (as the miners area based bonus scheme did in Nottinghamshire) is obvious.

THE TORY DREAM

But the Tories also have another political aim in mind in the sale of BT and they are even willing to allow a lower initial return on the sale to achieve it. £8 million has been spent on advertising over the last couple of months, and elaborate schemes have been devised to create the Tory dream of a 'share owning democracy' – ensuring that every punter no matter how 'small' has an 'interest' in the system.

And to ensure that shares are not sold as soon as possible to make a quick profit, most of these incentives are only available if the 'small investor' hangs on to the shares for between 2 and 7 years. If they are successful they hope to create mass opposition to Labour's re-nationalisation plans.

Unfortunately the response of the BT unions was too little and too late. Culminating in a humiliating climbdown by the POEU in November 1983 when faced with the threat of sequestration of union funds for disobeying a Court Order to connect the private network Project Mercury to the public system.

As a result a certain level of apathy of apathy and cynicism set into the POEU membership from which it is only beginning to emerge as it prepares to face the consequences of privatisation in the form of threatened job losses and attempts to undermine the national union.

Mick Sullivan

GMBATU sell-out at Cammell Lairds

37 workers at Cammell Lairds shipyard have been thrown into jail for occupying a gas rig and the destroyer 'Edinburgh' in a fight against redundancies which have decimated the yard's workforce. Two sections at the yard – the stagers (scaffolders) and the plant maintenance section –voted to take action and their decision was given official sanction by GMBATU.

Following the jailings, management called for manual workers to return to the yard. The 500 staff have been working throughout. Despite an appeal from the 37 (reprinted here), hundreds of workers, including senior shop stewards, are crossing the GMBATU picket daily.

The GMBATU's response to the jailing of their members has been little short of pathetic. Despite heavy lobbying they refused to support an emergency resolution to Labour Party. conference, demanding the freeing of the 37. The union called a 'national demonstration' in Liverpool on Friday October 12, leaving local activists only days to prepare it. They refused the spontaneous support of GMBATU members working for the City Council who were prepared to strike on behalf of their comrades.

At no stage has there been any attempt to bring out workers in other yards, despite a Confed decision to support any yard which took action in defence of jobs. GMBATU refused to sanction visits of delegations from Lairds to other yards which could have spread the action.

The whole handling of the dispute by the GMBATU leadership has shown their fear of a fight and their total ineptitude.

Strong support has come from Liverpool City Council and from the Merseyside Group of MPs, with the notable exception of Frank Field, who from the start labelled the occupiers as 'hot-heads'.

The dispute is still on and it deserves full support. We must respond when 37 of our people are thrown in jail. The message of the 37 is coming over. If we want to win, we have to fight.

Message from the Lairds prisoners to the staff.

We have now been gaoled for fighting for our jobs and against anti-trade union laws.

Any staff members who enter the yard to work during the dispute are as responsible for jailing us as the prison wardens who lock our cells and the police who took us from the yard.

We appeal to all staff not to cross the picket line, to turn back and to join us in our struggle to save the yard.

The Courts, the police and Lairds management will not prevent us fighting for our jobs, the jobs of our children and the future of our community.

Our fight is your fight, our victory is a victory for the whole yard.

Don't leave us in Walton. Support the occupation. Save the Yard. Join the picket.

The Lairds Prisoners
HMP Walton

Students: campaigning in the new term

BUILDING support for the miners and campaigning for a New Deal for students are the central objectives of the Left in the student movement. Briefing supporters allied with Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN), the Left grouping within the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) will be working to ensure that the National Union of Students gives full support to the miners.

This will doubtless need much work since the so-called Democratic Left leadership of both NOLS and NUS has consistently followed Neil Kinnock in its slavish adherence to legality. At last year's Christmas conference a motion proposed by the NUS Executive condemned 'violence' in the NGA dispute, displaying the same spurious even-handedness as Kinnock did over violence in the miners' strike.

Miners Support Groups are being set up at Sussex University and Worthing Technical College. The group at Sussex University is being set up jointly by the Students Union and the campus trade unions. We hope this takes place in colleges throughout the country.

The NUS New Deal campaign is the other major issue in the student movement. It consists of a demand for an improved standard of living for students over a range of issues. These include a 14% increase in the student grant, a £30 per week minimum for Further Education students, a minimum grant of £900 per year, the restoration of cuts in travel grants and the development of better education or training for young people.

The NUS strategy is twofold: one is a 'Claim It' campaign designed to expose the hardship the present system of financial support causes amongst students.

The other element is a series of political activities to press student demands. Much of this consists of the well-tried and fairly futile letter-writing, MP lobbying exercise the NUS leadership seems to enjoy so much.

The NUS Executive has also floated the idea of a National Rent Strike in support of the demands of the New Deal. They now appear to be backing away from this idea – not surprisingly since it seems to be an uncharacteristically radical proposal. However, on closer analysis it can be seen as a typical Democratic Left manoeuvre: a superficially radical strategy which is unlikely to succeed in practice defuses attacks on them from the Left. The proposal for a National Rent Strike has a number of weaknesses. It excludes colleges without their own accommodation, i.e. almost every Further Education college. The strategy also fails to build alliances with campus trade unions, and local progressive groups. But despite these limitations, Briefing supporters will be campaigning in support of the New Deal.

Alick Bridger,
Sussex University Labour Club
(Personal capacity)

National Front Stopped in Brighton

From the Mosleyites of the Thirties to the National Front and international nazi terrorists today, Brighton has been a centre for fascist activity. In November 1981 a National Front march attended by 150 fascists was driven off the streets by 600 Anti-Nazi League, a well-organised and easily mobilised group. However, now that the Socialist Workers Party have closed down the ANL there is an obvious need for a group to monitor and respond to fascist activity whether it be race attacks or NF mobilisations.

On a local level when the NF planned a march in Brighton, the organisation of a counter demonstration at short notice was fraught with problems. The NF planned a march supposedly against the ritual slaughter of animals. This is clearly an opportunist attempt by the NF to jump aboard the animal liberation bandwagon as a cover for attacks on Jewish and Muslim communities. Indeed the march was a provocation against Hove's large Jewish community; its arranged meeting place was on the same road as a Jewish Old People's Home and the date around Jewish New Year was hardly accidental.

Despite short notice an ad-hoc group of anti-fascists leafletted schools and fly-posted the town. Interestingly, it was the SWP, once the organisers of the Anti-Nazi League who opposed the counter-demonstration. Their argument was in a period of working class activity (ie the miners' strike) fascist groups could not grow and therefore need not be opposed. This economic determinism of its crudest kind totally ignored the relative growth of fascism during the 1974 miners' strike, and is a clear illustration of the SWP as a dying and irrelevent sect. Despite their intervention the march was opposed!

The march on September 22nd was a resounding defeat for the fascists. The police insisted that the NF change their assembly point from the one advertised. This disorientated anti-fascists temporarily, but we soon reassembled close by. A motley crew of about 50 NF eventually moved off, flanked by over 100 police. The march was first driven up side-streets as several anti-fascists streamed after them. The march only managed to assemble in the main road with the aid of police horses, vans and motor-cycles. Several anti-fascists were arrested when they tried to block the road.

Throughout the march's progress through the town we collected many people to march with us. The NF on the other hand were 'insulated' by the police presence and were unable to give out the leaflets. By the time we reached the fascists rally point we had doubled our original numbers and the nazis were unable to make their speeches because of the noise we were making! The police then bundled them all into a coach and whisked them away. Brighton's NF organiser, Martin Wingfield, in the local paper was quoted as saying that the NF would not march in Sussex for a "number of years". Next time I hope there will be a national organisation to call upon for mass mobilisations rather than relying upon a few individuals.

Brighton Labour Briefing

Her "Enemy Within"

The Law is the law is the law!
And Order is order is order!
A Judge is the best judge
And a Policeman the best lawyer
When he steals the funds of a union,
Or batters the head of a miner.

Look, "Ulster is British, is British!"
And "Murder is murder is murder!"
— As she counts her plastic bullets
For busting children's heads in,
On her side of the Border.
Oh but, "Violence is violence is violence!"
Incessantly she sings

— With her real Polaris necklace on,
And her Trident ear-rings.
And an Election is an Election
And Tory is Tory! she said
— As she viewed the South Atlantic
For any sign of blood.

Well, I closed down the Belgrano
In a single afternoon:
Now for those miners' families
— My enemy within.

Denis Knight
(Brighton Kemp Town CLP)

Glasgow Troops Out Demonstration

On Saturday September 8th, for the first time in three years, a demonstration calling for the withdrawal of British troops from the occupied six counties marched through Glasgow's city centre. The previous one, held in 1981, was disrupted by counter demonstrators and resulted in a temporary ban on marches relating to the Irish question. The latest march was attended by well over 3,000 people and it won back the right to demonstrate on the streets of Glasgow against continued British repression in Ireland. The march was organised by the Clydeside Troops Out Movement, Sinn Fein and the Scottish Republican Band alliance. In attendance were supporters from the Glasgow Labour Committee on Ireland, the RCP, the IRSP and the Scottish Republican Socialist Party. Throughout the length of the march, there was constant harassment from some 500 Loyalists, 73 of whom were arrested. The march, however, reached its destination, a rally in the City Halls.

Despite having their banner on the march, the Glasgow LCI voted by a small majority to decline the offer of having a speaker on the platform. The reason the majority gave for this was that they did not want to share the platform with fringe groups like the SRSP and the RCP. This was an excellent opportunity to link up with Republican sympathisers which was stupidly thrown away.

The main speaker at the rally was Vincent Malloy of Sinn Fein, who said that the euphoric atmosphere "reminded him of the night Bobby Sands was elected". "Sinn Fein", he said, "realised that more than armed struggle was necessary for victory." Malloy went on to stress the need for a political campaign, which did not depend on unconditional support of the IRA. The main demands of such a campaign, he said, should be — Oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Against Strip Searching and Troops Out Now!

Scott Goldie (West Dumbarton LPYS/ Vale of Leven Labour Party Branch)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Irish Trade Unionists visit Party Conference —

UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

Party Conference '84 saw a flowering of the Irish fringe — from the Fabians leftwards, each tendency put its views. Perhaps, the most significant contribution of all came from the Irish trade union movement. That is on top of the £10,000 the three visitors brought over for the miners!

For the first time since the days of Connolly and Larkin, a section of the leadership of the Irish trade union movement has resolved to campaign for national unity and independence and to use their unfluence here. 'There is', they say 'no contradiction between ''bread and butter'' work as trade unionists and campaigning for Irish unity'.

The weakness of the Irish trade union movement and the working class as a whole has been a failure to look for the political solution of its problems, 'partition has impeded the economic, social and political development of the Irish working class for too long'.

The reunified Ireland these people have in mind bears little resemblence to the set up in the South today, it is a welcome socialist vision.

Aware of pressure from the United States and Britain for Ireland to enter Nato they carefully named their group 'Trade Unionists for Irish Unity *and* Independence'(TUIUI). Chatting easily in the bar with conference visitors from the 'Stop Plastic Bullets Campaign' and ex-Armagh prisoner Linda Quigley, Sean Redmond (who is Gen.Sec of the Irish Municipal Workers Union), Alice Moore (Assistant Gen.Sec. Local Govt Workers' Union) and Des Bonass (Dublin Trades Council), explained that the group wished to see a British declaration of intent to withdraw. 'The problem of how to prevent what is referred to as the 'bloodbath' is a problem for our labour movement', they insisted, 'not for the British'.

From contacts made at Party Conference, the TUIUI intends to step up its work in Britain by arranging discussions with individual unions and possibly making a submission to the NEC subcommittee whose revision of the party's 1981 Northern Ireland Policy document is expected next year.

Irish campaigners won a noteable victory by winning the party's opposition to both the sexual harassment of strip searches in Armagh and the conveyor belt system of non-jury Diplock courts used in the North. (It is the first time at conference that the unions have challenged an NEC reccommendation on Ireland since the 20's.)

The disappointing vote on the withdrawal composite should not mask progress being made. The 'unity by consent policy' has now been substantially remodelled and the defeat of the 'men of violence' is no longer credible as the prime policy objective.

If we are to win the party to a position of unconditional withdrawal, the dialogue with republican, feminist and labour movements in Ireland must be extended into the unions.

The formation of the TUIUI and their participation in the debate at party conference is a vital step in this direction.

By Martin Collins

Greetings from Sinn Fein

The following statement was sent to the Labour Women for Ireland fringe meeting at annual conference in Blackpool:

A Chairde,

We send fraternal greetings to the sisters attending this Fringe meeting and trust that this mutual exchange of views between Republican women and women in the Labour Party will help in building dialogue and debate; two essential tools in breaking down the barriers which years of misrepresentation, expounded by the British government, have prolonged the struggle of the Irish people for unity and self-determination.

Sinn Fein Women's Department was formed in 1980 as part of the Party's developing policies on social, economic and cultural issues and out of a growing realisation by Republican women that the question of Women's freedom could not be postponed until national freedom had been won.

Sinn Fein Women believe that immediate campaigning against the repression of women is an integral part of the overall fight against the national, social, economic and cultural repression of which Ireland, North and South, is presently ruled. We believe that within the existing system, only the most minimal concessions can be gained, nevertheless, these concessions themselves and the increased awareness which ensues from such campaigns will make women's demands impossible to ignore in a free, united, socialist republic.



Harassment — daily occurance

The day to day reality of working-class anti-unionist women in the six counties is that they are subjected to constant armed patrolling of their areas by the British army and the RUC: that they have the highest prison population per head in Europe, with at the present over 700 prisoners in jails – not to mention the many thousands who have been imprisoned since 1968.

Sixty-two years of neglect have ensured overcrowding in dilapidated estates and 30-70% unemployed. Women from 17 to 70 years of age are arrested, interrogated, physically abused, thrown into jail. They are maimed and killed by plastic bullets and live bullets on the streets, and in their own homes. Many of them spend their lives in endless rounds of prison visits – that includes women travelling to England, to arrive at prisons only to find that their loved one has been deliberately and secretly transferred to a prison at the other end of the country. To these women, a better life means that the Brits go home, that the six county state be dismantled, that the political power of unionism and of the Church be removed.

Like the women in El Salvador, South Africa, Nicaragua, we recognise that political action in one area only can bring temporary concessions for women, but without involvement in a mass movement fighting all aspects of repression, improvements for one class, or one sex in the end, changes nothing.

Women in Sinn Fein, though the Women's Department, and the general work of Sinn Fein are active in Sinn Fein's Advice centres.

NJM ON TRIAL IN GRENADA

ONE YEAR after the US invasion of Grenada, the NJM leadership have been subjected to renewed torture, 24 hour confinement to cells and have been denied proper access to relatives and lawyers. The trial is due to start on 16th October with the elections set for 3rd December. The defence lawyers will be moving constitutional objections to the political bias shown by the judiciary and interim government, as the chances of any fair hearing for the accused in the midst of a heated election campaign are minimal.

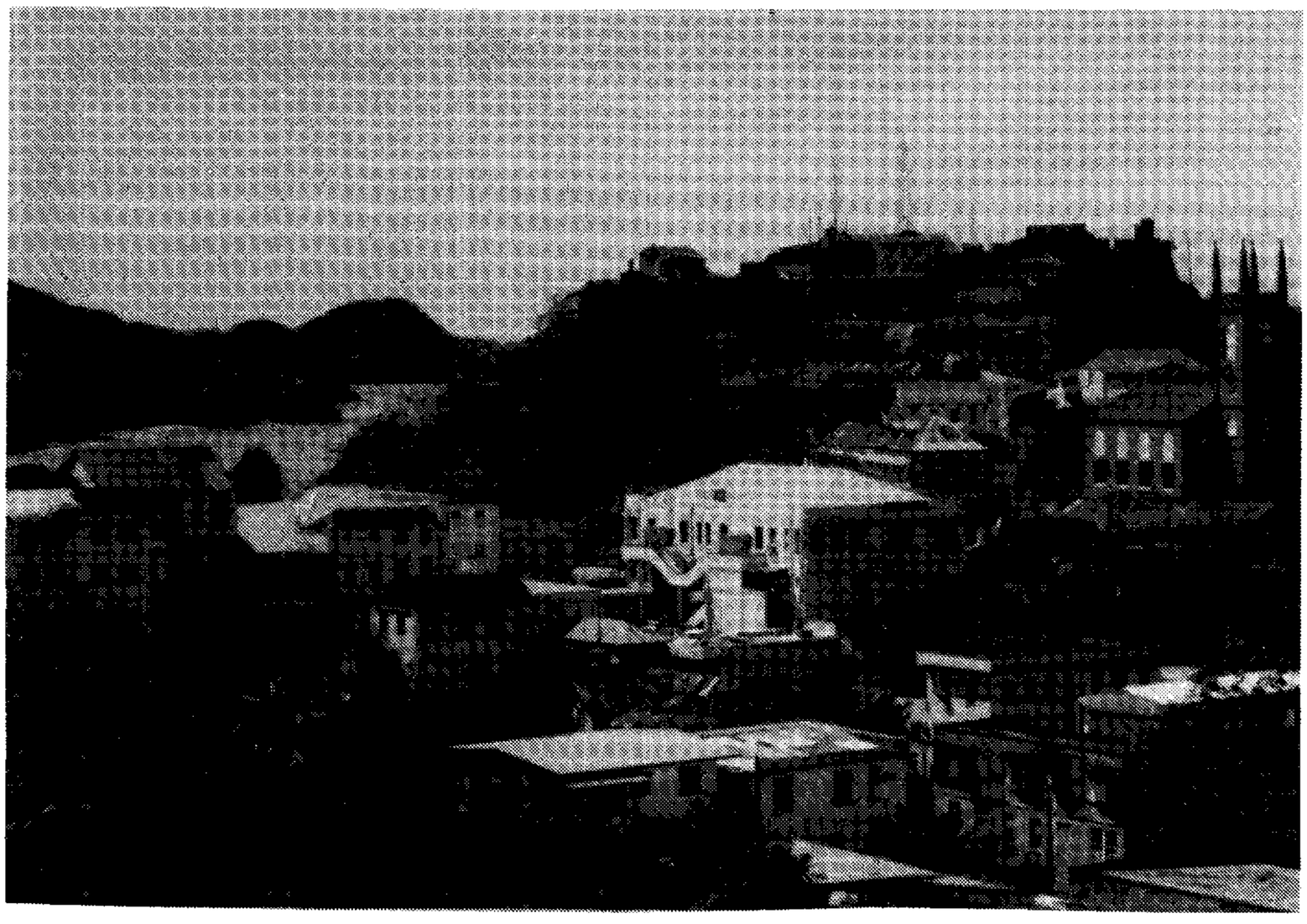
THE TRIAL

The preliminary enquiry into charges against 20 persons accused of the murder of Maurice Bishop and seven others on 19 October 1983 ended on 3 August. 19 persons, including ten members of the Central Committee of the New Jewel Movement, have been committed for trial.

The result of the preliminary enquiry heightens concern that political objectives are of more weight than judicial considerations in the courts of Grenada today.

PROSECUTION

The prosecution produced 27 witnesses, most of them being formal witnesses (eg police describing arrests etc). Only two witnesses claimed to have seen the death of Maurice Bishop. Both testified that Bishop and his comrades had been lined up against a wall and shot, on the orders of an officer. However, there were contradictions in their evidence, and it is not certain that their evidence will be conclusive. The evidence supporting the prosecution's case that the execution was carried out on the orders of the Central Committee was very weak.



Fort Rupert: Scene of the killings.

Despite this, the magistrate decided to commit for trial all but one (ex-Commissioner of Police Ian St.Bernard) of the accused.

For political reasons, the occupying forces want the trial to take place as quickly as possible. Additionally, the leader of the prosecution, Trinidadian QC Carl Hudson Phillips, has let it be known that he would not be prepared to proceed with the prosecution if Gairy is returned to power.

RAILROADED

The case involves a number of complex legal issues relating to military, constitutional, international as well as criminal law, and that research to prepare the defence properly will obviously take some time. Of course the large number of defendants and the number of witnesses already called by the prosecution will make preparation time longer. Further, defence work is hampered by the fact that the majority of the lawyers are not resident in Grenada, and because of commitments in their own practices, can only travel to the island intermittently. Most important too, money to pay legal fees has to be raised by the families of those accused, and since none of these are rich, this will clearly take some time.

Possibilities of a fair trial are further hampered by the current situation in occupied Grenada. The US 'Psychological Operations Battalion' is still working hard at its propaganda effort to poison the minds of the population against the revolution and especially the imprisoned leaders of the NJM. This is likely to affect chances of an unbiased jury. Moreover, defence lawyers claim that witnesses approached by them have been threatened and harassed by the authorities and by sections of the population still very emotional about the painful October events.

PRIME OBJECTIVE

There can be little doubt that the prime objective of the powers-that-be is to eliminate the remaining leadership of the NJM. If they cannot achieve this by legal means (by the imposition of the death penalty by the court) they will find other means.

From 'Grenada Update'.

women

in its Housing, Social Welfare Departments and in the anti-drug and anti-maternity closure campaigns. Through their work in Advice centres, women activists are not merely providing a service, processing complaints – which is the traditional role of the clinics of establishment politicians in order to buy votes. The effect of Sinn Fein's advice centres has been to support the growing militancy of people struggling to organise themselves against injustice.

Through their work, women have become more confident and more vocal, both inside and outside Sinn Fein. As a result, the profile of republican women has risen and will continue to rise and grow. This is reflected at Ard Fheiseanna (Annual Conference) where women are increasingly visible, both on the platform in leadership positions, and taking part in debates.

Like all colonised countries, Ireland, and especially the six counties, is caught in a time loop of reaction which cannot be broken by the usual forms of lobbying and campaigning of party politics. The civil rights marches of '68 and '69 brought nothing but further repression on the anti-unionist population. For all the talk of enlightened reforms, of fair employment agencies, of Housing being taken out of the hands of Unionist-dominated councils, the six counties has not changed. The artificial majority can still blackmail a willing British Government into channelling jobs into their own areas, shelving Housing plans intended for overcrowded nationalist areas. The six-county statelet is irreformable.

The only form of political activity which keeps Britain's last colony in the headlines, worries establishment politicians and most importantly, keeps alive the hope and the fighting spirit of hundreds of thousands of Irish people, is the War of Liberation.

It is for these reasons that women, alongside their male comrades, are engaging in armed struggle.

Every day they face the prospect of long years in jail, injury and death. This is why we in Sinn Fein wholeheartedly and unequivocally support their right and the right of all Irish people to take up arms against the foreign military and oppressive forces occupying our country.

We in Sinn Fein's Women's Department will continue struggling for freedom; freedom from our own oppression as women; freedom from British rule which imposes that repression. Only through this struggle do we envisage a real and truly lasting peace in Ireland for the Irish people as a whole.

In solidarity and sisterhood
Sinn Fein Women's Department

PICKET

The African Liberation Committee, together with CLS, the Committee for Human Rights in Grenada and other organisations are holding a Picket outside the US Embassy, Grosvenor Square, W.1., on 25th October, 1984 from 4.30--7.30pm.

AMANDLA!
POWER!

THE FOLLOWING motion was passed by conference despite an NEC recommendation to remit.

International Briefing would also like to acknowledge the vital part being played by the many black trade unionists affiliated to the Federation of South African Trade Unions, the black consciousness unions of the Council of Unions of South Africa and the community unions such as the South African Allied Workers Union. In future issues we hope to open up a debate on the events unfolding in Southern Africa and how the British labour movement can offer solidarity and support. Contributions are welcome.

This Conference expresses its condemnation of the current campaign by the South African minority government to attempt to gain international credibility through visits such as that organised to the United Kingdom for President Botha. It criticises the United Kingdom Government for having given international recognition to such a visit.

Conference calls upon the next Labour Government to adopt as part of its foreign policy a firm and unequivocal pledge to oppose and help to bring an end to the evil system of apartheid brutally enforced upon the black people of Southern Africa by a white minority.

Conference noting the continuation and entrenchment of apartheid policies in South Africa (including Namibia) calls upon the National Executive Committee to formulate a vigorous policy of opposition to the South African regime. In particular it calls for.

(a) the severing of economic, military and diplomatic links with South Africa, and specifically for the cancelling of the contracts that Rossings have with the United Kingdom Government to mine uranium in Namibia,

(b) the National Executive Committee to jointly determine the details of policy with representations of the African National Congress, the South African Congress of Trade Unions, the South West African People's Organisation, etc. and to give financial support where possible to these movements; this policy to be a priority of the Foreign Office, influencing our relations with other countries and our European Economic Community partners,

(c) the rejection of the policy of 'linkage', as proposed by the Reagan administration, whereby the independence of Namibia is made conditional on the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola,

(d) the production of a campaign pack by 1st March 1985, to be distributed to all affiliates of the Labour Party, outlining Party policy on Southern Africa and giving concrete proposals for campaigning;

(e) the popularisation of Party policy against apartheid by working with the Anti-Apartheid Movement to draw up a schedule of visits to the Labour Party's regions by speakers from the South African and Namibian Liberation Movements so that by the time the next Labour Conference is held every region will have been visited by speakers;

(f) the production of educational material concerning the situation in South Africa should be combined with an intensified campaign to isolate the apartheid regime in all fields.

Conference condemns the sale by Co-operative stores of any goods emanating from South Africa.

Conference instructs the National Executive Committee, in conjunction with the Anti-Apartheid Movement, to prepare and publicise a comprehensive list of products and companies with links with South Africa and to urge all sections of the Labour movement and the public to boycott them.

Further, Conference commits the Labour Party to:

(a) support the African National Congress, through the work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, in its struggle to fight apartheid in South Africa,

(b) fight to end the supply of arms to South Africa,

(c) support the development of full trade union rights in South Africa.

Moved by Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section). Seconded by Loughborough CLP.

International Briefing is interested in opening up a debate on what action local parties and trade unions can take to support those struggling in Southern Africa, and would welcome contributions.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING

7.30 Friday
October 26th County Hall

TODAY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Discussion (with speaker from ANC and others)

Rough justice

Many innocent people were killed or scarred for life as a result of the Birmingham Pub Bombings in November 1974. What is less widely recognised is that victims of that tragic event include the 6 innocent men convicted wrongly of planting the bombs.

The case of the six men convicted in 1975 for the Birmingham pub bombings raised many questions which have *never* been answered.

– The six men have always protested their innocence.
– The IRA stated categorically that the six men were never involved in that organisation.
– Considerable doubt has been cast on statements which were signed by four of the six men and formed a crucial part of the case. (Especially after statements by prison officers in 1976 to the effect that the men had been assaulted by the police.)
– Forensic evidence supplied at the trial was taken to indicate proof that the men had handled explosives. This evidence was seriously challenged by experts at the time, and further research since the trial has cast even stronger doubts on this whole area.
– Circumstantial evidence brought up at the trial has similarly been thrown into question – eg the role of Kenneth Littlejohn in the case.
– A list of people – *not* the six men imprisoned – thought to be responsible for the bombings was given to the Home Secretary, but no action was ever taken on this.

ROUGH JUSTICE – an independent Relatives Support Committee – urges concerned individuals and organisations to support their campaign to have these questions explored publicly.

The Campaign are asking for support from Labour MPs, councillors, CLPs, Trades Councils and other organisations. This is an important issue that has been neglected far too long. The Campaign also needs money, so please donate what you can.

I/we, the undersigned, agree that there are serious anomalies in this case and support demands for independent enquiries into the various aspects of the case.

Name . . . . . .

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Please return completed sponsorship statement. as soon as possible, to: Mrs Hunter, Rough Justice, c/o 29 Alder House, Heath Town. Wolverhampton, W.Mids.

Chester Humphrey extradition protest

THE US continue to press for the extradition of Chester Humphrey, ex Vice President of the Technical and Allied Workers Union. Chester was held by the US for seven months without charge and then re-arrested on August 8th at the request of the Americans who wanted him back in the US to face charges of smuggling arms. These charges were subsequently changed to 'issuing false documents' and 'crossing state lines' as the first charge could be deemed 'political' and extradition opposed on that ground.

Telegrams deploring the extradition attempts should be sent to: Nicholas Braithwaite, Chair, Interim Advisory Council, St George's, Grenada, with copies to. Committee for Human Rights in Grenada, c/o 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7.

Letter

Dear Comrade,

I read with interest Tony Greenstein's analysis of the Israeli General Election, (August, Supplement p.10 and October, Supplement p.19) and await with interest his analysis of the General Elections in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya, North and South Yemen and other Middle Eastern countries.

Fraternally, Harold Smith.

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