LONDON LABOUR 40p
BRIEFING
No 45 DECEMBER 1984

"Kinnock's not been on a picket line, nor in a village that has been occupied, so where is he getting his information from? His experience is reading the bosses' papers and watching the bosses' TV. He should condemn a society which, in order to defeat the miners, is prepared to starve little kids. Kinnock's a complete disgrace, but he's not the LP — the LP are the people who are putting their hands in their pockets for the miners, that are propagating our ideas, like yourselves. In a socialist society we'll have forgotten all about bloody Kinnock. Anyone who can't distinguish between oppression and the working class should be thrown out."

Jack Collins, Kent Area of the NUM

KINNOCK SCABS ON MINERS — BUT WE WILL FIGHT ON TO VICTORY!

The miners' strike is the most crucial battle for twenty years. The issue is simple; a major union has said that it will not accept the basic tenet of Toryism; it will not sell jobs, destroy communities or lead the labour movement into the path of compromise, conciliation and incorporation into the Tory state.

In response the media have willingly led the battle of lies, innuendo and half-truths as miners are offered bribes to break ranks and divide the rest of the labour movement from the battle.

The principal weapons of the Tories have been the creation of a mobile national police force and using the DHSS to starve the miners back to work.

The response of local Labour Parties, trade union branches, women's groups and the ethnic communities has been tremendous; in London alone over £500,000 has been raised and convoys of food, clothing and toys for the children have regularly left for the coalfields.

We must now demand that the TUC and Labour leaders stop equivocating — that every Labour MP go to the picket lines not to "neutrally observe", but to support; and that coal and oil imports be stopped forthwith.

Victory for the miners is the victory of every cause; the job of everyone is to hasten that day.

Jeremy Corbyn MP

The Campaign Group of Labour MPs have decided that the following statement be made in support of the NUM:
"We reiterate our full support for the NUM in their historic struggle against pit closures and we call upon all members of the PLP to join us in our appeal, and to give absolute priority to their campaign until victory is secured."

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

LONDON AGAINST RATECAPPING

GREENWICH UNITED AND WILLING TO FIGHT!

FOLLOWING a consultation procedure carried out between June and September with the local parties and the Town Hall trade unions, the Labour Group resolved, with only one vote against, to adopt resolutions carried by a meeting of the joint General Councils of Greenwich, Woolwich and Eltham CLPs as the basis of our policy to combat rate-capping.

It's demands comprise:

1) A commitment to act in unison with other Labour Authorities in defying the Rates Act and protecting jobs and services in Greenwich.

2) Supporting an initial tactic of declaring a budget but not fixing a rate for 1985/6.

3) Implementing a rents freeze for 1985/6.

4) Producing a budget for 1985/6, incorporating areas of growth responding to demographic change, increasing poverty, gaps in service provision and continuing manifesto implementation.

5) Campaigning widely in conjunction with trade unions, political parties, community groups, etc., demanding the return of the £95 million stolen from us since 1979 as rate support grant and the repeal of the Rates Act.

6) To call a Borough labour movement conference in defence of local democracy.

7) Investigate withholding debt repayments in 1985/6 and change council standing orders accordingly.

So far so good. We have launched the Greenwich Petition, calling for the return of our rate support grant and the abolition of the Rates Act. This will be presented to Parliament on December 11. The petition has provided us with a unique opportunity to talk to people about the issues around the Rates Act. The response has been very good.

I've Signed Have You THE GREENWICH PETITION

Growth

We have agreed a budget for 1985/6 incorporating growth of £4 million and have produced a consultative document for borough wide distribution. We will be conducting another MORI opinion poll at the same time.

Two series of small, locally-based public meetings are planned for the end of this year and the beginning of next which will have councillors and trade unionists sharing the same platform.

Work with the trade unions is continuing and will increase. Representatives of the four South London Labour Boroughs now meet regularly. We are planning mass meetings and another round of smaller workplace meetings over the next few months.

Plans to hold the borough labour movement conference are in hand and a date has been fixed for February 16, 1985.

Strong will to fight

We are committed to reconvening the joint GCs if there should be any deviations from the agreed strategy.

There is an enormous amount of work ahead of us, but the group is united and has a strong will to fight. With the active support of the local parties and trade unions I am very optimistic of our ability to win.

Claer Lloyd-Jones,
Chair,
Greenwich Labour Group



CAMDEN UNITED AGAINST RATECAPPING?

ON paper things look good – both manual and white collar Council unions have endorsed the stand taken by the Labour Group and both CLPs. That is for non-compliance, with a preference for the 'no rate' tactic as the means to get more money out of Jenkin.

But Labour has a majority of only 7 in the Council, and 4 weak-kneed comrades voting with the Tories or 8 abstaining could wreck the whole strategy. Since last May all councillors and branches have been asked to consider their position and for any who are not prepared to see it through to stand down sooner rather than later. Some of the old guard still think the problem will go away, but the LGC and the Leader has now set a December deadline. There seems to be no shortage of comrades prepared to take their places if necessary.

A 'Camden Assembly' launched by the Trades Council has so far produced less unanimity, with both CLPs keeping their distance although Party activists are involved. Its second meeting on 25th November was to be attended by leading Councillors.

The common campaign committee between Parties, Council unions and the local voluntary sector is set to coordinate a mass petition and window-poster campaign to accompany the Council's formal consultation process on the rates. Instead of a formal publication of statistics to the commercial rate-payers as required by law, this will involve a house-to-house leaflet. Individual sections of the council workforce will produce their own material too for publicity 'on the job'.

The spirit is there – but some of the Councillor flesh looks weak!

Cllr John Wakeham



Fighting ratecapping in Lambeth

The campaign against ratecapping in Lambeth is gathering strength as it moves to involve all the people of the borough — council workers, other trade unionists and all the people who need our services.

The position of Lambeth's Labour Group is clear. At a meeting in mid-September we agreed without dissent to a policy of:

— no rises in rents next year
— no cuts in jobs or services
— no rate to be set if the government persists in its use of the 1984 Rates Act.

We stand united with the other Labour Authorities on the hit list in demanding that the government return to us the money it has stolen over the past 5 years (over £113 million in Lambeth, almost exactly our total expenditure for the current year).

SUPPORT OF TOWN HALL UNIONS

The fullest support of the Town Hall unions has been fostered by a series of 32 workplace meetings where Ted Knight and union leaders have emphasised that solidarity by council workers in indispensible to victory.

Lambeth participated strongly in the ratecapping protest on November 7th, beginning with its own cavalcade from Clapham Common. There was heartening support from council workers, community groups and trade unionists beyond the Town hall, including teachers and miners.

The Local Government Committee has established its own working party to fight ratecapping. Its aim is to bring in community groups and thereby all the people of Lambeth in defence of our services.

Each committee of the council has produced briefing papers for public consultation. These outline in detail what the 10% cut called for by Jenkins would mean. Council-funded publicity material including posters, banners and a series of 4 press adverts will come out from mid-November onwards. Ratecapping forums involving community organisations, Lambeth Joint Trades Union Committee and the Lambeth Assembly are being arranged.

SUPPORT THE MINERS

The Lambeth Labour Parties and the Trades Council are pledged to support this strategy to the full. Much of our work at the moment is in support of the miners. We see the ratecapping campaign in its fight for jobs and the future of our community as a logical extension of that struggle.

To summarise, the ratecapping campaign in Lambeth is building strongly towards a climax from next January on. We aim to win and we recognise that Councillors alone cannot achieve this. Only with the solidarity of council workers and the people of Lambeth can Lambeth obtain justice.

Des Atkinson, Lambeth Councillor, Stockwell Ward

LONDON AGAINST RATECAPPING

Lewisham Conference fails to make up its mind

THE Lewisham Borough Local Government Conference adopted a firm stand of "No cuts, no rate rises, no rent rises and no redundancies". It even called for expansion of certain services such as childcare. However, the 170 delegates could not agree a strategy to implement its decisions.

Resolutions on deficit budgeting and not setting a rate were both voted down — the first by just one vote after a recount. This means that the strategy will be left up to the Labour Group. Will they be able — or willing — to confront the government? On present form this is unlikely, but it is up to the Left to organise through the branches, putting pressure on their councillors to stand firm. Already one councillor has stood down, and it is hoped that others not willing to carry out this policy will do likewise rather than vote against the Party next year.

If more follow, we could see more people who are prepared to fight elected to the Council.

Lewisham Council faces problems, too, in its dispute with NALGO in the Housing Department, which has been handled particularly badly. It is time that Borough Councils, and particularly the GLC, realised that only the Council *workforce* can effectively fight the government. Councillors can give a lead, and mount mass public campaigns, but in the end it is only the workforce that can stop government commissioners stepping in.

Kevin Flack (Lewisham East CLP)

SOUTHWARK REPORT

Despite the decision of the September LGC conference that a three noes strategy was the best option to fight ratecapping, Southwark (and most other hit-list councils) will take the route of not fixing a rate. This strategy can be made to work, but only on two conditions. First, an absolutely clear commitment must be made that any rate eventually set must be no higher than the current rate (possibly with allowance for inflation), and second, the full support of the council unions and local community must be gained.

The first of these we will have to fight for within the party. The second we will have to fight for outside. The sum total of the Council's campaigning so far appears to have been to put up a few posters proclaiming that Southwark is now a rate-capped zone.

If a realistic campaign is to be waged, we believe that there is no point in looking to the Council for a lead. The only people who are going to lead any serious struggle are the ones whose own livelihoods are at stake, the council workers themselves; and also the tenants and homeless and community groups of Southwark, all of whom have been fighting or are fighting the Council's policies. Southwark Briefing is working to build a fighting fightback . . .

BRIEFING MEETING
'IF THE RATE CAP FITS'
Discussion on local government and trade union response to Government ratecapping.
WEDNESDAY 28 November at 8pm
Camden Tenants Hall, SE15
Speakers from 'London Bridge', GLC NALGO

LONDON AGAINST RATECAPPING

UNITED ILEA TAKES FIRST STEP AGAINST GOVERNMENT



ILEA is the first of the rate-capped Authorities to set its budget. Despite public Tory threats of court action and commissioners, Labour members voted unanimously for a no-cuts budget. The budget, which was prepared by Finance Chair Steve Bundred and Deputy Leader Ruth Gee, will maintain services, protect and slightly increase jobs.

Labour Councillors received a decisive mandate from Londoners before taking their decision. ILEA's schools, colleges, youth and adult education institutes took part in a referendum conducted throughout September and October. Budget Consultation documents itemising the cuts the Government is demanding were sent out in August so that governing bodies could meet in the autumn to consider them. Out of 2,880 responses only 16 supported the Government – and those 16 included the CBI and four Tory Boroughs. 2864 rejected the cuts completely.

A MORI Poll taken at the same time showed that 8 out of 10 Inner Londoners including many Tories were opposed to any reduction in spending on the Education service, indeed one letter objecting to cuts came from a Government Minister, Mr. Robert Dunn, who wrote to object to the possible closure of a college in his own constituency if Patrick Jenkin's demands are carried out.

Rate-capping is only the most recent Government attack on ILEA. Mrs Thatcher and her minister have conducted a year on year vendetta against the Authority ever since they were elected in 1977. First the Tories demanded the break-up of ILEA as they are today demanding the break up of the GLC. Parents, Governors and Trade Unionists banded together to campaign against abolition and the proposals were dropped.

In 1981 the whole of the rate support grant was withdrawn because the Authority refused to make the swingeing cuts the Tories were demanding so ILEA became the only Education Authority in the country to receive no government grant despite the fact that 7 out of the 10 poorest areas in the country are to be found in inner London. The 1983 Tory Manifesto proposed break up by stealth in the shape of a joint board to govern ILEA. Once again a popular campaign caused Sir Keith to drop his plans and announce direct elections.

Today the government are demanding cuts and control of the ILEA budget and manpower targets (their words!). They wish to evict ILEA from County Hall. A further review of ILEA's constitution is threatened within five years. Members have set the ILEA budget. That is only the first step. Now we must put our case to the people of London and call upon them to support us and protect the service.

Frances Morrell (Leader of the Inner London Education Authority)

HACKNEY CONSOLIDATES CAMPAIGN

Philippa Jones,
(Hackney South & Shoreditch CLP)

AT Hackney's recall Annual Borough Conference with delegates from the GMCs and all of Labour Group, we voted unanimously for a mass campaign to demand that there be no rate rise higher than inflation, no rent rise and no cuts in jobs and services. The same motion stressed the central demand for the government to restore the Rate Support Grant to the level of 1979 and called for unity with the council workforce.

With this total agreement on strategy we went on to debate the tactics of not setting a rate or introducing a deficit budget. Delegates from the Town Hall trade unions favoured not setting a rate on the grounds that they hoped it would create a quick and early crisis with all London local authorities acting in unison.

Their argument was rejected by other trade union delegates and Labour Party members who felt that the justified suspicions of local people about the Council's record of high rate-rises would be best allayed by setting a low rate and that any mass campaign must be aimed at uniting both tenants and workers. Deleages argued that unity between local authorities on strategy was more important than focussing on one tactic — other measures could be used to give the trade unions a specific focus for action.

There were three crucial motions voted on. One recommended a deficit budget and back-up tactics but stressed the need for flexibility in the broader context of building a unified campaign and of changing government tactics. It was this motion that received overwhelming support — 95 for, 36 against and two abstentions. Another called for the introduction of a deficit budget and mentioned back-up tactics — it was carried but not overwhelmingly. A motion calling for not setting a rate was decisively rejected.

What emerged from the conference was a feeling that we had consolidated our campaign. We gave our leader Hilda Kean, and deputy leader, Andrew Puddephatt the scope for evolving tactical considerations as the need arises in building a mass campaign centred on the Council workforce. Whatever disquiet Town Hall delegates may have felt about the choice of tactics, we hope will be counterbalanced by this more open approach.

The "Working for Hackney" campaign held a packed-out cabaret cum political rally on the night of the conference and is busy co-ordinating the activities of many different organisations concerned about rate-capping. The campaign committee now includes representatives from the Labour Parties, trade unions, community groiups, black groups and women's campaign organisations.

We are collecting a mass petition, canvass-

Deficit budget is the best option!

Tory Ratecapping legislation has forced the question of local democracy and services onto the political agenda. The recent Labour Party Conference called on Labour Groups to resist ratecapping legislation, to work towards a common strategy to this end and to publicise local needs and the case for more resources from Central Government. It called, too, on the Party to encourage Labour Councils to construct budgets in accordance with local wishes, even when this can be defined as technical illegality. Activists in Haringey Labour Parties are now working to translate these fine words into action.

DEFICIT BUDGETING

Discussion focussed on two main tactics to resist ratecapping — not fixing a rate or drawing up a deficit budget. We, in Haringey Briefing, believe a *deficit budget* to be the tactic most able to unite the Party and the local community in resisting Tory plans. A deficit budget entails budgeting for a level of expenditure to meet the needs of the community and setting a rate which will be the local community's contribution to this expenditure. It clearly and unambiguously draws attention to the disparity between the community's requirements and resources available locally to meet them. It places the demand on Central Government to provide adequate resources to meet the deficit.

STANDSTILL RATE, NO CUTS

Thus for 1985/6 we advocate setting a standstill rate and an expenditure budget based on the Three Nos plus the necessary extra spending to ensure that all vacancies in the Council workforce are filled as well. This approach has the advantage over not fixing a rate in that it moves attention away from the question of rates to the question of services and jobs. Furthermore, a deficit budget prevents the future option of raising rates as a means of compensating for cutbacks in the Central Government Rate Support Grant. Ratecapping should not, we believe, be fought on the basis of restoring Council's right to levy higher rates, but on the wider question of providing resources from national funds for local needs.

TAKE THE INITIATIVE — NO CONCESSIONS

Deficit budgeting also forces the Government onto the defensive by being a clear statement of the Council's intentions and an obvious challenge to the Rates Act. It thus provides the simultaneous unity of demands between ratecapped authorities which will maximise pressure on the Government and it is a clear and simple rallying point for the Party. The alternative strategy of not fixing a rate will not produce this unity — different Councils will run out of money at different times, the Government will be able to play one Council off against another, and it is a tactic that does not clearly articulate the political demand to restore the RSG. It leaves open the option of accepting concession from the Government — we must resist these as it will lead to cuts and trade-offs between services.

ACTIVATING THE PARTY

We expect the Labour Group to be accountable to the CLPs. Thus the Party must make its position on ratecapping clear for the necessary discussion with the Labour Group can begin. That discussion, after much delay is now happening in Haringey, but it appears that the Labour Group are already making decisions without the Party. It is possible that some Councillors, for personal or political reasons may be reluctant to support a position which will bring them into conflict with the law. Therefore, we are asking *all* Councillors to seriously consider their position and if they feel unable to support such a policy to resign their Council seat. At the same time the Party must give full support and solidarity to those Councillors prepared to fight ratecapping.

BRIEFING MOTION

The following motion has been passed in wards in Haringey so that we can build up a united campaign on the basis of a deficit budget. It should now go to the GC and LGC.

"That in line with the Labour Party policy as decided at the 1984 Annual Conference for the year 1985/6 Haringey Council commits itself to setting a standstill rate and a deficit budget, allowing for full maintenance of all council services and the filling of all council job vacancies as the basis for our fight against ratecapping.

Accordingly, we call on all Councillors to declare their support for this policy.

At an earlier GC in Hornsey and Wood Green, a motion calling for a conference of local Trade Unions, Community Groups and the Parties was also passed but sad to relate this seems to have been mislaid in the Party bureaucracy.

From Haringey Labour Briefing Group.

ing and leafletting the whole borough, uniting with a miners' solidarity demonstration, organising a major under-5s event, a talent competition amongst pensioners' groups, our own demonstration and much more! Hackney North CLP is called a campaign conference of all authorities in conflict with the government. We hope that by involving as many people as possible we can stop this government in its tracks.

OPEN LETTER TO LONDON LABOUR GROUPS

Dear Comrade,

London Bridge, the Joint Shop Stewards Committee of the London Boroughs, has discussed the role of local councillors in the fight ahead against rate-capping.

We welcomed the position you have taken against rate-capping, and your willingness to stand up and be counted provides the basis for a real alliance of working people against the Tories. A united front of Councils, council employees, tenants and communities, will have the most powerful mobilising effect within the working class.

Such a movement, we are confident, will give us victory against rate-capping.

For the vast majority of us, in public employment, there is no option but to fight. If we are defeated by failing to fight, the dole queues and the impoverishment of our communities will be our fate. For you, choices exist.

The implementation of Tory cuts by Labour Authorities, would be unthinkable, particularly as the Labour Party Conference "supports any council which is forced to break the law as a result of Tory government policies". (Composite 43). If cuts were made by Labour Authorities, they too would be engaged in a fight with the trade unions, and those who elected them. Therefore Labour Groups have to make a fight of it also.

We realise this action will place considerable strain on individuals. There is a real threat of banning from office, surcharge and imprisonment.

The decision of individual councillors to resign in these circumstances, would be understood and respected, and if co-ordinated will provide an important impetus to our campaign, the basis of which is the resolution passed at the mass shop stewards meeting of October 17 1984. This matter is of some urgency, if a united front is to be guaranteed. We ask you to consider the attached resolution at your future meetings.

EDMUND HALL
Secretary, London Bridge

RESOLUTION - - - - -

"This.....supports the Council's stand of non-compliance with rate-capping, and we pledge support in line with Labour Party policy, to mobilise the maximum forces to defend the council's stand on socialist principles.

"We realise that there may be individuals in office who are unable to carry out policies which could lead to surcharge and imprisonment. We ask Labour Groups to identify those unable to carry out the policy of non-compliance, and in conjunction with the ALA, to set a London-wide date for any new elections, which would have as their rallying point the fight against rate-capping.

Reselection should be agreed on the following basis:

1. Not to make cuts in jobs and services, and not to comply with the rate-capping legislation.
2. To prepare a budget based on the needs of the ordinary people of the borough, in order to highlight the difference between real need and the government's attack on local communities.
3. Not to set a rate or raise the rates.
4. Not to raise council house rents.

LONDON AGAINST RATECAPPING

Enforce socialist discipline on the GLC Labour Group

John McDonnell Deputy Leader of the GLC

After its election in 1981 the GLC Labour Group was opened to observers from CLPs. At the Group meeting on November 5th 1984, next year's GLC budget and the strategy for combatting ratecapping was openly discussed for the first time. There were only 2 CLP observers and so the group was virtually a closed meeting allowing the CLP Labour councillors to express their views without the overview of their CLPs. The result was quite startling.

On every occasion the issue of ratecapping has been raised at the Labour Group a diversionary tactic has been used to put off any discussion or decision on committing the GLC to a confrontation with Government. This has normally involved Frances Morrell urging the group to put aside any discussion on the issue itself and instead to discuss the mechanics of campaigning. The time has now come for the GLC to construct its budget and thus start along the path of either succumbing to ratecapping or challenging the Government. Discussions on the mechanics and details of campaigning are of course vital *but* can only follow a firm decision on the overall objectives and strategy to be pursued in fighting ratecapping. Even the right-wing on the GLC Labour group accepted that a discussion on campaigning methods was at this stage a prevarication. The issue of whether the GLC is to stand firm with the London boroughs in refusing to implement ratecapping has to be grasped and soon.

After a long and quite bitter debate the GLC Labour group decided therefore to set in train and preparation of the budget and various information papers which would guide members on the implications of ratecapping for GLC services and on the options open to us to oppose or comply with the Government's demands for cuts. A budget consultation document is to be prepared for December and a decision on the group's position on ratecapping will have to be made early in the New Year.

REFUSING TO FIX A RATE

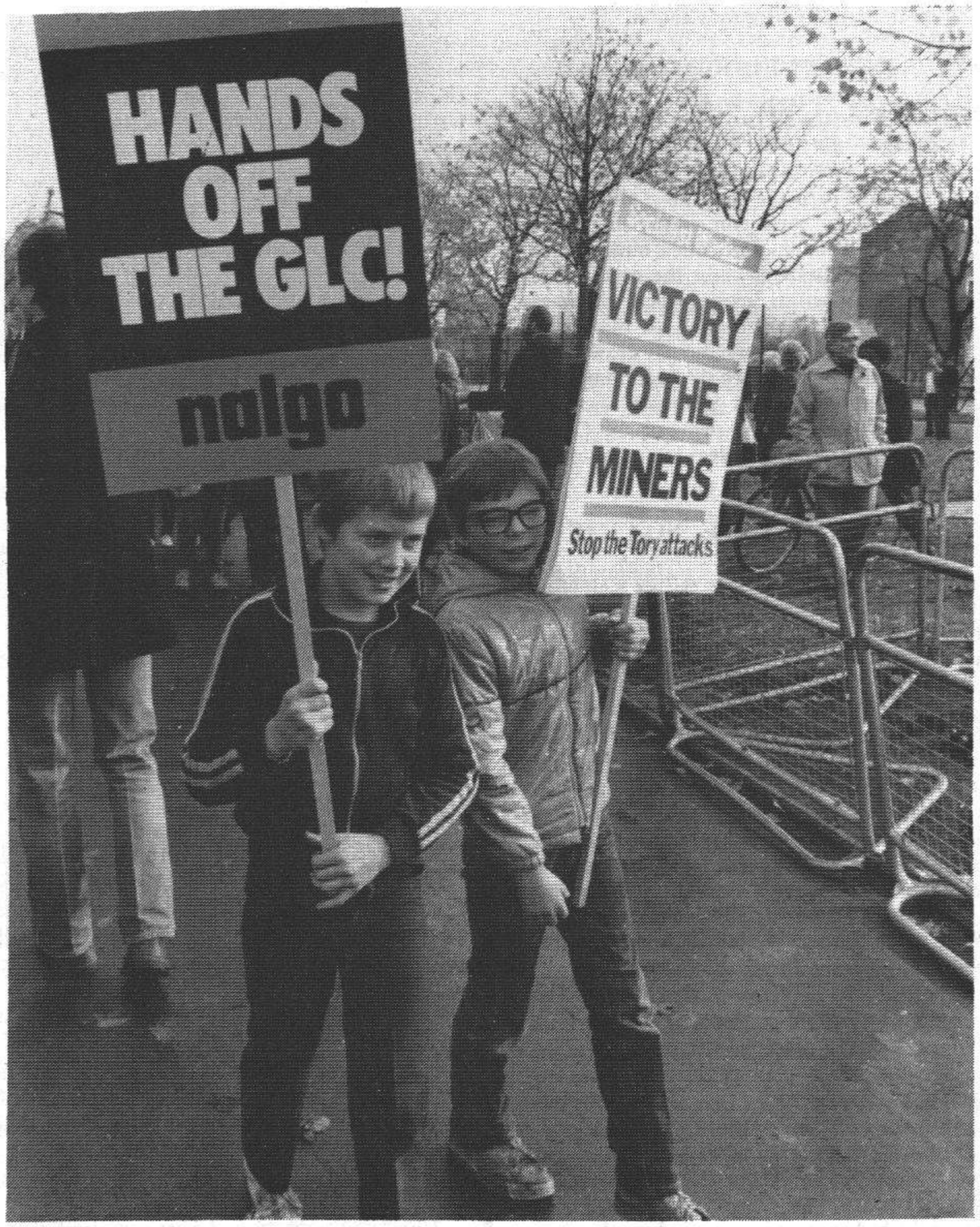
I made it clear at the group meeting that I would be recommending as Chair of Finance and Deputy Leader that the Group endorse Labour Party conference policy of refusing to comply with ratecapping and that the tactic we should pursue to give maximum support to our comrades in the boroughs is refusing to fix a rate. Although Ken Livingstone did not endorse this position at the group meeting, later at the Day of Action rally on November 7th he very clearly came out publicly in favour of not fixing a rate and refusing to make cuts in jobs and services.

The GLC as a precepting authority is legally bound to fix a rate by March 10th next year. If we refuse the GLC has no budget and individual councillors are at risk of surcharge and disqualification from office. Despite these serious threats it is clear that there will be a majority in the GLC Labour group for refusing to comply with ratecapping. There remain several Labour councillors however who are not willing to risk surcharge on this issue. For them the honourable way out at this stage is to resign their seat and allow the CLP to replace them with a councillor who is willing to stand firm in support of the party policy. In my view if any councillor refuses to stand down now and goes on to support compliance and cuts in services he or she is as much a scab as any miner currently crossing NUM picket lines.

SOME COUNCILLORS SUPPORT CUTS

At the Labour Group meeting some councillors indicated that they would support cuts, indeed Tony McBrearty, from Haringey offered his services in finding them. Other such as Tony Judge (Merton, Mitcham and Morden), Ashley Bramall (Tower Hamlets, Bethnal Green and Bow), Gerry Ross (Hackney North and Stoke Newington), Mair Garside (Greenwich, Woolwich East), Alan Williams (Havering, Hornchurch), and Ken Little (Enfield, Edmonton) made it clear that they would not risk illegality and would thus vote for compliance and cuts.

Ratecapping for the GLC next year would result in the halting of our manifesto-based growth programme of services and an initial package of between £50 to £80 million of cuts in services. This would include cutting grants to voluntary groups, smashing the GLC's job initiatives through the



John Chapman

LONDON AGAINST RATECAPPING

The GLC and ratecapping: a view from outside

John McDonnell's open letter in last month's Briefing – on the strategy for the GLC against ratecapping – was a welcome move, even if somewhat overdue, for those of us in Tory Boroughs and therefore not in the inner circle discussions on-rate-capping.

The main thrust of the article – that the GLC Labour Group must adopt a strategy of non-compliance (and do so openly) rather than use creative accountint to stay in power – and what kind of power would the GLC then have? – must command the support of socialists across the whole of London and is the only valid reason for members of the Labour Group to remain at County Hall. The idea that the Labour Group could stay in control merely to try to look after their pet projects, although being seriously canvassed at County Hall, must be treated as a sick joke!

The question of the GLC's – and ILEA's – stance on the issue of ratecapping is one which must draw those of us in Tory-controlled Boroughs into this arena. Whereas we can give moral, but seemingly little practical, support to our comrades in Labour Boroughs (although who knows what the move by the Regional Executive to hold a Ratecapping Strategy Conference on December 2 will bring?), a large number of Labour Members of the GLC represent seats in Tory Boroughs and it is activists in those seats who can have a very real impact on the GLC Labour Group's decision (and in particular those comrades with one eye on the Parliamentary selection process??).

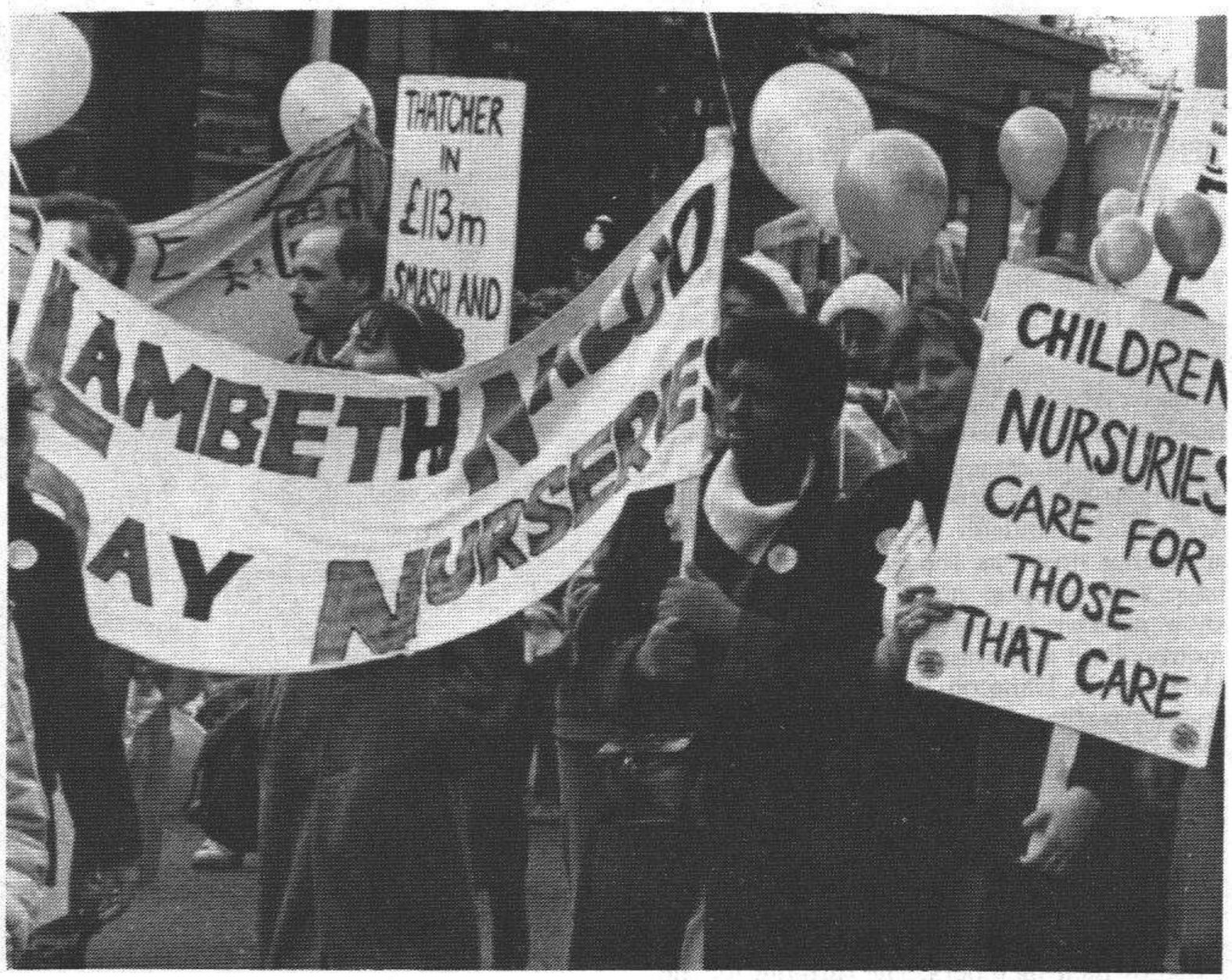
Ealing Conference

In Ealing we are holding a major conference on November 24 to determine the strategy a Labour council would be pursuing if we gained control tomorrow, or when we do in 1986 ("Rate-capping, Where would a Labour Council go from here?"), knowing that we need to do the groundwork among Party activists, trade unionists and community activists on this issue, even though our plans will change with every alteration of tactics by either the Government or the Association of London Authorities in the coming months. Inherent in any strategy produced would be the expectation of support from and for Ealing's Labour GLC Members.

However, unless the GLC and ILEA are seen to be actively following the line of non-compliance, and are saying more than merely "no cuts" by producing a comprehensive plan, the effect on Labour Groups and LGCs in areas such as Ealing could be devastating. Both the Group and the LGC in Ealing supported the policy of non-compliance when considered recently, in line with national Party policy, and I am sure such a view will emerge from our conference. What I also hope will emerge is overwhelming support for the policy of the majority of London Labour Boroughs, as reiterated by Ken Livingstone at the Democracy for London rally on November 7th: "in line with the rest of the Labour Boroughs we (the GLC) shall not make a rate or levy a precept under the rate-capped system."

Livingstone's statement – and that of McDonnell in the November Briefing ("I support the refusal to fix a rate") seem to me – looking from the outside – to represent a real attempt to commit the GLC to the same line of strategy as the London Boroughs at a time when it is essential to present a unified front to Jenkin, Baker and co. The problem is: we have all heard the GLC say it would not comply before. This time the Boroughs, the GLC and the ILEA can all stand together. It is up to us to ensure they do!

Kevin Veness
Secretary,
Ealing Borough LGC



Greater London Enterprise Board, sacking 1000 firefighters, increasing rents by £5 per week and ending the GLC's housing repairs programme. Even if creative accountancy could be employed to alleviate the need for some of these cuts this tactic could only work with the complicity of the Tory Government whose objective would be to buy the GLC off in 1985/86 whilst it picked off the boroughs. In 1986/87 the Government would then turn on an isolated GLC demanding its original target of £100-200 million worth of cuts in services.

STAND FIRM AND UNITED

The only hope Labour local authorities have of defeating ratecapping and protecting their communities is to stand firm and united in their refusal to comply with the Government's demands for cuts. Pushing the GLC into line with the London Labour boroughs must be the critical task for activists in the constituencies in the key period between now and March 10th — GLC budget day.

I urge comrades in the CLPs to send resolutions to the Regional Executive and the GLC Labour Group calling upon the GLC Labour Group to implement Labour Party conference policy by refusing to comply with the Government's ratecapping legislation and supporting the tactic of not fixing a rate.

Although there has been some support for a deficit budget tactic this approach would not work for the GLC which could with the agreement of the Tory Government use various capital funds to stay in power for a long period without confrontation whilst the boroughs were being picked off. The GLC officers and the Tory Government would welcome the GLC going down this route as a means by which they could divide and smash the united front of London Labour local authorities.

MANDATE GLC MEMBER

For those CLPs which are represented by a Labour GLC councillor it is vital that CLPs mandate their GLC member to support non-compliance and not fixing a rate. If the GLC councillor is not willing to stand firm he or she should be asked to stand down to allow the CLP to replace him/her with a comrade who will adhere to party policy.

We can defeat the Government if London Labour councils stand together. The GLC could make a massive contribution to this united front of opposition. It is the responsibility of every comrade to press the GLC Labour Group and their local Labour GLC councillor to stand firm, enforcing socialist discipline and solidarity on the Labour GLC.

UNITY AGAINST TORY RATE-CAPPING

Margaret Hodge, Leader, Islington Council

THE desperate Tory efforts in 1984 to destroy local democracy and to slash local services are already provoking an unprecedented response from the labour and trade union movement, as well as from the wider community.

When the Tories embarked on the latest phase of their attacks on local government after the 1983 General Election they claimed a democratic mandate. Every test of opinion since that time has shown that they do not have such support now. The opinion polls show massive support for the GLC and the metropolitan authorities, as did the GLC by-elections. In Islington, Lambeth, Greenwich and throughout London, by-election results have shown increasing support for local authorities who have expressed a firm stand against Tory attacks on services and democracy.

The trade unions in local government are also showing a determination to resist the attacks on their jobs and on the services provided by their members. The turn-out for the actions and demonstration on November 7 in London was a clear indication of this.



Growing Unity

Above all there has been a growing unity across rate-capped and heavily penalised authorities in refusing to comply with Tory dictates to cut the services. There was an unequivocal level of agreement shown at the Labour local government conference held in Sheffield last July. Despite all the great differences in types of provision, political complexion, budgetary and legal rules and much else, there has still been no break in the opposition to Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin and his diktats. It was by no means to be expected or anticipated that such a wall of opposition could have been built so quickly.

*None of the rate-capped authorities — not even Tory Portsmouth or Brent — have gone for derogation, thus making it impossible for Jenkin to intervene at this stage and causing him to threaten and bluster in the same way that MacGregor has done in trying to push or bribe the miners back to work.

*There has been agreement between rate-capped authorities in providing no information about balances and housing capital returns to the Department of the Environment, thus making it more difficult for Jenkin to plan the next stage of their strategy.

With unity among those under threat having held so well until now, it is possible to see the way forward to a battle against the government on the basis of the following demands:

*give us back the millions taken by central government so that we can restore the level of services;

*let local people and not Whitehall bureaucrats make the decisions about how we should run our own services.

The campaign on these slogans can best be put forward by the tactic which has so far won the widest agreement among rate-capped authorities, and this is the refusal to set a rate next March. This holds out by far the best possibility for unity and success in the battle to defeat the government.

There are some comrades who argue in favour of setting a rate next March — or before — without being certain of having the funds necessary to cover spending.

Some argue that this will simply postpone the reckoning until the money runs out. However, what they really mean is that they will fudge and compromise in the vain hope that the problem can be postponed until sometime in the future.

There are others who argue that the advantage of such a tactic might be that of bringing matters quickly to a head. Thus a group of comrades from Hackney declared in the October Briefing that to set a rate above the level dictated by the government 'is a proclamation of illegal intent as soon as it is adopted'.

Jobs and Services

It is difficult to see how such a step would move forward our battle against the Tories. It would immediately concentrate the mass media and the Tories on the issue of law and order rather than jobs and services. There were already signs of the media trying to do this at the time of the Sheffield July conference, to some extent abetted by Labour front-benchers. Such a tactic is the mirror image of Tory strategy — bringing the issue down to law breaking instead of services and democracy. As Robert Latham pointed out in his very clear analysis in November's Briefing this tactic cannot be seen as 'realistic'. It might produce surcharges for councillors but there is no indication it would do anything to defend jobs and services.

The great strength of the tactic of refusing to set a rate is that it allows unity across the wide range of Labour authorities who are faced with rate-capping. Indeed some of those who face massive penalties and rate increases short of rate-capping have already indicated that they are likely to follow it also. This tactic allows authorities to take the same action the same night in town halls across the country and to continue their resistance together. It is increasingly winning support from the trade unions also, as the recent NALGO conference showed. It allows us to win wider popular support by concentrating the issue on the defence of local services and local democracy.

The unity that it is possible to build in this way is essential to our success. As Robert Latham pointed out in the same Briefing article the outcome of our refusal to set a rate is by no means certain. It clearly does not provide the neat and easy solution for which some comrades constantly search, like an ark of the covenant.

But these very uncertainties are more of a problem for the Tories and our enemies than they are for us. The Tories do not know what will happen about the billions of pounds of debts of local authorities in the event of a refusal to set a rate. Last year they had to send an emissary to the City of London to reassure the bankers that Liverpool's debts would eventually be paid. They will have at least ten times the problem this year.

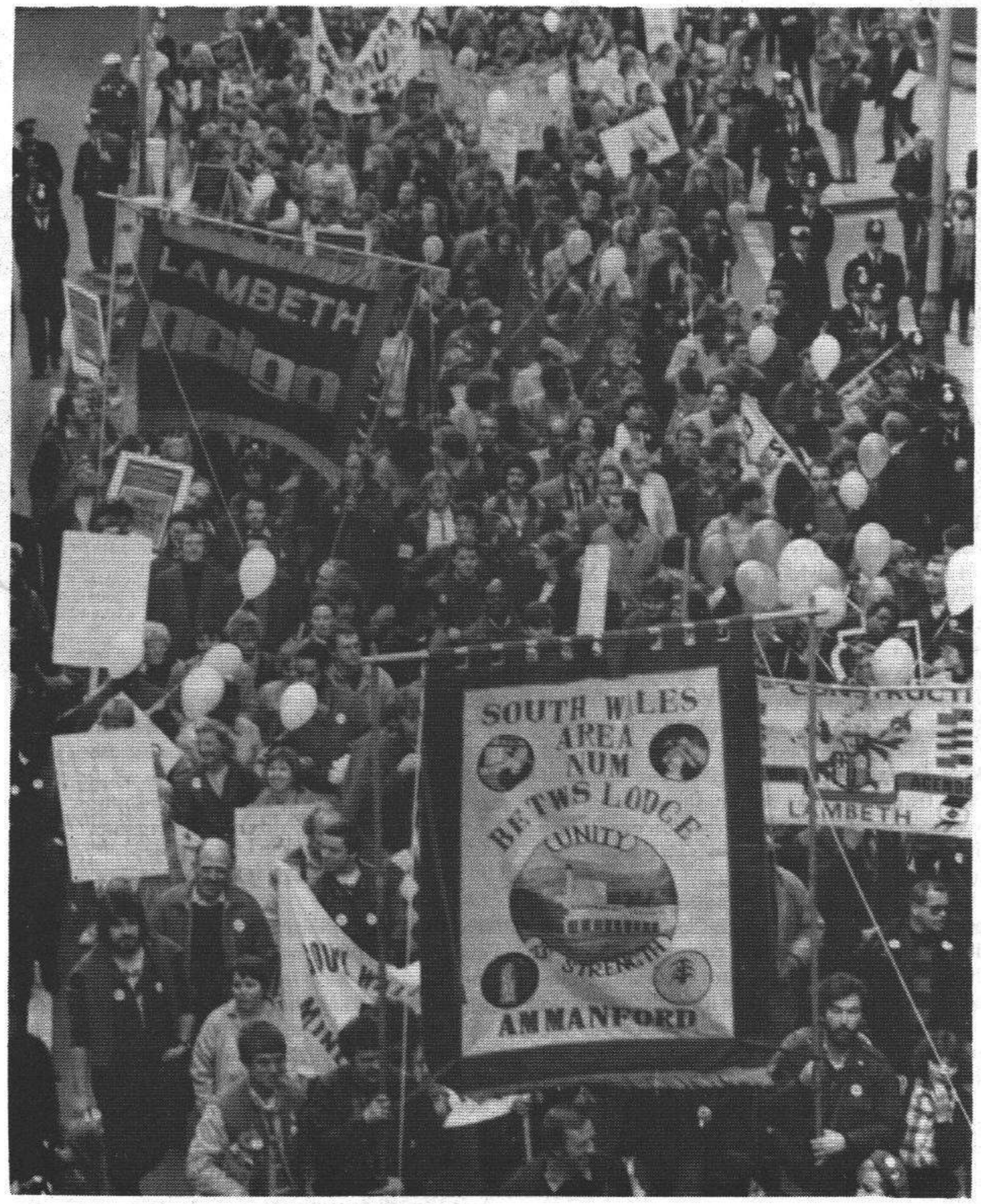
The Tories do not want to send in commissioners to six or twelve or twenty local authorities because this will manifest their contempt for local democracy in the most open way. If a large number of local authorities are resisting together, as the refusal tactic allows, they will be forced to come to terms with the local communities they are seeking to destroy. There are differences in policies and problems for different local authorities, and tactics may vary in detail. But it is unity, unity, unity, of our trade unions, our communities, our local parties and our groups that will in the end push back and defeat the Tories.

WHAT NEXT AFTER NOVEMBER 7th?

The November 7th March and Rally against ratecapping and the proposed abolition of the GLC can be counted as a great success. More than 100,000 workers took action across London and over 20,000 joined the march from Burgess Park in South London up to Jubilee Gardens.

The ensuing rally in the Royal Festival Hall heard fighting speeches from Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone and Jimmy Fitzpatrick, calling on the labour movement, including trade unionists and Laour councillors, to unite together in the battle to defeat these attacks on local government democracy, jobs and services. Malcolm Pitt (Kent NUM) also addressed the rally and helped emphasise the links between the miners' fight to save their jobs and local communities and the struggle to save jobs and services in London and the six Metropolitan Counties.

But however successful it may have been, the day can only be seen as a token of our opposition to ratecapping and abolition, and must be used as a springboard for the battle ahead. DFL recognises the need to develop a long term strategy to defeat the government proposals and we have no illusions about the size of the task ahead. But we do believe that a combination of union solidarity (GLC, boroughs and Civil Service), political backing from the GLC and Boroughs, and the strength of opinion against abolition and ratecapping can be successfully mobilised and the Tories' proposals defeated.



John Chapman

JOINT SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEES

One of our most important tasks now is to develop the inter-union links within the GLC itself and the main way to do this will be the formation of Joint Shop Stewards Committees. DFL is bringing together stewards from all the different unions on a departmental and area level to set up Joint Committees and ensure that we can plan and carry out action on a local level and ensure maximum support and involvement amongst the membership. Despite the withdrawal of the GLC Staff Association from DFL the joint union campaign has strengthened and we also believe that joint activity on a local level will ensure that GLCSA members who support the joint union campaign can get involved.

LONDON BRIDGE AND SAVE ILEA

Ratecapping and abolition threaten jobs and services both in the GLC and the London Boroughs. The 'London Bridge' Shop Stewards organisation helped build support for November 7th and ensured a massive turnout on the demonstration from the London Boroughs. Unity between the GLC and local borough workers will be absolutely essential in the fight against abolition – not least in ensuring that an effective policy of non-cooperation with abolition is developed. Similar links with the 'Save ILEA' Campaign helped build November 7th and the 'triple alliance' of the three organisations will continue to strengthen.

NON-COOPERATION

Effective non cooperation with all aspects of abolition – including the transfer of work to the Boroughs, setting up of the various new bodies supposed to take over GLC functions – will depend upon support from the unions within the receiving authorities and the Civil Service. The GLC unions must ensure that not only do their own members refuse to handle any work connected with abolition but that members of branches in the London Boroughs are boycotting the work at their end. Support must also be built up among the Civil Service unions who will also play an essential part in the abolition process.

The knock-on effect of abolition in the private sector will mean thousands of jobs being lost in firms presently doing business with the GLC. Links must be developed with the unions within these firms to make sure that they are aware of the threat to *their* members' jobs.

But one disappointing aspect of November 7th was the reaction of the GLC Labour Group to a potential legal problem over the use of the Festival Hall complex for the rally. No GLC Councillor, including the Leader, was prepared to authorise our use of the Hall and it wasn't until literally the very last minute that we managed to get agreement for the use of the Hall on a normal cost basis. Unity between Labour Councils/Groups and Trade Unions will be one essential aspect of the campaign but our experience over the days leading up to November 7th did not inspire confidence. Democracy for London will continue to build up the fight within the GLC, the London Boroughs in conjunction with London Bridge and within the ILEA through Save ILEA and outside local government through the trade union, community and labour movement. We need your support in this fight. Make sure your trade union branch, community group or political party is working to defeat abolition and ratecapping. Contact *Democracy for London, Room S127, County Hall, SE1 7PB, tel: 633 5565.*

The Labour Left and Local Government Trade Unionism

Having been a socialist for 24 years, a trade unionist for 10 and a Labour Councillor for 2½, I have been distressed recently to be told by striking HPU workers in Camden "You don't have a right to call yourself a trade unionist. You are a manager organising a strike-breaking force of other managers".



Islington Campaign Press Publicity Unit

It is easy for the indignation that I and other Left Labour Councillors feel when abused like this to be converted into a dismissal of the trade union case. More so if the 'other side' can be presented as outside of the legitimate Labour movement. The SWP are more than happy to accept the blame from Labour Councillors for any industrial dispute — because that means accepting the credit from their fellow workers. In reality their role is seldom decisive and after many years of uneasy and critical working together with SWP comrades in my trade union, although I regard them as anarcho-syndicalists rather than Marxists I would not exclude them from the Labour movement. So I looked back through recent Briefing coverage of local authority disputes, hoping to find some common analysis.

* A Nalgo dispute in Southwark over a dismissal which received a lot of coverage was summarised by Dick Larkin in No 41 "Dictatorship of the proletariat means the working class deciding; not an elite deciding for them." Undeniable — but he failed to explain in what sense Southwark Nalgo were more representative of the working class than Southwark Council.

* The most extensive coverage of any dispute was given to the nursery workers in Islington. In No 41 John Godfrey argued a straight economic case with the rhetoric of rate-capping in support "When asked why they (the Council) weren't making an increased offer, given the financial savings from the strike so far, they replied that they were worried about the effects on next year's spending. This implies they have no intention of seriously fighting rate-capping."

A more thoughtful contribution on the same dispute in No 42 by Pat Longman & Mick Sullivan confessed that "it is clear that there is a political weakness which cannot be totally blamed on councilllors ... After the three no's position fell they (the Left in the Party) waited for the council to make mistakes so they could reap the political benefits."

* No difficulty for any Briefing reader in agreeing with Ann Flowers on the attempt to close Tower Hamlets libraries. "It is a pity that staff have to strike to protect services in a Labour controlled council."

* And no difficulty in agreeing with Alan Russell of Hackney DLO (No 41) that "People won't fight to uphold theoretical complaints about the lack of services the council has already cut, but they will resist attempts to remove services and facilities they need ... We didn't just agonise, we organised. We forged alliances with Hackney's tenants and Hackney's Labour Parties ... we protected the building services and improved them."

Surely it is this attitude — of militant trade union action relating not just to the demands and strengths of its own workforce but to its *class base* that is the key. Ther are real tensions between workforce and management, *and between sections* OF THE WORKFORCE. It does not help to see any dispute within a Labour Council as an opportunity to take sides. They are usually symptoms of real tensions within the labour movement which can only be resolved in that wider class context.

Anne Phillips in Briefing 42 says "We live in a society divided not just between worker and employer, but between men and women, black and white, high paid and low paid — and economic growth alone will not eliminate these divisions ... The first task is to make *equality* rather than *growth* the central concerns." To which I would add — even a *successful* fight rather than rate-capping or the adoption of a 3-NOs position won't resolve them either.

THE WAY FORWARD

There has been more progress within the Council manual sector than with APT&C grades. Camden and Haringey have introduced a minimum earnings level; Hackney and Islington are reducing the reliance on bonus rates for building workers and the uncertain earnings which result. But in Hackney, Islington and Camden documents produced by joint working parties of tenants and stewards from both the manual and the white-collared unions have all called for better co-operation between different sections of workers and council departments in order to get the better service delivery — and that means changes in job descriptions or pay status that may reflect on union membership agreements for the various sectors. There are many detailed negotiations required, any of which can be brought to nought if there is not a base of goodwill and a common socialist aspiration.

The fact that all London Labour Councils threatened with rate-capping have started from a pledge to protect jobs and services must be welcomed. The greater co-ordination of Labour councillors via the ALA and the LGCU needs to be matched by better union co-ordination on an all-London basis and by joint TU co-ordination on an individual borough basis where this does not already occur.

But the Labour Party should also play a more serious role in forming a common long-term wages strategy for their local authorities and also for their trade unions. Although Nalgo is not LP affiliated, it is possible to establish workplace branches or otherwise co-ordinate the views of LP members within an authority or a CLP.

In the teaching unions most of us have been pressing for fewer grades for many years — in Camden, Nalgo members range from £97 per week to £36,000 p.a. That must require some levelling down as well as some levelling up!

Socialist councillors are often asked to 'put their money where their mouth is'. It is time that socialist trade unionists working for socialist councils began to stop fighting every sectional wage demand as if it were a class issue and began to develop a socialist egalitarian wage structure which abolishes the differences between manual and office workers and shows in practice that class identification which is often nothing but mouth.

John Wakeham (Camden Council)

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO USING THE MEDIA

A workshop for trade union activists

Despite the fact that the Labour Movement has to contend with a largely hostile capitalist media it IS possible for us to vastly improve the coverage we get. This first Beginners Guide to using the media will give a practical guide on how to deal with the press, radio & TV, the general public and other trade unionists.

Sunday December 9th 10.30 - 12.30
Croydon Trade Union Support Unit,
49c South End Croydon

Registration £2.00 waged, £1.00 unwaged, includes "Using the Media Pack"
There are a limited number of places available, so please complete the form and return as soon as possible to: Using the media, Croydon TUSU, 1st Floor, 49c South End, Croydon CR0 1BF.

Name .....
Address .....
.....
Organisation .....
Telephone .....
I enclose the appropriate registration fee of £2/£1

WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE MINERS

Every Saturday morning since April our local Labour Party Branch has had a miners support stall in Wood Green High Road, collecting between £40 and £80 each week. Our stall is in a good place — outside the Library on Council property, and although we have had the usual police harassment, they usually move away when we wave the letter from the mayor of Haringey at them, which gives permission to collect money for the miners on Council property! The Council has also organised food collecting points in all Haringey libraries.

At the same time, Haringey Trades Council were quick to set up a Miners Support Committee producing regular leaflets and organising Borough-wide support for the Staffordshire miners. Recently, local Labour Party Branches have joined with other Left parties, trade unionists and supporters to form area sub-committees of the Trades Council Support Committee. These committees organise collections and other fund-raising activities in their areas and ensure there is no overlapping of effort.

Since we joined up with other comrades to form the Wood Green sub-committee we are now able to run the stall all day on Saturday, more than doubling the amount of money we used to get. It has also helped towards covering all possible collecting points in the area. Comrades still keep their political identities but this doesn't effect us working together for the common cause — getting as much money and food to the miners as we can!



In Hornsey & Wood Green CLP we found that getting the Miners Levy in was difficult, mainly because of lack of time to get round to all members (although some members do send regular cheques in to Branch Secretaries who've put details on Branch Notices). But now, every other Sunday morning, groups of comrades from each of the 12 Wards meet together and collect the Levy from one chosen ward. so far 3 wards have been covered and over £300 collected as well as several Standing Orders!

We hope these ideas will help comrades in other areas with their efforts in support of the miners.

Linda Clarke
Haringey Briefing Group

Brent South reaches £5,000 for the miners!

BRENT South CLP has now topped £5,000 in its fundraising efforts for the miners. Most of this has come from the 50p weekly levy but this has been supplemented by a series of fund-raising events. The latest successes were both on November 3. In the afternoon a public auction, organised by St. Raphael's branch, raised £600, and in the evening a 'Burn Mac' firework-social, organised by Harlesden and Roundwood branches, raised £230.

The raffle held at the auction was a big success with the bottle of Cuban rum being won by the editor of Briefing!

Peter Bat in , who has organised Brent South's support for the miners, told Briefing that the next event is on the weekend of December 14/15, when over 30 children from a Welsh mining village will have a Christmas weekend with members of Brent South CLP.

BLACK PEOPLE'S SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINERS

SOLIDARITY FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN STRIKING MINERS
ONE FIGHT ONE STRUGGLE

A SOLIDARITY RALLY AND A CULTURAL EVENT HAVE BEEN ORGANISED BY BLACK PEOPLE
on 7th DECEMBER '84 at the COUNTY HALL (Conference Hall), Waterloo, SE1 at 6.30pm

ORGANISED BY:

East London Asian Collective Black People's Socialist League
Black Consciousness Movement Azanian Trade Union Centre Pan Africanist Congress
Eelam Solidarity Committee Hackney Asian Centre Newham Asian Association
Hackney African Organisation Black Delegation to the Mining Community

Speakers:

MALCOLM PITT (Secretary, Kent NUM)
ANN SCARGILL (Women's Support Committee, NUM)
a SINN FEIN speaker ASIAN COLLECTIVE OF EAST LONDON
BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT AZANIAN TRADE UNION CENTRE
EELAM SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE PALESTINIAN LIBERATION ORGANISATION

ARTISTS at CULTURAL EVENT:

MOHAMMED JAMAL H O NAZARETH MALIPHE PHETO IYAMIDE HAZELY
MERLE COLLIN PITIKA NTULI A. BISWAS
AFRICAN DAWN PULA ARTS KOMMUNE

Ticket £1.00 (all proceeds will go to the Miners)

Nominate for the Regional Executive

The Regional Women's Conference on 27th October was an historic occasion. Not because it was a good, well-attended conference with speakers from Barking Hospital, Armagh and the Nottinghamshire coalfield. Not even because a long list of positive resolutions were carried — the Women's Conference supports Black Sections, Britain withdrawing from both Northern Ireland and NATO, and is in favour of confrontation over central government's attacks on local democracy. It was historic because for the first time the Regional Women's Conference elected the Women's Section of the Regional Executive. At the same time, the number of places in that Section has doubled, from four to eight.

This was not done without some problems. Having convinced the NEC (after considerable lobbying) that rule changes supported by the regional AGM giving Women's Conference this right should be backed and put before Annual Conference, we had real problems with timing. Until the rule change was approved by Annual Conference in the first week of October, nominations could not be called for. That gave just a couple of weeks for names to be put forward. Some women are rightly aggrieved that they didn't know about it — the trouble was, if it hadn't been done at this Conference, women would have been waiting to take their places until March 1986 — 18 months after it has been agreed by Annual Conference and two years after the regional decision.

Despite all the hassle, eight women have been duly elected to the Regional Executive. They are Josie Edwards, Nadine Finch, Mary Honeyball, Rachel Lever, Ann Pettifor, Sarah Roelofs, Christine Shawcroft and Vanessa Wiseman.

NEXT YEARS' EXECUTIVE

Elected by the Women's Conference, they are accountable to it and, I hope, will be bound by the policies agreed by that Conference. This will be particularly important in the case of the Conference's policy on Ireland, and possibly also on Black Sections. Whilst neither of these issues have been discussed by the Regional Executive so far this year, it is comrades' positions on these issues — and alongside them must be placed *activities* during the miners' strike — which should be taken into account when determining the composition of next year's Regional Executive.

The leadership of the London Labour Party will be tested to the full next year — the fight against ratecapping, the continued fight against the abolition of the GLC and the lead-up to direct elections to ILEA in 1986 — all will require the EC leading the machinery of the London Party into the kind of activity it has not undertaken for many a year outside of elections.

It is important this is thought about now. The AGM may not be until March, but nominations for the EC close on *11th January* — and comrades nominated must also be delegates.

TRADE UNION SECTION

Last year there were only 17 nominations for 16 places in the Trade Union Section. But the loser, John Spellar of the EETPU, did not stay off the EC for long: one sympathetic resignation and, as the next on the list, he was back on. For too long comrades on the left have ignored the trade union section of the EC and concentrated on the CLPs. But with only one woman and one Black comrade elected in that section, the time has surely come to at least ensure there's a contest.

The Regional Executive needs good activists with roots in the working class. It — still — needs more women and Black comrades. Just because more women have been elected to the Women's Sections is no excuse for not electing them in other sections — if anything, the reverse is the case. And — unfortunately — the women elected are all white; not by intent, probably, although the rush of events is not sufficient of an excuse.

The important thing now is to get nominations in. Remember: the closing date is 11th January. Make sure your CLP, TU, Co-op, YS branch and socialist society meets to discuss it.

Joan Twelves, Regional Executive Member from CLP section 4 and Secretary of Vauxhall Labour Party

Useful information:
CLP Section 1 consists of CLPs in the Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Enfield, Haringey and Hillingdon.
Section 2: Barking, Camden, Hackney, Havering, Islington, Newham, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.
Section 3: Hammersmith, Hounslow, Kensington & Chelsea, Kingston, Merton, Richmond, Sutton, Wandsworth and Westminster.
Section 4: Bexley, Bromely, Croydon, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark.

LONDON LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE ADVANCE NOTICE

BLACK SECTIONS

Conference reaffirms the commitment of the Greater London Labour Party to build a wider basis of membership and support among black workers. Justified cynicism of many blacks towards Labour can be overcome if the party takes a clear stand against racism. Racism cannot be viewed as an issue for blacks alone, it is a problem for the entire labour movement.

Conference is completely opposed to the view that the struggle against racism can be advanced on the basis of constitutionally dividing the Labour Party into separate racial lines. Black workers will not be attracted to the Labour Party by such arrangements – they will only join when they become convinced that the Labour Party is committed to defending their interests.

The London Labour movement must mount a serious campaign against racism on a class basis by explaining its root causes in poverty, unemployment and bad housing caused by the decline of capitalism.

Racism can and must be defeated through the united action of the working class. A bold anti-racist strategy linked to a socialist program offering a way forward to both black and white workers can provide a basis for building such unity.

Bermondsey CLP

OPPOSE THIS RESOLUTION

LONDON BRIEFING CHRISTMAS SOCIAL. SATURDAY 15th DECEMBER at 8.00p.m.
AT 38 JESSON HOUSE, ORB ST., (OFF EAST ST)., SE17. NEAREST TUBE: ELEPHANT & CASTLE. COST £1. (Bring a bottle).

Attendance compulsory for all Briefing supporters!

NEXT London Briefing editorial meetings will be on Wednesday 2nd January and Monday 21st January, both at 6.30 p.m. at County Hall.

The meeting on 21st January will discuss Briefing's slate for the regional executive and is open to all supporters. Please attend!

ACTION FOR BENEFITS

A major campaign has been launched by the DHSS Trade Unions and campaigning groups to work to defend the social security system against government attacks and to extend the benefits system to provide a better service to the public.

Everyone needs welfare benefits at some time. From maternity grants and child benefit in the earliest days of life to the old age pensions on retirement, benefits are paid to almost every citizen in the country.

A vast range of sickness, supplementary housing and other benefits is designed to ensure that no one need suffer hardship or degradation when through no fault of their own they cannot work, or their earnings are not high enough to meet the needs of themselves and their families.

For over forty years every British government has recognised the need to provide some support to its citizens through benefit payments. Laws have been passed by Parliament since the very beginning of this century to insure people against financial hardship through injury or illness.

Since the war governments have accepted the conclusion that benefits are needed 'from the cradle to the grave'.

But the system has never been properly developed to meet people's needs. Benefit levels are often pitifully low. A married couple on supplementary benefit receive only £45.55 a week. Pension rates are a scandal, with a single person receiving only £35.80 a week after a lifetime's work.

Now the Conservative government is dismantling what does exist. Social security has been cut by £6 billion since 1979. Staff in the DHSS have been cut, so the service to the public is worsened along with the working conditions in the offices. Benefits to the unemployed are taxed while taxes on the wealthy have been slashed.

In April 1984 the Government set up studies which the Secretary of State Norman Fowler described as 'the most substantial examination of the Social Security system since the Beveridge Report.' A comprehensive review is needed, but Fowler's studies are not likely to provide it.

Only isolated parts of the system are being looked at. The reviews will not consider increasing the amount of money spent on social security. Only ten weeks were allowed for submitting evidence to the reviews.

The people running the reviews aren't likely to know much about living on benefits. The teams are dominated by Ministers and hand picked businessmen.

The social security reviews are far more likely to cut benefits in real terms than carry out the necessary overhaul and expansion of the system. Michael Meacher, Labour shadow spokesperson on Social Security, said the reviews 'have a good deal less to do with the welfare of pensioners, tenants and all the poor than with the planning of yet further expenditure cuts.'

In response to this new attack on the benefit levels, Action for Benefits has been formed, not only to defend the existing system but to campaign for its expansion.

It has been set up by:

British Pensioners & Trade Union Action Association.
Central London Social Security Advisers Forum.
CHAR – the campaign for the single homeless.
Child Poverty Action Group.
Civil and Public Services Association.
Disability Alliance.
Federation of Independent Advice Centres.
Low Pay Unit.
National Campaign Against Social Security Cuts.
National Association of Probation Officers.
South East Region TUC.
Society of Civil and Public Servants.

From the outset Action for Benefits has stressed the need for both claimants and DHSS workers to work together to defend and extend social security. The Government has tried to divide workers in the DHSS from claimants they serve. Staff cuts and a rising number of claims mean increased pressure on workers. Claimants are led to think that delays and other problems are the fault of workers in the benefit offices.

Action for Benefits intends to mount a massive national campaign against attempts to cut benefits. Your active support is needed to make the campaign effective.

Action for Benefits, c/o SCPS, 123-130 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TU.

A socialist plan for London Government

It was not too long ago when the common response to local government matters in the Labour Party was to let 'them' get on with it. Often it was difficult to entice comrades to put their names forward to the local government panel.

Comrades were bemused by Byzantine procedures, mentally stunned by impenetrable jargon and bored rigid by the obsessive parochialism of many local councillors.

Things have changed in the last five years as Labour in opposition at Westminster assumed less importance than Labour in control at County Hall. Londoners now face the prospect of chaos throughout local government and will experience a sharp decline in the quality of services which many have come to take for granted.

Many more Londoners of course have come to assume these services as being theirs by right simply because they are there, whilst many others have come increasingly to depend upon them. Full recognition of what is at stake might have to wait the disappearance of such services.

SUCCESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In London, as elsewhere, the success of local government under socialist control has been twofold. Not only have the quality of services been improved but awareness of the range of services has been heightened.

As a result Labour leads by a wide margin in opinion polls on the issues arising from London's government. The recent M.O.R.I. poll findings commissioned by the I.L.E.A. lend weight to the argument that a large majority support the basic contention that MORE not LESS needs to be spend by local government.

The Labour Party continues to be at the heart of many vigorous campaigns and Labour will inescapably be involved when industrial action to oppose the effects of Tory Government policy begins to happen.

This active, campaigning stance from the Labour Party stands in marked contrast to the relative indifference of a couple of years ago to local government matters. In some respects recent campaigning has set new heights in skill, ingenuity and energy. Nevertheless this will not be sufficient to inflict defeat on Jenkin & Thatcher.

Labour is currently caught in the time old trap of leading campaigns AGAINST abolition, in DEFENCE of services, to PREVENT job losses, OPPOSING ratecapping, STOPPING privatisation etc. In other words Labour is fighting on politically negative ground chosen by the pace of Tory reformism.

PROGRAMME FOR THE FUTURE

Labour in London needs to go beyond this and quickly. The London Labour Party needs to develop a clear and precise programme for the future of London government. This programme, when written, needs to be endorsed at an Annual Conference so that it can be incorporated into the next manifesto. This means that a number of Constituency Labour Parties will need to submit motions to the next Conference specifically relating to the future structure of London government.

Londoners will not be swayed with vague pledges that Labour will do something or other for London when there is a Kinnock led government. What is needed now is a socialist plan for London Government.

Some of its features are already well canvassed and we must commit the party leadership to them. The creation of a new and democratic London borough to replace the feudalistic City of London is one measure that has been awaited ever since days when Manny Shinwell was born in Whitechapel. Another proposition would be to break up the area presently covered by the City and pass it to neighbouring boroughs. This would have the effect of dramatically increasing those borough rate bases — a thought worth savouring.

The democratisation of the Metropolitan Police is an essential step, not only to ensure better and more accountable policing at a cost which bears a relation to the needs of London, but also to reverse the drift towards a national police force under Home Office control.

Other equally important ideas have come forward in recent socialist discussion. Linking London's vast tourist industry to a regional Industry & Employment planning committee so that the wealth generated by millions of visitors is used for the benefit of Londoners, is one such idea. Another is the development of an integrated and properly supported transport network. This is needed by residents, workers and tourists alike. Along the river, all land, assets and planning powers currently vested in the London Docklands Development Corporation have to be returned to the borough councils. Discussion has already started amongst socialists about the relation that should obtain between Health Authorities and the water authority and a recreated Greater London Council/London County Council. Dozens of other ideas are currently emerging.

If any comrades are interested in contributing to the work of the London Government Policy Group to produce a draft paper on the future of London Government with the intention of pressing Conference to commit the Labour Party to radical socialist legislation please contact L.G.P.G., 90 Thorpebank Road, Shepherds Bush, London W.12.

WORKPLACE BRANCHES — THE NEW MOVEMENT

Geoff Dixon

THE seminar of workplace branches held on 27th October was the third this year. The first brought together comrades to exchange information about the successes and problems of organising workplace branches. From this we were able to compile an advice document on how to set up and organise a branch. The second seminar began the process of identifying ways in which the pioneering start made by the few could be turned into an exciting new part of a mass movement involving the many. The third seminar continued this theme but also opened up the debate about the future role of workplace branches.

The conclusions of the three seminars are a revealing insight into the hopes and aspirations of rank and file activists. There are four main objectives of workplace branches as identified by the seminars.

Recruitment

First, recruitment to the party is part of the role laid down by the model constitution. It is also a prerequisite of setting up a branch. Most branches start by identifying existing members and then asking known supporters and active trade unionists to join. In all known cases membership has trebled. This has meant that branches are rarely less than 30 strong with mostly new members.

The problem lies in working out a continuing strategy to recruit, activate and maintain membership. Most branches are based on active trade unionists with political experience and their leading trade union role often forces the Labour Party at work down the agenda. The current climate both economically and politically is placing enormous burdens on shop stewards, convenors and branch secretaries, to simply defend their trade union on the industrial front. New members often lack the confidence to take a leading political role at work. The traditional Labour Party structures don't encourage new members either. A rapid development of new members is needed if workplace branches are to fulfill their potential.

Second, a workplace branch should be engaged in spreading the message of socialism to the workforce. Most branches run a newsletter for the whole workforce and hold open discussion meetings on every kind of topic. The formal "members only" meetings are recognised as largely irrelevant in the workplace. However, some formal meetings are needed but are generally short, as workplace branches have no policy making role within the existing structure, and little or no correspondence comes our way.

These then are the two main functions that we are required to perform under the constitution.

Political Levy

There are two other practical functions that are very important. First, the defence of political objectives and the political levy in the trade unions. The next 18 months are crucial and workplace branches are ideally placed to supplement the trade union campaigns and to draw in members as a result of those campaigns. Every trade union at national level should be encouraging party branches at work to give the party a higher profile, to encourage inter-union cooperation on political matters, to extend the message of socialism and to encourage political thought and debate at work.

This activity will do more than any other to put Labour on the offensive. The proposed rolling campaign of the TUC will turn the next 18 months into a grass roots General Election campaign leading up to Borough and District elections in 1986. The results in the unions and in local elections will set the battleground for the General Election proper in 1987/88.

The Labour Party NEC and the General Council of the TUC must initiate a positive programme linking workplace branches and the political ballots. The existing workplace branches can and will provide any assistance based on practical experience.

Organise the economy

Second, the longer term function of workplace branches will be to turn their attention to their industry or company and apply socialist principles to how Labour will organise the economy when we are in power. We will have the benefit of the collective view of the shop floor being brought to bear on solving the industrial problems of society. Factories, offices, hospitals, local government, nationalised and private industries will be analysed by socialists at the grass roots who can then support a Labour government in the implementation of a socialist economic strategy. These plans will be local and within the experience of working people and will be something concrete and relevant to their lives.

These then are the "four pillars". Recruitment, debate, campaigning and research. The lack of formalities aids these functions by sweeping away the need to become embroiled within the party bureaucracy. At each stage workplace branches will need to enlist the CLPs and trade unions to propose and translate their efforts into policy. Workplace branches provide the bond between the two wings of the movement to forge them into one fighting unity.

Next Stage

The next stage in the development of workplace branches is twofold. The NEC have now instructed Regional Offices to write to CLPs encouraging them to set up workplace branches in their area. The existing workplace branches have formed a Federation of Labour Party Workplace Branches to promote and encourage new branches based on experience.

Regional Conferences must debate this issue in 1985. Regional Executives should be required to set up sub-committees with co-opted members from existing workplace branches. Every Region should establish a systematic campaign with the trade unions to form as many branches as possible over the coming months.

The trade unions should also be debating the issue at all levels and encouraging new branches through trade union journals, branch meetings, conferences and shop stewards meetings.

The Federation of Labour Party Workplace Branches hopes to publish a pamphlet in the New Year and is actively engaged in placing the subject on the agenda for the whole labour and trade union movement. This is a tall order for a mere 100 branches so we are inviting all socialists to help in this process by raising the issue for debate at all levels and as often as possible. The NEC have called a conference for all workplace branches on 8th December in Birmingham so there are signs that we are being taken seriously now. We can provide information and contacts for speakers as well as advice on setting up branches in workplaces.

Please write to: Geoff Dixon, 1 Pelham Court, 44 Hatherley Road, Sidcup, Kent or phone 01-302 7983.

SOUTHGATE BY-ELECTION

SIX months ago, few people had heard of Southgate's MP, the late Sir Anthony Berry. Then he reached the headlines – he had a 'brainstorm' and very nearly ran down a policeman. Southgate Labour Party had just prepared a leaflet on the sordid affair when the Brighton bombing changed everything. The Party was obliged to issue a condemnation of the 'barbarous bomb attack' instead. But – whatever our opinions on the bombing itself – the fact remains that there will shortly be a by-election in this obscure little suburban constituency.

The results of this impending election are a foregone conclusion – the Tories will win, with a gigantic majority. Labour will be lucky to beat the Liberals into second place. Why, then, should London Labour Briefing bother about it at all?

Target Labour Government

For one thing, we need to test out our 'Target Labour Government' strategy. Local Briefing supporters are pushing not only for a full, balanced shortlist – to include at least one woman and at least one black person – but also for any candidate on a Briefing or Campaign Group platform. Two prospects at the moment are Winston Hamid and Mary Honeyball. Nominations will have closed by the 26th November when we should have a clearer idea about the best candidate to support.

Canvassers

But it's not only the choice of the candidate that's important. For years the Southgate Party has offered its limited resources to the surrounding constituencies – Enfield North, Edmonton, Hornsey and Wood Green, etc. Now it's time for *us* to get the support! We *must* get as many votes as possible, particularly if we get a good candidate, and this means busloads of canvassers – not just from these surrounding constituencies, but from all over London. We are going all out to get as big a showing as we can – it might be the only chance we'll ever have to put up a real fight in Southgate.

Jim Ring
Southgate Labour Party

Where is 'Tribune' going?

Nigel Williamson has recently been appointed editor of 'Tribune'. Kevin Flack for Briefing asked him what plans he has for the paper, and how he sees the future for the Labour Left.

BRIEFING: What changes do you plan to make with 'Tribune'?

NW: **There won't be a major political upheaval as there was when Chris Mullin took over. Having worked on the paper for two and a half years, I've obviously contributed to the way it's emerged. There are, however, two areas where I think there is room for improvement in the paper's coverage — women and industrial issues.**

The main change will be in style — still a newspaper, but possibly reduced in size with double the number of pages. Hopefully this will happen sometime in the new year.

BRIEFING: Do you see 'Tribune' as reflecting a level of Left opinion, or do you see it as steering people in a certain direction?

NW: **Both — it isn't as cut and dried as that. We had hoped to make ourselves more formally accountable to the movement by setting up a friendly society, with an elected Editorial Advisory Board. We were unable to proceed with this due to the legal action brought against us by John Silkin & Lord Bruce. I feel most strongly that 'Tribune' should be a *campaigning* paper.**

BRIEFING: In what way do you see 'Tribune' as being different from other Left papers?

NW: **The main difference is that 'Tribune' is not the mouthpiece of one group or sect. It's a broad forum, as can be seen from the contributors — Roy Hattersley writes frequently, even if he is demolished the following week. I see 'Tribune' as a forum for debate. Its role is to campaign, and not just dictate a line; 'Tribune' is not an organisation.**

BRIEFING: One of the features of your particular work has been investigative reporting, part of which resulted in your pamphlet on 'The New Right' — do you see this as continuing to play a major role in the paper?

NW: **The problem with 'investigative journalism' is Tribune's basic lack of resources. It's very time consuming and costly. But I certainly see that kind of journalism continuing in the paper where possible.**

BRIEFING: There has been some criticism of the cost of 'Tribune' — 50p a week. Doesn't this price it out of the range of most working class people? Who do you think 'Tribune' is aimed at?

NW: **Financial pressures meant the price rise couldn't be avoided. It's the first increase for 3 years, while some other papers have doubled in price.**

'Tribune' is aimed at Labour Party and Trade Union activists. I'd like to see us reaching out to a wider audience — but first we have to capture the activists. 'Tribune' has to be essential reading for them. It's not as widely read on the shop floor as we would like — and it is essential that the Left does keep in touch with the feelings and opinions of ordinary people. Roy Hattersley says the same from a Right-wing perspective but in many ways he's right. In the past, the Left has been sidetracked into petty arguments that only served to alienate us from our natural base. Take the Register, for instance — who in the outside world actually cared if CLPD registered or not? Yet a lot of us expended a lot of energy on it.



BRIEFING: How much coverage will you be giving to campaigns that are mainly outside the Party — CND and Greenham Common, for example?

NW: **A lot, as we do already. One idea might be a 'campaign noticeboard' page, where individual campaigns can communicate what they are doing and organise activity.**

BRIEFING: 'Tribune' has come in for some criticism from women active in the Party, and the Womens Action Committee in particular. How do you feel about this?

NW: **Some of the criticisms have been a little unfair. When the 'new regime' came in, in May 82, we went to great lengths to generate articles by women about issues that concerned them. After a while they dried up — other channels were tried, and when that failed, people became dispirited. We are concerned, and will keep trying.**

The Womens Action committee bulletin at Conference which attacked us misunderstood what 'Tribune' is all about — we will *not* censor letters. If people unsympathetic to women's demands write in, their letters will be published. We are equally open to publishing WAC viewpoints. Ideas can only be defeated by better ideas — that's why we invite Roy Hattersley to write and then try to put better arguments.

BRIEFING: 'Tribune' is very short of youth coverage. Why do you think this is?

NW: **Apart from YTS articles, its something we've almost totally ignored. We've very few readers under 25, and this can't be a good thing. It's certainly something we should think about. Militant's stranglehold on the Young Socialists, must drive young people away in their thousands. But you don't deal with that by witch-hunts or closing the YS down. You have to put political alternatives. There has to be a way to make the YS a broad-based, attractive organisation for youth.**

BRIEFING: What's the greatest qualification for editing a socialist paper?

NW: **To remember that politics is not the only thing in life. My idea of a good weekend is not passing resolutions at Conferences, but doing a bit of gardening, or taking the kids to the greyhounds at Catford, or playing cricket. You mustn't lose touch with other people. Those who devote their whole lives to politics can easily become isolated. I arrived at my socialism through personal experience. At 22 years old I found myself with an 18-year-old wife and baby, on the dole, living in a pokey dump — a council flat up flights of stairs with no lift. That's what made me a socialist.**

BRIEFING: And why did you want to become editor of 'Tribune'?

NW: **It's certainly not the wages! Because there's a job to be done. I've been involved in the strides forward 'Tribune' has taken over the last 2½ years — and I want to complete the task. I want to make 'Tribune' indispensible reading on the left.**

BRIEFING: A recent 'Tribune' editorial repeated a warning to Neil Kinnock. Do you think our leader is on the right tracks?

NW: **I'm not altogether happy with some of the advice Neil Kinnock is taking. He's listening to the wrong people. We said the same to Michael Foot — don't forget who your real friends are. It was the Right — not the left — who destroyed Foot; I'd hate to see Neil Kinnock go the same way. The reselection fiasco at Conference wasn't encouraging. He should listen to the people who put him where he is today — the Left. 'Tribune' has a role to play — putting the other side of the argument to the people he is currently listening to.**

BRIEFING: 'Tribune' has been severely hampered by the legal action taken against it by John Silkin and Lord Bruce. What's the situation now?

NW: **The writs against Michael Meacher and the staff have not been withdrawn — however they have not been pursued through the courts either. I hope we can settle it amicably. We have had tremendous support from local Labour Parties and trade union branches. They have been outraged that a moribund capitalist share structure should be resurrected by Labour Party members to try to take over a socialist newspaper. Whatever Silkin and Bruce felt about 'Tribune', justified or not, that wasn't the way to win friends and influence people.**

BRIEFING: What is your opinion of 'Briefing', and how would like to see Briefing supporters involved in 'Tribune'.

NW: **I've always been a great fan of 'Briefing'. It's a model of how the Left should organise and operate. It isn't a democratic centralist organisation — it's very open — and the collective meetings can be attended by anyone. It's extremely encouraging that it has spread outside London. I hope we can work together in the future. 'Tribune' relies on people letting us know what is happening in their neck of the woods. I invite 'Briefing' supporters to let us know the struggles they are involved in so we can give them coverage.**

BRIEFING: Where does the Left go now, after conference?

NW: **We have to come off the defensive. At the moment the Left — understandably — has a knee-jerk response to every new idea raised, for instance Roy Hattersley on different forms of public ownership. We fear that basic socialist principles may be being undermined. The solution is to go on the offensive, producing new ideas ourselves, based on basic principles but not merely defending the status quo.**

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

WOMEN'S RIGHTS— ON THEIR WAY OUT AGAIN

Some of the things which I am going to say in this article will, I suspect, not be very popular but I feel they need saying badly nonetheless, and it's my growing despair at not having seen them expressed elsewhere which has prompted me, finally, into saying them myself.

I feel, simply, that women at this time are in great danger of falling once again into an old and a familiar trap – that of being expected to bear the brunt of, and to pay the price alone for, the appearance of unity in the face of a common enemy, in this case Thatcherism. Women may it seems continue to discuss 'personal' sexual politics, the problems of combining motherhood with work and/or politics etc but, it would seem from the lack of discussion on the subject, we now no longer discuss the implications of what is happening to us *specifically as women* as a direct result of this common enemy.

Common political sense would seem to dictate that women's issues must be discussed, women's rights all the more vigorously defended (especially their rights as workers), at such a time, and yet it would seem that this is far from being the case. On the contrary all the evidence points, I believe, in the opposite direction, to the repeat of a pattern which has become only too familiar over the years.

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF?

During the 1920s and '30s the radical force of the feminist movement gradually lost much of its impetus. There were many reasons for this but the growing threat of mass unemployment and of fascism were undoubtedly crucial factors. 'Women's issues' began increasingly to take a back seat as more and more activists became drawn into the struggles developing around these two major threats. Perhaps women believed that by laying aside their own struggles to support the 'mainstream' political movements of the day they would thereby be able to carve out an equal place in the sun for themselves as well. Again during the Second World War, women (encouraged by liberal doses of government propaganda) rallied to 'support their men' by obligingly streaming into the factories to take their places in their absence – and just as obligingly streaming out again when these same men returned to demand 'their' jobs back again. The lessons are there to be learned, but it seems that we are painfully slow at learning them.

Women are quite rightly giving massive support to the miners in their present dispute. The miners' fight is without doubt a crucial one – the first real challenge to the power of this government. **However, given the fact that the dispute arose as a fight to defend** *men only* **jobs,** we can't help but wonder whether we would get the same support from men in defending *women's* jobs.

OMINOUS SIGNS

There are endless examples of the growing threat to women's rights at this time, but we can see such threats demonstrated clearly enough just by looking at two brief articles which appeared, placed (strategically?) side by side in the *Guardian* recently (19th October).

In one article we are told by Andrew Veitch, Medical Correspondent, that 'Unemployed men are 10 times more likely to deliberately harm themselves than those in work'. Such acts we are told are not to be confused with the common or garden variety of attempted suicide but, on the contrary, are something quite separate and different called in this case 'parasuicide'. Dr Norman Kreitman (Director of the MRC's epidemiology unit) apparently found these figures 'particularly disturbing'. Not apparently disturbing enough however to interest him in producing the equivalent figures for unemployed women.

Placed next to this article we find one by David Hearst telling us that, according to the National Marriage Guidance Council, 'Women are giving up their jobs to stand by their unemployed husbands and save their marriages'. Even part-time work, it seems, is unacceptable to these redundant breadwinners for in addition we learn that even low earners were '. . . discouraged from working because their incomes were deducted from their husbands' benefits'.

The implications of these statements are, quite simply, staggering and need I think to be taken one at a time:

Firstly: That 'standing by' your husband can only be achieved apparently, in these circumstances, by giving up your own right to work.

Secondly: That men are responding to the loss of their jobs with such threats and tantrums that women are apparently now to be forbidden even the right to a small part-time job lest this should threaten men's total control of the limited money supply still coming into the home. And

Lastly: That women's rights must be sacrificed to maintain male power in the home even to the extent, if necessary, of throwing the whole family, quite unnecessarily, onto the dole and into extreme poverty. If this is how we are to 'stand by our men' and 'save our marriages' surely we must ask ourselves how much such men, and such marriages can possibly be worth.

And so a new and 'particularly disturbing' problem has now arisen, we are told. 'Parasuicide' by unemployed men and, neatly, side by side, we are offered a solution. Women must give up their jobs to save their men and their marriages. In short, for unemployment read male unemployment, for which female unemployment is to be the solution. And no doubt the consequent rise in the 'parasuicide' rate amongst unemployed women will be conveniently enough dealt with by simply failing to provide the figures, as in this case.

ANOTHER SELL-OUT?

The threats to women at this time are, as the above examples show, very real indeed. The danger is that we will be expected, once again, to sacrifice our own rights, jobs and lives in the name either of 'loyalty' to our individual men and/or of unity in the face of the common enemy. However it must be quite obvious that the only real test of men's commitment to women's rights is not whether they say all the right things when things are relatively easy but whether they continue to support us when things begin to get really tough. The question is not in other words whether women will 'stand by' their men, but on the contrary whether men have any intention at all at this time, of standing by their women.

The evidence to date is not encouraging. Past history and all the signs so far would seem to indicate that, with the enthusiastic support of government policy, and propaganda, men will once again save their own – and the government's – skin, by sacrificing our rights and our jobs. A mighty sell-out if we are not very careful could well be on the way again!

Susan O'Brien

BEDTIME STORY

Once upon a time there were three bears....
Why?
Because there were.
Why?
Just because. That's all.
Why?
How the hell do I know?
Why?
Now one day a little girl came to their house in the forest. The bears were out walking so the little girl peeped in.....
Why?
Why what?
What's the little girl wearing on her head?
A scarf to tie up her hair - AND DON'T ASK WHY! Because she's cold that's why!
Why?
Because she's been through a tidal wave, a hurricane and just swum up Niagara Falls.
What's that Daddy?
Oh never mind, let's get on with the story.
Why?
Because it's your bedtime AND you're tired AND the little girl found a bedroom in the house AND there were three beds.....
Why?
AND a great big bed a middling bed AND.....
Why?
AND the little girl tried the great big bed.....
WHY?
AND the middling bed.....
WHY WHY WHY WHY
Look, will you stop interrupting!
Why?
OK I'm not reading. I am NOT reading if you keep on interrupting.
No Daddy. Won't interrupt Daddy.
OK. Once more and that's it. Now the great big father bear came back, looked at his bed and said in his great big voice WHO'S BEEN LYING ON MY BED AND CRUMPLED IT ALL UP? And the middling mother bear looked at her bed and said in her middling voice
Who's been lying on my bed and crumpled it all up?
Why Daddy?
Because it's a sexist story.
Why?
Because it was written by a man.
Why?
Because men hog most books.
Why?
Well now, that's another story.....

One of the poems to be found (much larger) on five 'Poetry Posters' by Les Tate. Three Poetry Posters about politics, one about childcare, one about Gay Rights. Available from 39 Kingswood Road, London SW2 4JE; 50p each or £1.50 for 5, which includes packing and postage. Each poster contains about 8 poems.

Croydon Women's Conference
WOMEN IN ACTION
Ruskin House, Coombe Road, Croydon
10am - 2pm Sunday 2nd December
EVERYBODY WELCOME

Speakers invited from: Miners's Wives Group
Barking Hospital GLC Women's Committee

Workshops on: Women in Trade Unions
Public Services Health
Low Pay & Part-Time Work
Maternity & Childcare

For more information please contact Alison, Ann or Hilary — 686 0796
Or write to Alison Butler, CUWC, 49c South End, Croydon, CR0 1BF

Published by London Labour Briefing, 31 Cranwich Rd, London N16.

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd [TU], Forster Road, London N17.
Typeset by Bread 'n Roses [TU], 30 Camden Road, NW1, and by Folrose Ltd [TU], 98 Gifford Street, London N1 and by Lithoprint, 329 Upper Street, London N1.

LABOUR
BRIEFING
NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No. 13 December 1984

DEFEND DEMOCRACY & THE RIGHT TO PICKET!

RESIST THE POLITICAL POLICE

Louise Christian Streatham CLP

A SMALL part of the truth about the policing of the miners' strike finally found its way onto our television screens in an Open Space BBC programme made by Sheffield Police Watch and shown on November 8th ("Taking Liberties"). The programme had been stuck on the desk of the Director General of the BBC for almost two months and was very nearly censored altogether. To many people in the country the programme may have been a shock but the incidents depicted in it have been repeated many times over not as isolated police malpractices but as an integral part of a co-ordinated police strategy aimed at defeating the miners. It is the clear evidence of this organised strategy which is the most alarming in its implications for now and for the future. What has been used against the miners will soon be used against other peaceful demonstrators. This isn't melodramatic: it's a brutal reality that the Labour movement, for all its ritualistic stances against police violence, has barely begun to grasp.

The main elements of the police strategy were developed in Nottinghamshire early on in the strike by Charles McLaughlin, the Chief Constable of that area but are now being used in Yorkshire and elsewhere. McLaughlin has been rewarded by being made head of the Association of Chief Police Officers and of the National Reporting Centre in charge of the national riot police force and thereby of the national police operation against the miners. This is why he and not the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire appeared on the BBC to answer the allegations in "Taking Liberties".

The police strategy has four main planks; the use of roadblocks, mass arrests on the picket line and in the community, the imposition of bail conditions and finally a creative use of different criminal charges ranging from a revival of an obsolete offence of "watching and besetting" (in a law of 1897) to the use of feudal and discredited riot laws. The aim of the strategy is simple; to stop striking miners from picketing, to criminalise them and thereby to break the strike. Sophisticated methods of control have been used with the collaboration of the criminal courts. The courts' role has been little concerned

(CONTINUED OVER)



Labour Party Photo Library

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

RESIST THE POLITICAL POLICE

(CONTINUED)

with judging guilt or innocence; instead they have acted as a forum for outlawing strikers collectively (and thereby the strike itself) by legitimising total police control in the mining communities. Much of the force of the "rule of law" in the criminal courts has been directed at stopping all picketing.

The everyday reality for striking miners is that they are bound sooner or later to be arrested simply for being on the picket line. This is not a situation where you can avoid being arrested by remaining at the back of the picket because the police snatch squads target those who've not yet been through the courts. But even worse is the routine everyday harassment. Miners are being stopped from taking their children to school, visiting their sick relatives, driving friends to job interviews and even voting in union elections becuse of police roadblocks. One miner was warned by a policeman that he'd be arrested if he was seen outside his own house. The house was 50 yards away from the pithead and the miner who lived there was, like all those arrested, under a bail conditions preventing picketing. Striking miners are liable suddenly to find hundreds of police outside their front doors; police invade peopl's homes arbitrarily to carry out arrests. There are literally hundreds of cases of people whose cars have been smashed when they refused to turn back at roadblocks. And hundreds more where special 'Intimidation' squads have arrested striking miners on the basis of anonymous complaints and held them without charge for hours, sometimes overnight, before releasing them without charge.

The huge scale of the police roadblock operation is seen in the following figures which are contained in sworn police evidence as their own estimates of the number of people stopped on the roads by police on the borders of Nottinghamshire and turned back from their destination.

Week commencing	*Numbers turned back*
26.3.84	3197
2.4.84	4378
9.4.84	5121
16.4.84	4467
24.4.84	3355
30.4.84	9731
8.5.84	7511
14.5.84	6819
21.5.84	7094
29.5.84	4974
4.6.84	7351
11.6.84	3054
18.6.84	7192
25.6.84	9504
2.7.84	6748
9.7.84	11,613
16.7.84	17,814
23.7.84	7104
30.7.84	13,532
6.8.84	10,427

The figures include stops of people who are not even striking miners (as mentioned in last month's Briefing a frail 71 year old man was forcibly dragged from his car at one roadblock) and many, many striking miners are stopped not from picketing but from other activities. In Nottinghamshire it's common for defendants to be late or miss court hearings because the police roadblocks will not let them thorugh. The courts simply accept this as normal. It's also accepted that bail conditions preventing picketing result in blanket restrictions on freedom of movement; some magistrates can be persuaded to add on riders to the bail conditions saying things like "except that he shall be allowed to take his children to school". The police continue asking for bail conditions after every single arrest and for those who allegedly break them to be sent to prison even though they've never been convicted of any offence.

A few weeks ago the Lord Chief Justice of England, Lord Lane, declared that it was acceptable for all miners who go picketing to be given bail conditions, since mass picketing in his view is necessarily intimidatory and unlawful. This denial of any right of peaceful picketing he described as 'local knowledge' which magistrates are entitled to take into account. He accepted word for word outrageous police evidence alleging that it is the "sole intention" of every striking miner on a picket line to use violence against working miners. He disbelieved utterly the evidence of individual miners who made strong condemnations of violence and a defence of their right to peaceful picketing. The judgement of Lord Lane made it crystal clear that civil liberties in this country are a thing of the past.

Meanwhile the police are becoming more and more confident of their absolute power to intimidate. The use of special riot laws has escalated; hundreds have been charged with offences carrying a potential sentence of life imprisonment just for being on a picket line. None of the special riot cases have been heard because they have to go before crown courts but the charges hang over the heads of many whose only crime has been to demonstrate peacefully against the threat to their jobs.

If you haven't been shocked by reading this; if you think you know it all anyway then please think again. This article isn't asking for blase responses of the "yes we know the police are bastards" variety. It is saying as loudly and clearly as I can manage that what's happening is a crisis of enormous proportions. As I said at the Conference, we all of us must be prepared as the miners have been prepared to break the law if we want to stand up for the labour movement.

In the circumstances I've described risking ending up on the wrong side of the law by exercising the right ot picket peacefully is the most important defence of non-violence and democracy that anyone can make. I believe that all British people, however they voted, are responsible for what is happening. Because laws are based on consent, it is everyone's duty actively to withdraw their consent when there is a loss of liberty and when there is injustice as palpable as that in the mining communities today.



PRESS ASSOCIATION

TILMANSTONE COLLIERY, SEPTEMBER 9

Police force bent

Over the past several months, as a result of the miners' struggle to save their industry, jobs and communities, the realities of 'our' police in Thatcher's eighties have been starkly revealed. The miners have been seen by the entire Labour movement to face a highly militarised police force, equipped for and bent upon violence. The police have blatantly approached every miners' picket as a battle, and done their utmost to start the fighting. They have manoeuvered like an army, and used cavalry as their primary weapon of attack.

This entire police operation has been controlled by one single permanent command centre – the 'National Reporting Centre' as it has misleadingly been named. This central command unit, which is not even under the nominal control of any Police Authority, has finally provided the police with *complete* autonomy from all but the current unprecedented direct control by central government.

NO SURPRISE

None of this should come as any surprise. The current government has always had two clear requirements of the police. To enforce its attacks upon the Labour movement in general, and some specific unions in particular; and to rapidly suppress any uprising or rebellion in the

YORKSHIRE GRIM DETERMINATION

EACH stage of the miners' strike is the most critical one for victory. The massive Tory press barrage has resulted in less than half a percent of the Yorkshire miners going back, despite the £1400 bribe. It has had a more serious effect on the NUM's executive where a higher proportion is now voting for surrender. On the ground there is, however, a grimmer determination to see Christmas through and let the Tories feel the full impact of the winter.

The scabs in Yorkshire have been rejected by the communities in which they live. They have police vans parked outside their doors and in some cases are being kept in four star hotels over 40 miles from the coalfield. A significant proportion of the scabs are from the white collar section COSA which has opposed the strike from the beginning.



GARTH FRANKLAND

Power Station Workers

The government's public figures for the coal supplies are almost certainly optimistic – hence the plans for the movement of huge amounts of coal. The power station workers in the Yorkshire area have been significantly more supportive of the miners than their colleagues elsewhere. For instance they have boycotted an oil pipe intended to bring scab oil to replace coal at one station. The movement of scab coal in Yorkshire will be met by huge pickets both on the depots and on the power stations. The power station workers must however boycott any scab coal brought in. The big five power stations in Yorkshire have not produced any significant amounts of energy for the national grid since the dispute began. But as they can handle up to 20% of the total national demand, their depleted coal stocks have to be built up. If the government cannot get usable coal to these power stations there will be massive power cuts with the first cold spell.

Support is building up throughout Yorkshire for the strikers. Labour Party members are playing a particularly important role. Quite an enormous contrast with the 1974 strike. In response, hundreds of miners are joining the Labour Party.

Hull Trades Council which is twinned with Fryston, Wheldale and Glasshoughton pits in the Castleford area, is now raising over £1200 a week. Other money from Hull is going each week direct to the Barnsley HQ.

Leeds

In Leeds, despite having two competing support committees, one from the Labour Party and one from the Trades Council, public events are being put on each week to raise money. A shop in the market area has become a central focus for the raising of food and money. Leeds City Council has come under strong Tory attack for its support of miners' families living in the Leeds District. This has now nearly reached a quarter of a million pounds.

Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield and many smaller Yorkshire towns such as Cleckheaton are holding regular social events along with street and pub collections to raise money and food.

The reaction to Kinnock's refusal to attend the NUM rallies was one of total disgust among the majority of Labour Party members. It is not possible to quote any miners' reactions due to the violence of their language.

In my own ward, Chapel Allerton in Leeds, there were four different resolutions presented to the meeting of 40 people condemning Kinnock's whole attitude to the strike. A composited resolution was passed with everyone voting in favour. The rank and file of the Labour Party away from Westminster understand what the fight of the miners is about. This is the biggest class battle since the Second World War in Britain. If the miners win the working class win. If the Tories win we all lose. The NUM have already destroyed the NCB management whose directors are dropping like flies. The NUM have the capacity to destroy this government with our help. **If Kinnock does not want to help the only conclusion one can draw is that he is afraid of power. That makes him both unfit and unlikely ever to be a Labour Prime Minister.**

A victory for the miners is a victory for the working class. It is also a victory for the Labour Party. Those thousands of miners and their wives who have joined the Labour Party over the last months represent our future. We have to redouble our efforts alongside them for victory.

Garth Frankland,
(Leeds Councillor)

upon violence

cities. It is the purpose of this government to destroy all working class power and organisations, and to fachieve that end they need a centrally controlled police force, kept as far from the communities in which it operates as possible.

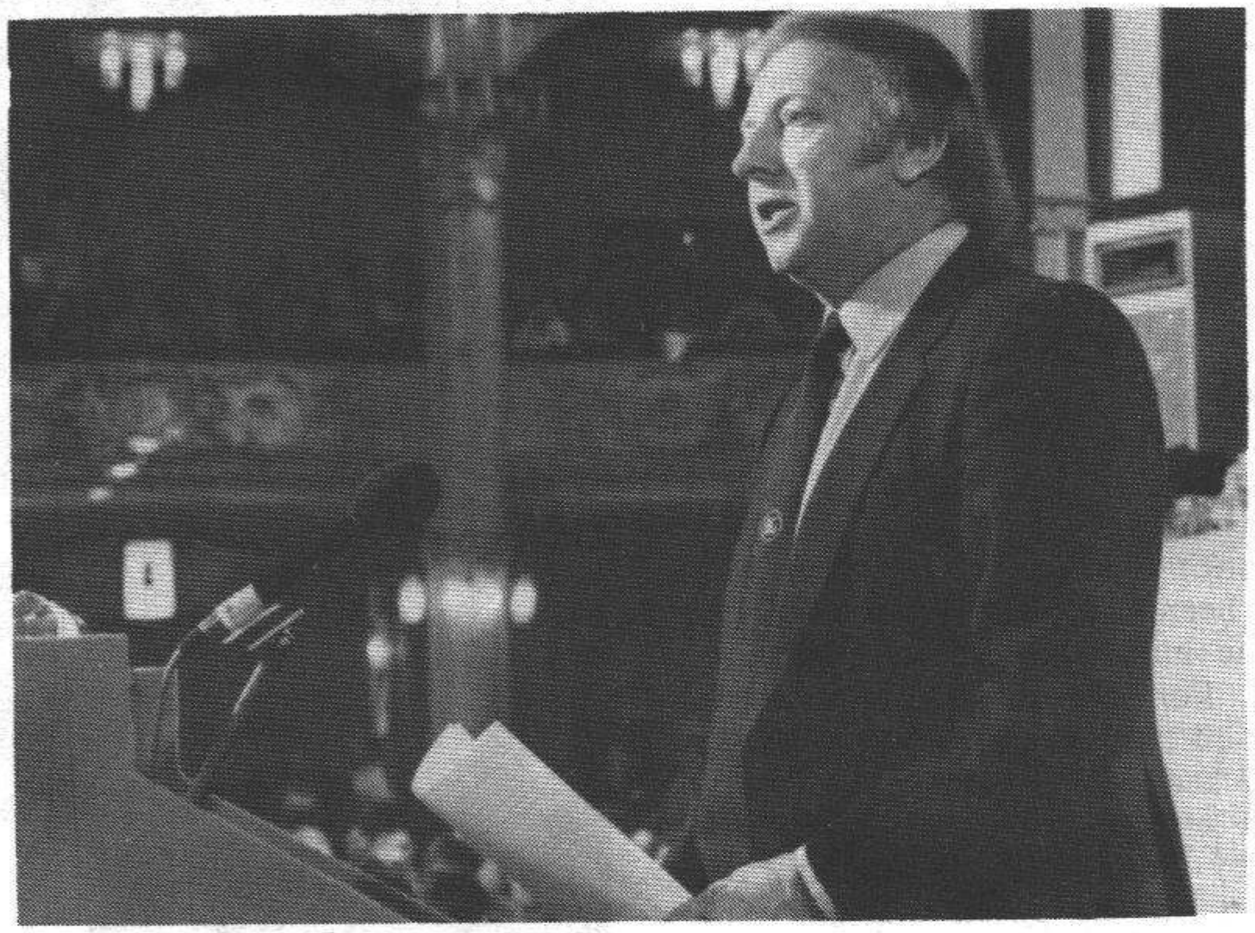
Labour Local Authorities, in particular the G.L.C. have recently recognised the severity of the problem we confront in the police force, largely as a result of the uprisings in 1981. They have provided financial assistance to community based organisations which aim to monitor the activities of the police. As a result of the work of these groups a campaign for the establishment of a properly accountable police force, controlled by an elected Police Authority with full responsibility for *all* police operations and policy, has emerged.

The manner in which the police have operated in the coalfields should demonstrate to the entire Labour movement what has been known by the inner city communities for some time: The police are a racist, corrupt and entirely coercive agency as they are presently organised, trained and used. We now have a Police Act which has greatly increased their powers, and their ability to oppress ordinary people. The Labour Party must commit itself to the introduction of legislation that will render the police democratically accountable to the communities in which they operate, and must prioritise this commitment in the manifesto on which we will fight the next General Election.

Jacob Veale Lewisham Police Monitoring Group

VICTORY TO THE MINERS

NATIONAL
SOLIDARITY
CONFERENCE



SUNDAY
DECEMBER 2nd
11.30-5.30
Camden Town Hall,
Euston Road, London NW1

Aims of the conference:

- **To raise finance**
- **To co-ordinate picketing**
- **To consolidate labour movement support**

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:
ARTHUR SCARGILL
TONY BENN
KAY SUTCLIFFE
MERLE AMORY
PAUL WHETTON
LESLEY BOULTON

WORKSHOPS:

WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES

BLACK MINERS GROUP

TRADE UNION BROAD LEFTS

LABOUR PARTY AND MINERS

JOIN THE PICKET LINES

RESIST THE POLITICAL POLICE

DELEGATES WELCOME

I agree/my organisation agrees/to sponsor the solidarity conference. I/we enclose a registration fee of £2 for the first delegate, and £1 for each additional one (no limit on numbers). We enclose an additional sum of £ ..... as a contribution towards organising costs.

NAME (BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE) .....

ADDRESS .....

ORGANISATION .....

(Please add names and addresses of additional delegates on back and return to: Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Rd., London N16. Please hurry; speed is essential). For information, ring 01-981 3289.

STOP ALL MOVEMENTS OF COAL

BLACK SECTIONS: HERE TO STAY!

Hornsey & Wood Green
Black Section
Tottenham Black Section

THE debate on black sections this year at the Party conference did not in fact confront the issue of racism in the Party but merely raised racism as an item on the political agenda. For people watching the debate, many may have got the impression that there were as many black people against the setting up of black sections as those for. The fact is that there were 18 constituency motions in support as opposed to one constituency – Luton South that was against.

The motions from the 18 constituencies resulted in two composites and the motion from Luton South CLP stood on its own with two amendments (accepted by Luton South) from Birmingham Perry Barr CLP and the EETPU.

The speakers on the debate, on the day, did not reflect the above facts. The two composites and the one motion were moved and seconded. This was followed by three speakers against black sections and only one in favour, thus distorting totally the organisation and the hard work done by the black comrades in favour of black sections and equating them with the "uncle Toms" in the Party who had "made it" to the rank of councillors.



DIANE ABBOTT ADVOCATING BLACK SECTIONS AT CONFERENCE

Smokescreen of 'Consultation'

"Black People and the Labour Party", the NEC Working Party's consultative document, was presented on the day of the debate. This overdue document played a major role in putting up the smokescreen of "consultation" (lack of) behind which some constituencies and the block votes of trade unions took cover.

Lack of consultation with their membership resulted in most of the trades unions voting against the setting up of black sections. Some unions have race equality working parties and so were not in a real position to make a decision on this issue. NUPE is one such union which was persuaded to abstain. Others just put a stop to black sections with their block votes.

The NUM, ACTT and the Bleachers and Dyers Union voted in favour of black sections just as they supported the demands from the Women's Section — recognising that we are a long way from equality in the Party.

The votes against black sections were as expected based on the position taken by the NEC. It was the voting pattern on the motion from Luton South that proved very interesting. This motion was against black sections. Instead of trades unions "consulting" with their black members on this, and in the meantime abstaining or voting againt this motion, they supported it overwhelmingly with some four million votes!

The leadership, in the form of the NEC, did their bit in creating a hostile atmosphere for this historic debate. Surely the principled position for the NEC, if indeed serious about "consulting" should have been to ask for a categoric rejection to the motion from Luton South, therefore securing a stalemate situation and a fresh slate to begin consultation based on their document.

Undoubtedly many trades union branches and CLPs will be discussing the pros and cons of black sections before the next conference. Speakers are available from the National Black Sections Steering Committee and also model resolutions will shortly be available for those branches convinced of the need for black sections.

National Black Section Steering Committee, 39 Chippenham Road, London W9.

A FUTURE THAT'S UNEQUAL

A Future That Works (the NEC's economic statement) was accepted by conference last month. The first line reads 'our purpose in this statement is to restate and reaffirm out policies . . .' The NEC is obviously so pleased with its previous endeavours that it's going for a second performance.

The programme itself consists almost entirely of macro economic proposals for expanding the economy. So presumably the NEC is quite happy about the relative positions of all the groups in our society – so long as the cake can be made bigger.

How can a socialist economic programme not include provisions for changing the position of disadvantaged sections of society. In times of economic prosperity Black and disabled people and women never do as well as the rest. And when capitalism's cycle of economic depression takes its inevitable turn the same groups suffer greater hardship than the rest.

Yet in aggregate we have enough wealth in the country to ensure, not just, nobody goes without, but everybody has sufficient according to need. The primary problem is not that there isn't enough to go round – there is but it is in the hands of the very few. It is one distribution. A Future That Works does not even mention re-distribution of wealth. The fate of the working class and other disadvantaged groups, depends entirely on a Labour Government being able to play economic bingo more successfully than the Tories.

A Future That Works is written by those for whom the past has worked – White middle class men. That is why it 'restates and reaffirms' the past.

Our society is multiracial, with significant numbers of disabled and gay people and with women in the majority. Yet these groups are under-represented in the policy making machine of the party – in the case of Black people not represented at all. The people who wrote a Future That Works tried to change the rules on selection of Parliamentary candidates to ensure that candidates from these groups do not get selected. Whatever the merits of the proposed change (I don't think there are any but for argument's sake) it would have led to even fewer disadvantaged candidates being selected. For constituency members would be inclined towards the sitting member, unlikely to be aware of the alternatives, certainly not having the opportunity to judge them.

Paul Sharma (National Treasurer Black Section) personal capacity

BRIEFING WOMEN'S GROUP

The last meeting of the National Editorial Board agreed to set up a National Briefing Women's Group.

The first meeting is to be held on Saturday December 1st at 4pm at County Hall, London SE1, and is open to all women Briefing supporters. Further details can be obtained from: *Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Road, London N.16.*

BRIEFING AND THE BRIGHTON BOMB

Last month's editorial statement on the Brighton bomb produced an immediate — and overwhelmingly hostile — response from our readers. Phone calls, letters and articles poured in. And the National Editorial Board meeting disassociated itself from the statement. We print below a further editorial statement, a contribution from Sinn Fein, and the replies we have received.

EDITORIAL

'GIVE IRELAND PEACE AND THERE WILL BE NO WAR'

IRA Statement, 12th October 1984

On the evening before the Brighton bombing Clive Soley, ex-Labour Northern Ireland spokesperson, was speaking at a meeting of Battersea Labour Party. Much of the discussion revolved around the Republican twin strategy of 'the armalite and the ballot box' and reports that the armalite half was to be given greater prominence. Soley said that whatever happened 'we must not lose our nerve' and retreat from the political advances that have recently been achieved. In view of the big bang no more than 5 hours later the discussion was ironic — and the more so given the last Labour Briefing editorial.

For it wasn't only that those who we — unfortunately — know will lose their political nerve such as the Labour leadership (if they ever had any), but Briefing itself made a serious political misjudgement.

MADE A SERIOUS POLITICAL MISJUDGEMENT

The National Labour Briefing Editorial Board has subsequently condemned the November editorial and reaffirmed its support for, and solidarity with, the Irish republican movement though we may not always agree with all their tactics or policies. We believe our number one task and overwhelming priority as active members of the British labour movement is to fight for and secure an immediate and unconditional British withdrawal.

The IRA have stated in an interview in Republican News 18/10/84 — 'we are determined never to lay down our arms until the Irish people as a nation are allowed to determine their own future.' Speaking to the Irish Times just after the bombing Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein President, said; 'it is the inevitable result of the British occupation of the Six Counties' (Irish Times 15/10/84). Diane Abbott, a Labour Councillor and the first Black woman to stand for the NEC, has summed it up in an interview with the journal Labour and Ireland given in August — '... it's quite simple — anyone who comes from a former colony knows the troops always have to come out. There have been British troops — 'peacekeeping forces' — in Cyprus, Malaya, Kenya, all over the place, and they have all had to come out.'

Only an unequivocal British withdrawal including the disarming of the RUC and UDR, will allow for peace in Ireland. Labour Briefing stands for peace, but we are not pacifists. Thatcher stands for violence and claims to be a pacifist. Striking miners and women from the mining communities are being beaten to pieces now for just trying to defend their livelihoods and communities in exactly the same way that Catholics marching for their civil rights were beaten to pieces 15 years ago. Thatcher's horrific hypocrisy of denouncing violence while enacting it is beneath contempt.

In the same Irish Times interview Adams also said, 'the bombing has been successful insofar as it has applied attention once again to what's happening in the six counties.' It certainly appears to be the case that the British only sit up and take notice when they are bombed into it.

However, we believe that the political advances that Soley referred to in Battersea the night before the bombing, have patently not come from any increased Dublin-London accord hung around the Forum report. Certainly Soley seemed to see such attempts to combat Sinn Fein's electoral success by promoting both the SDLP and the Dublin government as the only true protectors and benefactors of the Northern Ireland nationalist community, as coinciding with his attempts to win the hearts and minds of Loyalist racists. Unionist and Loyalist consent to Dublin rule was seen as the only path to Ireland's reunification. We believe the advances have, with out a shred of a doubt, come from Sinn Fein's 'ballot box' strategy and the positive response which that has found with some - too few - sections of the British labour movement. Ken Livingstone's reciprocal invitation to Gerry Adams to come and speak to Londoners in 1983 has been extended and developed by the ensuing dialogue between British and Irish republican feminists and between trade unionists on either side of the Irish sea. But the dialogue with Sinn Fein is a mere murmur compared to the roar it must become. That depends on us in the Labour Party insisting that Sinn Fein's voice, and that of all Irish Republicans, must be heard here and now. The exclusion order on Danny Morrison must be lifted and the Dublin based trade-unionists for withdrawal campaign should be flooded with invitations to speak to CLPs and trade union branches.

Tony Benn has published a Bill for British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. In its introduction, Benn argues that we need to agree the principle of withdrawal. Exactly — and to achieve this end we should be promoting discussion, debate and argument throughout the entire labour movement on the Bill itself.

As is becoming increasingly and wonderfully the case women are leading the way. National Labour Women's Conference last May called on the Labour Party to campaign against every aspect of the repression of the Irish nationalist people. The recent London Labour Women's Conference has an ex-Armagh prisoner as a guest speaker and unanimously carried a resolution calling for British withdrawal. The sooner we all follow suit the sooner will there be peace in Ireland.



John Chapman

`No solution short of full independence...´

Below we print extracts from Gerry Adams' Presidential Address to the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis held in Dublin on November 3rd and 4th:

'Irish republicans need to be active in campaigning for world peace, against nuclear weapons and for an Irish neutrality. And before our opponents point to our position on the legitimacy of armed struggle in pursuance of national independence and freedom, let me point out that there is no contradiction.

The suppression of small nations throughout the world and the arms race being pursued by the super-powers are but opposite sides of the one coin. To support national liberation is to be opposed to imperialism and Dublin's position on international issues is based on its position on the national question as surely as London government foreign policy is reflected in its attitude to Ireland.

Recently we suffered London's media response to the IRA's attempted execution of the British cabinet in Brighton. The London government's response to that Irish action was, dare I say it, much quicker and probably much more considered than its long-awaited response to the Dublin Forum is likely to be. Regardless of what one thinks of that operation, and we can be assured that Margaret Thatcher got little sympathy from nationalist Ireland, or indeed from an increasingly disaffected working class in her own country, it is obviously totally hypocritical for British apologists to describe the Brighton bombing as an attack on democracy.

The quality of democracy in Britain is, of course, a matter for the British people. It is their business, not ours. But the British connection, the partition of this country, and the resultant suffering and grief is far from democratic. On the contrary, it is un-democratic, unwanted, illegal and immoral. All casualties and fatalities in Ireland or Britain as a result of the war are sad symptoms of our British problem and the Brighton bombing was an inevitable result of the British presence in this country. Far from being a blow against democracy it was a blow for democracy. Having said that, I am mindful of the consequences of this action. I have no doubt that the British government will attempt reprisal action in vengeance for the Brighton operation. As always, we in Sinn Fein, in the public leadership of the republican struggle, are the most likely victims of British assassination plans.

Aware as always of the dangers of our position, but committed nonetheless to the struggle in which we are engaged, we will continue to campaign for the restoration of Irish democracy and to articulate the desire of our people for freedom and independence, regardless of Dublin smears or British violence.

Ireland geographically, historically and culturally is one nation. We as one people have the right to be free, and in that freedom the divided sections of our people will find the will to unite, regardless of religious affiliations, in establishing a society which meets the needs of all our people.

. . . Sinn Fein's view, as was stated then and since, is that the British government needs to be met with a firm, united and unambiguous demand from all Irish 'nationalist' parties, for an end to the unionist veto and for a declaration of a date for British withdrawal.

Within the new situation created by these measures, it is then a matter of business-like negotiation between representatives of all the Irish parties, and this includes those who represent today's loyalist voters, to set the constitutional, economic, social and political arrangements for a new Irish state.

We assert that the loyalist people must be given, in common with all other citizens, firm guarantees of their religious and civil liberties and we believe that, faced with British withdrawal and the removal partition, a considerable body of loyalist opinion would accept the wisdom of negotiating for the type of society which would reflect their needs as well as the needs of all the other people in Ireland.

The establishment of a society free from British interference, with the union at an end, will see sectarianism shrivel and will see the emergence of class politics proper with a realignment of forces along left and right lines. Of course, these suggestions will be ridiculed at present by the same leaders. No wonder! They have no real reason for doing anything else.

The Forum report, far from tackling the question of loyalism and the veto, actually reinforces loyalist intransigence and institutionalises the veto. Indeed the Forum report does not permit Loyalists to examine any option other than the present arrangement guaranteed to them by the British connection and far from spelling out basic demands, the report merely spells out various options which permit the British, if they are so moved, to pick and choose from a 'dolly-mixture' selection of alternatives. They will obviously choose to do only that which suits their interests.

All of this arises, as I have said before, because the Forum was not convened to deal with the real problem of British interference or its social, economic, political, sectarian and cultural side-effects, but because those participating felt threatened by the rise of Sinn Fein. The Forum was not meant to tackle the root causes of violence and instability in Irish society. It was established merely to tackle the root causes of the swing to Sinn Fein in the six counties, or to quote the much-used cliche "the alienation of Northern nationalists".

. . . Today we are a stronger and a more vibrant party than we were last year or the year before. Next year we will be stronger again. Regardless of how often Garret Fitzgerald meets Margaret Thatcher or how many Dublin/London summits are held, we are confident, because there is no solution short of full independence, and because we have the determination to withstand all pressures, we are confident that our party will continue to grow so that it can act in a major way as the catalyst for full freedom, democracy and social justice for our people.'

"Moralising cant and patronising chauvinism"

Dear Comrades,

I wasn't aware that Briefing borrowed editorials from the Daily Telegraph until I noticed with surprise your very odd way of arguing for Troops Out of Ireland last month. There you combined extreme right-wing opportunism (admiration for 'the personal courage of . . . Margaret Thatcher') with extremely fatuous ultraleftism (the death of the cabinet 'might have produced a military government within weeks'). About only one thing were you crystal clear: Irish people must be admonished for having caused a nasty problem for British 'socialists'.

Put bluntly, your editorial failed to attack the ruling class, rubbished the working class by entirely misrepresenting its reaction and showed thereby a degree of pomposity, myopia and even chauvinism.

It's extremely unlikely that the bombing will provide the government with a very large 'shot of adrenalin' as you seem to fear. This government's brutality sparked off the bomb and unlike almost any other bomb this one tore into the ruling class *and only them*. Working people won't have missed that small fact even if your editor did. *Our* 'upbringing' and our 'traditions' may not lead to support bombing as a strategy but they do tell us there's an important difference between indiscriminate violence and that directed at the ruling class. The bomb will temporarily confuse British working people and give ephemeral support to the Tories. But the fawning sycophancy of your admiration for their 'personal courage' can only have the effect of prolonging that support.

My confidence in your editor wasn't increased either by the assertion that, had the bomb succeeded, the ruling class was likely to respond with a military government. I'm sorry to point out that the British ruling class has much more resilience than that. It could bury and replace the entire cabinet without blinking. Yet even if it were too weak to avoid the Generals, should Irish republicans be blamed for 'propelling us onto a new plane of social and political crisis'? Isn't it our tradition to hold the ruling class responsible in such situations?

But on the issue of violence you excelled yourselves. You refused 'to parrot the ritual condemnation of "violence" . . .' and three lines later parroted just that. How dare you claim you 'abhor and are incapable of the use of violence as a substitute for rational argument and political debate' when you know well that violence is the only answer when faced the naked brutal arm of the state. 'Rational argument' used against ruling class guns results in large cemeteries. That is as true in West Belfast as it is in Soweto or Central America. If you were to suffer the military coup you expect you'd need to learn this lesson *very quickly*!

Moralistic cant about violence in general is one thing but patronising chauvinism is another. Does your editor really believe Friday's bomb was due to merely an 'exclusion from the political process'? The editorial comes very close to that. Just for the record it must be said that the bomb wasn't laid 3 weeks ago but in fact 98 years ago when Lord Randolph Churchill first tied the future of the Tory party to the rising level of loyalist violence and pogroms against catholics. Nationalists in the north of Ireland have been excluded from the state from its birth; they only resorted to violence however in reponse to extreme violence from the state.

As if it weren't pompous enough your editorial then suggests there are millions hoping that Thatcher (courageous Thatcher, remember?) will hear 'the screams of the Belgrano victims' and repent. Why talk such rubbish? Thatcher couldn't change even if she wanted to. True, millions *may* be hoping she sees the light but I think it's slightly more likely they're hoping the IRA 'get lucky once'.

Finally I have to say that the article really has little to do with its title (Get Thatcher's terrorist troops out of Ireland). Fleeting references to Ireland slip their way into the last two paragraphs but no time is spent in arguing the important case for withdrawal or even in discussing how we do it.

I'm aware that this editorial probably doesn't represent the views of Briefing supporters throughout the country and I think that we must make sure that such an editorial is never again written. In particular the clown who penned this nonsense must never again be left alone in charge of a Briefing editorial, or Irish people may very justifiably 'explode'.

Comradely yours,
Ronan Brady (Brent East CLP)

London Labour Women Visit Belfast and Armagh

The 1983 London Labour Party Women's Conference passed a resolution which strongly condemned the repressive policy of strip searching women prisoners in Armagh Jail. It also called for a delegation of London Labour Women to visit Armagh to investigate the effect this policy is having on the prisoners, their families, and the republican community.

The delegation of four women (listed below) flew to Belfast for the weekend of 22nd/23rd September, and we were warmly greeted by all the people that we met and spoke to there (apart from the RUC!).

Our first meeting was with a group of relatives and ex-prisoners. Mr O'Hanlon, father of Siobhan O'Hanlon, who has already been on remand in Armagh Jail for over a year, and who has been strip searched many times before and after her weekly remand court appearances, asked us a very pertinent question. 'Why', he demanded to know, 'had the Labour Party sent a delegation of relatively small fry when it should have sent the big fish – a delegation of MPs?' A question that our representatives in Parliament should put their minds to!

Linda Quigley, who was released from Armagh on May 24th this year, described her experience of strip searching as 'the most degrading and humiliating experience of my life. It is akin to being raped.'

BARBARIC PRACISES

Strip searches of women prisoners in Armagh are carried out, according to the prison authorities, for security reasons. However, as both the ex-prisoners and the relatives of women currently being held in Armagh pointed out, the only items ever found on any of the women who have been strip searched since this policy was introduced in November 1982 have been a five pound note and a small bottle of perfume. Hardly a massive haul and certainly not sufficient to 'justify' this barbaric practise.

Linda also pointed out that this is not only the actual strip searching itself, but the effects both before and after that are of great concern. Many women suffer from physical ill-health such as migraine and sickness and vomiting as the day of their weekly court appearance, and thus the day of being strip searched twice (on their way to and on their way back from the court) approaches. The prisoners have complained both to the prison 'medical' authorities and the board of governors but their response has been one of total indifference. Indeed the board of governors — the body responsible for overseeing that 'proper' conditions and human rights are maintained within the jail — replied 'There's an old Chinese proverb — "if rape is inevitable, you may as well lie back and enjoy it!" '

VISIT TO ARMAGH JAIL

On the Sunday of our visit we went to Armagh Jail to visit two remand prisoners, Marie Wright and Siobhan O'Hanlon. They strongly reiterated what we had been told about the effects of strip searching, and explained that the 'security reason' argument put forward by the Northern Ireland Office simply doesn't hold water. The remand prisoners, who are strip searched before and after their court appearances, *never* leave the immediate company of a prison or an RUC officer. They have no contact with other prisoners on the journey to court and the vans they are transported in have individual cubicles into which the women are locked during the journey. The policy of strip searching is obviously aimed at humiliating and demoralising the women – at breaking their resistance to the prison regime and to British rule.

We as members of the Labour Party and as women have a duty to ensure that strip searching is stopped. The delegation will be reporting to this year's conference with recommendations to raise publicity and activity around this issue as an urgent priority. Make sure that you get involved.

Stephanie Green

Members of the Delegation:
Kate Flannery (London Labour Party Women's Committee)
Sarah Roelofs (Women's Officer, LCI)
Stephanie Green (Holborn & St. Pancras Women's Section)
Deborah Knight (Brent East Women's Section)

BRIEFING&THE BRIGHTON BOMB (continued)

"British-centred viewpoint"

Dear Briefing,
Your article on the Brighton bomb (National supplement, November 1984) was way off the mark. Your editorial board's main reaction may have been one of horror and sympathy for the targets but that was certainly not the reaction of most socialist (and others) I've spoken to. Even people usually far from sympathetic to the IRA have expressed admiration of their audacity — I've heard no sympathy at all for the victims.

'Try riding your bike now, Norman' has not been an uncommon phrase, and jokes are doing the rounds like 'What do you call 4 dead Tories? A start'. The reaction has been totally different from Harrods.

But more seriously than misjudging socialists' reactions in your article, was your totally British-centred way of looking at the bombing. Socialists wishing to comment on the Brighton bombing should *first of all* look at it from the point of view of Irish republicans — did the bombing advance the struggle to free Ireland, was it a morale-booster to the nationalist population, and is it legitimate for an anti-imperialist guerrilla army to attempt to wipe out the Cabinet of the oppressor nation?

If the answer to those three questions is Yes, then they far outweigh the little difficulties that the bomb may or may not cause for us in England, Scotland and Wales.

I'm neither advocating nor condemning the bombing. But whether we like it or not, such bombings will continue whilst British troops remain in Ireland, so it is preferable that we put them in the context of where they are coming from, rather than reacting as if it had been the work of a small British left group.

Yours,
Harry Roberts (Leeds)

"Imperialist Mentality"

Dear National Briefing,
The Leader is the last issue "Only one way to stop more, worse outrages" was itself outrageous. Adopting an imperialist mentality, it told Irish republicans to adopt the tactics of the British Peace Movement, in order to make life easier for British socialists.

Unlike Harrods, the Brighton bomb was aimed at a specific target, the political wing of the British ruling class, whose troops are occupying Northern Ireland. As such it was a perfectly legitimate target, though whether it was tactically correct is for the IRA to judge. Our answer to the media's manufactured hysteria should be that of the Express to Jerry Adams attempted assassination – the Tories are reaping that which they've sown. Instead we had personal moralising masquerading as a political response.

Public reaction was also different from that envisaged. On the Saturday morning following the bombing, I was collecting for the miners ¼ mile from the Grand. The only comments came from two women who regretted Thatcher's escape. From an 89-year-old woman in my ward, it was the contrast between the Tories' treatment of the Fireservice and NHS – all public services – and the treatment they received in return, that stood out.

The article berates "modern bomb technology" and "the use of violence as a substitute for rational argument" ignoring Lenin's dictum that the violence of the oppressed and oppressor cannot be equated. Is for example male violence and women's reaction to it identical? For marxists a state based on violence cannot be removed peacefully, hence our support for national liberation movements. Rational argument does not destroy an irrational system.

The article argued for the struggle in Ireland to be subsumed to electing a Labour Government. This is the imperialist and chauvinist politics of Militant – the counterposing of socialism in the abstract to the concrete struggle in Ireland.

The condemnation of violence because of "our whole upbringing . . . all our traditions" is more worthy of Kinnock on the miners.

Tony Greenstein,
Brighton Labour Briefing

Surprise gains at Wales Women's Conference

OF all Labour Party regions, Wales must be the most backward and right wing – and its women's organisation is no exception. It came as a surprise that the first attempt by women in WAC and Briefing to organise a Left opposition at the Labour Women Wales Conference brought immediate gains.

We organised a fringe meeting with speakers from WAC, Briefing and Women Against Pit Closures. We produced a WAC conference bulletin promoting our resolutions, amendments to standing orders and WAC and left candidates in elections for the Labour Women's Committee for Wales and Conference Arrangements Committee. We did so more to give ourselves a higher profile and to test our strength than in the expectation of making any progress.

We anticipated that, as in the past, resolutions on positive action would suffer crushing defeat, that only well-established and non-contentious items of party policy would be endorsed and that the Right would sweep the board in the elections for both committees.



WESTERN MAIL — THE QUALITY VOICE OF WALES

Advance by Labour left

By CLIVE BETTS, Welsh Affairs Correspondent

Women revolt against official party line

LEFT-WINGERS and women's rights campaigners made major advances in the Welsh Labour Party at the weekend.

Tight organisation centred around the hard-Left magazine, *South Wales Labour Briefing* resulted in delegates to the Labour Women Wales confer- ce three times revoltin- st the official line.

ng coups on policy m- ved by the elec- te to the colu- r's conf- being

in Cardiff on Saturday — has previously reflected the conservative attitude of the party in Wales. Last year the executive line was faithfully followed, and all motions demanding str- rights for women in the p- heavily defeated.

elaney, a delegate of the nion AUEW (TASS) anaged break- wom- ights A- ll

A demand that women members on the national executive committee be elected by the annual women's conference rather than by the party in general was also passed.

On the third motion the conference platform could muster only a small majority for its opposition to a women's rights dema- that ever, shortlist for both par- tary and local government must include a woman, sh-

Delegates have this demand will Welsh women n- feminism and so- le," said Gill The women their c- p sec- d

rights.

Anne Delaney said, "We have got to get across that we are not anti-men: it is a matter of extending to women in the party their full democratic rights."

Despite platform opposition, the conference voted to support total opposition to Tory policies, "even if it means breaking Tory laws."

Stevi Jackson, of Cardiff, one of the organisers of the *South Wales Labour Briefing* group, told the con- rence, "The question is, do ement Tory policy or L-

ference passe- n deplo- ent

support of a rally by miners' wives in Cardiff on December 8.

Labour leader Mr Neil Kinnock was accused of "scabbing" on the miners' strike for refusing to speak at the official NUM rallies.

Vera McElhone, of Cardiff urged the conference, "Write your stronges- letters of complaints to the nation- executive c ommittee and to t- Parliamentary Labour Party. N- Kinnock has been scabbing on strike. I feel ap- ed by the st- ment by Neil k that he is to sit on a pl- h the mine- eplored governm- r priv- run old- d the duct- re

ed. The three women we supported in the elections for the LWCW and the four for the CAC were all successful, unseating some notable right-wingers. Next year we will encourage more left women to stand and should be able to wrest the LWCW from the control of the right.

More Left resolutions were passed than ever before, including one calling for total resistance to local government cuts even if it meant breaking Tory laws. Despite opposition from the platform, this was easily won. In the past, conference has always voted in line with the platform's recommendations – this year the vote went against them on several occasions.

Fringe meetings at this conference are usually poorly attended. Only about ten women turned up at last year's WAC fringe meeting. This year we decided to think big and booked a room for forty people. Eighty women packed in for a fruitful discussion on the links between women's struggles in the coalfields and in the Labour Party.

All Successful

In fact, two out of three WAC resolutions were passed – the one calling for positive discrimination in shortlisting was narrowly defeat-

Significant

It is probably difficult for anyone who has no first hand knowledge of the Labour Party in Wales to appreciate just how significant these gains are. They represent the first real challenge to the Right's hegemony. Our success has shown the value of organising and given us the enthusiasm to continue. It has given a vital morale boost to the Left as a whole, not just to the women.

Here in Wales, as in the Labour Party in Britain as a whole, women are taking the lead.

Stevi Jackson (Cardiff Central CLP)

CRISIS IN CND DEEPENS

Joy Hurcombe (Vice Chair CND 1984, writing in a personal capacity)

This year's CND Conference takes place against a background of strong pressure on the movement to adopt minimum campaigning demands and throw away its sharp campaigning edge. The movement is in deep crisis. There is a fundamental attack on the basic aims, policies and accepted democratic principles. It is up to the rank and file activists from the regions and groups to prevent the right wing from using conference to consolidate their control. Conference is the only forum left where the ordinary members of the campaign can make their protest heard. Delegates may find that this may be the last opportunity for two of the conference resolutions call for the abolition of annual conference.

All mass movements in history have been subject to internal tensions and debate. However no campaign can win if it alienates its supporters and changes its demands. Within CND there is an attempt to ditch the demand for unilateral nuclear disarmament and replace it with a call on the government to adopt non nuclear defence. This is said to be the answer to the slur that nuclear disarmament "would leave the country defenceless". There is no way in which a campaign for disarmament can be fundamentally changed to a campaign for defence.

We are united in a single issue — disarmament — and nothing should divert us from that until we have won mass support. This issue will be debated at conference. It is probably the most important item on the agenda. We have to win. If conference adopts a demand for non-nuclear defence, the movement will split in two. Its base will be eroded. It will become just another pressure group accommodating and compromising on membership of NATO, nationalism, racism, and accepting the economics of the military machine and the notion of a supposed enemy. The resolution, from Deptford CND, is a grassroots reaction to the right-wing CND leadership. Delegates should support the resolution and make sure that the amendment, from Christian CND, is thrown out.

One resolution calls for a campaign against the nuclear weapons of the USSR. It appears to be calling for balance in our campaign but it ignores the way in which CND's opponents will use such a campaign against us and how it will reinforce the anti-Soviet views of the general public. The resolution calls for active support for individuals and groups in Warsaw Pact countries who oppose both NATO and Soviet nuclear weapons. Again it sounds very even-handed but in practice it may prevent real dialogue rather than improving it.

SEA LAUNCHED CRUISE MISSILES, AIRLAND BATTLE, CIVIL LIBERTIES

These resolutions together with the amendments which sharpen the rather bland tone, should provide conference with the opportunity to discuss the miners' strike, the policing of peaceful pickets and the implications for the peace movement, and the urgency of campaigning against NATO

TRIDENT

Those who dream of an easy option thought that an ANTI-TRIDENT CAMPAIGN supported by all politicial parties (including Tories) could be the start of an ANTI-THATCHER ALLIANCE. This would be a broad alliance of all but the driest of Tories. Cancelling Trident would be the only disarmament demand with all other unilateral demands out of the window. Aspects of this vision appear in this resolution but if amendment 2 from Southwark is accepted, a commitment to industrial action against Trident would change this campaign from an academic exercise to an active means of challenging the Tory government.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

One resolution calls for deletion of the word "unilateral" and another calls for deletion of the words "leading to complete and general disarmament" from our aims. All constitutional changes should be opposed with the exception of the two from Green CND. These call for total opposition to the complete nuclear energy cycle and limitation to three consecutive years for eligibility to serve on National Council, Executive or as an officer.

This last resolution reflects the concern that is felt by ordinary members at the amount of power that certain key people in the campaign hold and keep year after year. It is becoming a centralised organisation with a leadership out of touch with the campaign at grassroots level. This is why changes in our unilateralist demands may be pushed through despite the opposition of the membership. We must unite and fight. Benn would say — if you fight you win, if you fudge you lose.

BRIEFING GUIDE TO

1. The background

Before 1909, there were no legal restraints o. trade union political expenditure. In that year, the House of Lords upheld a decision of the lower courts stopping unions spending their funds on party political purposes.

The unions and the Labour Party campaigned for Parliament to restore the status quo. They were not successful. The *1913 Trade Union Act* introduced by the Liberal Government created a legal structure governing party political spending.

★***Political objectives*** *had to be included in union rule books.*

★*Spending on party political purposes had to come from a special* ***Political Fund****, separate from the union's general fund which financed industrial objectives.*

★*This fund had to be financed by a special* ***Political Levy*** *paid separately from the remainder of members' dues.*

★*Members' ordinary dues could not be used to finance political purposes.*

★*A union could only establish this structure after a successful* ***secret ballot*** *of all members.*

★*If the majority of members decided to establish this structure, individuals would still have a* ***legal right to contract out*** *of paying the political levy and the right not be discriminated against, except in relation to the management of the political fund, if they did.*

★*If the union rules or the law were not followed in relation to any of these matters members would be entitled to complain to a special government appointed overseer, the Certification Officer. If they were not satisfied they could then appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal and the ordinary courts*

This is still the position today. There was one major exception. In 1927, in retribution for the General Strike, the Baldwin government changed the system by which members had to *opt out* of paying the political levy to a system by which they had to *opt in*. In 1946, the Labour government restored the 1913 position. The law deals only with political funds. Establishing a political fund and affiliating to the Labour Party are two separate things. *But without a political fund a union cannot affiliate to the party.* By affiliating, unions use their funds to support the Labour Party and receive a say in decision-making at every level of the party.

From 1913 to the 1930's both TUC and Labour Party argued that the 1913 Act should be repealed and complete freedom restored. The arguments used still have relevance today:

(a) If unions are to be autonomous, self-governing bodies, the union members, not the state, should decide the regulations on political expenditure.

(b) Unions' industrial and political purposes are indivisible. Unions need political representation, of which their own party is the highest form, just as much as they need shop stewards or full-time officials.

(c) The 1913 Act institutionalised a division between the industrial and the political which has played a role in miseducating generations of trade unions to believe that they should not be involved in politics.

(d) There is no symmetry between trade unions and employers, the Labour Party and capitalist parties. The employers and the Tories, possessing greater power and resources anyway, were free of all legal restraints.

(e) Even if one accepts the 1913 basis, why should members who had been defeated in a democratic ballot be free to disregard that ballot and 'opt out'? If political expenditure is as essential as industrial expenditure those who contract out are every bit as much shirkers as those who refuse to join the union in the first place.' But after 1945, the unions and Labour Party came to accept the 1913 Act.

2. The aims of the Tory Government

The present administration are using legislation and unemployment to transform the structure and practice of British trade unionism. They aim to confine unions to the industrial sphere, to limit their involvement in politics, to make them fight with one arm behind their backs. Specifically, 'what would please me immensely' said Mrs.Thatcher, 'would be if the TUC were not and the unions were not a part of the Labour Party or the Labour Party a part of the trade union movement. That connection, I must say, I think is wrong.'

The Tories want to move towards a US style system where the unions are not structurally integrated into a political party. By weakening the links between unions and the Labour Party, the Tories also weaken the Labour Party. They fear a government produced by a simultaneous radicalisation in party and unions which would break from the post-war consensus as decisively to the left as Thatcherism has to the right.

The present government also pays great attention to the *form* of legislation. Given their belief that politically inspired leaders are holding back good right wing ordinary members they particularly welcome an apparently democratic form which involves union members taking their own organisation to court. So the cabinet resisted demands from the Tory right wing to simply change 'contracting out' of the political levy to 'contracting in'. Between 1927 and 1946, when this system was in operation, the percentage of members of TUC affiliated unions paying the levy dropped by more than 30%. The government was also concerned that too crude and draconian an assault could draw attention to the privileged position of big business.

These are the real aims behind the Tory legislation, but the campaign to introduce it has been conducted in terms of abuse of the existing provisions of the 1913 Act with allegations that unwilling members are pressed, intimidated and coerced into paying the political levy. These charges are never substantiated in any meaningful fashion. When, in 1982, Frank White, MP for Bury, asked the Director General of the Engineering Employers Federation, whether he possessed evidence as to these allegations, he was told, 'Not anything that I think you would recognise as evidence, no'. On average there are around a dozen complaints to the Certification Officer each year. In 1982 with an intense media campaign there were 24 out of 6 million levy payers.

As Steel Maitland, a Tory cabinet minister stated at the time of the 1927 Trade Disputes Act, 'The major part of the outcry against the political levy is not motivated by a burning indignation for the trade unionist who is forced to subscribe to the furtherance of political principles which he abhors. It is based on a desire to hit the Socialist Party through the pocket and it uses the comparatively small proportion of injustice in respect of the political levy as a smokescreen under which to make the attack'.

3. The Tory legislation and the political levy

The new legislation can be found in Part III ss.12-19 of the Trade Union Act 1984. It does not change 'opting out' to 'opting in' to the political levy. In consideration of the Tories agreeing not to press this the TUC agreed that:

★*Unions would review existing arrangements to see if there were problems.*

★*Circulate information to union members on their right to contract out of the levy.*

The government have asked the Association of Conservative trade unionists to examine what happens, and will review the position if there is no 'improvement'. The Act itself states:

★*Ballots on political expenditure must now be held* ***every ten years****. Unions will have 12 months from March 1985 in which to hold the first ballot.*

★*The ballots must be secret – postal or held immediately before, after, or during working hours. Everybody must be able to vote without incurring direct cost.*

★*The ballot will be about whether or not a union should have a political fund* ***not specifically about affiliation to the Labour Party****. Only unions which have a political fund will, by law, have to hold a ballot. Decision will be by straight majority.*

★*The rules for conducting the ballot will have to be approved by the Certification Officer.*

★*If a majority is not obtained then six months after the date of the ballot political expenditure must cease. If no ballot* ***is held*** *then political expenditure will cease on the final date for ballot March 31st 1986.*

★*This is not automatic. It will be left to a member to take the union to court. The court have discretion, 'to make an order requiring the union to take within such time as may be specified in the order such steps as may be so specified'. The court could order a ballot to be held. Alternatively, they could simply order all political expenditure to stop, there and then.*

★*If the union ignores the order it can be enforced by any member. The result of defiance would be sequestration of funds.*

★*The definition of political objects is extended by s.17 of the Act. Expenditure on the production or publication of any literature, document, film, sound recording or, advert which has as its main purpose persuading people to vote or not to vote for a particular party or candidate,* ***has to come out of a union's political fund, not its general funds.***

4. The implications of the legislation

Forty-seven unions with more than six million members are affiliated to the Labour Party paying 62p per head for affiliated members. 80% of the Labour Party's fund comes from the unions. Companies can donate what they wish to the Tories, without consulting shareholders, still less employees. In 1979, *Labour Research* estimated that the Tories received £2.5 million from just 445 companies, whilst

THE POLITICAL LEVY

Labour's affiliation fees from all unions come to just £1.8 million. A more recent survey of 3,000 published accounts found company donations to the Tories had risen by 80%.

The gap is growing. Pressure is already on the finances of unions who have lost 2 million members since 1979. *If several big unions lost the ballots and were unable to continue their political funds it could have a drastic impact on Labour's already dire finances.*

The number of members paying the levy (which gives us *some* idea of the chances of this happening) varies from union to union. At the top end 98% of the members of NUPE and the TGWU pay the political levy. In the NUR, the figure is 97%; in USDAW and COHSE it is 92%. Coming down the ladder, we reach the AUEW, with 65%, and TASS with 58%, going down to ASTMS with around 35% and, ultimately, the ACTT with around 7%.

The second kind of evidence is in recent opinion polls. A MORI survey published in early 1982, found that a majority of members of the TGWU, GMBATU, AUEW, EEPTU, NUR and USDAW opposed their union's affiliation to the Labour Party. A Gallup Poll for Channel Four in 1983 showed 53% of the sample opposed to Labour Party affiliation with 36% in favour. A special poll commissioned by the unions themselves, in mid 1984, asked four questions of union members: 'Do you support . . . : 'activities by your union?', 44% for, 45% against; 'affiliation to the Labour Party', 38% for, 52% against; 'Spending 5p on political activities', 42% for, 47% against; and 'supporting MPs in the interest of union members', 63% for, 27% against.

These polls were conducted before what will undoubtedly be an intensely virulent media campaign has even commenced. Nonetheless, they show what unions and party are up against.

Apart from the Labour Party link, the 1984 Act will cause other problems for unions. NALGO and the CPSA, for example, are not affiliated to the Labour Party and do not have political funds (the fact that when both recently balloted to establish such funds the NALGO resolution was defeated by almost 9 to 1 and the CPSA resolution by 2 to 1 provides further evidence of what we are up against). For most unions the distinction between industrial campaigns and political campaigns is becoming increasingly blurred. To defend their members' basic terms and conditions of employment NALGO has to campaign against the state. Yet, as the 1984 Act went through the House, Tory Junior Minister, Alan Clark, claimed that NALGO's £1 million 1983 anti-cuts campaign would be caught by the extended definition of political objectives in s.17. The money spent on this campaign could not come out of the union's general funds. It would have to, in future, come out of a political fund. As NALGO hasn't got one and, as yet, can't convince its members it should have one, *NALGO would not be able to run this kind of campaign to defend basic conditions.*

Finally, the publicity surrounding these measures and the legal rights that the new legislation gives members could cause unions innumerable problems. We have already seen the Freedom Association helping members take court cases over the closed shop provisions and over the miners strike. It only needs one member, for example, to complain about the conduct of the ballot and, the courts will be ready to order a rerun. Litigation will be a constant problem and, remember the whole exercise has to take place every decade'

5. *Campaigning against the Tories*

(a) Participation in the Ballots

Trade unions in principle should boycott these ballots. If it was correct, as the TUC decided at the Special Conference, at Wembley, in 1982, to boycott the ballots on the closed shop, then the same goes for political fund ballots. Peter Hain in *Marxism Today* claims that this part of the 1984 Act 'is automatically enforced . . .' and cannot be defied like other parts of the legislation. That is not so: Members have to take the union to court. The union *could* resist *in the same way* as it could resist judgements over picketing and the closed shop.

The majority of union leaders have made a *political choice*, not to resist the Tory anti-union laws, including this one. It is highly probable that all unions *will* take part in the ballot.

(b) The Question for Ballot

Some unions have looked at the recent poll quoted above and gone for the option of continuing to have links with MPs, which they assume will get the most favourable response. ASTMS, for example, has decided to ballot on the question, 'Do you wish to continue to support the Parliamentary Committee?' (A body open to all MPs who are ASTMS members). The *question* on the ballot may need to be drafted with skill and caution. If, however, *campaigns* are run on the lines of the ASTMS question they may well be counter-productive. The members are not that stupid, 'The Parliamentary Committee may be useful but why is the union *affiliated to the Labour Party*? may be a normal reaction. If unions try to evade such questions they will run the risk of reinforcing the undemocratic picture painted by the Tories of trade unions and their leaders. The media can be relied on to raise these issues anyway. Attempts to win ballots by using apathy and obscuring questions and relying on a small turn out can only strengthen cynicism and demoralisation.

(c) The Organised Campaign

A meeting was held in August between the Labour Party NEC and prominent union leaders. They decided to set up a steering committee to attempt to co-ordinate the ballots by, for example, suggesting that the best bets for a 'yes' vote go first, thus hopefully creating a rolling effect. There must be questions about the efficacy of such an initiative. The meeting decided to raise £150,000 for the campaign. That is a pitiful drop in the ocean. The media will spend millions. Moreover, the chair of the committee, Bill Keyes, argued that the campaigns should not be run as if they were about affiliation to the Labour Party. This approach seems in danger of leaving the organised campaign within the limits of trade union routinism.

Another initiative has been taken by the *Labour Co-ordinating Committee* who have called a conference on the issue in London on 1st December. More imaginatively, they have suggested links locally between union branches and CLPs.

(d) The Left's Campaign

An alternative approach will see these ballots as an opportunity and utilise them to strengthen and develop the links between Labour and the unions, to involve more trade unionists in the Labour Party and, to increase the level of activism and commitment in the unions. Such a campaign will raise and argue why unions should be involved in politics, starting from the point that the present government is launching a *political* attack on the trade unions – on jobs, on rights at work, on privatisation. We also have to bring up what many people see as the alternative, the SDP-Liberal Alliance, remembering that less than 40% of trade unionists voted Labour in 1983. We have to argue why the policies of Owen and Steel provide no answer to the problems of trade unionists. We have then to critically analyse the failures of Labour governments to radically change the situation of Britain's trade unionists. And, of course, we have to look at Labour's failings today such as the inability of Labour's leaders to put across the miners' case.

Labour activists also need to publicise the existing structures which give trade unionists decision-making powers. But we need to look at existing structures critically. Does the Labour Party really provide an adequate forum for the concerns and problems of ordinary trade unionists?

Some of the issues we should look at are:

★ *Affiliations to CLPs.* Do we know how many union branches are eligible for affiliation and why many are not affiliated? How many are affiliated but send no delegates? Can links be established to coordinate a campaign here?

★ *Workplace Branches.* Activity in many union branches is derisory. Many trade unionists find initial attendance at GMC's forbidding. Workplace branches provide a means of linking politics and industrial struggle in the cockpit of trade unionism, where it has meaning for the majority. What can be done locally to establish workplace branches?

★ *Black Sections and Women's Representatives.* The attitude to the question of representation for specific groups exhibited before and after conference by Labour's leadership has been downright reactionary. If the party is to attract particularly the constituency that has become active around the miners' strike then it must create the structures that blacks, women, gays want.

These are *just some* examples. A discussion of these issues leads not only into a discussion of how trade unions are represented in the party (and whatever the merits of the block vote the present method of purchasing votes unrelated to the number of political levy payers is *totally* unjustifiable) and the very basic question of democracy in the unions themselves.

We have to try to break out of the ghetto of routinist meetings and get these arguments across in a simple way accessible to non-activists. The campaign around the GLC is an excellent example. If we leave everything to the existing leadership and to existing channels then the danger is an ineffective campaign focussing on the converted defending an inadequate status quo. We have to point out that this campaign is just as vital as a general election. Resources on a similar scale should be made available for it.

John McIlroy
(Manchester Withington CLP)

HISTORIC MARCH IN RUGBY

10th November in Rugby saw a historic 1,000-strong march protesting that council's decision to ban Lesbians and Gays from employment. Organised by Rugby Labour Group and NALGO it also saw the first voluntary 'coming out' of an MP, Chris Smith (Islington) at a euphoric rally, which also received messages from Tony Benn and Women Against Pit Closures.

However 18 were violently arrested after police charged a group of young Lesbians and Gays walking back with their banner up, including Richard McCance, a Nottingham Cllr.

A defence campaign has been set up. Matt Williams, one of those arrested said, "We'd like as many as possible at the picket of our trial on 16th Dec. Also 16 of the 18 aren't receiving legal aid so money is desperately needed."

Contact for speakers, donations etc: *c/o GALOP, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1 (01-278 6215)*

Already Sandwell Labour council has followed Rugby's lead by banning Lesbians and Gays from working with children.

WELCOME TO WEST YORKSHIRE BRIEFING

THE first edition of West Yorkshire Labour Briefing has been a runaway success. Over 550 copies have been distributed to all the major towns in West Yorkshire – Castleford, Normanton, Wakefield, Huddersfield, Halifax, Leeds and Bradford. The first issue led with a stinging attack on the majority Labour Group on West Yorkshire County Council over their failure to help the miners. It was 30 weeks into the strike before they made any concessions to miners' families on bus fares and they still have not contributed directly to any welfare funds for miners' families. (This contrasts with the immediate donation they gave to the Ethiopian appeal). Other articles dealt with racism in the Bradford Labour Group and with the almost Tory cutting attacks of the majority of the Labour Group in Wakefield.

The first issue came as a result of a series of socialist classes held in Leeds during the summer but the spread of sponsors and sellers of the new magazine ensures a wide degree of input throughout West Yorkshire.

The aim is to produce the Briefing every two months. Copies can be obtained from 21 Bennet Road, Leeds 6 for 35p.

Garth Frankland

WEST YORKSHIRE LABOUR **BRIEFING**

NOV — DEC 1984

TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Day conference jointly called by Target Labour Government and Labour Briefing

SATURDAY 9th FEBRUARY 1985
Muhammed Ali Centre, Birmingham

10.00-10.30 Registration
10.30-11.00 **What Type of Labour Government?** Ken Livingstone, Merle Amory
11.00-12.40 Workshops on policies
a) Economic policy
b) International & Defence
c) Justice & Freedom
d) Social policy
12.40-1.00 Report back from workshops
1.00-2.30 Lunch break: food & bar available
2.30-3.45 Workshops on Accountability and Positive Action
3.45-4.00 Report back from workshops
4.00-5.00 **Rally: How To Get Rid of the Tories**

Sponsorship: The following are being approached to sponsor the conference: Campaign Group of MPs,
Black Sections Steering Cttee., Labour Cttee. on Ireland, Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, Labour Movement Lesbians, Labour CND.

Creche: This must be booked in advance.

Registration: £2 waged/50p unwaged to cover costs. There will also be a collection.

Documentation: Short papers from the policy groups of Target Labour Government for the policy workshops, and one for the accountability workshop will be sent to those pre-registering. They will be available on the day.

Wheelchair Access.

Transport: Transport to and from the Centre will be provided by minibus in addition to regular bus service.

The fall and rise of North Staffs Briefing

North Staffs Labour Briefing was set up in August 1983. It has an impressive membership of about 70 people, and nearly £300 in the bank. NSLB could have succeeded in building a Broad Left movement in the Labour Movement of North Staffs where past attempts had failed. It failed, however, for the same reasons past attempts have failed — because of the soft left politics of the majority of its leading members.

At its inaugural meeting, and when it was still an issue, NSLB voted to register under the Labour Party's register of unaffiliated organisations. It rejected drawing up a minimum platform so as to exclude right wingers. Indeed in the last but one editon of NSLB there was an article by arch witchhunter John Golding!

These politics were damaging in another aspect too. The whole emphasis was not on acting as a campaigning group in the local Labour Movement pushing left policies, but simply as a magazine. In effect it became just a reporter of what the local Labour Party was doing. As a result NSLB had no intervention into the NGA dispute, and worse, no intervention into the campaign against cuts in the NHS. When a special meeting was called to discuss intervening into the NHS it became a farce, and every proposal bar one for making an intervention was turned down.

But what finally ensured the death of NSLB was the bureaucratism of the soft left. The first edition of the magazine came out with a front page that most members of the Editorial Board had not seen, and did not agree with, whilst articles which the EB had repeatedly said should be included on the witchhunt in the LP were excluded. The soft left simply got over the criticism by de facto dissolving the EB, and giving the power to decide the final content to the same 3 people who had carved up the first issue. As time went on this bureaucratism got worse. Members of Socialist Organiser who had been elected to the EB were excluded even from them by not being told about EB meetings. This reached the ridiculous stage where an issue of NSLB came out in June which some members of the EB, and quite a few members of the NSLB Co-op did not know existed. The result has been that in the last year only 2 issues of NSLB have been produced.

Out of the ashes has risen a new Labour Briefing. On 30th November the first tentative steps to establish a new Briefing group were made. There has been a group of about 5 people selling the national supplement for the last 2 months. As the Miners Defence Conference is to take place on December 2nd, we brought forward the date of setting up a new group in order to be able to build for that conference. We also decided to produce Briefing leaflets for distribution on the picket lines. The new Briefing does not have the numbers and money that the old Briefing had, but its politics are far superior. In the weeks ahead the main test will be if those politics can be used to build a genuinely Broad Left Briefing group.

Arthur Bough

There will be no issue next month because of Christmas holidays. The next issue will be out on 17th January 1985. Deadline for articles: 7th January.

Next National Briefing editorial meeting will be on Sunday 20th January at 12 noon at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham.

YOUTH BRIEFING

It's our future !

Labour Briefing and its Youth Commission are producing a pamphlet called 'It's our future — youth and the miners strike', with articles from young miners, women from the mining communities and young people who through the LPYS, YCND, LGYs and so on have been active in building solidarity with the miners. The strike has brought many political lessons home to youth, and the pamphlet seeks to build on this radicalisation and draw together the links that have been made during the strike. We want to see youth united in support of the miners and against the Tories and LPYS activists should raise the demand for a 'Youth Support the Miners' national event called by the LPYS.

Copies of the Pamphlet can be obtained by contacting Martin Huseyin c/o 18 Terminus St, Brighton, E.Sussex: Tel Brighton 698111 (day) or 25295 (evening).

Young people in support of the miners should go along to the Mineworkers Defence Committee conference, Dec 2nd, Camden Town Hall. A workshop is being held specifically on youth and the strike.

Young Sandinistas Tour

THE THREAT OF the escalation of U.S. intervention in Central America leading to an all-out invasion of Nicaragua, is very real one. The events of the last few weeks, with the elections in Nicaragua and the US have had a major impact on young people. LPYS branches *now* must take up the whole question of US intervention.

In Sussex, the LPYS is organising a regional speaking tour of Young Sandinistas on the issue of 'Will Reagan Invade Nicaragua?' This is clearly a major development within the YS, and in the build up to regional conference all YS branches should hold similar meetings organised with the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and Youth CND.

With the attempted back-down by the CND leadership over the question of cruise and US bases, the links YCND has made between Reagan's intervention in Central America and the war-drive must be emphasised and taken into the LPYS.

At the National Union of Students conference at Xmas, Sussex University has put a motion calling on the executive to form an emergency committee to co-ordinate action in the event of further escalation in Nicaragua, and activists in the LPYS, YCND and the National Organisation of Labour Students should begin to organise for action in the event of a US invasion of Nicaragua. This should be around the themes of No to US intervention in Central America, Support for the Sandinista government, No to US bases and missiles in Europe.

Simon Joyce, Brighton LPYS

Who does the law protect?

On October 13th in Birmingham there was a 2,000 strong West Midlands Youth CND march around the theme 'jobs not bombs, coal not dole'. 3 people, including myself, scaled a balcony in the main shopping area, displaying our banners and shouting slogans. Firstly, one of us, then all of us voluntarily came down. Bernard Nolan and myself were told that if we did this we would be let free. Once out of sight of the crowd we were pushed into a police van.

We were charged under the Justice of the Peace Act of 1361 which is not a criminal offence, but allowed no bail, so we spent a weekend under lock and key for doing no more than exercising our supposed right to freedom of speech. The next YCND meeting also had a visit from 2 policemen, obviously done to intimidate us.

These are the same sort of tactics used against anyone who questions the status quo. The miners are particularly bearing the brunt at the moment.

The left must continue to condemn these actions of the police, and not shroud the truth as some do to appear more publicly acceptable.

On February 5th Bernard Nolan and I are in court showing cause why we should not be bound over to keep the peace. A picket has been planned and we need the full support of the Trade Unions, the Labour Party, LPYS, as well as letters of support.

The police protect only the interests of the ruling class. Join withus and fight police tactics.

Dave Lee — Birmingham Youth CND

'I'm a front line picket'

Mick Conway (Fitzwilliam LPYS & Acton Hall colliery) talks about his visit to Ireland.

WE WENT OVER for the August anti-internment demonstration in Belfast — where Sean Downes was shot. There was about 5,000 on the march. There was a massive Royal Ulster Constabulary and Army presence — down all the side streets with three armoured cars at the front of the march and three behind. When we got to the Sinn Fein HQ the RUC moved in and stopped the demo.

Some youths were standing on a derelict building. The RUC immediately started blasting them with plastic bullets after a few stones had been chucked. Everybody started panicking and running. Then Gerry Adams got on the microphone and told the kids to get down off the roof. Everybody got down in the road to listen to the rally. It was during this time that they shot Sean Downes.

I wanted to see for myself what things are like in Northern Ireland. I think that the police have perfected their tactics in the six counties and we're now learning what the Irish people have been going through. There should be a campaign by the LPYS, the Labour Party and the trade unions to get Britain out of Ireland. One thing I found out was that two of the most hated politicians are Don Concannon and Roy Mason — both Labour MPs. I think that there is now a lot of sympathy for the Irish people in the mining communities. People are drawing the links — the snatch squads they use against pickets — that's been developed and perfected in Northern Ireland.

I'm a front line picket! No one is going to tell me how to conduct myself on a picket line — especially not the likes of Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis. I don't think its up to people in Britain to tell the Irish how to conduct their struggle.

There is massive support for the miners over there. They know that when we win it will be a victory for them as well. You'll never get anywhere near socialism here while the British army is oppressing workers in other countries. So its time people in the labour movement realised that a victory for the Irish people is a victory for us.

From Sandinista youth of Nicaragua to Mineworkers of Great Britain

Dear Companéro

A revolutionary Sandinista greeting from the youth of Nicaragua.

Our youth organisation would like to assure you of our solidarity with the struggle you are waging in your country to win Trade union democracy and to sustain your struggle without your rights being suppressed. Our organisation will like to tell you not to lose heart. Your struggle against the reactionary structures of capitalism is an example to future generations, a struggle which will be long, cruel and full of sacrifices. But we say to all, 'The struggle continues, victory is certain. Free country or death'.

Evelyn Pinto
Juventud Sandinista 19 de Julio
Managua

EETPU: CRY FROM THE GRASSROOTS

The executive of the EETPU often claim to be the most democratic in the country. If democracy only required a cross on a ballot paper they would be right. Democracy also requires a free exchange of ideas and an equal opportunity for each view to be put to the electorate, and it is in its almost total failure to observe these principals that the EETPU should be condemned.

The executive of the EETPU are all elected by postal ballot, the count is done by an independent body, and each candidate is entitled to an election adress of equal length. It seems on the surface to be a fair election but there are such inequalities in the conduct of the campaign that it is almost impossible to defeat a sitting member. Any candidate who is seen campaigning at work places is removed from the election. No candidate is allowed to send circulars to any workplace. The only campaigning allowed is at branches, these are very badly attended and usually run by a full time official. These same officials are able to campaign unofficially for the sitting member at workplaces, and most take the opportunity to do so. The end result is an overwhelming advantage to the sitting member. The ballot paper contains only that members name that anyone has ever heard of before. Imagine the result of a general election in which only the Tories were allowed to use television — that is an EETPU executive election.

REVERSING INCONVENIENT RESULTS

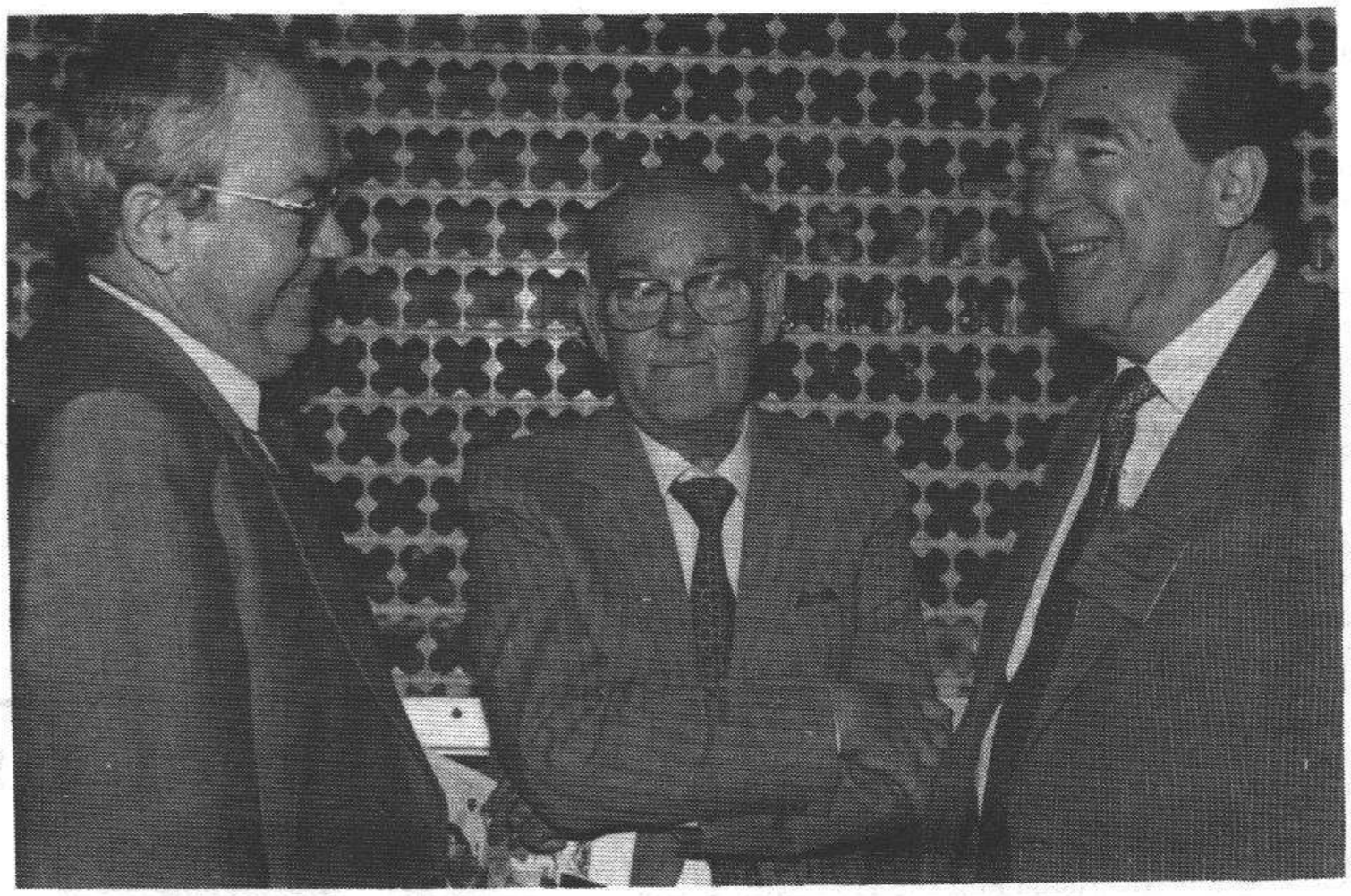
The EETPU are also adept at reversing inconvenient ballot results. The last pay claim for electricity supply workers that went to a ballot was rejected and the union were left with a surprise mandate to call industrial action. In the week before the action was due full time official were suddenly "unavailable" or "in conference" and unable to talk to stewards on the phone. There were many details undecided and it would have been impossible to start the action on the date the executive had given. Surprise, surprise, a sudden weekend meeting, an improved offer (the improvement was less than 50p per week) accepted without a further ballot. I wonder why that was the last time the "democratic" EETPU put a pay claim to a ballot?

Then there was the case of the shrinking delegation. Members in the London electricity supply industry had, prior to 1983, a delegation of 10 or 11 to the union conference, 6 delegates were elected at the area industrial conference and another 4 or 5 were branch delegates. First of all electricity supply members in London were moved into one branch, 2,900 members with one delegate. At the area conference we elected the usual 6 delegates, but some weeks later we were told that the area official had left his instructions behind and had not noticed that the delegation had been cut to 3. By these "democratic" methods the London delegation, probably the most critical delegation in the country, had been cut from 11 to 4.

MANIPULATE THE MEMBERSHIP

The recent ballot in favour of Hammonds' statement against the T.U.C. support for the N.U.M. was a classic example of another method the EETPU use to manipulate the membership — the strict control of information. The ballot paper was carefully framed to produce the desired result. The Guardian described the ballot paper as "loaded". In case this didn't work, an open letter was sent out by the National Officer so critical of the N.U.M. it could well have been a Daily Mail editorial. The case for the T.U.C. and the N.U.M. was never put. In the face of such a one-sided ballot the only surprise is that 4,000 members voted against the executive.

There are many other examples of "democracy" in the EETPU. The fact that any circular that does not come from the executive or an affiliated body must be approved by the executive before members are allowed to read it, the fact that one brother had written 10 letters to the union paper and never had one published, the closure of London Central branch, etc. Perhaps the most telling indictment is the fact that this article must be unsigned if I am to remain a member. Didn't I hear Chapple pontificating about the treatment of dissidents in another country recently?



JOHN CHAPMAN

MEETING OF MINDS: HAMMOND, DUFFY AND MAXWELL

AS an active member of the broad left in the EETPU, better known as Flashlight broad left, I appreciate a few words in your column to make known to your readers that there is, in the EETPU, a body of members who reject utterly the position of their leaders on the issues of the day.

Frank Chapple's long reign is over, and he was notorious for his actions and statements, which placed him on the extreme right-wing in British politics.

Eric Hammond, his successor, seems intent on outdoing his record by his behaviour so far as General Secretary. Coming into office at a time of the most intense trade union struggle of modern times, he has chosen to go out of his way to attack the miners, to court the CBI at their conference, and in other ways to prove to Thatcher and the Tories that he is a "responsible" trade union leader who, far from representing any kind of threat to her policies, can be considered an ally of her government.

The EETPU these days can be relied upon to attack not only the left wing of the movement, but to undermine the role of the TUC in its position against the Tebbit and King anti-union laws, and to adopt a totally divisive position against the mainstream of broad trade union positions, including those of a variety of moderates. However, EETPU members up and down the country are collecting money and showing with others, their solidarity with the miners.

This is the real rank and file voice of the EETPU. The only chance they have to demonstrate a wish to be led differently, is through the ballot box when Executive Council elections are held.

These are, however, weighted against the progressive opponents, who advocate change.

Even so, when John Aitkin, a left-wing candidate stood against Hammond in 1982 he achieved an excellent vote of 33,000.

Similarly Ian Brown, a Manchester convenor, ran the National Secretary of the Plumbing section to a very close vote, i.e., within 2500.

Both candidates campaigned on clear progressive policies and union democracy.

I mention these facts to show that the voice of principle, and socialist outlook is alive and kicking in the EETPU, fighting to return the union to the mainstream of trade union politics and to become once again a respected section of the Labour Party.

This powerful industrial and political trade union can once again be regarded with credibility when it has a leadership prepared to advocate the policies of the trade union and labour movement, instead of continually weakening them by their actions. I hope that very soon, the EETPU rank and file membership elects into office a leadership which will be truly accountable to the ordinary members.

Yours fraternally,
Tom Lang.

LESBIANS & GAYS SUPPORT THE MINERS

Lesbians and Gays support the miners was set up at the start of July by comrades who wanted to help and show solidarity with the miners and their communities in their struggle against pit-closures and job losses. Although we could have supported the miners through the wide base of political parties that some of us belonged to, we felt it important to show the links between the harassment the mining communities were facing, and the continual attacks the Gay and Lesbian communities have suffered from the state, the police and the media.

Apart from spreading the word within the Gay community, as to why we should show strong support to the miners, we have established collections at Lesbian and Gay pubs and clubs. So far we have collected over £3,000 of which £2,600 has been sent to South Wales, to the Dulais valley support group. The rest has been sent to Harworth womens support group in Notts. As well as sending speakers to address various meetings we organised a public meeting at Conway Hall on the 19th Octover. Over 100 people came to hear speakers from LCGR, Harworth, Dulais, the YCL and a speaker from Sth Wales NUM. We felt that the meeting was a success and have decided to hold another one soon.

At one of our weekly meetings in September three comrades from Dulais came along and invited us as a group to go down to Sth Wales and see for ourselves what the situation was. So on the 26th-28th October 30 of us travelled down by mini-bus where we had a fantastic time. The welcome and the hospitality we received was incredible. Those people of Dulais took us into their homes and made an effort to find out what Lesbians and Gays are really like. They had read so many lies about themselves in the gutter press that they began to realise that what they had read about us was lies too. Plus we had our first mass platform in support of the miners, in Swansea, where a woman from the group received an excellent reception.

There is still a long way to go, but we know that we've made some friends, built some links, and can be sure of their support in our struggle. As one South Wales miner put it: "Next time you need our help, we'll send the comrades up from the valleys."

Statement by the executive of the National Union of Mineworkers to the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and Labour Movement Lesbians fringe meeting at Labour Party conference.

"Support civil liberties and the rights of Lesbians and Gays. We welcome the links made in South Wales and elsewhere. Our struggle is yours, victory to the miners!"

London Lesbians and Gays support the miners can be contacted at 39, Chippenham Rd, London W9 2AH or phone Kate



(01-989-2613) or Robert (01-444-5442). LGSM meets weekly on Sundays at 6:00 at the Fallen Angel, 63, Grameh St, London N1. (Angle tube), no w-chair access). All Lesbians and Gays who support the miners should come along and get involved.

There are also LGCM groups in Southampton, Cardiff, Manchester, York, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. They can be contacted via the London group.

HEALTH WORKERS FIGHT!

The strike by domestics at Barking Hospital has now been going on for as long as the miners' strike – nine months. This battle against privatisation is one of many that are now taking place as the Tories attempt to make profits from the NHS.

Workers at Addenbrooke Hospital in Cambridge have now joined the fight with an all-out strike against private contractors OCS who, like Crothalls at Barking, have attempted to cut pay and conditions for staff, and halve hospital cleaning hours. It's not just staff who get a raw deal – patients suffer and risk infection as hospitals go dirty; OCS have even been exposed for using child labour to try to break the strike at Addenbrooke.

The strike at Barking has proved to union leaders that women *will* fight. Their 24-hour, 7 days a week picket line has become a symbol of the fight to save our NHS. They are calling on *you* to join the picket line, donate money to the strike fund, and raise support through your union and Party branch.

Kevin Flack
(East Lewisham CLP)

FIGHTBACK AT VAUXHALLS

THE recent 16 day strike at Vauxhall Motors showed one thing in particular. Whilst we cannot, nor if we are to survive in the modern competitive world wish to, stop the advance of New Technology, the workforce are aware of the changes involved and are not prepared to stand idly by and watch the Multi-Nationals like General Motors reap all the benefits and reduce jobs even further.

At the end of the strike the Company had been forced to increase their cash offer from 3½%, consolidate part of the weekly bonus payment into the hourly rate, negotiate a new wage grading structure, and give written commitments on future employment levels. The overall cash value with all aspects included is in excess of 10½%, a clear sign that the action that took place gave a real payback to the workers involved for the changes in working practices that will be expected from them.

Since the return to work the Company have been sharply reminded that they must stick to their own agreements. Daily stoppages of work have taken place because they have tried to implement changes that had not been discussed or agreed with the trade unions.

Awareness by the members has never been so acute and the message is clear, we know the dangers involved and are watching you like a hawk, G.M.

Brian L. Gray, Luton District Secretary, Transport & General Workers' Union,

IT'S *OUR* PARTY TOO, COMRADES!

Socialists with disabilities are a minority within the Labour Party, but this is not surprising if one considers the attitudes displayed by the Party itself. A recent recruitment poster had a group of smiling faces on it all belonging to what *appeared* to be able-bodied people! The Party reflects the hurtful ignorance of society where people with disabilities have little say and are rarely visible.

What is the point of Labour MPs voting for anti-discrimination legislation with regard to disability, if they fail to challenge the same situation inside their CLPs? Many comrades with disabilities are prevented from attending our meetings by poor access and little consideration of their communication needs.

UNITY OF THE OPPRESSED

Four years ago, during the International Year of Disabled People, the Party Conference had a token debate on disability but hardly a word since then. We face oppression daily in similar though different ways to comrades who are women, black or gay. These sections of the Party have begun to have their voices heard, but there is a danger that our voice will not be heard and we will be left behind in the rush to table motions. Unity, therefore, amongst the oppressed is vital. This unity, however, should exist not because we are outcasts in a white male macho able-bodied (normal!) society, but because we have experiences and strengths that we can share and support each other with.

One of our first tasks is to build the Socialist Disability Action Group which exists within the labour movement to raise the issue of disability as a political issue. While some CLPs and TUs have affiliated to the Group, it would appear that the Labour Party is not too keen to allow us to affiliate to the Party. Perhaps it is the words in our name which puts them off!

The crucial fact remains for socialists, with or without disabilities, to make disability an issue inside the Party. We must try to discover the facts about the problems facing comrades and how many cannot attend meetings. The Socialist Disability Action Group is still small, but we should affiliate as many CLPs and TUs to it as we possibly can. When we are preparing material or setting up campaigns of one kind or another, it is important not to assume that everyone is able-bodied in society. To forget our existence is to contribute to our oppression!

PATHETIC POLICIES

Socialists with disabilities will be forced to challenge the pathetic policies which exist inside the Party towards us and we will be organising against the savage attacks upon our rights and needs by this Thatcher government. To do all of this requires great effort and support. Comrades, can we rely on you for that support?

Bob Findlay, Sparkbrook CLP & Socialist Disability Action Group

Contact SDAG:
The Secretary, 2 Tenterden Road, Tottenham, London N17 8BE (01-808 6030)

Letter

Different impressions of Brighton

Dear Briefing,

Brighton Labour Briefing's report of the National Front march in Brighton on September 22nd was triumphantly headed 'National Front Stopped in Brighton'. As one who participated in the counter-demonstration, my own impression was rather different.

First, the National Front was not 'stopped'. They were allowed to march through the main shopping streets of Brighton, drums beating, past crowds of Saturday shoppers. To allow fascists to have control of the streets in this way can in no terms be seen as a victory.

Secondly, the counter-demonstration was weak and disorganised, and for most of the march was actually outnumbered by the National Front. Only one serious attempt was made to 'stop' the fascists, that is to prevent them from marching along their prescribed route. This was unsuccessful owing to the presence of police horses but also due to the small numbers and lack of organisation of the anti-fascists.

I was part of a contingent of Jewish Socialists' Group members. We came down from London, with our banner, in rèsponse to what was, as the report recognises, an explicitly anti-Jewish march. I saw little sign of other organised presence. I did not see any banners from local CLPs, union branches or trades councils, let alone any from organisations from outside the area.

To me, the experience of Brighton points to the current weakness of the anti-fascist movement, or perhaps to the low priority that the Left seems to give at the moment to fighting organised fascism.

I would propose that local Briefing Groups should discuss this situation as a matter of urgency, with an eye to what they can do to participate in, or if necessary revitalise local networks which are specifically aimed at monitoring and countering the fascist and nazi Right. They should look at how they can work with autonomous organisations of minority groups. They should look at how such activity can be co-ordinated, locally and nationally. We cannot allow fascists to have control of the streets, however temporarily.

Yours in comradeship.

Mike Heiser
(Brent East CLP and Jewish Socialists' Group)

science briefing

The motive force for Thatcher's confrontation with the miners is undoubtedly the Tories' lust for a political and economic victory over the whole working class movement which would pave the way for a wider assault on us all. But there are two other important underlying factors: profits and energy policy.

MacGregor's brief is to jack-up present profitability in order to finance the increasing mechanisation of newer and thicker seam pits such as Selby Yorkshire and Belvoir Leicester. At the same time the Tories want to reduce the nation's reliance on coal and coal miners and increase dependence on nuclear power and oil.

ENERGY POLICY

Any reasonable examination of world energy supply shows the government's policy must be implacably opposed. Nuclear power and oil power are both more costly than coal.

The underlying reasons for developing nuclear power were to produce Plutonium to make bombs and to develop a nuclear industry which can export nuclear expertise to other countries who may be convinced they want nuclear power and bombs. Nuclear power can NEVER be safe or 'clean' whereas coal can be easily 'cleaned' in power stations to remove the sulphur dioxide which makes acid rain; so there can be no doubt that opposition to nukes will continue to increase. In the USA the nuclear power programme is now at a standstill due to public pressure, and Britain exports plutonium to the US Military.

At present rates world oil supplies will be used-up in 30 years. So as oil prices start to soar in the next two decades economic forces will demand an expansion of coal mining – which at present rates will last 250 years – NOT the current closure programme. So-called 'uneconomic coal-fields' will have to be (re-) opened but notice that a so-called 'un-economic' pit once closed cannot be re-opened because of technical and geological problems; instead whole new pits must be re-opened at great expense. After two decades of contraction the need for expansion of British Coal was pinpointed by the World Coal Study in 1980 and re-iterated by Philip Jones, chair of the Electricity Council, speaking in August this year who said that 'in any scenario coal will be the main fuel for electricity generation'. Interestingly despite this the CEGB is one of the main bulwarks of the pro-nuclear lobby. To understand this one needs simply to consider how and why its undemocratic top management are appointed.

Britain's coal itself is of exceptionally high quality and is a vital source of chemicals. It can easily be converted into Synthetic Natural Gas (SNG) to replace North Sea Gas and indeed technology is now being developed to do this. Furthermore alongside wind and tidal power it must in the future take over from oil as oil declines. It could also become the main raw material for the petrochemical industry so cars will run on coal-derived petrol (New Scientist 6 Sept 1984).

In any sane understanding of the world, coal and miners have an expanding future. Thatcher wants to sacrifice the future to satiate the Tories' hatred for the Labour movement and her obsessive desire for a plutonium exporting warped energy policy.
VICTORY WITH THE MINERS!

PIERS CORBYN
Bermondsey CLP

For further information/speakers please contact Science Briefing, c/o 55 Innis House, East Street, London SE17 2JN. Tel 01 701 5691.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Like vultures they waited. Crouching in the aisles and packing the front of the hall with their assorted and miscellaneous paraphernalia – cameras, tripods, wires, leads, notebooks. The world's media awaited Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams' address to the 80th Ard Fheis (annual conference). With copies of his speech in their sweaty mits, no doubt gutter press headlines were already composed – 'man of hate proclaims support for men of violence'.– or some equally racist and ignorant diatribe.

In actual fact Adams *proclaimed* support for the republican *women* prisoners in Armagh in particular and for all those 'engaged in struggles for independence and freedom' in general. 'In a male dominated society like ours and even in a movement like ours the women are usually eclipsed by the men. . . . the suffering endured by our sisters in Armagh, especially as a result of the brutal and degrading practice of strip-searching, warrants more than mere expressions of solidarity . . . We pledge our solidarity . . . to our black brothers and sisters in Africa, to those oppressed by totalitarian regimes in Central America, to the Palestinians, to the Basques, . . .'

'BLOW FOR DEMOCRACY'

In an 18-page speech just two paragraphs touched on the Brighton bombing. These few sentences presented a clear political argument that the bombing was a blow 'for democracy' rather than against it. ' . . . the British connection, the partition of this country, and the resultant suffering and grief is far from democratic. On the contrary, it is undemocratic, unwanted, illegal and immoral. . . . the Brighton bombing was an inevitable result of the British presence in this country. Far from being a blow against democracy it was a blow for democracy.' One can agree or disagree, but at the least the argument should be listened to and understood. But as the New Statesperson pointed out, the British media hear only that which they wish to write.

The rest of Adams' speech was a sustained critique of the Forum report, the Dublin government's pretensions to represent the so-called alienated nationalist community in the North and its elitist and inhuman social and economic policies, and Sinn Fein's socialist alternative. Neil Kinnock could have been proud of it – indeed we would be proud of him if he ever gave such an argument in support of Labour's socialist alternative. As Mary Holland commented, 'For almost the first time that I can remember this conference sounded like a political party in which working-class men and women discussed issues that related to their daily lives . . .' (New Statesperson, 9/11/84).

And The Guardian, a paper which attempts liberal-humanist political analysis (ie SDP), headlined its page 3 conference preview article 'Buoyant Sinn Fein in shift to left' (3/11/84). Indeed it was so.

YOUTH AND WOMEN

The conference heard young Sinn Fein members argue the need for youth to meet separately from the rest of the organisation to deal with youth affairs and to act in their own interests. Their proposals were overwhelmingly supported by the Ard Fheis. A resolution calling for an end to the 'fragmentation within Sinn Fein' was vigorously opposed by Rita O'Hare, head of the Women's Department. 'To me this is a not so subtle attack on the Women's Department. We are all very active members of Sinn Fein and involved in many of its other activities. If there wasn't a Women's Department we know we wouldn't even be discussing those issues important for *women* . . .' Delegates agreed with her and the resolution was lost.



NADINE FINCH.

The Women's Department showed the reality of Rita's words, and those of the National Secretary who described it as the 'most active department', by presenting a completely re-written women's policy document. Together with many resolutions from cumann (branches) the new document was mostly carried with little disagreement. Covering sexism and stereotyping, equal pay and equal work, violence against women, child-care, discrimination, illigitimacy, divorce, contraception and abortion, it was the last three sections that were contentious. However, all were passed with the section on abortion marking a shift in Sinn Fein's position from being 'opposed to abortion' to opposition 'to abortion as a means of birth control'. The debate on this section showed more of a shift with a predominance of 'right to choose' speakers in contrast to last year's predominance of 'right to life' speakers.

Proposals to disband 'Sinn Fein (Britain)', to register as a political party in the 26 Counties, and that Sinn Fein members be expelled if they ever crossed a trade union picket also caused considerable acrimony. To the relief of those of us campaigning against the idea of the British Labour Party organising in Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein (Britain) was disbanded. The other two proposals were lost after lively and interesting debate.

At the end of the Ard Fheis, Labour Committee on Ireland representatives were left with the distinct suspicion that Sinn Fein packed more politics into their 2 days than the British Labour Party does into its five. Added to which was the lack of petty bureaucracy in the running of the conference with even Sinn Fein leaders queueing to speak along with rank and file delegates. We look forward to the day Kinnock and Hattersley do likewise. Until then it is clear that there is much the British Labour Party could learn from listening to Sinn Fein.

Sarah Roelofs
Niall Power

Labour Committee on Ireland

LONDON LABOUR CND
STOP THE EUROPEAN BOMB
A half-day school to discuss the implications of the new Labour defence document.
County Hall, Sunday December 9, 2.30 – 5.30
Speakers: Oliver MacDonald, Jo Richardson MP
Troops Out speaker on 'Ireland – NATO Target'.
Admission £1, concs. 50p. More info from Kevin Jones on 635 0942 or 388 1628.

REAGAN WINS

THE UNITED STATES: AFTER THE DELUGE (PART ONE)
Mike Davis assesses the US election results

When the American presidential campaign was not merely a television replay of the Nuremburg Rally – *Ronnie und Pepsi uber allies* – it was an obsessional struggle over trivia: Hart's 'beef', Reagan's memory, Ferraro's taxes and Bush's manhood. Despite Reagan's ominous warning that Mondale was 'so far Left that he had left America', and the reciprocal liberal fear that 'decency' was fighting its last, quixotic battle against sheer 'greed', a hairbreadth's difference usually separated the substantive positions of the two candidates Indeed, some vital issues – including the invasion of Grenada, military aid to Duarte, and the placement of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe – weren't even mentioned since there was no disagreement. In their famous duet, mistyped a 'debate', Reagan said talk to the Russians, Mondale said be firm; Reagan warned against a 'second Cuba' in Central America, Mondale threatened to 'quarantine the totalitarians (sic), and so on.

If it was hard for an electorate already dazed by the greatest advertising blitz in history to figure out exactly who the real 'war-monger' was, it was sometimes equally difficult to discern the economic progressive. Despite Democratic pieties about the 'caring society', their platform offered no serious jobs programme nor a restoration of Great Society entitlements nor, as Jessie Jackson had demanded, a reduction in the arms race. Worst yet, Mondale, repeating the Democrats' cardinal mistake of 1980, ran as a fiscal conservative openly avowing to raise taxes not, it should be emphasized, to rebuild the welfare state, but only to reduce the deficit.

In quasi-class terms, the election became especially a struggle for the soul of the middle income fifth of the population. If all American families are divided into five equal-sized groups, Reaganomics has had the effect over the last four years of taking away app. 8% of the after-tax income of the poorest fifth, and 2% of the next poorest. The richest fifth has gained nearly 9% and the next richest, 3.5%. The third, or middle, fifth (app. 50 million people) has more or less been running in place, least affected positively or negatively by fiscal redistribution, but most directly sensitive to the threat of new tax increases. This strategic fifth – average income around $19,000 – represents the modal organized working class and was the primary target of the American unions' unprecedented electoral mobilization.

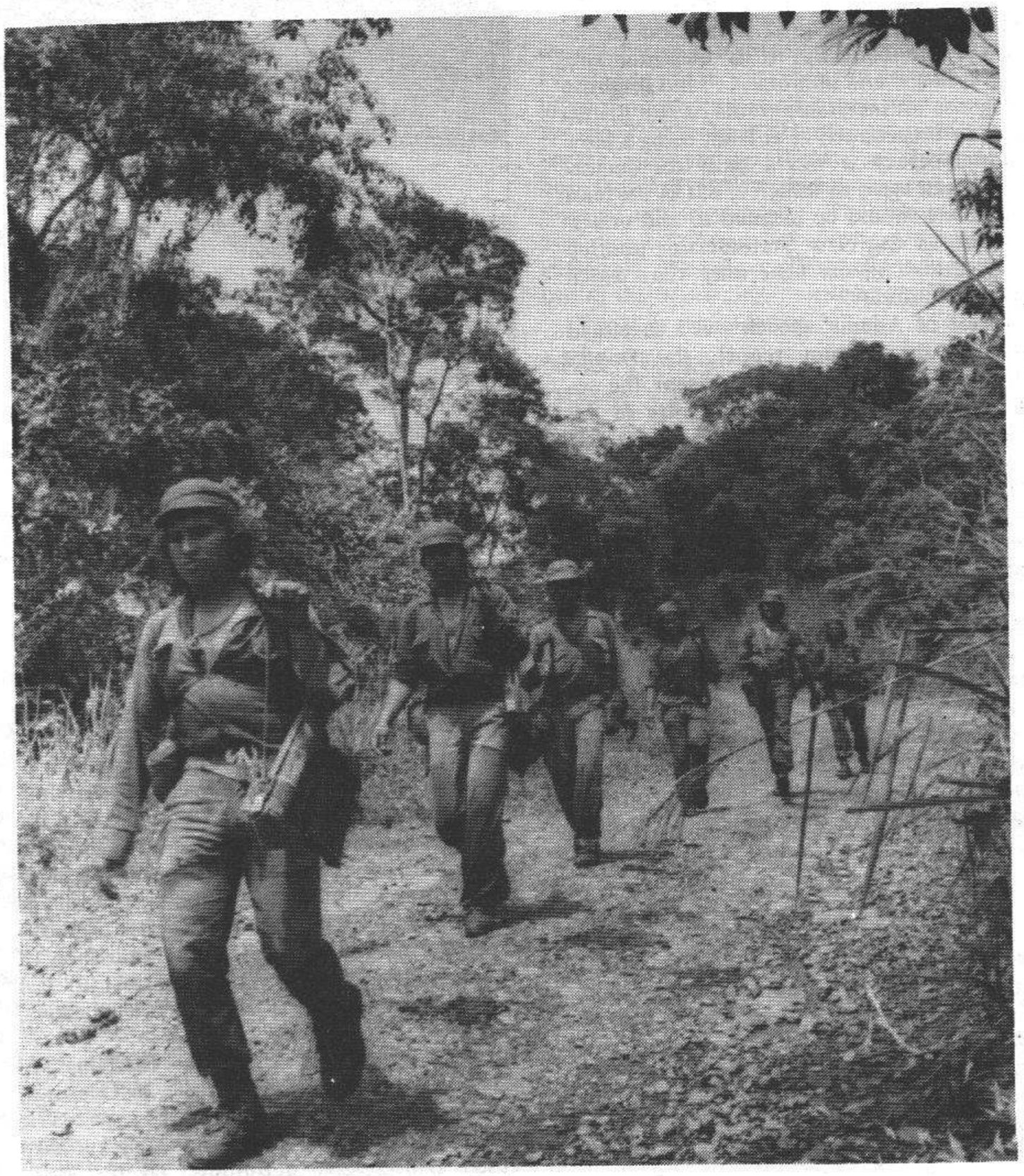
MONDALE AND THE UNION VOTE

The bedrock of Mondale's credibility as a candidate, in fact, reposed on his *pre*-primary endorsement by the AFL-CIO Executive and its assurance that it could deliver two-thirds of the union vote (compared to 50% in 1980). Polls last Christmas, moreover, indicated that Mondale was attracting a majority of wage-earners making $20,000 or less, reinforcing the belief that an all-out union mobilization would capture the decisive middle income fifth and sweep the Democrats back into power. In the event, however, the boundary between Republican and Democratic families declined to $10,000 - 12,000, and Mondale was doomed. With some notable exceptions, the vaunted election drive of the unions was a bureaucratic disaster, characterized by stilted publicity, top-down organization and contemptible patronizing towards the Jessie Jackson rank and file.

THE BLACK VOTE

The conjoint failures of the strategies of the labor vote', the 'gender gap', and the 'left silent majority' are symptomatic of the poverty of the Democratic programme as well as the hallucinatory effect of the current boom. At the same time, however, the lonely fidelity of the Black electorate is thrown into even more striking relief. The Democratic Party has won a majority of the white vote only once since 1944, and without the massive black mobilization this year, spurred by Jackson s galvanic candidacy, the Party's plight would have been almost unimaginable. Yet, as I shall argue in the next installment, the almost certain reward of the black electorate for its stalwart support of the Democrats will be its almost total exclusion from the banquet tables of the revamped, 'neo-liberal' party being planned for 1986 and 1988.

WHO LOSES?



LABOUR PARTY PHOTO LIBRARY

.NICARAGUAN RESERVES FIGHTING HONDURAN-BASED CONTRAS

GRENADA: IMPERIALISM, COLLABORATION AND ANTI-IMPERIALISM

Just one year after the invasion of Grenada, the United States is making its intentions clearer. President Reagan used the Grenada invasion as his major piece in stirring up the anti-communism and racism in his election campaign. His eyes are now set on firming-up control in Grenada and enslaving the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean. He moves in tandem with Imperialism as a whole to dominate the world and continue subjugating all oppressed peoples.

Thus in addition to destroying the development and social justice bases laid by the Peoples Revolutionary Government, the U.S., Britain and their stooges are installing the machinery for political, military and social and economic oppression. Britain is playing a major role in the financing (Aid!) and training of new police, military and intelligence services. The U.S. continues its intrigues as it wages psychological warfare on the people.

SHOW-TRIAL

To advance its strategy, the U.S. is relying heavily on advances in two immediate areas.

The first is the enactment of show-trials to eliminate the leadership of the New Jewel Movement and the People's Revolutionary Armed forces.

The elections which are due to be held on December 3rd are another shot in the bow. The idea is to give credibility to both the invasion and U.S. actions in the country. They intend to ensure the installation of a Government which will be completely under their domination but with a front of elected persons. With the repression of the progressive movement and the fact that the elections are already rigged and manipulated (most people aged under 30 have not been registered) the possibilities are clear. Either Eric Gairey or the New National Party put together by the U.S. and Caribbean collaborators such as Tom Adams and Eugenia Charles will form the government. The U.S. will accept either. Thus the stage is set for the U.S. to implement another stage of its strategy for Grenada and the Caribbean.

The re-arrest of trade unionist, Chester Humphrey, and the decision by the court to uphold a U.S. request (or demand) for his extradition to the U.S. is another indication of the move to remove all activists, N.J.M. personnel and patriots from the scene. Chester's extradition was granted on the basis of a treaty between Grenada and the U.S. The evidence that a treaty exists was presented to the court. This is an unsigned letter from Eric Gairey sent to the U.S. President some years ago during Gairey's rule. It purports to ratify an extradition treaty between the two countries. Because an unsigned document is not an acceptance of terms and conditions, and cannot be legally (in normal circumstances) acceptable, an appeal has been lodged.

Chester's lawyer, Robert Grant, has issued detailed statements on the blatant manipulation of the judicial process by the occupation forces. this view has been supported by Ramsey Clarke, former U.S. Attorney General, who has maintained a keen and active interest in the attempts by the U.S. to intervene in the affairs of sovereign states and specifically in the matters relating to the political prisoners and the show trials. Many legal persons in Britain (such as Tony Gifford and Richard Hart) also hold this view which has been evidenced again by the deportation of British lawyer, Richard Allfrey.

IMPORTANCE OF TRIAL.

Since October 1983, the U.S. have sought to put captured prisoners on trial and wage war on the institutions and ideas which seek to take Grenada out of the stranglehold of poverty, and dependence. The show trials are an important area for them.

The U.S. has, in conjunction with its puppets in Grenada and the Caribbean, used every avenue to ensure that the trials begin and end as soon as possible. The leading pro-US legal people in the region, led by Karl Hudson-Phillips are conducting the prosecution's case and they are paid fantastic sums. The defendants, on the other hand have no access to the finance which is necessary to cover the cost of legal representation. The Interim administration and the U.S. and its friends have also blocked some of the lawyers who sought to act in representative and advisory roles. Prominent amongst these are Lord Tony Gifford from Britain and Ramsey Clarke from the U.S.

INHUMANE

In the face of these problems which have been compounded by the withdrawal of most of the rights of people who are detained, the prisoners are treated in the most inhumane manner. Tortures, solitary confinement, beatings, denials of access to visitors and proper diet, and clothing changes are the norm. In fact on the morning of November 1st before they appeared in court for the start of the trial, at least two prisoners were beaten by Jamaican soldiers. Phyllis Coard appeared in court carried on a stretcher (she had been on hunger strike for about one month); on November 2nd, another prisoner had to be taken to hospital for treatment for head and foot wounds. It is not known how serious these are, but information received said that a Jamaican soldier commented that they should have "shot him" (i.e. the prisoner).

The inability of imperialism to push through the trials leaves them with another strategy. Recent events within the prison indicates that the strategy of eliminating the prisoners will be pursued at all costs. They have the options of using dietary methods or outright assassination. The latter could be easily done (as in the case of George Jackson) and an excuse such as riot or some other form of confrontation used to justify the actions of the soldiers.

But resistance is growing. Of course, resistance comes in many forms and is determined by the resources available and the conditions prevailing at the time. A recent indication of the continuing resistance is the publication in Grenada of three statements by the New Jewel Movement membership and its Central Committee. These publicise the fact that the Party continues to operate and organise against the occupation of the country. The leadership and members recognise that errors were made in dealing with the crisis in the party and call upon the forces struggling for the national sovereignty of Grenada to unite in the struggle.

Buzz Johnson

Nicaragua — the U.S. eagle poised to attack

The United States has sent its troops into Nicaragua 3 times this century already — this month Reagan is threatening to make it four times!

Today the US Government is looking for Russians and Cubans in Nicaragua (and Nicaraguans in El Salvador!) — it seems that in the eyes of the press and Government in the USA that the people of Nicaragua can't take any action on their own account, but are led around by the hand like children (is it a coincidence that a recent article in the *Times* described the Sandinistas as 'children that won't grow up' because they wouldn't bow the pressures of 'Realpolitik' i.e. US domination!).

The MiGs scare is a classic reds under Nicaraguan beds propaganda attack. There were no MiG 21s on their way to Nicaragua, even though Nicaragua is daily attacked from the air by the 'Contra' or overflown by US SR71 spy-planes. The celebrated CIA 'cratologists' had not made a mistake, the whole affair was fabricated as a pretext for further US aggression against Nicaragua.

For the moment this aggression has stopped short of an invasion by US troops, although this threat is in itself a weapon in the attacks on Nicaragua since the 'state of alert' which has been called by the Nicaraguan Government will draw people and resources from the economy and damage the country's social progress.

This economic damage is of course also added to the existing cost in lives and resources caused by the US proxy army operating from Honduras — the 'Contra'. The invasion itself by US troops has not yet happened, but Nicaragua is *already* under attack. And can we, as Socialists, afford to wait until *after* an invasion to protest, as we did with Grenada?

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign is organising a variety of protest actions now (see below for one of them) as well as planning more for the near future. Please get in touch with the NSC at 20/21 Compton Terrace London N1 for details and to offer your help, either as an individual, LP Branch or union Branch. We are appealing for money for our emergency fund to help the NSC finance these plans, please make cheques payable to the NSC.

David Dixon, National Organiser
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign

Sunday December 2nd
THE LONG ROAD TO DEMOCRACY
Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign
Rally outside U.S. Embassy at 11am
Followed by
SPONSORED WALK
to Downing Street
12 — 3pm

FIGHT APARTHEID FIGHT RACISM

by DAVID KITSON

Twenty five years ago, Chief Luthuli called on people throughout the world to support the South African people in their struggle for freedom against the apartheid regime. In Britain the Anti-Apartheid Movement was formed. It responded to the call by instituting boycotts and sanctions against the regime. It holds an annual general meeting to consider resolutions submitted by members and affiliated organisations. These resolutions, if accepted, guide the policy of the Movement. The AGM elects 30 members to a National Committee, which also includes representatives from affiliated groups and up to ten co-opted members. This committee votes the Executive Committee into office.

Sparks were expected to fly at this year's AGM because of a difference between the Executive and the City of London Group of the AAM. The latter, with 180 active members now came into being in consequence of Steven Kitson's detention in Pretoria in 1982 while visiting his imprisoned father. Widespread protest and picketing of the South African Embassy led to his release after six days. Later in the same year an 86 day and night picket outside the Embassy led to the moving of political prisoners including his father, Dave Kitson, to a better gaol. These pickets emphasised the effectiveness of an activity which had been going on for twenty five years. They also revealed a new area of support for Anti-Apartheid activity from young people and black people not reached by other organizations and concentrated on street activity — collections, meetings, marches, and of course picketing. The picketing of the embassy every Friday at 3.30pm goes on to this day calling especially for the release of Nelson Mandela, the leader of the ANC and support for the UDF.

When Botha visisted Thatcher last June, the police, who had collaborated with Embassy officials, declared a ban on demonstrations on the pavement outside the Embassy. While AAM Executive members were seeking to negotiate with the police to attempt to get the ban lifted, City Group members were demonstrating on the pavement courting arrest. After 161 arrests including those of 3 MPs, Messrs Holland, Corbyn and Banks, and of some London Labour councillors a test case came to court. The magistrate rejected the police ban, stating that British people have the right to demonstrate in an orderly manner.

Whilst City Group was celebrating this victory the Executive, put out by City Group's activities over a period of time put a request to the Group that it should limit its activities to the square mile comprising the City where the Group has an office provided by the GLC. The Embassy is outside this area. Also the Group's membership should be limited to those linked with the City. This would reduce its membership to about five. Also the Group should stop acting on a "national" level.

In consequence, City Group, with others, submitted motions to the AGM criticising the Executive. These motions were composited and debated in the morning during the period of maximum attendance at the AGM with great heat and unfortunate uproar. The composite was lost by 416 votes to 210 with 11 abstentions.

City Group had also submitted 13 nominations (out of 30) for election to the National Committee. Despite the diversity of the nominated, including MPs, councillors, members of the Kitson family, and of City Group, this was denounced as a "slate". Various newspapers evoked an ultra-left scare, claiming a takeover bid of the AAM by the Revolutionary Communist Group despite its minuscule representation in the thirteen. The "tiny" RCG claims to be Leninist, giving unconditional support to the Soviet Union and to all liberation struggles including that in South Africa being waged by the ANC. However it had certainly added flames to the fire by openly criticising the AAM Executive in its newspaper. Although



LABOUR PARTY PHOTO LIBRARY

before the AGM, the RGC constituted 4 per cent of City Group's membership, being outnumbered easily by Liberal and Labour members of the Group, the latter was alleged to be under its influence.

ANC

At the beginning of the AGM, a letter from the local Chief Representative of the ANC, Solly Smith, was read out not according ANC support to the candidature of Norma & David Kitson, who had stated their membership of the ANC, because this had not been discussed with the ANC. No other nominee admitted to membership of the ANC. Dave Kitson remarked that, although he had not discussed his nomination with Smith he had consulted other ANC members who had no problem with his candidature.

When the ballot papers had been counted, it was announced that 676 valid papers had been cast, the ougoing executive had been re-elected but none of the 'upstarts'.

Once the fuss was over general support was given to the remaining resolutions during the afternoon when 420 people were present, a number more consonant with the hall capacity. However a resolution from the Guildford Socialist Workers' Party calling for the main support from the AAM to be for black trade unionist workers in South Africa was rejected.

The chair attempted to delay discussion on motions 16 and 17 until later, but the ensuing tumult resulted in their being discussed in their proper order. Both were passed with overwhelming support. No 16 states:

"This AGM believes that the struggle against apartheid cannot be seperated from the fight against racism in Britain. Therefore this AGM resolves that in its work against apartheid and in solidarity with the liberation struggles in South Africa, the AAM should work in close cooperation with other anti-racist organisations, and whenever possible engage in joint action."

Motion 17 states:

"This AGM resolves that the AAM shall attempt to increase and broaden its support by:-
1) working with youth, students, women's, gay, disabled, pensioners' and black groups
2) encouraging its members to organise street activities (petitioning, leafletting, speaking, etc.) with the aim of raising general consciousness about apartheid and of drawing more people into the movement."

Differences at an AGM such as those described here are a storm in a teacup compared with the real struggle now convulsing South Africa. Let us all give solidarity to the fight for national liberation. Aluta continua!

ANTI-ARAB RACIST CONFERENCE

Rich oil sheiks, murderous terrorists, passive women in veils – these are some of the racist stereotypes of Arabs portrayed in the media.

Western imperialism uses these images of oil sodden, lazy Arabs as a justification for its plundering of the wealth of the area and its numerous military interventions in the Middle East. Zionism and the Israeli state – being the focal point and most aggressive wing of the imperialist presence in the area – has played a major part in the development of anti-Arab racism in the West.

As part of the GLC Anti-Arab Racism Year, Palestine Solidarity Campaign organised, together with the Ethnic Minorities Unit, a Conference on Anti Arab Racism which was held on October 14th at the Camden Centre.

The reaction of the Jewish establishment, led by Greville Janner MP, was predictable. The conference was 'anti-semitic' and a hate campaign was launched by the Jewish Chronicle, a paper that advises Jews to keep indoors whenever the NF are marching. The theme was soon taken up by the Daily Mail, the Times, the Standard, etc. Tories fresh from turning a blind eye to fascist infiltration of their own party, such as Lady Porter of Westminster Council, had suddenly discovered 'anti-Semitism'. Even the leadership of the Jewish Socialist Group, in an attempt to win plaudits from the very establishment that usually attacks them, attacked the Conference in the Jewish Chronicle for linking anti-Arab racism and Zionism, though a number on its left dissented.

The Conference itself was the biggest such gathering held in Europe. There were over 500 participants and as even the Jewish Chronicle, which has been waging a crusade against the GLC, had to admit, there were many Jewish participants.

Published by Labour Briefing, 31 Cranwich Rd, London N16. **Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), Forster Road, London N17.**