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MINERS' STRIKE KNIFE-EDGE REOPENS QUESTION OF LABOUR LEADERSHIP

TIME TO CHALLENGE KINNOCK!

Cllrs Frank Hansen and Graham Durham (Brent East CLP) and Graham Bash, (editor).

1985 opens with the class struggle in Britain at its most critical level for sixty years. The miners' strike is an event of momentous proportions which creates the possibility of defeat for the ruling class and its state machine – a defeat which could transform British politics and open up the prospect of rapid and revolutionary change in Britain and Europe.

Every aspect of struggle against British capitalism – trade unionism, feminism, local democracy, black struggles, the peace movement, gays – is now inextricably bound up with the NUM's fight to defend jobs and communities. The miners' strike is not simply an industrial strike in defence of jobs, it has become the decisive battleground.

If the ruling class succeeds in its campaign to smash the NUM, then it will have inflicted a blow on the working class of similar proportions to 1926. Organised trade unionism will be reduced to an ineffective rump, unemployment will continue to spiral upwards and wages will be driven down. Many of the welfare reforms wrenched from capitalism this century will be destroyed. The Labour Party will be divided, split, purged and kept out of office. Local government will cease to be an effective arena of opposition, having been stripped of democracy and decision-making power. The struggles of all oppressed groups in society will be thrown into reverse. This is the scale of the threat we face in 1985.

The Tories have shown that they are prepared to use whatever means are necessary to defeat the NUM. What haunts them and spawns the criticisms of Heath, Pym and the 'wets', is the spectre that they may lose. That spectre is alive and well in every striking pit community



Labour Party Photograph Library

MINERS: DETERMINED TO WIN

in Britain.

After ten months on strike the miners are absolutely determined to win. Their consciousness has grown by leaps and bounds – and the most advanced elements are clearly aware of the wider implications of the struggle. The solidarity generated by the strike has reinvigorated the Labour movement, revitalising old traditions of struggle and throwing up new ones. Feminism has become a mass force in the working class

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LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

MINERS AND KINNOCK

(CONTINUED)

in the form of the women's support groups. Above all, the strike has shown us that we can fight and win, that Thatcherism can be halted in its tracks, that real possibilities do exist for a better life and society for all of us.

At present the strike is deadlocked, with the class forces on either side finely balanced. However, this cannot last for long. The New Year will see the Tories escalating the level of propaganda, intimidation and state violence. Sooner or later they will attempt to move the stocks from the pitheads, undoubtedly involving troops. The only answer to this is for the strike to be intensified and generalised.

The NUM will not and cannot be defeated if 1985 sees rank-and-file trades unionists giving a lead in solidarity strikes and the imposition of a total ban on coal movements. This lead will not come from above – the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party are afraid of the confidence and the demands for change which would result from a miners' victory. They have consciously sought to reduce the miners to an isolated vanguard. In his attempt to "Save" the Labour Party as a viable electoral force acceptable to the establishment, Kinnock is acting as the gravedigger of the very movement he is supposed to represent.

Kinnock and Willis

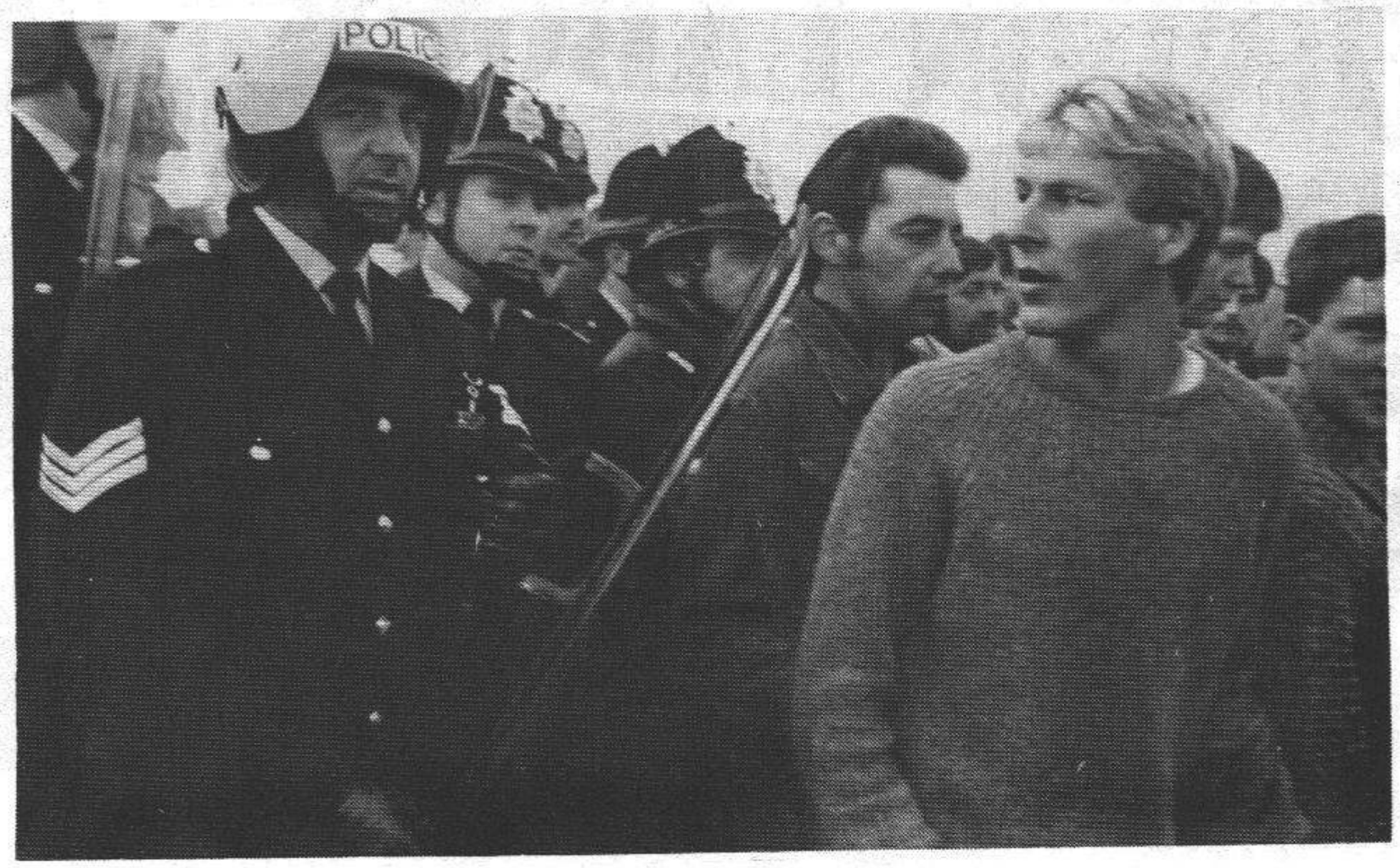
Just as Wilson and Murray dragged the Labour movement from the heights of the 1974 struggle to the depths of the social contract, IMF sanctions and electoral defeat in 1979, so Kinnock and Willis are attempting to demobilise the labour movement to prevent it destroying Thatcherism through mass working class action. Whether we like it or not, defeating the Tories means taking on Kinnock, Willis and Co., and beginning to break their grip on other sections of the working class.

Despite these betrayals there is a rock-hard bed of support for the miners in most working class communities and a massive reservoir of potential support to be tapped. The strike has unleashed powerful forces which can pave the way for victory.

The most revolutionary and potentially significant gain of the strike has been the creation of the support committees organised by women in the mining communities. A victory for these women would open up an unstoppable challenge to the power of men throughout British society. The women's poem "She's on the picket line" expresses far more than a thousand conference resolutions passed at male-dominated trade union conferences.

Boost to Feminism

The boost to feminism created by the miners' strike is echoed by the significance of the strike for the black community, the gay community, peace campaigners and the Irish struggle against British oppression. Each of these and more have made links with the NUM and both sides have drawn conclusions about the common fight they have against the British ruling class and its state forces. Internationally the NUM has found massive support throughout the world making powerful links for the future. It is the underground trade union Solidarnosc which has taken action in support of the NUM – not the Polish junta which regularly sends scab coal to break the strike. A victory for the NUM would strengthen European working-class struggles immeasurably.



John Harris (IFL)

Gascoine Wood, Yorks Police forcing pickets away from pit lane to allow scabs in

The main task of the left must be to break the isolation which Kinnock and the TUC are trying to impose on the strike. What has to be overcome among many working people is the feeling that the Tories cannot be defeated. This despair can only be transformed in practice by building the struggle and showing that the miners can win. Support will rapidly grow if the government is thrown on the defensive.

Challenge to Leadership

Politically this means intensifying the challenge to the Labour leadership and demanding that they take positive action in support of the strike.

In his call for a General Strike, Tony Benn is absolutely correct. Ken Livingstone, Dennis Skinner, Audrey Wise and seafarers' leader Jim Slater have also called for a general strike. But this cannot be a paper slogan, nor a course lightly pursued in order, in Benn's words, "to educate the ruling class". A General Strike would pose the question of power point blank: it could succeed only by becoming a mass offensive to bring down the government and break its state machine, taking power into our own movement's hands and forming a Labour government on that basis. On that understanding we must demand the calling of a General Strike by our leaders and take the necessary preparatory action in advance. We have no illusions in Willis or Kinnock to organise such a struggle. All those of us committed to this course must realise: if the necessary action is to be taken, we must co-ordinate our joint forces and take the action ourselves.

Tony Benn's political leadership throughout the strike has been exemplary. But its logical consequence is clear – not to conciliate with Kinnock as Tribune suggests, but to challenge him for the leadership of the party. Tony Benn must be urged to reconsider his position. But the responsibility for such a challenge lies not with Benn alone but with all of us, within the Left of the Party and across broader forces, who are committed to the miners' victory.

One of the few options left to Thatcher to defeat the miners is the use of troops to move coal. An extension of the rail unions' action to the power stations and a determined stepping up of picketing at all power stations must be our answer.

We already have well-organised miners' support committees in many localities in which political divisions have been laid aside to act together to support the miners. The activities of these committees must be built on and more collections, more visits, more picketing organised. The Mineworkers Defence Committee and rank and file trade union groups must co-ordinate more solidarity action. Each and every labour movement activist must mercilessly criticise those leaders who refuse to back the miners.

Equally, Labour local authorities facing rate-capping and/or abolition must bring about the earliest possible confrontation with the government, drawing into the struggle the thousands of local government workers who have already shown (as on November 7) their willingness to fight. Any vacillation on this issue would amount to a stab in the back for the miners.

This is a struggle we cannot afford to lose. It is the duty of all socialists to open the way to victory in 1985. Unity is strength!

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

For our jobs and communities — London resists rate-capping

Philippa Jones
(Hackney South and
Shoreditch CLP)

In the wake of the government's latest announcements on rate-limits and cuts in overall local authority grants, the most important task for socialists involved in local government is to mount a massive resistance to rate-capping. This struggle could also be a crucial focus for saving the GLC and Met Counties from abolition.

The political basis for resistance is 1) the refusal to pass on Tory policies in any form — neither making cuts in jobs and services, nor increasing rents and rates, 2) the demand to restore the Rate Support Grant to the level of 1979, 3) non-compliance with the Rates Act and 4) a refusal to seek individual solutions or negotiations. Unity between authorities must rest on these principles.

As we face the build-up to budget-making, it is time to put words into action. We must make clear to the national leadership of the Labour Party that we are determined to implement Labour Party policy and fulfil our obligations to the people who elected us. Their duty is to do the same.

Neil Kinnock in his New Year's message, and John Cunningham have both taken their 'stand' — they would rather break the poor than break the law. Our response must be to follow the NUM's lead and oppose the Tories' attacks with every political force that the labour movement can muster.

Greatest danger

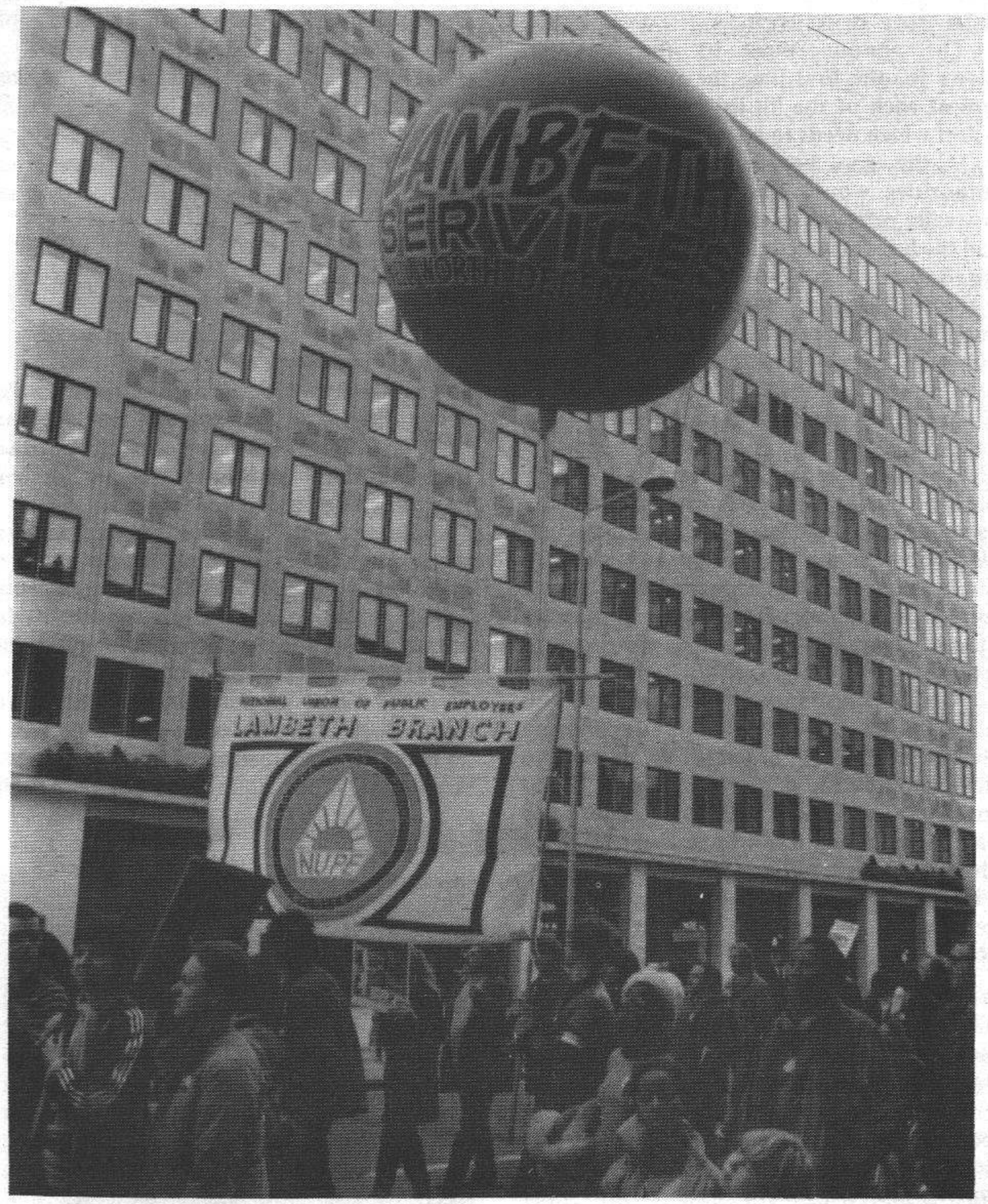
The greatest danger is that Labour councillors themselves will fail to stand by manifesto commitments for fear of taking illegal action. There is still time to call for their resignations 'without dishonour' and build a panel of comrades who are prepared to face the consequences.

Labour Party activists need to unite with trade unionists, council tenants and community groups and keep up the maximum political pressure on councillors. The question of tactical options can be subsumed within the broader strategic approach. In Hackney, the left is in a strong position, having united the Labour Group and Labour Parties around a deficit budget approach with the final decision on tactics being left in the hands of Labour Group.

In some other London boroughs, and amongst trade unionists in London Bridge comrades have opted for not fixing a rate as their fighting option. In all authorities, including the GLC and ILEA, wherever one of the tactics can be won, councillors must be brought into line.

Fights to win

The question is not which tactic to choose — what really matters is that each authority does choose one (according to local conditions) and fights to win. The strength and resolution of the labour movement united across authorities and between Labour Parties and town hall trade unions will be decisive. Over the next few weeks there will be enormous pressure on councils to negotiate with the government — the key issue here is that we are not prepared to negotiate away jobs and services.



John Chapman

If we take a united position from the January 19th Greater London Labour Party Conference on rate-capping, which endorses the strategic approach and both tactical options then our next major target is the TUC Day of Action on local government called "Democracy Day" on March 6.

We should aim to contribute to the Day of Action by consolidating our political campaign. Budget day is on March 7th which will also be a time for further action. To build for these events, Labour Parties must work alongside town hall trade unions, and with them take our struggle to the wider movement, calling workplace meetings and rallies, supporting community-sector initiatives, uniting with women's organisations, black groups and lesbian and gay groups.

And above all we need to link our struggle with the miners by holding joint meetings, building pickets at power stations and so on. The miners' ten months of heroic battle could be greatly strengthened by our determination to defend the gains working class people have made through democratic local government. And in turn, they make our victory more possible — together we can win! See you on March 6th!

Ratecapping: towards the crunch

Martyn Day,
Secretary of Association of London LGCs
(in a personal capacity)

On December 11th Patrick Jenkin announced the maximum rate levels and the Rate Support Grant (RSG) settlements for all of the hit list authorities. The announcement in conjunction with other recent decisions made by the Labour-led hit list authorities gives us an opportunity to review the financial and political positions of those authorities and to consider what likelihood there is that they will actually defy the Government come the Budget decision time in March.

The announcement by the Minister shows for the first time the financial position of each of the hit list authorities. The aspect which needs to be considered carefully is the gap between the budget the authorities would like to levy, which is generally referred to as their needs budget, and the level at which the Government is trying to force them to spend. The table shows for the London Boroughs their needs budget; the Governments limit and the gap between; from which it can be seen that the gaps range from £8.5m for Islington to £34m for Hackney. Most authorities have a gap which will represent in the region of 15% of their budget. I understand that their position for the other authorities is much the same as for the Boroughs. The gaps are clearly enormous and would have massive implications in terms of loss of services and jobs if the authorities tried to implement cuts to reach the levels set by the Government.

On a political level, a recent report complied by the Hackney Policy Unit showed that all of the Labour led hit list authorities have adopted the policy of "no cuts", that most have accepted that there should be no rate increase and a few have also commited themselves to a policy of no rent increases. Finally all the authorities are committed to refusing to accept and comply with the Rates Act.

Borough	Exp. Limit	Needs Based Budget	The Gap	Reserves
Islington	*85.5*	*94*	*8.5*	*2.5/5m*
Lambeth	*115*	*130*	*15*	*10m*
Southwark	*108.5*	*124.2*	*16*	*4.5*
Haringey	*130*	*148*	*18*	*5.5*
Greenwich	*66.5*	*77*	*10.5*	*7*
Camden	*117*	*136*	*19*	*nil*
Hackney	*84*	*118*	*34*	*6m*
Lewisham	*79*	*93*	*14*	*nil*

BUDGET DAY

The vital question that needs to be considered is what chance there is that all Labour Councillors will actually tow the "no cuts" line when Budget Day arrives in early march? The key to finding an answer to the question lies in considering what opportunities still exist for authorities to compromise/muddle through. There are clearly a large number of Councillors who are wary of defying the Government, with all the implications that entails. I would suggest that for many the crucial factor in deciding which way to vote will be the magnitude of the cuts which would have to be imposed to pass a Budget which complied with the Government limits. The greater the magnitude, the fewer the councillors who will be able to vote for the cuts.

It is important to be aware that the reason why the gap is so large is that whilst the Government announced that the expenditure limits for 1985/6 were to be at the current years expenditure levels, ie only pegging back by inflation, the Government then refused to take into account all the creative accounting measures which authorities have used to avoid block grant penalties. This has made an enormous difference to the size of the gap. In my own authority, Lewisham, for example our real expenditure this year is £86m, which includes £7m worth of creative accounting. The Government has set our limit at £79m which has doubled what the gap would otherwise have been. A number of councillors continued to hope that the Government would decide that it had made a mistake and would allow for the creative accounting when the levels were set on the 11th December. The Secretary of State totally ignored the point in making his announcement.

The final opportunity, within the framework of the Rates Act, for authorities to persuade the Government to take creative accounting into account would lie with their rejecting the maximum rate. This would have to be done by the 15th January. At the meeting of the leaders of the hit list authorities, on 18th December, it was agreed that the leaders should persuade their Groups to continue refusing to comply with any part of the Rates Act and should therefore neither accept nor reject the maximum rate. If all the Labour Groups endorse this key decision it will mean that the gaps described above will still exist on Budget Day.



Lewisham Council pledged to fight. Will it deliver?

Chris Knight

THE USE OF RESERVES

The only othe potential avenue for muddling through is through the use of reserves, whether by way of underspends, new special funds or other new creative accounting measures, which authorities may have available on Budget Day to breach the gap.

The level of each authority's reserves is extremely difficult to assess mainly because the position only becomes clear just before the Budget is made. I have however set out above in the table under column A the figures given by the leaders of the London hit list authorities at the ALA meeting on the 17th December. The vagueries of the reserves position has caused the biggest difficulty in maintaining the unity of the hit list authorities. Rumours have been flying around, particularly in London, suggesting that some authorities have far more in reserve than they are letting on which has simply fuelled speculation from the most cynical that they will use the reserves to muddle through. For example "the rumour mongers" have suggested that Lambeth has double and Southwark 4/5 times as much as the figure given.

Only time will tell which figures are accurate. But what must not be forgotten is that, firstly, most authorities will have very little in reserve and therefore their use in the Budget will have little impact on the level of cuts which would have to be made and secondly, because of the block grant penalty system, for most authorities for every £1 spent above target in trying to close the gap the Government takes away in the region of £1 from the RSG given to that authority. So for example in Greenwich, with their gap of £11m they would need to find £22m in

reserves to be able to fund their needs budget without any cuts. As far as I am aware only one or two authorities has anything like the reserves needed to get anywhere near breaching the gap.

If January 15th passes and no authority has rejected their maximum rate the question will then be whether the Government will enter into any negotiations prior to the 6th and 7th March when most of the precepting authorities and then the other authorities will be making their Budgets. I cannot see any chance of them doing that because to do so would mean that they would effectively be accepting the demise of the Rates Act and I think we have a long way to go before we reach that stage.

SIMPLE CHOICE ON 6th MARCH

With little opportunity for compromise, the overwhelming chance is that Labour Councillors will, on the 6th/7th March, be left with the simple choice of either voting to invoke the massive cuts necessary to balance the books or to confront the Government by not setting a rate or by setting a deficit budget. If this is the case I could only see those authorities with a large and determined right wing on the Labour Group voting against the confrontational stance and I would be surprised if this applied to more than 3/4 authorities.

Six months ago I would have considered anyone who suggested we might have any more than 7/8 authorities still in the running by the budget making stage to be an optimist. There can be no doubt that the credit for all the authorities still being united must go to the Leaders of the hit list authorities.

Starting with the "no cuts" line given by the Sheffield Conference in July and following on with decisions not to go for derogation, not to provide the DoE with information on reserves and most recently the decision not to accept or reject the maximum rate, the Leaders have consistently led the Labour Groups along a unified path of confrontation. The fact that the Leaders have been prepared to follow this left stance despite opposition from the Leadership of the PLP and some of the national TU leaders is an indication of how the influence of the Labour Left has increased in local government politics. And indeed the links that are being forged, through this crisis, between some of the major cities in England should be a boost to the development of a national Labour left network.

LEWISHAM

The importance of this development must not be overlooked by the left. in the past 6/9 months certain sections of the left have consistently opposed the strategy and tactics which the Leaders have been pressing. In Lewisham for example a section of the left have at various times proposed that the Labour Group should adopt the tactics of mass resignation and deficit budgeting. These tactics were certainly both worth considering but what has been extremely destructive is that this Left section has tried to suggest that unless the Group in Lewisham adopts those stances it has in some ways "sold out" and therefore rather than supporting the Left members of the Group who have been pressing the other councillors to follow the line of confrontation they have spent most of their time opposing those Left councillors.

For the period leading up to, as well as the period after, the 6th/7th March the left needs to be able to apply every pressure on Councillors to ensure that the Rates Act is defeated, the stolen RSG is returned and that no cuts are implemented. The Leaders of the hit list authorities have led the way in ensuring that the battle lines are drawn up in such a way as to give them maximum chance of achieving those goals. Whilst they continue to pursue that line it is the job of the rest of us to support them.

Hackney under fire

Philippa Jones, (Hackney South and Shoreditch CLP)

The latest government announcements on rate-capping put Hackney into what is probably one of the worst financial positions of all authorities. With the overall reduction in local authority grants, the council is required to meet an expenditure limit of £82 million, reduce the rates by 4.3% and make cuts of £33 million.

Government attacks are particularly severe for Hackney because 'creative accounting' was exhausted last year and there are no reserves left. A leading moderate councillor, Bob Masters, has said publicly that the government is pushing Hackney to the wall with no alternative but to fight. Even Joe Lobenstein, the champion of Tory councillors in Hackney, has declared to the press that government measures are too harsh.

Labour Party activists must be vigilant. The policy of the Labour Party is to unite people not just against the government's extreme initial moves but also against any future compromises that do not guarantee jobs and services and no rent rises and no rate rises beyond inflation.

It is also essential that all authorities stand together and do not break ranks to approach the government individually. The government's tactic of divide and rule and of hitting the weakest the hardest cannot be allowed to pay off. In all public forums, authorities must speak with one voice.

Labour Group in Hackney has supported the decisions of the local Labour Parties' conference to introduce a 'no cuts' deficit budget, though the final choice of tactics will be made at the end of February. They have endorsed a budget of £120 million. The figure is based on £102 million for last year, allowing for inflation and a number of uncommitted growth items, such as the restoration of some staffing level reductions and the introduction of a 35-hour week for manual workers.

The Working for Hackney campaign is co-ordinating a campaign in support of the proposed budget. At the end of February there will be a consultative conference on the budget and alternatives with trade unions, tenants associations, ethnic minority groups and the community sector. The Save Hackney Campaign is building for a procession on March 2nd which the Labour Party supports fully and the Hackney labour movement plans to participate in the TUC Day of Action on March 6.

The main focus for activity is budget day itself on March 7th and the Working for Hackney campaign will hold a rally at the Town Hall just before the decision is made. With the movement amassed in the Town Hall it's hoped that councillors will take heart and vote to defend jobs and services.

Fighting to win!

By Edmund Hall, Secretary, London Bridge.

LONDON BRIDGE is the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee of the London Boroughs. It was formed in March 1984, and since then has been meeting on a regular monthly basis. All local authority shop stewards are welcome to attend the committee meetings: please contact the secretary if you wish to be included on the mailing list.

London Bridge has responded to rate-capping with a policy of

* No cuts in jobs or services;
* the defence of local democracy
* non-compliance with the 1984 Rates Act,
* full support for councils committed to the fight against rate-capping.

It has asked councils neither to raise the rates nor council rents, and to prepare budgets based on the needs of their Boroughs, to highlight the difference between real need and the government's attack on local communities.

A resolution based on these policies was unanimously endorsed at a shop stewards' conference in the Queen Elizabeth Hall on October 17 1984, and the march and rally of November 7 1984 demonstrated our will to fight ratecapping.

London Bridge, named to symbolise the bridging of common interests across the historical divisions of white and blue collar workers, and worker and the community, has regular contact with the Association of London Authorities and with two important trade union organisations, the Democracy For London campaign and the Save ILEA campaign. Its delegate structure ensures a regular update from the rate-capped authorities, and the debates within the joint shop stewards' committees of those authorities.

The motto of London Bridge is 'Fighting to Win'. Its policies are designed to ensure the return of the rate support grant to the Boroughs – not to pass on the cost of the theft of rate support grant to the ratepayers and tenants.

Confrontation with the government is soon to be a reality. It will find the trade unions, the communities of London, and the local politicians in total opposition to cuts in local authority spending. The government will not be permitted to destroy the democracy of London.

Contact: Edmund Hall, London Borough of Lambeth, Courtenay House, 9-15 New Park Road, London SW2 4DU.

Camden occupation reveals racism in Labour Group

by Cllr. Kate Allen

From 22nd November until 21st December, Camden Town Hall was occupied by homeless families, mostly Bengali, some Irish. The usual formality of the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms was transformed as families turned them into makeshift homes. Children, many of whom had previously known only the cramped conditions of bed and breakfast accommodation, found for the first time that they had space to play in safety. The occupation lasted for four weeks during which the Labour Group displayed insensitivity, defensiveness, and the kind of siege mentality which ensures that groups outside the Council see the Council itself as the only enemy. Most disturbingly of all the story of the occupation is that of racism, racism within the housing department but also within the Labour Group.

The occupation began after the death on November 20th of Sharin Karim and her two children aged 3 and 5 years when fire ravaged the hotel in which she had been placed by Camden Council. All three died of suffocation in a cramped room which had been Mrs Karim's only experience of life in this country. The hotel had no fire alarms, no fire extinguishers, the exits were blocked and light bulbs had been removed from the stairways. Mrs Karim had no chance to save herself or her children.

On November 22nd homeless families from other properties owned by the same landlord came to Camden Town Hall with their supporters to ask the Council to act. The families were angry and afraid: angry that death traps were used by the Council and at the deaths that had happened; and afraid that Mrs Karim's fate would be their own if no action was taken. Amazingly at this point the only demand that the families made was for a public meeting at which certain councillors were asked to be present. The reponse from the Deputy Leader, Sandy Wynn, was unsympathetic and defensive. Within two hours of people entering the Council Chamber the Deputy Leader was



Members of the occupation arguing with the Councillors, asking them to return to the centre of the Chamber and discuss the housing issues.

HARINGEY UNITED!

The Haringey Labour Group is displaying a unity rarely seen before. The position agreed is: —

* Not to go for derogation.
* Not to meet Jenkin unless collectively with other authorities
* To follow the 'not setting a rate' option. This decision was taken unanimously at the Group meeting on the 13th December.

The Party at its meeting on the 12th December has also called for the Group, jointly with other authorities, to refuse to pay debt charges. This was 'left on the table' which I fear effectively kills it as a further option unless the Party can pressurise its representatives to have a change of mind.

The main reason for this unity is the enormity of the financial demands being imposed by the Tories:

* To meet the D of E expenditure limit would require a cut of £20m out of a budget of £148m, a massive 13% which could result in 2,500 redundancies.
* The position is being made worse by a possible overspend of £3m which, with penalities, could add another £10m worth of deficit, making a £30m shortfall.
* Haringey, unlike some other rate-capped authorities has hardly any reserves.

CAMPAIGNING

On the campaigning front the Group has eventually given its publicity department some resources and the posters, leaflets etc plus the information from the Council has been considerable and on the whole very good. There has been one round of workplace meetings with the Council workforce and members, and a second round is planned in a couple of months.

The Party was also united in its position, with both CLPs (Tottenham and Hornsey/Wood Green) passing similar motions. These called for: —

* Total, not a partial, settlement.
* Not cuts in services, no redundancies, no loss of job opportunities.
* Not setting a rate in unison with other Labour authorities.
* Non repayment of debt charges until a settlement is achieved.

The Party's campaigning has lagged behind the Group somewhat with obviously, and rightly, people's energies directed into the miners' struggle. There have been two Council bye-elections in October and November which saw Labour councillors returned, with swings to Labour in both seats. In Coleraine Ward, the Tory vote was halved. Newsletters have been put out in both CLPs and a joint campaign committee meeting plus the trade union campaign committee is being held.

THE FUTURE

1. The Party must continue to apply pressure on, and support the Labour Group to ensure the current unity and current stance is maintained.

2. The Party must step up its campaign with more newsletters; canvassing areas; meetings etc and not just rely on the Council's publicity.

3. The Party must forge better links with the Council trade unions and establish a joint campaign against rate-capping.

Roger Harris

discussing the possibility of turning the electricity off and bringing in the security guards to evict. The occupation had begun as the families decided that the Council Chamber was a safer option than the Council's offer that first evening of more bed and breakfast 'possible' of the same standard to that which had burnt down.

In the face of such a response the families considered what demands they should make. The demand which had the Labour Group in turmoil for the next four weeks was that those families in hotels owned by the same landlord, and families in a further 3 hotels which they knew to be unsafe should be housed in Camden property, either permanent housing or stage 2 (the use temporarily of property needing repair).



The police storm the Council Chamber. With their backs to the photo are, left to right, Richard Sumray, Mike Kirk and Bob Latham. A young boy is trapped behind the door — and was taken to hospital.

On the second day of the occupation three Labour councillors, Bob Latham, Chair of the Race and Police Committees, Richard Sumray and Mike Kirk issued a statement. It offered some of the families temporary accommodation from the Councils own stock, others would have to return to bed and breakfast. Having read out their prepared statement the councillors decided that they were going home for the weekend, an option which they did not appreciate was not open to the families in the Council Chamber.

The occupation, understandably frustrated by this response, refused to allow the councillors to leave until they had discussed the offer. The councillors on the other hand were more concerned with the issue of their personal safety than with deaths in Council used fire traps. Their response to the occupation was indefensible: they called the police. Families in the occupation were witness to 25 police officers storming the Council Chamber to 'save' three Labour councillors from a predominantly black occupation. The police action resulted in one young boy being taken to hospital but the three councillors went home.

In the following three weeks there were three Group meetings. Calls were made at the first meeting for the police to be used to clear the Council Chamber. The main proponent of this view was Bill Birtles , Chair of the National Council for Civil Liberties. It was the only recognition that such action would irreparably tear the Group apart that such moves were not endorsed. The first Group meeting also changed the entire housing allocations policy and set a target to rehouse all families in bed and breakfast into Camden stock within 6 months — a change which was one of the occupation's demands. However, the Group went on to attempt to divide the occupation by agreeing to rehouse some families in Camden housing while insisting that others would go into bed and breakfast. Attempts to divide the occupation were to be repeated again and again over the next three weeks. That first Group meeting also went on to affirm its support for those councillors who had called in the police. The only move to censure Group members was an abortive attempt to condemn those who had spoken out publicly against the use of the police.

At the second group meeting gains were made which allowed discussions to taken place between the occupation and Phil Turner, Leader of the Council. Those discussions eventually broke down, again because of the attempt to undermine the solidarity of the occupation. Only the idea of families spending Christmas in the Council Chamber eventually allowed a settlement to be reached. By this point the Group's position was that 6 families in the occupation would not get rehoused. The occupation remained solid and refused to be divided. The eventual response from Group officers was that the 6 families would be rehoused but that this assurance would be verbal and could not be given in writing. The lack of integrity in such a position was completely in line with the handling of the whole occupation.

During the occupation two main arguments were used by the majority of members of the Labour Group, both of them racist in their assumptions and effects.

The first was that the families were not really acting on their own behalf but were the passive, possibly even unwilling pawns of black activists. Those Group members who argued this line were the very ones who did not go near the town hall for the duration of the occupation. At no time did they speak to those involved or spend time in the Council Chamber or witness the astonishing solidarity displayed by the families. They failed also to appreciate the experience of the Bengali families in political terms falling back on the racist stereotype which had assumed that the Bengali families would wait forever for an offer of housing. The effect of this thinking resulted in the constant attempts to divide the families.

The second argument was arguably worse in its public effect. This was the argument of 'queue jumping'. The Chair of the Housing Management Committee, Mike Kirk, resigned towards the end of the occupation, because the Group had given into 'occupation type politics'. This argument failed first of all to understand that the existing housing allocations policy was racist, a fact which was perfectly demonstrated by the families in occupation if it had not already been proved. It relied upon a faith in the allocations policy, an assumption of some form of purity which allowed that everyone was rehoused in turn in an equitable way. The use of arguments of queue jumping in relation to a black population which were recounted in the local press also prepared the ground for a racist backlash. When resources are scarce and black people fight for their rights, and those in power reduce the argument to queue jumping, only the naive can expect anything less than a backlash.

Overwhelmingly the response by the Labour Group was one of being under siege. Over 200 local and national groups gave their support to the occupation. The occupation had highlighted the horrors of living in bed and breakfast. It had achieved a total change of council policy so that all homeless people would be made Camden offers within 6 months. Other groups and individuals appreciated what the occupation had won. But the Labour Group dug itself into a position where it accepted responsibility for managing a housing crisis which could not be managed. It took on a role of saying if one group gets housing another does not. It used its power to divide and rule, to set one group against another instead of uniting with local groups to campaign for more resources.

BLACK COMMUNITY APPALLED

The effects of the occupation will be felt for sometime. The Group is more divided that it has ever been. Resignations and calls for resignation will continue. The Council's Principal Race Relations Adviser has resigned. Other officers who supported the occupation are threatened by an element within the Group who want to see them disciplined. Community groups who depend upon the Council for grants have been threatened. The Black community in Camden has been appalled by the Council's actions. Recovery in time for rate-capping will be difficult. It will first of all need a recognition of the way that racism within the Group dictated the response to the occupation. It will also need a change of attitude — when 200 groups unite around one issue it is arrogant in the extreme to assume that just because you are elected and they are not, that you are right.

It will need a recognition that Labour Councils cannot manage the worst housing crisis since the end of the last war. Attempts to do so simply divide the community and focus the anger of individuals and groups upon the Council. We must develop a response which unites people in an effective campaign against the Government, involving the community in the decisions which have to be made in the meantime.

TWO VIEWS ON ILEA

ILEA now at forefront of local government struggle

Steve Bundred (GLC/ILEA Councillor, Islington North CLP)

Most CLPs in London have for some time been active in resisting the abolition threat facing the GLC. A majority also now understand the impact which rate-capping could have on jobs and services provided by the Boroughs. But very few have yet appreciated the scale of the damage which *both* these measures threaten to inflict on the ILEA. Since 1979 the Government has been engaged in a series of unrelenting attacks on ILEA spending and services. Successive attempts to break up the Authority have been beaten off by popular mobilisation and determined opposition. But despite numerous successes, the Authority is now in a *worse* position than other authorities on the Government's hit list.

To take rate-capping first, the Government announced a 1985/6 precept limit of 74.19p for the ILEA in December. This compares with a precept of 83.1p agreed by the Authority in November; and with a 1p rate expected to raise £11.34m in inner London next year, it is equivalent to a demand for a cut of £101m.

The precept agreed by ILEA for 1985/6 was only 3.9% above the current level, but after allowing for a reduction in balances it was sufficient to finance net expenditure of £957m. This would allow existing services to be maintained, permit new developments to go ahead and provide for increases in the numbers of both teaching and non-teaching staff for the second year running.

In contrast, the precept limit which the Government is seeking to impose would require the loss of well over 5,000 jobs (8% of the workforce), massive increases in school meal prices and other charges, the closure of courses in colleges and AEIs, reductions in curriculum provision and teaching materials provided to schools, withdrawal of funds for youth clubs, and the abandonment of all new initiatives including those nursery schools and classes scheduled to open in September.

REJECT GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

In common with other authorities the ILEA has responded by rejecting the Government's proposals and pressing instead for the return of block grant which would enable us to cut the precept by 14p without damage to services. But the Government has now changed the Block Grant rules in such a way as to make it almost inconceivable that ILEA could ever again attract grant.

Tories claim that the purpose of targets and penalties for local authority spending, and of the Rates Act itself, is to force local authorities to bring their budgets closer into line with GREs – the DoE's own bogus assessment of local needs. For the ILEA this would mean a cut of £402m or 42%. But even at the GRE level of £555m the ILEA would get no grant, despite having 7 of the 10 most deprived areas of the country within its boundaries.

If the decisions on block grant and the threat of massive cuts from rate-capping next year were all that the Government had in store for ILEA that would be bad enough. But there is more.



Ruth Gee (left) with Steve Bundred, Frances Morrell and Ashley Bramall taking ILEA's satchel full of anti-cuts letters to Sir Keith Joseph.

The GLC abolition bill provides for the creation of a new directly elected ILEA in 1986. It also provides for the new authority to be ratecapped for the first three years of its existence. It further provides for all the Authority's staffing levels and for the wages of former GLC staff employed by the Authority to be controlled by the Secretary of State. It even requires the new ILEA to consult with boroughs before introducing any new policy or change of policy and gives Tory boroughs such as Westminster and Wandsworth the right of appeal to Ministers if they are not satisfied with the consultation. And it provides for the future sale of County Hall and the eviction of the Authority at any time the Government chooses.

But worst of all, it enables the Secretary of State to abolish the new Authority and transfer all or some of its functions to the Boroughs at a later date if it does not prove sufficiently acquiescent to Ministers' wishes. He would not require fresh legislation to do this and would not even need to consult the Authority before issuing an order to abolish it!

Yet even that is not the limit of the attacks we now face. A few months ago Sir Keith Joseph issued a circular to local authorities declaring that in future the

ILEA's Budget — A Cut Above the Average

Inner London Education is on the brink of its biggest crisis in living memory. Caught in a pincer movement masterminded by the Government, viable education provision in London's inner city seems unlikely to survive without both arms of the pincer being broken or undergoing miraculous road to Damascus conversions.

Attacking from the front, there are Patrick Jenkin, Sir Keith Joseph and the combined cut-throats of the D.O.E. and the D.E.S. demanding of ILEA surgery so drastic (£100 million from £957 million) that the patient looks certain to bleed to death on the operating table. In the event that this treatment is not terminal, the Government, contrary to its promises, included reserve powers in its demolition of the GLC Bill, which will allow it to "fix" the spending of the new directly elected ILEA in 1986, if the last rites have not yet been administered.

ILEA LABOUR GROUP

Attacking from the rear comes the ILEA Labour Group, which, while loudly proclaiming the iniquities of the Government, is turning on its workforce with the ferocity of a pack of cornered rats.

Last summer, ILEA estimated that it would require £975 million to run the service in 1985-6 "without cuts". "Without cuts" in ILEA's parlance is an abbreviation for "without cuts, except those which can be brought about by administrative delays or other bureaucratic devices not requiring explicit member decisions." ILEA believed the Government would ask for £75 million of cuts and described these as "extremely damaging" involving the loss of over 5,000 jobs. By November '84 ILEA had trimmed its estimate to £963 million from which Labour members were prepared to cut £5.6 million. The Government is now demanding a cut of £100 million and has the legal powers to enforce it.

That, crudely, is the size of the problem. Conventional wisdom tells us that to defeat the Government, we need a united campaign of ILEA councillors, employees, parents, children and the Labour movement and community at large. What steps has this Labour Group taken to achieve this unity? How do they propose to carry forward the campaign?

Their recent behaviour is revealing

★ Last autumn, ILEA began its Budget Consultation Process. Labour Governors were invited to meetings across London and were informed that Union representatives from ILEA's workforce would be present. The Unions themselves were not informed.

★ Compulsory transfer of teaching staff continued unabated last summer with the same mindless callousness. (Have you heard the one about the teacher transferred three times in three years. He's now working at Hatcham Wood).

★ 569 of the teachers, who struck last 27th June, in response to the call from SERTUC and the NUM for action, have received disciplinary warnings. Teachers who refused to cross NUPE picket lines, but who reported for work, were treated as strikers.

★ A motion assuring ILEA's workforce that disciplinary measures against strikers would not be taken by the Authority for its own November 7th strike was thrown out by leading members of the Labour Group.

★ Teachers are now exluded from meetings at County Hall, on the instruction of the Chief Whip, (in case they get close enough to ILEA members to lobby them).

★ Teachers, who have refused to cover for absent colleagus, are now being severely disciplined. The normal procedure in London, for helping Divisional Offices to find supply teachers, is for the teachers, in the schools needing supply help, to refuse to cover. Remarkably, this enables Divisional Officers, who, until that moment, had been totaly unsuccessful in finding cover teachers, to have supply teachers on site for the following day.

★ Sixth form courses are being cut in all but the most middle class areas of Inner London. This is not taking place as a result of an ILEA policy decision. ILEA will make its policy decision after public consultation. Before this consultation can take place, ILEA's Tertiary Education Boards are putting up sufficient bureaucratic and financial obstacles to make the continuation of sixth form teaching in secondary schools difficult or impossible. ILEA's post-consultative policy decision to opt for full sixth form closures and to substitute small and cheaper tertiary colleges will then be a formality.

This is ILEA's contribution to united front against the Government!

DON'T BE FOOLED

Education is now the Cinderella among Labour's policies. Don't be fooled by ILEA's tub-thumping and don't allow its vindictiveness to destroy any hope of unity. Unless Labour Parties make their ILEA members accountable, this ILEA is going to hand the Government a victory on a plate.

There is still time for you to influence ILEA's budget process. Are your councillors going to fight the Government or the work force? Is your Party prepared to make them fight the Government or replace them?

(You can also mandate your London Labour Party Conference delegates to support the Hackney North motion and amendment4 on education).

Keith Lichman
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

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addition of a nursery class to an existing primary or infant school will be regarded as a fundamental change in the character of the school, in the same way as proposals to close a school or convert a grammar school to a comprehensive are now regarded, and will be subject to the same procedures. The effect is to introduce a minimum twelve months' delay into new nursery initiatives and to give an ultimate veto over them to none other than the Secretary of State himself.

In July, ILEA approved a budget of £600,000 to inform the public of the likely consequences of rate-capping. An advertising agency was employed and a series of powerful posters began to appear on prominent sites throughout London. On application from Westminster Council this campaign has, for the time being at least, been declared to be unlawful and the contract has been quashed. Since any new contract would be caught by the provisions of the Paving Act and would thus require the consent of the Secretary of State, we are now in the bizarre position whereby the Government intends the total devastation of inner London's education service but we are debarred by law from telling anyone about it.

STRONG RESOLVE OF LABOUR GROUP

Throughout all this the resolve of the Labour Group on ILEA to resist the Government's attacks has been strong. The budget decisions taken in November were approved by the Regional Executive and agreed unanimously by Labour members on the Authority. There is a clear majority within the Group to stick to those decisions and refuse to implement the Government's cuts. In the last few months the DES and DoE have issued a stream of ill-informed press releases and ministerial pronouncements attacking our spending and staffing levels. Each one was designed to undermine public support and weaken the confidence of members. Each has had the opposite effect. Over 3,000 letters were received by the ILEA in October supporting our budget proposals. Fewer than 20 letters supported the Government. In addition over 1,000 letters have been received directly by ministers opposing their plans to cut ILEA spending.

But despite this, the Government has chosen to press ahead with a campaign against the Labour ILEA which is bound to lead to heavy casualties. The December announcement and the publication of the Abolition Bill have strengthened the unity of the Labour Group by showing that there is no room for compromise and only a victory over the Tories will suffice. ILEA is therefore now in the forefront of the local government struggle. And it is time the Party at all levels woke up to what is happening.

Wanted! A socialist education policy for Labour

Keith Joseph's latest salvo in the battle over education – that teachers should be assessed annually and rewarded by merit or dole – is just the latest episode in the Tories' drive to re-shape education along rightist principles. That today's education debate is popularly conducted in terms of exam results, 'standards' of success and behaviour, returning to the 'basics', and the failure of schools to respond to new trends in industry, illustrates how far the Tories have been able to impose their own class' restrictive vision of education without any popular alternative. Labour's silence on these matters indicates its failure to see what is at stake.

Two milestones in particular indicate what ground needs to be recovered. Firstly, the publication nearly fifteen years ago of the Black papers on education – an unholy assortment of rightist prejudices and anti-comprehensive sentiments foreshadowing today's ministerial directives – which were widely regarded as the ravings of a mad cabal foaming at the mouth at the apparent excesses of the sixties. Secondly, almost ten years ago, the William Tyndale debacle took place. This illustrated sharply how isolated were the educational progressives who saw Tyndale defamed and being used by the 'popular' media ('School of Shame') to threaten progressive change in all schools.

HARDLY REASSURING

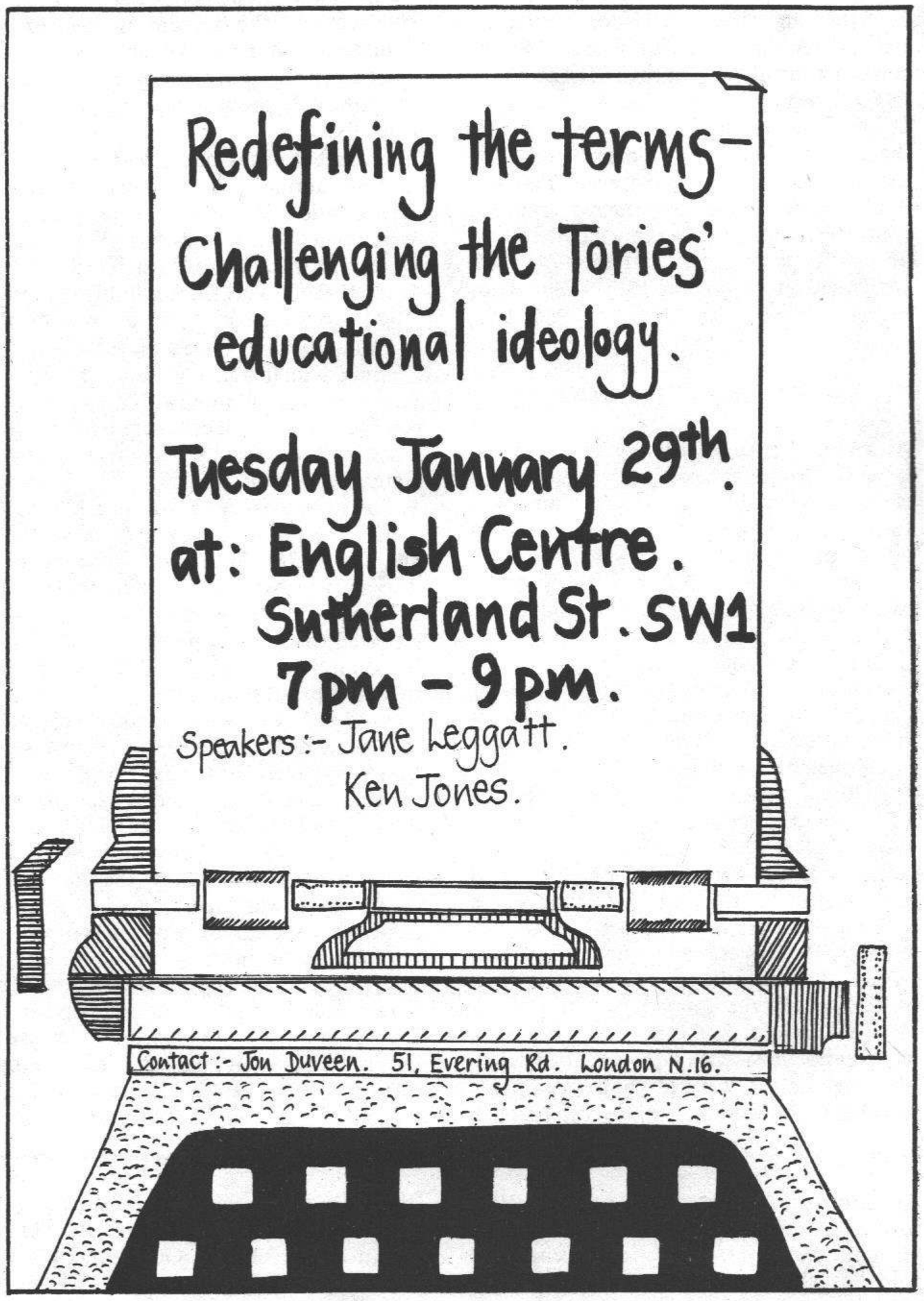
It's hardly reassuring to tell ourselves that Tyndale was lost due to the connivings of the old right-wing guard of the Islington Labour Party. Nor is it anything like comfort to be reminded that the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, ushered in the era of 'bringing schools into line with the needs of industry' in his infamous Green Paper. For any progress made on the left of the party since then on the central question *of what type of education we want* must either be very slight or of the deepest variety of subterranean entrism.

Today's education debate is increasingly dominated by 'vocationalist' themes.. Via the agency of the Manpower Services Commission, comprehensive education is facing its biggest challenge ever. The re-organisation of the 16-19 age group, the New Technical and Vocational Initiative (NTVEI), the CPEVE (173), and the new BTEC courses – all of which have been introduced over a fairly short period of time – will replace the comprehensive principle with a new form of selection. Increasingly, the lower half of the secondary school, and correspondingly the primary schools, will gear themselves to producing 'academic' streams for middle-class and 'bright' working-class students. Meanwhile the working-class majority in schools will be ushered towards 'vocational' courses which involve learning values of obedience and discipline under the guise of training for flexible skills – such are the shameful in-school Tory ethics of mass youth unemployment that mirror the world of the YTS beyond school.

PREPARING FOR A FIGHTBACK

In response, members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance have begun to prepare the grounds for a fightback. Building on the work that has been done by radical teachers, with a view to enriching the curriculum and extending the opportunities for all working-class children, the STA Education Group is aiming for a summer conference which can unite teachers against Tory educational ideology.

Towards this end, Labour Party members can help by tabling resolutions which directly tackle these issues and force the NEC to take the Tories head on over educational *content* as well as resources. To find out more, wards and GMCs could do worse than sponsor a meeting on *January 29th at the English Centre, Sutherland St., SW1, 7pm - 9pm* REDEFINING THE TERMS – CHALLENGING THE TORIES' EDUCATIONAL IDEOLOGY. At this meeting the challenge will be launched by a variety of radical educationalists including Jane Leggatt, Andy Green and (in personal capacity) Ken Jones of the NUT Executive.



Tony Graham
Hornsey & Wood Green CLP and
Socialist Teachers Alliance

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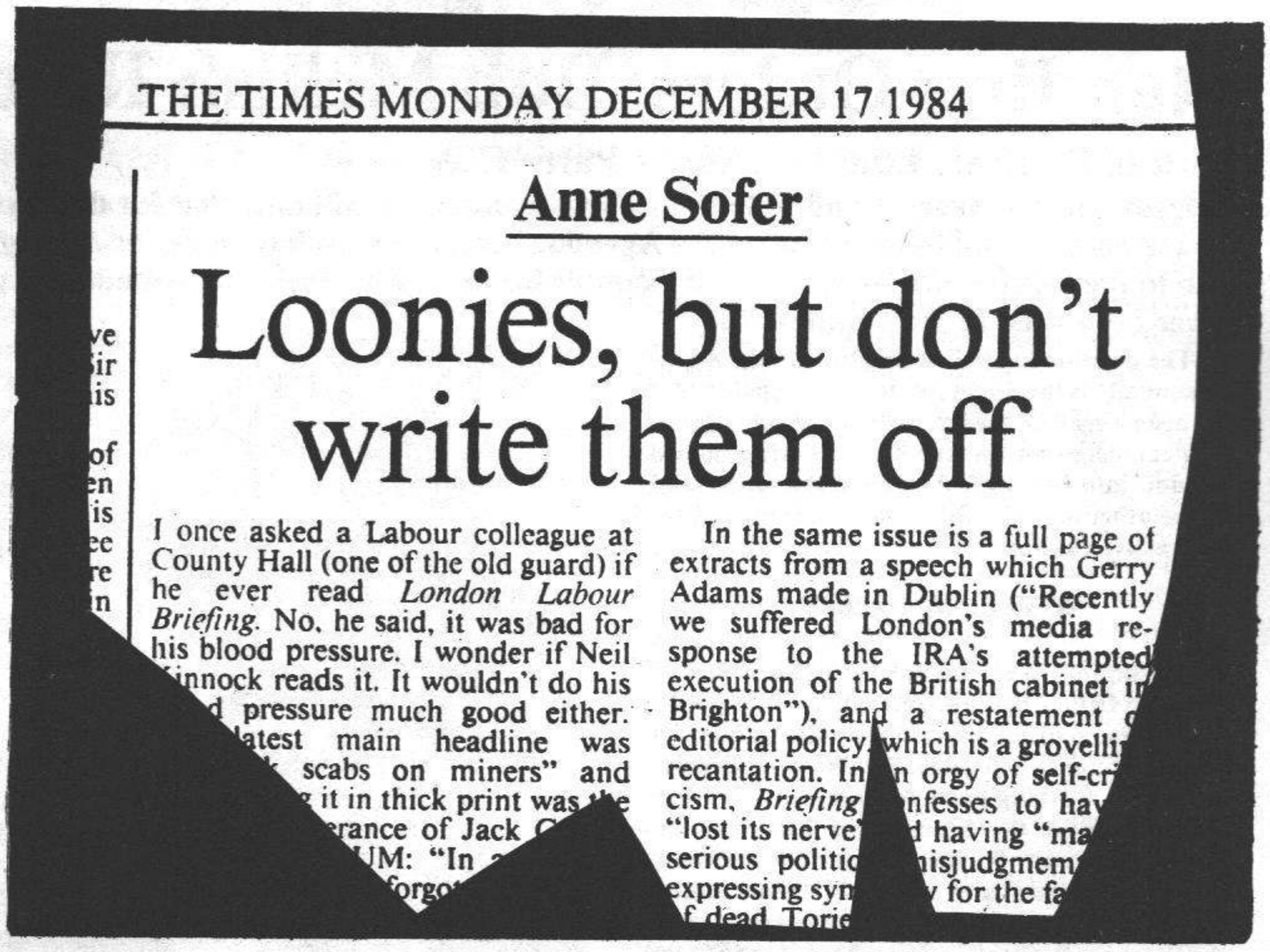
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What they say about us



THE TIMES MONDAY DECEMBER 17 1984

Anne Sofer

Loonies, but don't write them off

I once asked a Labour colleague at County Hall (one of the old guard) if he ever read *London Labour Briefing*. No, he said, it was bad for his blood pressure. I wonder if Neil Kinnock reads it. It wouldn't do his blood pressure much good either. The latest main headline was "Kinnock scabs on miners" and accompanying it in thick print was the prophetic utterance of Jack Collins of the Kent NUM: "In a socialist society we'll have forgotten all about bloody Kinnock".

In the same issue is a full page of extracts from a speech which Gerry Adams made in Dublin ("Recently we suffered London's media response to the IRA's attempted execution of the British cabinet in Brighton"), and a restatement of editorial policy, which is a grovelling recantation. In an orgy of self-criticism, *Briefing* confesses to having "lost its nerve" and having "made serious political misjudgements", expressing sympathy for the family of dead Tories

"Loonies, but don't write them off"

By Anne Sofer, SDP member of the GLC/ILEA for St Pancras North

From *The Times* December 17th

I once asked a Labour colleague at County Hall (one of the old guard) if he ever read London Labour Briefing. *No, he said, it was bad for his blood pressure. I wonder if Neil Kinnock reads it. It wouldn't do his blood pressure much good either. The latest main headline was "Kinnock scabs on miners" and accompanying it in thick print was the prophetic utterance of Jack Collins of the Kent NUM: "In a socialist society we'll have forgotten all about bloody Kinnock".*

The people who do *read* London Labour Briefing *are the Fleet Street diarists. It is a rich seam of loony left nonsense and has a talent for predictable headlines: "Housing peace camp in Southwark", "Lesbians and Gays back the miners", etc. But I have learnt to treat it rather more seriously than that. Over the past four years it has led the way the Labour Party is going. It predicted (and played some part in) the palace revolutions that took place in the GLC and ILEA in 1981 and in many of the London boroughs in 1982. Its contributors include most of the leading members of those authorities. It probably has a larger readership among London Labour activists than any other political monthly . . . a journal furthermore whose every issue is chock-full of contributions from London politicians who are household names within the Labour movement. It is high time Neil Kinnock started taking it seriously.*

He might, for instance, ask those reputable Labour Party members — the leader and deputy leader of the GLC, the leader of the ILEA, leaders of the London boroughs of Islington and Lambeth, and the MPs for Newham South and Barking — whether they are still Briefing *supporters. he can be sure that as soon as he asks, the cry of "witch hunt" will go up. And, trapped as he is, he may well decide that* Briefing, *and London, will have to wait. Since Mrs. Thatcher has also decided to write London off, we are in for a hard time.*

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LONDON LABOUR PARTY

Standing Orders: Bob Mellish Rules. OK?

by Ann Pettifor, London Labour Party Executive

Delegates to this year's London Labour Party Conference will note that for the first time the Rules and Standing Orders of the Conference are published in full in the Agenda. Delegates now have no excuse for ignorance over their rights and duties in relation to the Conference — and can for example begin to press their long-standing Right of Reply to debates — a right which has never been used at the Conference.

The decision to publish the Rules in the Agenda annually is the direct result of a campaign that has been waged on the Executive over the last year — a campaign on the one hand to bring radical London into line with Annual Conference, and on the other to put London into the vanguard for progressive change.

WORKING PARTY

But attempting to amend Bob Mellish's Rules and Standing Orders has not, and will not, be easy. At the beginning of the year, in response to pressure from conference delegates, the Executive decided to set up a working party to review its own rules and "to ensure that Conference provides a genuine opportunity for the rank and file to express their aspirations and to hold their elected representatives to account." I was asked to chair the Working Party of five members of the EC and to prepare recommendations for the Executive and to put to 1985 Conference.

Other Members of the Working Party were: Vidya Anand (1 attendance) Lesley Phillips (0) Charles Cherrill (0) ¡

In addition the working party met the Regional Standing Orders Committee twice and Peter Willsman of the Party's Conference Arrangements Committee once?.

Due to the lack of interest of other members of the working party, I was left alone to plough through the standing orders and rules and to meet with the SOC. This was not a pleasant experience given the overt hostility of the officer responsible for servicing the meetings. However a report was finally produce — not as I had expected, for the full Executive who commissioned it, but for the Finance and General Purposes Committee. At this meeting, there was virtually no support for the many recommendations. This was surprising to me given their moderate and rational nature. Bob Labi joined trade unionists Peter Spalding and Brian Nicholson in opposing the proposal for a Women's Organisation representative on the Standing Orders Committee. (Although this alliance of Militant with the Right on matters of concern to women is not by any means new. The so-called 'Labi-Spellar' axis on the executive which acts unitedly in relation to issues lke Black Sections, Women's Rights and Homosexuality, no longer cause surprise.)

As a result of the Finance and General Purposes Committee's opposition, a truncated version of the Report was put to the full executive — in the form of minutes for the F&GP. It was clear that support for the recommendations would have to be mobilised, and that some way would have to be found to bring the recommendations to the attention of the full executive. This was done by persuading individual members of the EC to put the recommendations down in the form of resolutions — a most unsatisfactory way to bring a Report back to the Executive.

Unfortunately, in the heat of debate, a recorded vote of the subsequent Executive decisions was not called for, although officers had been alerted to the possibility of recording votes. (Recorded votes are not yet a regular occurrence on the London Regional Executive; indeed the principle has only recently been agreed. However, it is vital for the Left to *remember* to make use of this procedure so that constituencies can be alerted to the actions of their representatives on the Executive — and can be held to account for them.)



BOB MELLISH

CARRIED IN FULL

The Working Party's Recommendations were, in the event, carried in full by the Executive and are included in the Agenda already circulated. The amendments fall into two groups; those that bring London into line with the party nationally, and those which set a precedent.

The first group includes the following:

a) Clause XIII: The Electoral Programme for ILEA and the GLC should be approved by the full Conference, and not just the executive.

b) Standing Order 2(h): enables verbal questions to be put on GLC and ILEA Reports.

c) SO 3: Voting for the Chair and other offices to be fully recorded and made available to Conference delegates.

d) Clause XV: Constitutional amendments to require only a simple majority (Bob Mellish had insisted on two thirds) — as they do at Annual Conference.

The second group, which set a precedent are:

a) Clause X: The appointment of the General Secretary and Deputy G.S. by the Regional Executive (to be endorsed by the NEC) — and not by the NEC alone, as is done at present.

b) Clause XI: The election of a Standing Orders Committee of *six* members (there are currently five): four to be elected by the whole conference; one to be elected by representatives of CLP's only. (Currently all members of the SOC are elected by full conference.); and one to be elected by representatives of women's organisations.

(The first part of this amendment brings London into line with Annual Conference).

c) Clause XII(c): Recommends an end to the three-year-rule for constitutional amendments. At present the Executive has the power to present amendments annually. The Working Party argued for the full Conference to be given parity with the EC in this respect. The 'John Evans' amendment to the 1984 Conference revealed that Executives can be as hasty and ill-advised in the drafting of amendments as delegates. There is no reason therefore why they should enjoy greater powers than the Conference itself.

d) SO 2(g): Enables resolutions to be used in compositing when delegate have been granted special leave of absence in special circumstances.

e) A motion of principle raising for debate the question of qualification for nomination to the Executive or SOC. At present, candidates wishing to build support for their election to these bodies have to stand for election for more than one year. To do so, they have to claim the delegacy from their constituency party or union, thus depriving other members from attending conference as delegates. Women in particular, need time to build their reputations but are inhibited from competing for election as delegate each year. There is no logical reason why a nominee to the EC or SOC should also be a Conference delegate. The Rules of the union APEX provide for nominations from members who are not delegates to the Conference. This is rational, and the London party should take the initiative in adopting the same rule.

Fight NHS

For Health Workers 1985 looks like being another year of savage cuts and privatisation — but with a new team of business style managers swinging the axe.

The implementation of the Griffiths Report meants that all Districts and Regions will all be appointing new General Managers, preferably with outside business experience i.e. managing supermarkets, running factories and other skills relevant to the NHS.

The supremo selected by Fowler to run this new regime is Victor Page, a man so committed and dedicated to the NHS that he's been a member of BUPA for the last 25 years. But Vic can afford to smile, his £70,000 a year makes private medical insurance policy easily affordable.

Victor Page's salary will make him one of the highest paid butchers in the country. The message to Health Workers and all those who depend on the NHS for treatment is clear: *This is our MacGregor!*

But despite the massive scale of the Tories attack on the NHS 1985 could be the year that their thuggish policies are kicked back into the small minds from which they emerged.

The ten month long strike at Barking Hospital is ample evidence of Health Workers ability to sustain long, hard industrial action. Hard-fought strikes by Domestics at Hammersmith Hospital and currently at Addenbrookes in Cambridge are further examples, but there is an urgent need to break the isolation.

CONFERENCE '85

'Campaigning' — What does it mean?

by Joan Twelves Regional Executive (South East London CLPs section) and Secretary of Vauxhall Labour Party

The 1984 Annual Meeting of the London Labour Party started off with a close vote (351,500 to 353,000) on a composite moved by Islington North on 'campaigning'. For most delegates, the contentious part of it was the suggestion that half of the Annual Meeting should in future be devoted to workshop sessions.

This year's AGM will also be faced with a 'campaigning' resolution from Islington North, with the same model coming from Ealing Acton. The part of workshops has been modified to 'parallel workshop sessions'. My own experience of organising workshops for the London Labour Women's Committee in 1983 makes this a less attractive proposition than it appears on the surface. Delegates were there for policy making; non-delegates weren't sure what role and powers the workshops had, and what their relationship was to the Conference. The end result was an agreement to arrange workshops days totally separate from the Conference, preferably around the time when resolutions were being formulated.

But it is not workshops that worry me about these resolutions. What I don't know is what the movers mean by 'campaigning'. This seems to have become the watchword of sections of the Party since the general election disaster and the election of the Kinnock leadership. It is tossed around as the universal socialist panacea. With campaigning, we will win. But campaigning on what? With the miners' strike, the fight against the abolition of the GLC and ratecapping on the top of the political agenda for the foreseeable future, I would like to think that these resolutions assume we know what they mean. But that's not the impression I got from last year's debate, and that's not the impression I get from the resolutions.

Linked with a proposal to make the GLLP's Campaign Committee the 'principal political committee' of the Executive, the implication is there that as long as we're out on the doorstep, it's irrelevant what policies are being proposed.

Now, as a member of the GLLP's Campaign Committee, I am well aware of the need to turn the regional office and the regional executive into a 'campaigning' force — I wrote in November's Briefing about the inability of the Left on the Regional Executive to use it to build solidarity with the miners. Proposals in the resolutions on improving and teaching technical skills shouldn't need to be spelt out.

But I am also aware, particularly as Secretary of a CLP which seems to have achieved a reputation in some quarters of being a 'good', 'campaigning' party (and which has fought six council by-elections over the last nine months in which we've won increased majorities every time, and booted out the SDP), that campaigning is not *just* technical skills, it's not *just* being out on the doorstep, and it's *not* separating these activities from policies. What has to be done is organising communities and workplaces around issues which directly affect people's lives (eg hospital cuts and closures); winning them to socialist ideas through activity; organising in the trade unions, CND, tenants' groups, women's groups, the Black community, as the Labour Party, providing clear political leadership. Unless this is spelt out – and political priorities clearly defined – organisational changes will make little difference. We have to organise *our* communities – *our* class – not just turn up on *their* doorsteps a bit more often.

The 'campaigning' resolutions, along with others from Ilford North and Wimbledon, also call for the Regional Executive to be restructured to give direct representation for boroughs. They quite rightly point to the impossibility of being accountable to over 20 CLPs, the current electorates in the CLP sections. This is something I have found particularly difficult to handle since being elected to the Executive – especially as being a CLP Secretary, mother and car-less makes reporting back personally impossible (hopefully articles in Briefing help!) – and I have found that in practice I can only be truly accountable to my own CLP. But, again, there are problems with what is being suggested – because they are CLP-centric, they ignore the majority of the Executive. The 16 CLP reps are, on the whole, good attenders and work hard. The women's representation has now been changed so that they are directly elected by and accountable to the London Women's Conference. But what about the trade unions, socialist societies, co-ops, YS, and co-optees from the GLC, ILEA, ALA, etc? Surely, if the Executive is to be restructured, the representation on it from *all* sections of the Party should be put under the microscope.

TRADE UNION SECTIONS

It is clear from other resolutions on the agenda that London trade unionists want to be closely involved in the struggles of the London Labour Party. The miners' strike has shown the need for the left to unite the industrial and political wings of the movement – the coming battle over the political levy makes this pressingly essential. Far more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that all sections, and particularly the trade unions, are representative and accountable. This year's Annual Meeting could achieve more by making sure that there is a meaningful contest in the trade union section, with strong left activists being elected, than getting bogged down in 'campaigning' resolutions which end up creating more problems than they identify.

privatisation in 1985!

As the NHS unions prepare their 1985 pay claim we now have an excellent opportunity to link the fights against low pay and privatisation into one full-scale national campaign of industrial action to bring the maximum possible pressure onto the Government.

With the miners strike now set to continue well into 1985 there could be no better time for an all-out confrontation with Fowler, Page and the hand-picked Tory stooges who sit on the DHA's. But the action would need widespread practical support from the users of the service if the fight's going to be won.

Many lessons have been learnt from the miners' support work but miners support groups must be ready and willing to take on board national action in the health service, or wherever else it may crop up, and be flexible enough to cope.

The overwhelming rank and file support given to Health Workers in the 1982 Pay Dispute can be re-kindled and is the key to success for all those seriously in the business of saving the NHS — Health Emergency Campaigns have already built strong links in many districts but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Many activists in the NHS now find themselves in the difficult and unusual position of defending NHS pay and conditions against the onslaught from the privateers. With contracts likely to be going out hand over first in 1985 it's essential that the issue of low pay in the NHS is not forgotten and that the Labour Party fully recognises the importance of the issue.

In the midst of all the gloom it's nice to be able to report the recent victory of the occupation at Rivermead Hospital in Oxford. When the authority announced that the hospital was to partially close the workers refused to accept it and occupied the building. With the overwhelming support of the community and a lot of hard campaigning the hospital has now won a reprieve.

The victory at Rivermead shows clearly that cuts and privatisation *can* be beaten when workers inside and outside the hospitals stand solidly together. It's the job of every Labour Party activist to build towards that kind of solidarity.

London Health Emergency will be continuing the fight for London's Health Service throughout 1985. Make sure that your organisation affiliates in time for our AGM on March 16th, 10.30am, at County Hall.

£10 will cover affiliation to both L.H.E. and your local campaign for the next 12 months and you'll get a bundle of copies of the monthly "Health Emergency" bulletin plus regular campaign mailings. We can also supply speakers for your meetings.

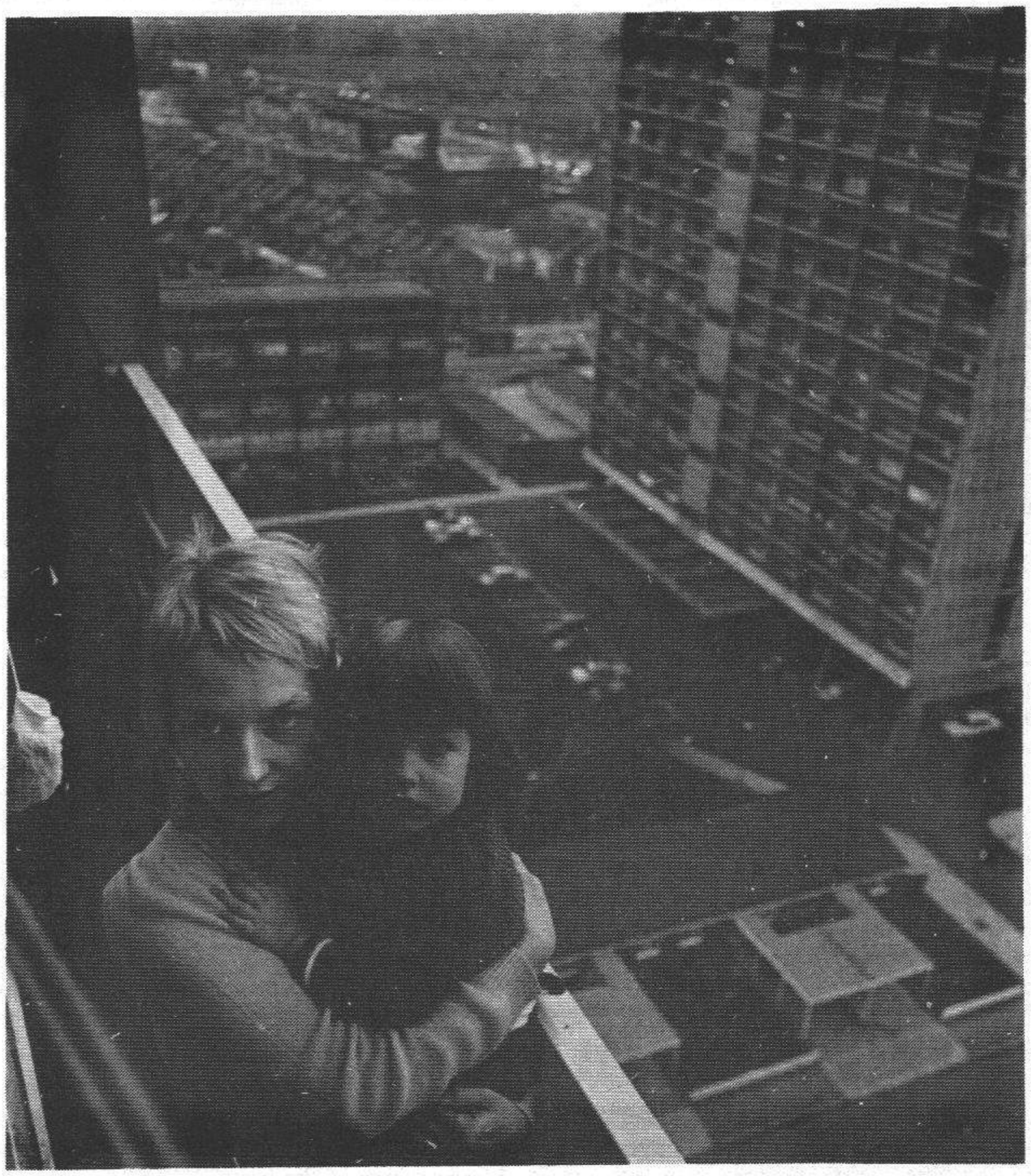
Just contact: London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Road, London W.C.1, 01 833 3020.

Geoff Martin, Organiser
London Health Emergency

HOUSING — RETURN TO CLASS ISSUES!

In Britain, amongst all Thatcher's crises, one crisis, the housing crisis, has occasioned little serious political debate, particularly in the left wing press. Yet the right of shelter, hard won by previous class struggle, has as much importance as the fight for jobs, education and health!

In Britain, there is a housing crisis of dramatic proportions bringing back the Victorian ideology of poor law housing, and worse! Mounting homelessness, butchered public investment in the provision of housing, and a direct attack on the basic principle of council housing as being anti-democratic are the new orthodoxy of this government, bent on privatising housing for profit, like much else.



Labour Party Photo Library

Slashing house-building

Since the Tories came to power in 1979, public spending on housing overall has fallen by 45%. This has meant slashing council house building to ridiculously small levels. On the present rate of replacement at about 30-40,000 new houses a year, every house is now expected to last 350 years. This has also meant hundreds of thousands of houses left unrepaired or improved and in many cases empty. This is equivalent to about £2 billion in lost money for local councils. Coincidentally the estimate of tax relief on mortgages this year has risen to £3.5 billion – a rise of more than £2 billion over the same period.

Jenkin's latest tricks with the Housing Investment Programme (the amount he allows Local Authorities to spend, not the amount he gives them!) far from being the trumpeted victories over the Treasury, represent further cuts of around £1 billion in public housing investment. That means perhaps only 20,000 new houses started, thousands more council houses unimproved, and 50-100,000 further job losses in the construction industries made in the private sector no doubt with the forced privatisation of what public work is left.

Again, Jenkin was supposed to have beaten off treasury attacks this year on the cash support from central government to local authorities on housing revenue. The actual level of £3.2 billion still represents a cut equal to a year's inflation.

The pressures for rent increases and doing less day to day repairs and lowering standards of management will increase in line with this – particularly in Tory boroughs who despise the idea of council housing, as a social ideal, treating its aspirants, especially the homeless, black people and all the other identifiable groups, like dirt and often outside the laws they hypocritically champion!

What of the labour movement in defence of the class interest? Caught up in trendy moves for co-ops for a few, housing associations for a few more and few experiments in tenants managing their own mini-crises we have forgotten why council housing came about. Its historical importance is not only in the local democratic control and service it provides but in its national role in redistributing wealth and property to the working class. The right of shelter can only be met in remembering both these points.

Giving it away

Labour councils are giving that right away by not maintaining houses properly and by remote, paternalistic and authoritarian management. The tenants' movement is giving it away by their libertarian capitalist stance asking for equity with owner occupiers instead of collective, socialist control of that housing, anti-racist, anti-sexist and class based.

The Labour Party nationally and through reformist groups such as the Labour Housing Group echo this parity (or is it parroty) call with policy proposals centring on 'equal choices between alternative housing tenures' and 'tax neutrality' already conceding the Tories' argument about owner occupation as 'best' and 'natural' and in accepting Patrick Jenkin's line about a limited future role for council housing. They return us to 'poor law' housing as a welfare provision identified by means testing for those unable to afford their own, with the consequent increase of private slum landlords and a return to 'Rachmanism'. The agenda for the housing debate must return to class issues about the removal of the private rented sector, the collective ownership of land, the local collective management of council housing and other forms of social housing – not administrative decentralisation – end chronic housing shortages and increase mobility for all households.

The object is to socialise the process of housing and provide an alternative to owner occupier while removing their occupational and capitalist privilege. Public investment must be geared to this objective.

The present pursuit of equity in labour politics is a recipe for a continuing housing crisis that will force people into believing the Tories' blandishments about owner occupation while presenting no alternative nor analysis of the drawbacks of owner occupation. And there are many!

Bill Brown,
(Hackney North and Stoke Newington CLP)

The Alliance in London and the reality of power

A year ago this month the Alliance in Richmond achieved what they regarded as a remarkable breakthrough and won control of a London Borough and in the process ended 100 years of Tory rule. The "Richmond disease" the so-called tactical vote had finally brought them to power. Yet having won power from an ageing and politically bankrupt local Tory party their record has been nothing less than a municipal disaster. Their "community politics" has ground to a halt, their policy decisions have been described as "right-wing" even by *Tory* critics and they have been shown to lack any coherent political strategy.

The often quoted statement by Labour that the Alliance would turn out to be a paler version of the Tories has at last received empirical backing. The accepted conclusion in Richmond has been that the Alliance has been even worse than the Tories. For the last year they have continued previous Tory policies to such an extent that the Tory Opposition Leader curiously muted in the Council Chamber has claimed to be frustrated into silence because he cannot attack them on policy grounds because the Alliance has been carrying out Tory policies. However anyone who dares criticise any Council policies has had to face threats of libel actions by Alliance Committee Chairpersons.

CUTS IN EDUCATION

In their long-awaited first Alliance Budget hundreds of thousands of pounds was cut from the Education budget and previous Alliance voters joined Labour activists in a large demonstration outside the Council offices. Their duplicity reached new depths in September 1984 over the controversial Richmond Riverside Development. The commercial exploitation of the centre of Richmond had been one of the few passions of the outgoing Tory administration which had filled the town with huge empty office blocks. While in opposition the Alliance had attacked the Riverside Development as 'desecration'. Now in office the Alliance signed a deal with a large private developer which would mean more offices than the previous Tory plan. Nothing has been done to cut the record Housing waiting list.

Their monthly newsletters and newspaper collections, the backbone of their 'community politics' strategy have all but disappeared. And a number of unsurprising fights have occurred between the Liberals and their SDP 'partners'. The SDP made it clear after the last election that they wanted and SDP candidate to fight one of the two Parliamentary seats, now both highly marginal. Not a party too committed to consultation, both Liberal PPCs were 're-selected' in record time. Not content with just snubbing the SDP the Alliance tried the same on the electors of the Tory ward of Sheen. Despite intense local opposition and armed with a Sports Council grant they erected a large Sports Centre in what was open space. The speed of the operation was to forestall legal action being taken by residents. After the Centre was built it has been discovered that that land may not after all be suitable for an all-weather pitch and the scheme is now £40,000 over budget.

Even the unemployed have seen the light where the Alliance is concerned. The Alliance Leader referred to them as 'the great unwashed' as he and his Group voted *against* a *Tory* plan to allow free sports facilities for the families of unemployed people.

An administration that boasted a manifesto commitment to 'expose council activities to full public scrutiny' is having to eat its words over a seven month civil liberties case involving council policy and the use by the social services department of 'Place of Safety Orders' which enables social services to suspend parental rights over children. Despite a barrage of press criticism the Council have refused an internal or a public inquiry. The police action in the case has already been criticised by the Director of Public Prosecutions yet this 'liberal' council has told the family involved to go to the Ombudsman rather than listening to what the parents have to say and thereby improving their procedures.

EMBARRASSED

Even Alliance activists have been embarrassed by the activities of their Council. At two recent by-elections Alliance canvassers were telling voters that this time if they voted Alliance rather than Labour this would be the 'final push' to power. This was despite the fact that at the time of the by-elections the Alliance had been in power for 11 months. And a year into power they have decided to conduct a MORI opinion poll to ask the people of Richmond what fiscal policies they would like to see the Council enact. The nakedness of the Alliance in Richmond has also annoyed the previously loyal local press who with London's first Alliance Council felt they has a 'story' on their hands. But local editors are a little fed up of Alliance Chairs turning up in force at newspaper offices complaining about any and every anti-Council statement. So much for freedom of the press.

Apart from the Ice Rink, Richmond's most famous tourist attraction is the Theatre on the Green. The activities of London's only Alliance Council which border on farce can now rival the best pantomine the Theatre chooses to put on. Richmond under the Alliance serves as a salutory lesson for all potential Labour voters and editors of 'The New Statesman' who treat the Alliance as a soft option. They do not represent in any conceivable way an acceptable alternative to a Tory administration.

For too long seats like Richmond – and the disease has spread to the south of England – have been neglected as 'no win' situations. Yet they are crucial to our success at the next council elections and the next General Election. If we halt the progress of the Alliance in places like Richmond – where they do not expect a hard fight from Labour – then their entire southern strategy which has forced Labour into third place in so many seats will be destroyed.

We must stop believing *their* campaign slogans and use their record in Richmond to expose their dangerously simplistic statements as being nothing more than political decipt.

Keith Vaz
Chair, Richmond & Barnes CLP

Miners levy: Brent South on target

As we have monitored our levy since we started in May it is possible to assess how support for the miners has been in the CLP. I am pleased to say that the money is now coming in from most wards in a strong and regular way. We have now raised £6,536.54 about 63.12% of our target 50p/member. Four out of ten wards are now raising over the levy amounts. Apart from the levy we have had many other fund raising events throughout the year for the miners including barbecues and socials. We have just had a Xmas weekend for 50 Welsh miners' children who were looked after by CLP members and had a well organised stay in the CLP. We were able to pay for the coach to bring them up and back, a hamper for each of the children's families and a cheque for £400 for the hardship fund at home. Our levy money goes to Kent NUM for whom we have also managed to collect food parcels from members and house to house collections. So contrary to what the 'rags' say our experience is that the support locally for the miners is stronger now than ever before.

Peter Batkin

EALING BY-ELECTION

Following the death of Labour Councillor Ray Edwards, Ealing is facing its fifth by-election in just over a year. The seat, West End Ward, is a Labour-held marginal and one where, unfortunately, the Ealing North party's high level of organisation is not very evident.

The last three by-elections in Ealing have resulted in swings to Labour of between 9% and 11% and it is essential to keep the pressure on the Tories, with their very small Council majority, by scoring another success of the same order in West End.

Although Polling Day has not been fixed by the time of writing this, we expect it to be late February/early March. The campaign will be fought on the issues of privatisation, defence of services and local democracy. We would appeal to all comrades to help us win this vital by-election.

Kevin Veness
Secretary, Ealing Borough LGC

NEASDEN PICKET: BEGINNING TO BITE



It's a cold, bright morning. Friday, December 21, 1984. There are thirty of us here: eight from Richmond and Twickenham Miners' Support Group, several from Enfield, ones and twos from Hackney, Lewisham and other assorted places. Most have been here since 6 or 6.30 am.

"Is there no-one from Brent Trades Council?" "Where are the Brent comrades?" I keep getting asked. The picket this morning has been a kind of accident. There is supposed to be picketing here every day of the week, with three Kent miners – Kenny, John and Bob – forming the core, backed up with local support from the Brent Miners' Support Group. But last Friday, Kenny and John were arrested for not moving fast enough when told to go away from the gate area by the police ("Too late!" they were told as they started to move. "You've lost all your fucking rights!"). Their case is coming up on February 21, but until then they are not allowed within a mile radius of the power station, and so only Bob is left maintaining the picket. This morning, for the first time in months, Bob isn't here: he's gone down with a streaming cold. I nearly didn't turn up here myself – the Brent comrades for the most part were lukewarm about the leaflet given out at Monday's mass picket, on the back of which we (that is, the Mineworkers' Defence Committee) had written: "Come again on Friday". But how do you cancel a picket once it has been announced? Yesterday, I heard from my sister in Enfield that she and others were all set to come. "There's no getting out of it now", I thought, "I'll have to be there – I expect there will be ones and twos from all over London arriving."

So here we are. No miners. No-one from Brent. But thirty of us in good spirits on a beautiful, cold Christmassy morning. The two chimneys of the power station are a pure, clear cream colour, like up-ended candles against the bright blue sky. We are standing by the main gates a few hundred yards away, next to a ramparts-like wall with "Support the Miners" painted in bold white letters across it. Neasden is a relatively small station, normally used only as a booster for the national grid, turning its generators on for a couple of hours in the morning peak period and again in the evening. It is remote-controlled from East Grinstead (tel. 0342-23611). The staff working here number only about a dozen in all, including management. Essentially, they just perform maintenance duties, and check in the tankers "to make sure they don't sell us short." Most of the men are in the EETPU; some are TGWU. Their attitude as we approach them on the picket line is usually ambivalent, bordering on sympathetic. Relations with one or two contacts go beyond this, and we get plenty of information from inside. Three weeks ago, we were advised that a really strong mass picket would begin producing effects. Emma Tait, secretary of the Brent Miners' Support Group, raised the need for London-wide picketing help at the December 2 Conference of the Mineworkers' Defence Committee. This was agreed, picket-volunteers were signed up, and we were able to join with SERTUC and the Kent NUM in organising the mass picket here on Monday December 17, at which about 400 of us turned up and heard rousing speeches by Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn, David Kitson and others. Ken's appeal for all Londoners to join the picket lines in defence of democracy and jobs was broadcast over Radio London.

9.20 a.m. Two electricians arrive in a mini-metro. They have come to mend a damaged cable. They belong to the EETPU. "Our steward has told us to cross the picket line", they say. We implore them, tell them the picket is official, explain about the TUC guidelines, point out that the station is being run entirely on scab aviation fuel delivered by non-union tanker drivers. "If the miners lose now, after all those months, it will be terrible – terrible for all of us!" We are pleading, begging, almost crying . . . The men turn and drive off, to cheers and applause.

10.00 a.m. An orange-coloured London Electricity Board lorry arrives, with a trailer behind and three men in the cab. They show us their docket: a white piece of paper stamped URGENT, instructing them to mend the damaged feeder cable. No trouble. They belong to the TGWU. It takes a while to turn the long vehicle and its trailer around. Terrific cheers and applause as they drive off.

By now, a lot of people on the picket are saying they have to go to work, or fulfil various

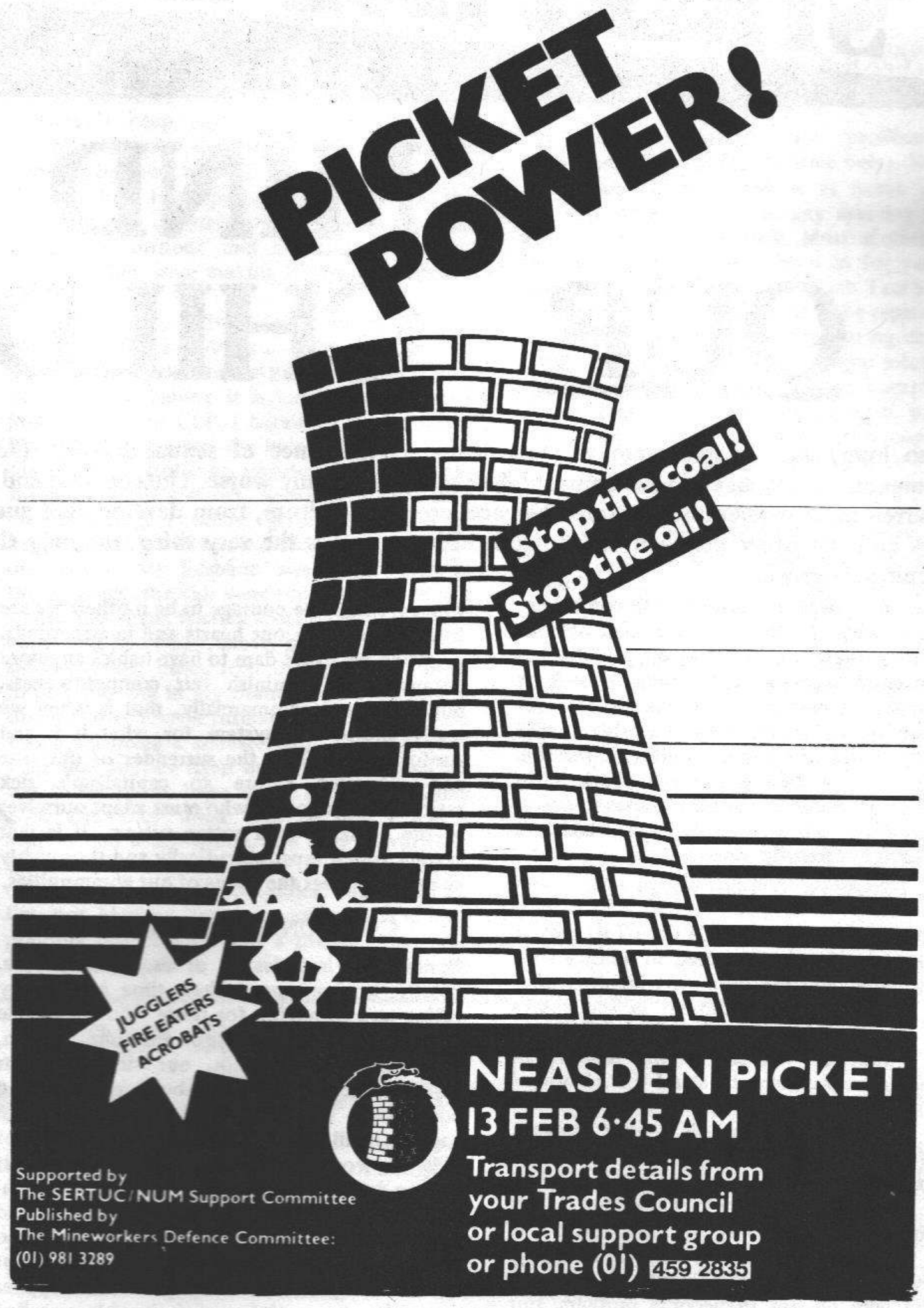
other commitments. We are soon down to a dozen, and most of these cannot stay all day. But how can we leave the picket now, when perhaps we've a chance of keeping repair workers from that damaged cable over the whole Christmas period? Someone gives me some ten pence pieces to go and phone for reinforcements. I am about to go when a smaller orange transit van arrives. Again, it's the LEB with two men inside. They are TGWU. Good! Yes, they're with us – they refuse to cross the picket line. They have been told to mend that cable urgently – if it isn't fixed, the local hospital "will be threatened with a power-failure, along with the whole area".

11.15 a.m. At the phone box, I meet the same two TGWU men whom we've just turned away. They are putting a call through to their union branch secretary. Afterwards, they come over to have a word with me. "You lot haven't half tied us up this morning", says one. "Management are really panicking about that bust cable. But I'll tell you, if that hospital is threatened, I'll be straight back up here to mend it just the same, picket or no picket." I protest to him that hospitals have got their own generators. Of course, he doesn't need that explained. "Yeah, if they give you any of that bullshit – just tell the LEB to get another generator up to that hospital!" I get into the phone box, call up the Brent Unemployed Workers' Centre, tell them about the successes this morning and ask for help.

12.10. An Eastern Electricity lorry arrives, carrying a mechanical digger. The driver is young. He's come to work on the damaged cable. We tell him about his mates who have all turned back. He's not sure whether to believe us. Discussion for five minutes or so. Eventually he begins to turn round. "I'm just going back to check", he says. "If you've crossed me on this one I'll be back!" He drives off, to cheers and applause.

1.45 p.m. Two men from the CEGB come in a van to deliver some paperwork. After some pleading they agree to go back to their depot in Willesden to check things out with management and the union. More applause (they re-appear an hour later and we let them through with the paper).

3.20 p.m. The two men in the transit (the ones I'd spoken to at the phone box) reappear. They tell us that the TGWU is respecting the picket, and that the cable won't get mended this side of Christmas. They've just come to put a plastic bag over it to protect it from the weather in the meantime. We let them through with the plastic bag, and they race back thirty seconds later. A few of us go up and check the spot: there's a hole in the ground, with a length of cable showing at the bottom, part of it covered with a plastic bag. A "Radio London" car drives up, and a woman reporter comes out.



She's heard about the hospital under threat. She interviews us with a tape-recorder. Then off she goes to the hospital. One of us climbs down and takes away that plastic bag . . .

Today's been the best day's picketing here for weeks. Since mid-afternoon, some comrades from Brent have begun arriving, including, in particular, Bob Crouch from the Kent NUM. The brazier is lit, and we all keep warm. At the other gate, the cafe proprietor supports the miners, and won't take any money for teas from us. Five tank-loads of aviation fuel have gone in today, but the week's picture looks like this:

Friday, 14th	0 tankers
Saturday, 15th	4 tankers
Sunday, 16th	6 tankers
Monday, 17th	0 tankers
Tuesday, 18th	0 tankers
Wednesday, 19th	1 tanker
Thursday, 20th	3 tankers
Friday, 21st	5 tankers

During the mass picket on Monday, the station was completely closed down: nobody came in at all throughout the day. The management expected a large picket also on Tuesday, when Jeremy Corbyn and three other Labour MPs (from the Campaign Group) were present. Although the picket was small, no tankers appeared then either.

Soon after the start of the strike in March, this station began burning for much longer than the four hours per day for which it was designed. At the maximum, it was burning for 17 hours per day, and this continued until about three weeks ago. Then a large Rolls Royce jet engine was burned out and had to be removed: the pickets saw it being taken out. A fortnight later, another engine was removed, this was a week ago. There is no spare engine in the plant, and now it is back to burning for only four hours a day. It is barely getting even enough fuel to be able to keep that up for long. For us, the remaining problem is the non-union scab tanker-drivers. As Ken Livingstone said on the picket on Monday, they've got to be stopped. They will be stopped. We're going to see to that.

It's six o'clock. It's completely dark, on this, the longest night of the year. After chanting some spells over the red embers of the brazier, Bob and I decide to call it a day. We'll be back tomorrow to watch that cable.

Chris Knight

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

MIND OUR CHILDREN

Not so long ago, children were an unavoidable consequence of sexual activity. (And in many places they still are.) A natural phenomenon, totally beyond our control. Like the weather, only worse. The constant and substantial burden of childbirth and childcare has barred most women, no matter their race, creed, or culture, from development and achievement in any other field. So bless Mary Stopes and the other pioneers of birthcontrol because it is the very thing, the only thing, that frees women from their traditional, transcultural shackles.

True, our present means of birth control are far from perfect. But whatever their various drawbacks, these are easier to cope with than an unwanted, unloved, unaffordable baby. Now that we have a choice, we also have to consider what we are doing, and why. To bring a child into the world means a commitment for life. One from which there is no turning back, without causing painful emotional traumas to everyone involved. So it is a decision which we consider very carefully indeed.

IDEOLOGY AND REALITY

In Labour Briefing August '84 Cath Tate wrote: 'Women who want to succeed in politics have first to overcome the dominant ideology that states that our true fulfilment in life comes from being a wife and mother. This is still the *main* barrier to women coming forward in representative numbers to stand for selection.' This is a load of rubbish!

It is an anti-socialist, right-wing analysis: isolationalist and competitive. Why? Because it blames the individual woman for failing to overcome a problem that is in fact communal. It is presented as a psychological issue, instead of being recognised for the sociological one that it is. There is nothing ideologically wrong with women who choose to become mothers, but there is something *practically* wrong with a society that doesn't provide some adequate form of communal childcare. *THIS* is *THE* barrier to women coming forward in representative numbers for anything that demands serious commitment.

MOTHERHOOOD AS AN ACT OF POLITICAL DEFIANCE

Consider the situation: The world is being poisoned, polluted, depleted, abused and mismanaged on a grandiose and unprecedented scale. Death and disaster will probably follow. Nuclear weapons, C3I et al means we are also under constant threat of immediate, painful, and total extinction. Two-thirds of the world's people are undernourished or actually dying from hunger and thirst. Of the remainder, many are poor, unhealthy, live in unhygienic and crammed conditions, and largely miss out on what further education there is available. Almost everywhere capitalism rules. The profit-motive is paramount. The interests of multinational companies are served – and fanatically protected – by sham governments whose claims to be the guardians of freedom and democracy are a farce and a fallacy. Why should anyone wish to bring children into this world? Because when we lose the courage to be mothers we are truly defeated in our hearts and in our minds.

When we don't dare to have babies anymore because they diminish our competitiveness, politically and commercially, that is when we really accept the system for what it is and conform to it. It is the surrender of our true and primitive nature to capitalism's sick rationale. It is not us, who must adapt ourselves to the demands of a rotten system. It is that system which must be radically and thoroughly changed to meet the needs of our communities.

COMMUNITY AND STATUS

Community includes all of us. Many people, mostly women, spend their time and energy caring and providing for those who are unable to do it for themselves, not only our children, but also our old folk, our sick, and our disabled. It is on this labour of love and compassion that the whole edifice of human society, in all its myriad forms, is built. And yet it is this work, humble and menial, carried out unseen in huts and hovels and homes throughout the world that is unrecognised and unrewarded, financially or politically. It has no status whatsoever, and those who carry it out earn nothing, not even respect. This applies especially to mothers, even in this so-called democratic country where we are supposed to have equal rights. Some say that to have children is ideologically wrong. Others seem to think it is a self-indulgent thing that women do. Still others that we do it because we can't think of anything else. I say that in having and rearing children we make a substantial and valuable contribution to society. The love and time we give our children will benefit you all. They will do the work when you are too old. They will feed you and pay your bills. They will defend your rights when you are helpless, feeble old fools. They are the most valuable resource of this or any other nation. The quality of the care we give them determines the quality of all our futures.

Of course the traditional Right accords some sort of status to motherhoood and this may appeal, or even seem reassuring, to some women. But it is granted only on the condition that we are mothers to the exclusion of all else, so we don't compete with the men, don't participate in, or gain understanding of what takes place outside our homes, and are consequently unable to educate our children in political history. This way, thepoor raise their sons and daughters to accept poverty and deprivation, to be exploited labourers and the mothers of exploited labourers, to take pride in their service, to be soldiers and prostitutes.

At Greenham, my six year old daughter and I stood amongst many other women, facing the soldiers, and the fence. Directly in front of us stood a row of policement. 'Is that your child?' asked one of them. 'Yes' I said, not without a touch of mother's pride. 'It's not a very good example you're setting her, is it?' he said disapprovingly down his nose. I answered I was giving her a political education, a lesson in active democracy. 'Ha' he sneered, and moved off. Smug pig. If only his mother had been able to teach him a thing or two about power and democracy, he wouldn't have been there, at that time, in that uniform.

DISCRIMINATION AND ISOLATION

Hopefully I have convinced some of you that mothers are dedicated workers in a vital industry. (According to the International Labour Organisation western housewives spend 3000 to 4000 hours each year on housework and family care. A 35 hour a week, paid, unionised, job amounts to 1,750 hours a year.) We have no trade union, no national pressure group, no representatives in Parliament, to defend our interests. Decisions that affect our lives are taken for us, not by us, and without any form of consultation. This is blatant discrimination. But it is not sexual. It doesn't happen because we are women. It happens because we are childcarers, and children are not catered for, or allowed to be part of, public life. In fact, the attitude of our society is victorian: children shouldn't be heard, and preferably not seen either. And we mothers are isolated, barred from unifying and organising, not by any laws, but by the very nature of our work.

When I first because a mother, I didn't realise this. I spent a lot of time with both my babies, very willingly. I felt it was important for us just to sit around together, play, and fight, and cuddle, and share food, just like monkeys do. It was a happy thing to do, and very rewarding, in personal terms. (If anyone missed out, at that point, it was my husband, who had to work long hours to pay all the bills and things, so he didn't have much time to enjoy family life. And as he doesn't himself produce milk, we couldn't swap roles very well either.) But after about nine months, a baby's need for the company of other children becomes quite dominant. (And a mother's need for the company of other adults too!) To my shock horror surprise, there was nowhere for either or both of us to go. There are virtually no

provisions for the under-threes. Every activity has to take place within the constraints of your own or somebody else's home. Whatever facilities you can provide at home are quickly exhausted by an active toddler. Children, who have no neutral terrain on which to meet, become competitive and possessive. Each defends his/her sovereignity to THEIR house, THEIR toys, THEIR mum. Sharing and co-operation don't come natural under these circumstances. They are attitudes that you have to enforce in them, unfortunately.

To get away from it we used to go out a lot, to the parks. Regents Park, Primrose Hill, Hampstead Heath, Golders Hill, and so on. they are all so full of dogshit that you can't let a toddler crawl through the grass!

After lugging a baby in a buggy, a toddler, two bags and a box of shopping along a mile or two of busy pavement, you'd think a woman is entitled to a drink, wouldn't you? Well, we have to drink our pint on the pavement outside, in the cold, the noise and the pollution. Some publicans won't even allow that. As soon as you stick your face in the door, they tell you to leave, because you have a child in your arms that you can't leave unsupervised outside, not even for a minute.

POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION

But it's not just public houses we are barred from – it's any public activity at all. Public meetings, for instance, don't usually provide creches or kids' corners. So they are difficult, if not impossible, to attend.

Demonstrations are a trial. At last year's ILEA demo there were thousands of us, with our babies, our toddlers, our small children. We had to stand in the cold and the drizzle on the wet muddy grounds of Hyde Park for two hours while various leading trade unionists held long, boring speeches. Even when we finally did move, all the TU branches went first, so we had to wait some more. Now this might seem a tedious little complaint to the uninformed. But the fact is, that when a small child falls over, something they do often, in the mud, it gets wet. And when it's wet and it stays out in the cold, it catches a cold, or worse. Also, because you can't keep sight of them as they run around, because they are hidden by other people's legs, we were all dashing about, trying to keep them from getting lost. So even as the speakers were congratulating us on the 'encouraging large turnout' and thanking us for our support, they were making it very difficult for us to stay.

Labour Party activists seem equally unaware of the problems mothers have in participating. This is only my personal experience, but I have no reason to believe it is uncommon; when I joined my local CLP, I became a roadsteward. Every month me and the kids toddled through the street, stuffing agendas for meetings through people's doors. Sometimes they rang me up, saying: 'I couldn't go the meeting, what happened?' I never knew. I didn't go to a single one myself. My husband was out at work in the evenings, the kids were too young to be left alone, and single friends mostly feel they can't cope with two noisy, snotty-nosed, recalcitrant, shitty-nappied brats, feed them, and put them to bed. No one in my branch ever bothered to find out why I never turned up, and after a year I stopped being a roadsteward. The only time after that anyone from the Party contacted me was to ask me to bake a cake for a fund-raising stall. Did they think that because I was a mother and a housewife, the only worthwhile contribution I could make to politics was a cake? And if this isn't prejudice, then what is? I'm not blaming anyone personally, I'm just pointing out that there is a prevalent attitude throughout society, throughout the Labour Party, from grassroots to Parliament, which is contrary to the democratic interests of a substantial minority – guess is about 12% – of the population.

CHILDCARE, DEMOCRACY, AND SOCIALISM

For me, fortunately, the problem has disappeared, at least for the time being. My kids go to school, their dad is at home in the evenings, and I can go to any meeting I like. That's just my good luck. Most mothers still face the dilemma I have been in for years. It needs a proper solution. Not Cath Tate's nutty idea, which is that if we want to be represented in Parliament, we should stop having children and be more like men, but a proper solution – an acceptance that children are a natural part of our lives, in every aspect, personal, private, social, public, political. And in this context I would like to make an appeal to socialists, especially socialist men. When you organise a meeting, make sure children can be welcome too. Do some babysitting. Provide some childcare. It may not seem as exciting as going to a demo, raising funds for the miners, or holding speeches, but it is just as relevant.

How relevant will be quite clear when the rate-capping issue comes to a head. Defiant Labour Councils need all the grassroots support they can get, but if mothers find it difficult or impossible to go to meetings, how can we discuss what is to be done, how can we organise to protect our services, how can we make a significant political stand? Mind our children. They belong to all of us. Help us defend ourselves and work for a society where there is a more equal division of labour and resources, a more just division of power.

Monica Slade
Hampstead & Highgate CLP

Letter from a member of Alcoholics Anonymous

Dear Briefing,
This letter is unsigned not because I wish to make any secret of either my alcoholism or my identity but because, according to the Twelve Traditions of AA, the AA name ought never to be drawn into public controversy. 'Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities' (Tradition 12).

I was astonished to find that as a feminist, socialist, republican and lapsed Catholic, I would find myself at home in a fellowship which reeked, to me, of such bogeys as American cultural imperialism, fundamentalist Bible-thumping, male domination, bourgeois moralism, etc etc. Like many other organisations of my experience, AA is not free of such tendencies. I am at home in it because, as an alcoholic, I suffer from a progressive, incurable, and killer disease, and no other fellowship in the world can save me from my own will to self-destruction. Despite periods of controlled drinking of all kinds, including going on the wagon, cutting down, changing my drink, drinking later in the day, eating more, exercising more, increasing my political or artistic commitment etc I have no defence whatsoever against alcohol. As my illness progresses – which it must, whether or not I drink – my allergy to the stuff increases apace, so that alcohol becomes progressively more and more damaging to my physically, mentally, materially and spiritually. At the same time, the compulsion to drink gets stronger. Catch 22!

It is a horrible thing to have to admit that I am powerless over alcohol and that my life is unmanageable. However much I struggle against oppression of all kinds, I have no control over my own life. I am in fact incapable of struggling effectively at all unless I can turn over my will to a Power greater than myself – in the first place to AA. Alcoholics have tremendous willpower and self-control. It is when we lose – in drink – the courage and humility to let God take care of us and AA take care of our alcoholism that we become our own worst enemies, literally hell-bent on our own downfall.

I hope comrades will not be too alarmed at or offended by this mention of the biggest Bogeyman of all. Other AA members have other names for Her, Him or It, and other understandings of what S/He might be like. Our recovery depends on finding this Power within ourselves. We can't know all that much about It at first, and we certainly don't accept absolutely any conception of God laid down by any merely human person or institution. Many of us were convinced at various times that we were God, and this was no small part of our insanity. Most readers will be aware that this insanity is not confined to alcoholics . . .

Alcoholics who have any experience in any part of our movement have a lot going for them. We have been privileged to learn – despite ourselves – great lessons in humility and rigorous honesty. I know that if I drink again, I can be a traitor, prostitute or murderess (I have been all these things in informal ways). If I stick with AA long enough and stay sober long enough, I will learn to tell the truth more often, stand by my comrades, remain true to my principles, and stay free. Of course I might be arrested, imprisoned, tempted to inform or betray, offered poisonous mind-chainging or – worst of all – alcoholic drink. I cannot control such occurrences, but in AA I can learn to defend myself against any attempted exploitation of my weaknesses by maintaining my mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health. When I was practising my alcoholism I needed no outside oppressor or institution to betray myself over and over again! Alcohol can be poured down my gullet, I suppose, but if I pray hard, it will be as harmless to me as the blood of Christ in any ceremony which shares out that blood.

I"ve learned in AA by listening to the stories of other alcoholics that many diseases such as strokes, heart failures, mental breakdowns and crippling or near-fatal accidents can have alcoholism as their real cause. The disease is entirely democratic. It respects neither class, intelligence, talent, race, sex, age or experience. No amount of human worth is proof against it.

I can't tell you whether or not you are an alcoholic. I do know that if you think you might be, you have nothing to lose by coming to an AA meeting and possibly everything to lose by refusing to try it.

There are groups for women which I believe are very necessary and useful ('Women and Alcohol' is one) but they cannot replace the combined strength and experience of the united Fellowship of AA. Unity is strength despite our differences. Alcoholics of various oppressed nationalities also find strength, hope and a home in AA. So do gay alcoholics.

AA is not dogmatic about mind-changing drugs, but I will be. They are *all* poison to an alcoholic. If you have a drug problem you may find it helpful to go to an appropriate self-help

Continued on next page

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT
BRIEFING
ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Fighting heterosexism in Brent

(Cllr) Angela Shariff
Vice Liaison Chair
Brent Women's Sub-Committee

Brent Women's Committee has been subjected to the most atrocious and inaccurate gutter press coverage of a very practical and realistic decision to produce guidelines on sexism, racism and heterosexism with respect to Council posters.

The main aim of this move is to avoid stereotype images of women and to truly reflect the ambitions of women in society. An officer in each department will have responsibility with respect to ensuring guidelines are complied with. At the moment therefore a decision has been taken on the principle. The detail is still to be worked out by the Women's Sub-Committee through its consultation process.

THE PRESS RESPONSE

We have refused to provide the press with examples of past mistakes since the emphasis is on rectifying the position for the future. Nonetheless the local Wembley Observer and the Daily Mail have printed a 'Tea Dancing' poster, which is primarily racist as it reflects comfortable white middle class society. Whilst the poster is heterosexist, the press have chosen to make the following statements *'The poster . . . struck members of the Women's Ctte as deeply shocking. For it showed a man dancing with a woman"* (Daily Mail) *"But the Women's Ctte is nothing if not open-minded. It accepts a proportion of the folk in Brent steadfastly remain heterosexual"* Daily Mail) *"Already some councillors can see billboards presenting a black man dancing with a white woman; a white man with a black woman; two white men together; two black women in each other's arms"* (Daily Mail). *"The women claim that homosexuals and lesbians are being made to feel like wall flowers by publicity material"* (Daily Star). The press go to pains telling the public which posters we propose to change . . . when we have not decided yet!

All we are saying is that Brent as a multi-racial borough which includes single people, gays and lesbians, single parents AND couples, should ensure its publicity adequately reflects the nature of the Borough. In particular women should be properly represented and not stereotyped as passive or seen to be subservient or dominated by men.

The proposals were supported by the three Liberals as an important move and they rightly criticised the Tories and some of the Labour men who seemed to think the debate was part of the Benny Hill Show! The Tories were able to get away with remarks like 'crackpot feminists and wierdos and queers', despite women councillors demanding retractions and apologies.

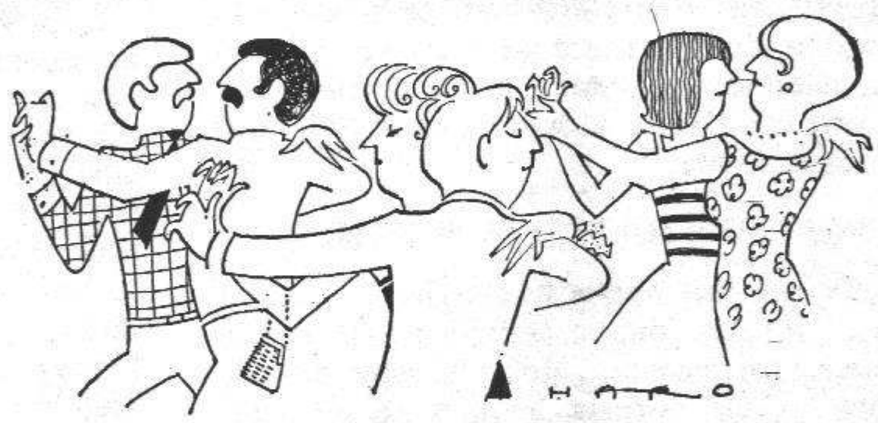
The battle in the Labour Party to recognise these issues as important is still a long struggle when Labour Councillors make remarks like 'the fight against racism could lose ground if feminists, gays and lesbians were given equal priority'.

PAGE 3

Daily Mail, Friday, December 14, 1984

The Loony Left adding a new dimension to romance

Give me the moonlight, give me the girl...and leave the rest to Brent Council



TUT, TUT. The poster advertising the Saturday night dance in the Town Hall struck members of the Women's Committee as deeply shocking. For it showed a man dancing *with a woman.*



You know, the sort of thing you'd expect of, say, that old smoochie serenader Frank Vaughan, but not, it seems, of the patrons taking days in the Brent.

By AMIT ROY

In future, the poster will show a lesbian dancing close to another lesbian and a gay man locked in the embrace of another gay man.

But the women's committee "nothing if not open minded ... accepts a proportion of the f... remain ...

...bitions

Already some councillors can see billboards presenting a black man dancing with a white woman; a white m... with a black woman; two white wom... ...ogether; two black ...other's arms.

...to put gays in ... stop with the ...n Hall on ... for the ...ces will ...

...wo ...

women's officer, Ellen Reynolds. 'Lesbians and gays do exist,' she said. 'They are ratepayers and they pay taxes. They are consumers of council services. They want to be acknowledged in any publicity that comes out. They do not want to be ignored.'

Sam Greenaway, a family man, doesn't see things the way that Ellen and Gillian do.

'Realistic'

As one of the council's 31 Tories ...here are 32 on the Labour side ...hree Liberals—he voted in vain

(CONTINUED)

group, but if you are an alcoholic, your *firs* priority is to stop drinking and come to AA. That didn't make much sense to me when I first heard it, but it does now. Through AA, once I put down the glass everything else in my life begins gradually to fall into place. I allowed a psychiatrist to poison me further for a short while with 'natural substance' anti-depressants; when I finally dropped the last of them down the sink I suffered an almighty great hangover. (I do not advise anyone to do exactly the same – some pills have to be stopped gradually.)

For those of us who have learned to look to Ireland for a lead, let the last word go to someone who never needed AA.

'If they aren't able to destroy the desire for freedom, they won't break you. They won't break me because the desire for freedom, and the freedom of the Irish people, is in my heart. The day will dawn when all the people of Ireland will have the desire for freedom to show. It is then we'll see the rising of the moon.'

Bobby Sands escaped clean, free and pure. So – all of us – must we.

Anon

The London AA number if 834 8202. Details of all AA meetings in London – some of which are open to non-alcoholic observers – can be obtained by ringing this number. The alcoholic on phone duty will be more than happy to talk to you about your individual problem on the phone for a long as you need. Ring soon – she or he might be needing your call!

WHAT DO MEN WANT?

A SERIES OF 6 DISCUSSIONS ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A MAN TODAY

By making women at once subjects of investigation and active participants in change, the women's movement put into question a host of traditional assumptions about sexuality, gender, social, political and economic relations. But what has the impact of the women's movement been on men? How do men now understand what it means to be male? Have men's relationships to women, to the family and to power altered?

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THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY — THURSDAY 14 MARCH,
WEEKLY: SEMINAR ROOM

ICA
THE MALL SW1

Write for the Streetlife Supplement!

Articles and letters should be sent to **Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Road, London N16**

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LABOUR

BRIEFING

NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No. 14 FEBRUARY 1985

For a massive miners' demonstration on February 24

WE WILL WIN!

The Mineworkers' Defence Committee, the Broad Left Organising Committee, the Liason Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs have jointly set a date for a massive labour movement demonstration in London in support of the miners. At the meeting of the LCTDU at which he urged such a call, Tony Benn also outlined plans for the setting up of 'a small and representative steering committee' to facilitate the co-ordination of all-out mass national action to ensure that the miners' win. The functions of this committee should be:

1. To win acceptance of the principle that you do not cross a picket line;

2. To extend industrial action into related activities — especially power stations, road transport of coal and oil and associated work;

3. To step up the financial support by all possible means including systematic levies of those in work;

4. To link the miners' strike politically with the wider struggle against unemployment, cuts, privatisation, poverty and threats to women's interests, civil liberties and local authorities.

Hopefully, all this will go some way towards meeting the NUM's urgent demands. 'How much longer are you going to stand aside and see us continually battered?' asked Arthur Scargill in a recent speech. 'I ask trade unionists at rank and file level — 'stop waiting for the leadership to tell you what to do. Take industrial action and put into effect TUC policy'. This is the key. All of our meetings, conferences, demonstrations and the rest will mean nothing unless they are geared to the organising of solidarity industrial action to win this strike.

The TUC has betrayed the miners. Our job now is to organise solidarity without and despite the TUC.

Tens of thousands of activists — in trade union branches, Labour Party wards women's organisations black groups lesbian and gay movements have been inspired and mobilised by the miners' battle. The Mineworkers' Defence Committee is trying to bring them together into a force capable of responding to Arthur Scargill's appeal.

It held a 2000-strong conference on December 2, and managed to unite a broad spectrum of the Left. A second

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Mineworkers Defence Committee

National Conference

Solidarity with the NUM!

Saturday February 9, 11am to 5pm, at the Octagon Centre, Sheffield.

Confirmed speakers include

PETER HEATHFIELD TONY BENN PHIL HOLT

JOHN TOCHER BETTY HEATHFIELD

Sponsors so far include: Kings Cross ASLEF, Civil Service Miners' Support Campaign, Felixstowe Port Committee of the National Union of Seamen, Campaign Group of MPs, Fire Brigades Union, CPSA Broad Left, NALGO National Miners' Support Campaign, National Union of Seamen, Broad Left Organising Committee, Labour Briefing, Socialist Worker, Militant, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, C A Parsons Shop Stewards Committee TASS, Greenham Women for a Miners' Victory, News of the World/Sun Miners' Hardship Fund.

Delegates: 2 per trade union organisation, 1 per other organisation. Accommodation, credentials, creche: 01-981 3289 or write to MDC c/o 31 Cranwich Rd, London N16.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

MINERS. WE WILL WIN! (contd.)

conference will be held on February 9th, this time in Sheffield. Already we have received the sponsorship of the Seamen's Union, the Fire Brigades Union, the Broad Left Organising Committee, numerous rank-and-file organisations, Labour Parties, Greenham women's groups and other organisations – as well, of course, as the specific endorsement of Peter Heathfield and Arthur Scargill among others in the NUM. At the time of writing, this is within little more than a week since letters requesting sponsorships were sent out. The groundswell of support being built up is really terrific.

Our aim in organising the re-call conference is to fulfil the mandate given to us by the first conference on December 2. That conference instructed our committee to work for a delegate-based committee with the power and breadth to be able to take, jointly with the NUM, such measures as are necessary to win this strike.

Other activities under way include:

1. **Finance.** We have circulated a financial appeal to European trade unions. Numerous plans for fund-raising benefits are under way including a possible very large benefit at Wembley Conference Centre.

2. **TUC lobby.** The TUC s meeting on January 23 was lobbied by our committee in conjunction with BLOC.

3. **Women's Conference.** A Women's Solidarity Conference is being organised, with a date somewhere around International Women's Day (March 9).

4. **Sunday February 24th National Demonstration in support of the miners.** Our march on central London, jointly called by the campaign group of Labour MPs, the LCDTU, the Mineworkers' Defence Committee and other bodies, promises to be absolutely massive. We are out to shake Whitehall, Parliament and Thatcherism to the roots. Miners are expected in their thousands; preparations to welcome them must be undertaken without delay.

5. **Support for the 24 hour general strike on February 11**, called for by Yorkshire and Humberside Regional TUC. They are appealing for other regions to join in, and we are doing all in our power to support this.

PICKET POWER!

We've taken steps to get information on all the power stations in the country which are being picketed, together with available information as to the situation inside each station — this should soon be in our bulletin. We want to get far better publicity for mass pickets than has previously been put out. The picket at Neasden on December 17th, called for by the Kent NUM and SERTUC, was boosted about eight-fold by our additional publicity — instead of the usual 50 or so, there were 400 of us. And that was with little more than a week to organise! On Friday 21st, we had a sufficiently big picket — thanks mainly to Richmond and Twickenham Miners' Support Group — to turn away a series of Electricity Board vehicles coming in response to an urgent request by management to repair a damaged feeder cable. In fact, that cable remained unrepaired through the whole Christmas/New Year period thanks to a small number of us on the gate. Give us notice, and give us a chance to get publicity out, and I think that with our range of contacts and supporters we can make a very substantial difference to the scale of power-station picketing in the areas where we are strong.

The elements for victory are there. There were widespread power cuts in London on Monday January 7. According to the Financial Times on January 8:

"The strike has enabled the NCB to supply power stations in the Midlands with coal which, in other circumstances, the CEGB would probably have refused to burn. In the Midlands alone, the NCB has cleared out more than 5 million tonnes of coal from stockpiles up to six years old. However... these stocks are almost exhausted..."

If just six large power stations can be put out of action, then power cuts seriously affecting industry are certain. And workers at many of the large power stations outside the Midlands have been refusing to accept new supplies of coal.

But so far it is all too little, too late, and too scattered. This dispute is a watershed confrontation between Capital and Labour. The miners, at present, are bearing the brunt of the battle for the whole labour movement.

We should all be mobilised. As Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone and others have said, we need a general strike. One-day protests, demonstrations and so on should be preparations for (in Arthur Scargill's words) "the most massive mobilisation of industrial action our movement has ever known".

Until now, the TUC and Labour leaders have managed to persuade the great majority of the labour movement that we are too weak for such action. By persuading us that we are weak, they keep us weak.

By bringing together the militants who support the miners, we can become aware of our strength. Scattered actions can be transformed into a powerful momentum.

Unleashing the necessary forces means dispensing entirely with bureaucratic habits. It means opening up our campaign to everyone who wants to win. The Tories may yet find that they have provoked and awakened the anger of a sleeping dragon, black as coal . . .

Build the Mineworkers' Defence Committee!

Chris Knight,
(Mineworkers' Defence Committee and Lewisham East CLP)

Recognise our power

"THE NUM has been placed in the very frontline of attack. It is time for the whole movement to wake up and respond with maximum effort. There can be no bystanders any longer.

The labour and trade union movement has to act now in order to defend itself for the future. For after they have come for the NUM, who will feel safe?

Immense strength and power is at our command. All we have to do is recognise that fact and use it. The National Union of Mineworkers is winning this dispute and gaining strength and support by the week.

But the rest of the movement can give a mighty boost to that groundswell by mobilising all forms of industrial action on a massive scale.

The whole establishment – police, courts, Government, media – has thrown its weight against the NUM. Let the whole labour movement now pick up that gauntlet and throw it straight back in their teeth."

Arthur Scargill,
writing in 'The Miner'

We pledge ourselves to measure up to this appeal. Jointly with the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, with the NUR, TGWU, the Seamen's Union, the Fire Brigades Union, sympathetic regional councils of the TUC, metropolitan and local authorities under threat, the miners' support groups and all labour, women's and ethnic organisations committed to a miners' victory – help us to acknowledge the scale of our collective power and use it to win this fight."

Ken Livingstone, editor, Black Dragon, weekly bulletin of the Mineworkers Defence Committee

Please send me the next six weekly issues of BLACK DRAGON. I enclose £2 (waged)... £1 (unwaged)..., nil (striking miner).

Name..... Address .....

.....

Send to: Black Dragon, 127 George Lane, London SE13.

Coalville: Railworkers support the miners — with little help from their leaders

Roy Butlin, Chair Coalville Traffic LDC (shop stewards committee)

NO COAL has been moved by train from Coalville Freight Depot since the directive from our union, the National Union of Railwaymen, on 3 April 1984. In the nine months since we have faced hardship through loss of earnings, intimidation and victimisation on the part of management yet we have received very little national support from our union. At the time of going to press the Rail Federation (NUR and the drivers' union, ASLEF) has called a one day strike for 17 January for a limited number of depots only. A brief summary of events at Coalville over the last nine months will show why we expected greater support from our union.

★ At the beginning of April NUR members walked off the job when men were sent home for refusing to move coal. Then for a few weeks the branch voted to work 'compromise' trains from a private opencast site. In June both ASLEF and NUR voted not to move any coal trains after management had demanded a return to normal working.

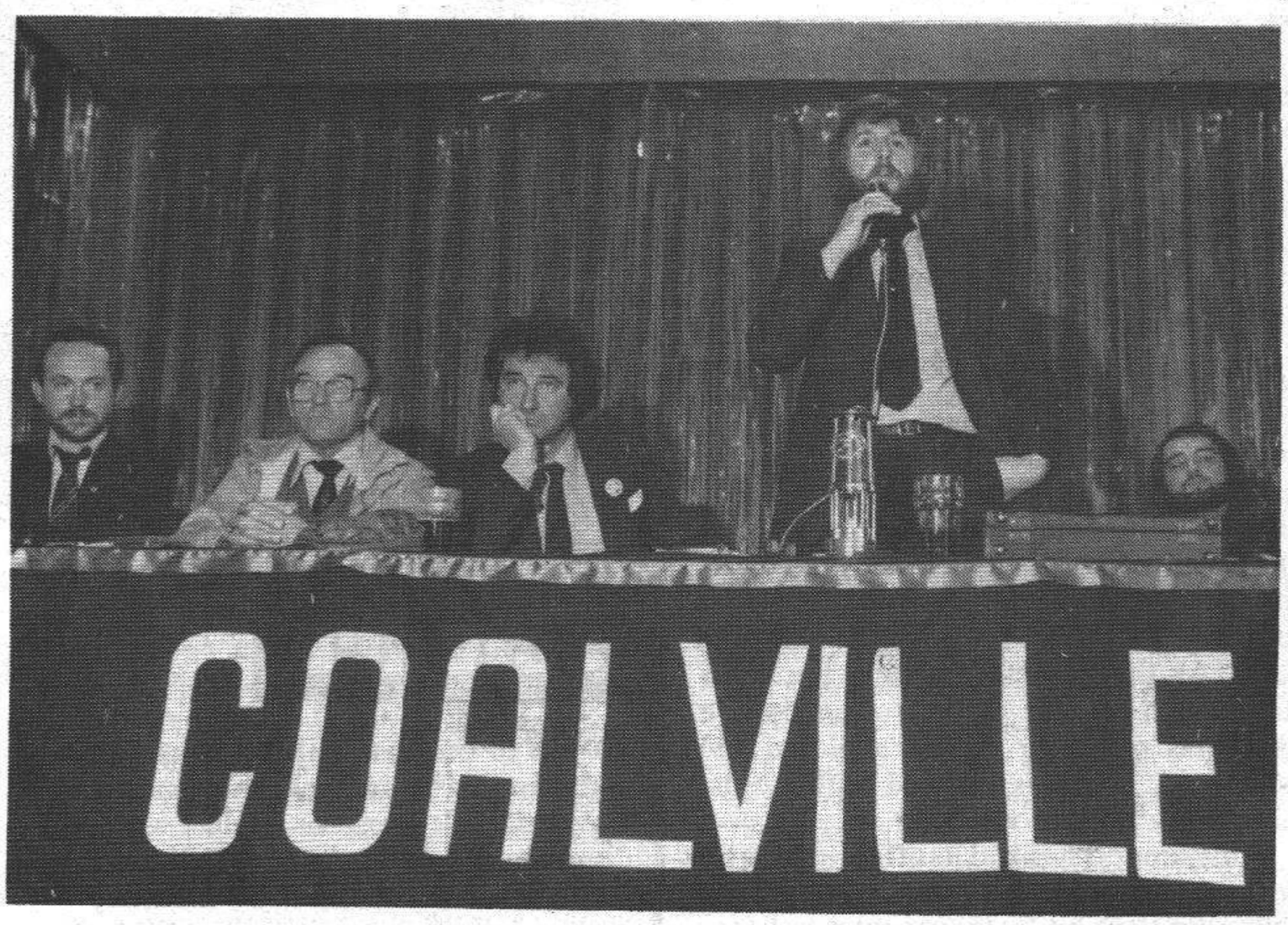
★ On 28 September, the new Area Manager put forward a Five Point Closure Plan for Coalville Depot unless there was an immediate return to work on 1 October. That night police searched the houses of 7 railworkers and 3 were charged with having stolen BR property. These included used oil rags and a tin of Swarfega. The three have been dismissed and are in the process of being prosecuted by the police.

BR's DIRTY TRICKS DEPT

★ On Monday 17 December management succeeded in moving 2 coal trains from the mine to the power station, principally for propaganda purposes and to further intimidate our members. In so doing they resorted to the dirtiest trick yet. One of our signalmen, who was refusing to allow coal trains through, was due on duty on the afternoon of Monday 17 December. His signal box was an essential link in a chain of signal boxes. Monday morning he was summoned to Derby to see the Area Manager who said that as he had been under strain he should take paid leave. Although the signalman refused, his absence from the box allowed a relief signalman to move coal trains. The next day, the signalman was again summoned to Derby where the Area Manager declared him 'mentally unstable' and told him to report to Derby the following day to see the medical officer.

This was not only clear intimidation of one of my members but allowed coal trains to move as well. No appointment with the doctor had been made in fact and the signalman was informed that in the meantime he would have to sweep platforms. Since that time the signalman has been moved to another box where he has been passed out — that is, he has been declared competent to work a signal box. But where this involves the movement of coal trains he becomes 'mentally unstable'.

In all these months our union leadership has done little to explain what is happening at Coalville to the rest of the members. My members feel isolated and at times demoralised. Coalville is in Leicestershire; we are surrounded by working miners. We have had great support from 'The Dirty Thirty' miners who are on strike in Leicestershire as well as from Warwickshire NUM. In a coalfield where nearly all the miners are scabbing our action is tremendously important to the outcome of the strike.



Platform at rail meeting in Coalville. Roy Butlin (speaking) NUR, Tony Donaghue (3rd from left) NUR executive.

G.M. COOKSON

STOP ALL COAL TRAINS

As a Freight Depot where 80% of our work is coal we have very little muscle on our own. We need backing from our union and are convinced we would get such support if a lead was given from our union executive. On 8 January the Rail Federation finally met to discuss the situation. We attempted to organise a lobby but unfortunately we had been given wrong information as to the venue. We wanted to put forward the following demands to the Rail Federation:

- No movement of coal trains
- For the right of Coalville men to sign on and be given alternative work
- No more scab labour at Coalville — withdraw the signalmen who come from outside
- No more victimisation — reinstate the Coalville signalman who was suspended and demoted.

We were eventually allowed to hold a meeting at NUR Headquarters where Executive Committee members and Assistant General Secretary, Vernon Hince, tried to defend the inaction on the part of the union. The overwhelming feeling of the meeting was that the Federation should call for strike action to show management that we would not allow harassment and victimisation of our members who are carrying out union instructions. The decision of the Federation only goes some way to backing my members who daily come under pressure to work 'normally'. As is often said, it may be too little, too late.

My members understand the importance of keeping pits open if our jobs are not to go as well. But we need support from our own union. Most of you reading this will not have known what has been happening there. Nor, unfortunately, do most NUR members. We are carrying out our union's instruction in order to support the miners. It's time our union leaders did the same.

'Til Next Christmas If Necessary...

Peter Walker's announcement that increased coal was going to be used in the power stations was not made from a position of strength but of weakness. The massive use of oil and nuclear power has overburdened the power stations to such an extent that increasing numbers of units are having to be closed for maintenance purposed. Increased use of coal with practically no increase in coal production means that the Government is going to have to move huge amounts of coal around the country. This coal can be stopped — and the trade union movement should be organising to do this now.

Some NUM leaders have admitted that the TUC support guidelines have been a failure; but in the Yorkshire power stations, railways and docks there is support that can prevent any coal movement.

Before Christmas the Labour Party, trade union and socialist activists in the Leeds district organised a mass picket of 400 at Ledston Luck Colliery at 4am. Karl Curry, the president of Ledston Luck NUM welcomed the picket which provided a massive boost to the strikers' morale. He called for further such mass pickets. The picket itself was peaceful under a large presence of local police. At Kellingley, the Yorkshire "superpit", there is a completely different atmosphere. The scabs are being brought in surrounded by hundreds of police, many dressed in riot gear.

GIANT INCREASE IN SUPPORT

The period before Christmas showed a giant increase in support for the miners and their families. Every other member of our Labour Party was cooking turkeys for miners' Christmas parties. Every miner's family was provided with some of Christmas cheer. For instance, Hull Trades Council raised over £2,000 for the Castleford miners, the Leeds bus branch of the TGWU organised a Christmas party for miners' children and Dortmund, which is twinned with Leeds, sent a lorry full of toys, food etc.

This support has had its effect in preventing any post-Christmas return to work. The police did their bit by taking extra holidays so preventing some scab miners from going to work.

Alan Wassall, of Wheldale NUM, Castleford, said that he thanked everyone for the turkey, but that he was prepared to stay out until the turkey season arrived again! He thought that victory is possible and that there is amongst the Yorkshire NUM rank and file the determination to see things through to victory.

Owen Briscoe, secretary of the Yorkshire NUM, has called for a levy of 20p a week from every trade unionist in Britain to support the strike. This would raise £1 million a week.

DAY OF ACTION

The Yorkshire and Humberside Regional TUC has designated February 11th as a day of action in support of the miners. Explicitly, the TUC has called upon trade unionists to go to the picket lines, to donate a day's pay or to go on strike. Owen Briscoe spoke in favour of this proposal and urged trade unionists to attend the picket lines on a regular basis.

Other regional TUC's and the national TUC should now follow the lead set by Yorkshire and Humberside.

Garth Frankland
(Councillor, Chapel Allerton, Leeds)



Martin Jenkinson

Labour Party members march through Leeds in support of the miners

science

Nuke waste crisis

Thanks to the National Union of Seamen and many enviromental campaigns the Government's plans for nuclear waste dumping are now in ruins.

If this logjam continues – which is very likely – THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR NUCLEAR POWER IN THIS COUNTRY and Thatcher's plan to close coal-pits and increase nuclear power four-fold are absolute irresponsible nonsense.

The Department of Environ delayed admitting that their plans to dump "intermediate level" waste in a disused mine at Billingham Tees-side have been stopped by massive local opposition and non co-operation from ICI. NUS action has already halted "low level" waste dumping in steel containers in the Atlantic and stopped the Government even investigating possible "high level" waste dumping on the seabed.

No other dumping schemes appear to be available. Nuclear waste is now piling up at nuclear installations where it has already leaked on occasions – such as at Windscale (Sellafield). Much of this waste remains dangerous for thousands, or hundreds of thousands of years. There is no way a nuke policy wallowing in its own waste piles littering the country for generations to come can be allowed to pass.

CLEAN COAL

The best quality – least polluting – coal in Britain comes from Kent and Wales, the fields the Government is targetting most for closure.

This is of crucial importance now since following the publication of the House of Commons Enviroment Committee report on Acid Rain the Government must consider whether – and how – to reduce acid gas pollution from the UK in line with the rest of Europe.

The largest source of SO2 and NOx, the gases which cause acid rain, is Power stations. The acid gas can easily and cheaply be removed at the power station but for deliberate CEGB and Government obstinacy.

However about 20% or so of acid gas pollution comes from domestic and smaller scale industry burning where it cannot be removed. ONLY LOW ACID COAL – LIKE THAT FROM KENT AND WALES – CAN BE USED TO REDUCE ACID RAIN from this sector. It should be noted that imported coal is almost entirely of low quality and has a high acid content.

THE 3 BIG REASONS FOR COAL

At the same time the utter irresponsibility of the Tory plan in terms of long term energy supply stands exposed. Pit closures means the loss forever of billions of tons of coal because geological collapse means coalfields once closed cannot be re-opened. When world oil runs out in 30yrs we will need that coal.

We must now raise loud and clear at every level the three big arguments for coal:-

*** No to nuclear waste.**

*** Yes to clean coal from Kent and Wales**

*** No to destruction of Britain's Energy future.**

Through this we can put the Tories on the defensive, change the context of the Miner's Strike, and thereby develop the 'second front' of industrial action now vitally needed.

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP.

Information and speakers on Energy and the Miners Strike are available from The Energy Policy Workshop of the Mineworkers Defence Cttee, c/o MDC or 55 Innis Ho, East St, SE17. (7015691)

COAL or NUCLEAR

An anti-nuclear leaflet linking nuclear power, the miners' strike and energy policy — and calling for active support for the miners. Artwork available free with space available for local details. Send A5 size SAE to South Eastern Anti-Nuclear Network, 111, Albion Hill, Brighton, East Sussex.



C. Huczalak

Critical stage at Barking

The 10 month old Barking Hospital Dispute has reached a critical stage. The disputed private cleaning contract, cutting 876 cleaning hours, awarded for 12 months to Crothalls Ltd. began on April 1st 1984 and is now up for review.

Redbridge District Health Authority have conceded that the contract has failed to satisfy them for more than 10 months and environmental health inspection reports have condemned cleaning standards. DHA Chair, Cllr. Curtis has made it clear that the DHA's final decision on the fate of the contract will be made on February 5th 1985 (DHA meeting).

Striking Domestics spirits soared with news that the DHA may consider employing a direct labour force. A Workers Plan, "Part of the Team" argues that the Old Contract had too few hours to maintain adequate cleaning standards and that far from being cut, cleaning hours should more properly have been increased in April 1984.

Bringing evidence from Domestics own work experience and professional papers, the Domestics argue for improving cleaning standards at Barking Hospital. The 'Plan' is a positive statement of the need to establish cleaning standards in Barking Hospital as the guiding principle for Domestic services — not price. It is an argument that is well placed for use in future disputes in the health service (copies available from Barking and Dagenham Health Emergency price £4.00).

February 5th is important to the Health Service. Your support is needed at this DHA meeting. Support the Domestics' fight for cleaning standards and sack the private contractor. On February 6th a Mass Picket of Barking Hospital is arranged to celebrate or protest at the DHA decision. Further details on strikeline 01-592 5038.

Money is still needed to support the strike fund and critically regular supplies of wood to the picket line are vital ... strikeline 01-592 5038 ... 14, Porters Avenue, Dagenham, Essex.

Barrie Neal (Barking and Dagenham Health Emergency)

COAL NOT DOLE

Should be ground in
In thick blunt felt tip or charcoal
Gashed across every lying front page
And every camera crew and every newscaster
Should have it branded
Coal deep coal dark coal angry
Across their bland smiling foreheads
It should be hung heavy as tablets of stone
Round the necks of pressmen, policemen, politicians
Who condemn and condemn from cosy offices
Then pressed down thick and heavy
Ground in by a child's stubborn hand
(Those hands already sized up for idleness)
On the tombstones of the TUC leaders.
Finally it will be grimed miles high
In huge black capitals
Coked onto every wall
When Thatcherism tears itself to pieces
Now, next week, next month, next year, next generation
When gritted coal resistance dug in
Catches fire burning back to explode
And socialism flames free from the ashes.

Les Tate (Streatham CLP)

NALGO CAMPAIGN FOR A UNITED IRELAND

A Conference of NALGO branches interested in submitting resolutions on British withdrawal from Ireland to NALGO Annual Conference was held on 15 December 1984 organised by Newham NALGO. The following motion had already been passed:

'This Branch believes that a United Ireland represents the only just and lasting solution to the conflict between Britain and Ireland and within Ireland. We believe that the State of Northern Ireland was specifically established to ensure a permanent Unionist majority and that it is undemocratic and irreformable. We therefore support the following programme for British political, economic and military withdrawal:–

- ***Britain to renounce all claims of sovereignty over Northern Ireland***
- ***The ending of the Unionist veto on Irish unity and support for Irish majority rule***
- ***The disbandment of the UDR and RUC***
- ***The repeal of the Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act***
- ***The calling of a 32-county constituency assembly to set the terms and time-scale for a full British military, economic and political withdrawal from Northern Ireland.'***

It was decided at the Conference to form a loose grouping of interested members called 'NALGO Campaign for a United Ireland', which would aim to get Ireland more widely discussed within NALGO, and in particular to encourage branches to submit the above, or a similar, resolution, or amendments broadly in line with its policy, for the 1985 Annual Conference.

The Campaign agreed to publicise its existence and aims in NALGO's journals, and to provide speakers for branch meetings if requested. It will hold a further meeting in the spring, to which all branches that have submitted similar motions will be invited to attend, to discuss strategies and tactics (eg compositing and lobbying) to ensure that Ireland is debated at Conference, and to plan for a fringe meeting on Ireland that the Campaign will host at Conference itself.

For more information please contact Martin Sachs, Newham NALGO Office, 7 Chapel Street, London E15 3LP.

Labour Women in 1985: a programme for political power

By Ann Pettifor, national organiser, Labour Women's Action Committee

Activists of the Labour Women's Action Committee gathered in Birmingham in December, 1984 for their fifth AGM — and resolved to begin immediate campaigning on three fronts.

The first — the transformation of the Parliamentary Labour Party, to make it more representative of working class women — is already under way. Briefings on the current selection process have already been circulated to WAC's 500 active supporters — and a list of women willing to serve as candidates is being compiled and circulated.

The second — for the Labour Party Women's Conference to mount Shadow Elections to the Women's Section of the NEC, will form the major thrust in WAC's campaign at this summer's Women's Conference in Bournemouth. The Women's Conference first decided in 1982 that the election of the Women's Section of the NEC should take place at the National Labour Women's Conference — if it is to be a democratic election representative of Labour Women. There was no further debate in 1983 because of the cancellation of the Conference; in 1984 Women's Conference again, this time overwhelmingly, supported the demand. WAC has resolved that it is now logical and timely for the Women's Conference to *act* on these decisions, and to mount elections which will discredit the shadowy and unrepresentative elections *of women by men* at the Annual Conference. WAC is drafting model resolutions demanding Shadow Elections and is circulating them to its affiliated members and organisations. Any Women's Sections wanting copies of the model resolutions should contact the Secretary at the address below.

Campaigning on the third front — elections to Labour's NEC in the autumn, will begin immediately as a result of the AGM decision to endorse the existing slate of women. They are: Audrey Wise and Jo Richardson for the Constituency Section and Diane Abbott, Margaret Beckett, Frances Morrell, Joan Maynard and Clare Short for the Women's Section.

In addition, after lengthy discussion and consultation — and on the recommendation of a paper by Mandy Mcore of the National Labour Women's Committee, WAC resolved to campaign for a new formula for elections to the National Labour Women's Committee. WAC is already committed to democratic and accountable elections taking place at the Women's Conference itself — instead of at the unrepresentative regional women's conferences — which have no formal trade union representation. But concern has been expressed that these elections would be dominated by London-based women — MP's and other national figures. WAC has therefore proposed the following formula for debate within the women's organisation: two members to be elected from each region; nominations to come from the regions concerned, but election to be by the Women's Conference as a whole. Naturally WAC would campaign for more nominations to be put forward than the number of vacancies, to ensure genuine elections. The proposal would mean that women on the National Committee would need to secure a base in their own region to guarantee nomination — but would be accountable to the whole conference for their political record on behalf of the National Women's Organisation.

The AGM resolved to take practical steps to strengthen its burgeoning regional organisation. Regional organisers elected at the AGM now have a set of standing orders to guide them in the setting up of regional Labour WAC's — committed to advancing WAC's main aims. A list of regional organisers can be obtained from the Secretary.

Finally, despite the reservations expressed by a number of its activists, WAC resolved to sponsor the February meeting of Target Labour Government.

If you wish to join the Labour Women's Action Committee, or promote one of its resolutions through your constituency then please write to the Secretary: Judy Sadler, 56 Milton Road, London SE24. WAC welcomes the support of men in the promotion of its resolutions.

Labour Briefing Women

Women who buy and sell, read and write for Labour Briefing are meeting together to discuss and debate, organise and act on those issues important to us as *women*.

Our AIMS are:

* *Labour Briefing Journal* – To increase women's input into the journal, increase coverage of women's issues, of women's struggles and triumphs all over the world. We would like to encourage more women to write – or draw or photograph – for Briefing, with the aim of having women writing about their own activities instead of 'expert outsiders'. We would also like to see more discussion in the journal of all issues from a feminist perspective. But we want to avoid ourselves being ghettoised either in the pages of Labour Briefing or in our activities – so we aim to avoid all the coverage on women being lumped together and we take criticisms and proposals from our discussions back into Labour Briefing as a whole.

* *Building alliances with women who aren't involved with Labour Briefing – both within and outside the Labour Party* – We would like to see more contact, discussion, and joint action with other groups of women. Outside of the Labour Party the Women's Liberation Movement is campaigning and organising on a multitude of issues that are vitally important to all women. We aim to link up, support and join forces with non-Labour Party women's actions and discussions. Within the Labour Party there are also other women's groups and campaigns with whom we would similarly like to discuss. We think there should be more space for women to discuss our agreements and our disagreements, our commonalities and our differences. And we very much wish to actively support women everywhere who are fighting for their rights and liberation.

* *Accountability and support* – Through organising ourselves better we hope to become more democratic so that the women on the National Briefing Editorial Board (at least six places out of the 12 are reserved for women) can be accountable to all women involved in Briefing. We also wish to increase support for women on the Editorial Board and for each other – for all of us!

We aim to hold regular national meetings in Birmingham to which we invite all interested women. (Details of the next meeting can be obtained by ringing 01-533 2593). At the next meeting we will be having a discussion on 'women in struggle' — why do women so often emerge in a leading role? Why have women organised in the 1984 miners' strike in a way that they didn't in '72 or '74? In what way will the miners' victory be an advance for women's interests?

For more information, contact Jane or Sarah at 31 Cranwich Road, London N16.

FIGHTING

Fighting Spirit is the title of Milton Smalling's second book. Milton was born in Stepney, a small town in St. Ann's in Jamaica. He is a writer and percussion player. He left Jamaica in March 1965 to join his mother in England.

His book draws on his experience of London and Jamaica, and one of the poems, 'We the Black People Call it Murder', describes the effects of racial attacks:

Flames rising flesh burning
We the black people call it murder
Another blasted cover up
We can't give up

They died screaming in a burning inferno
We the black people call it murder

YOUTH BRIEFING

The next few months will be important for young people active inside the LPYS and Youth CND. YCND is holding its national conference on February 16th and 17th and between January and March each LPYS Region holds its conference. Briefing supporters and supporters of Regional activist bulletins are preparing for the YS Regional conferences, by organising resolutions, leaflets and fringe meetings.

This is happening in Yorkshire, Southern Region, the North West, Scotland and the West Midlands. The regional conferences are very important in the run up to the National LPYS conference, where we hope Labour Briefing will have an important impact organising fringe meetings and organising jointly with the campaigns it supports, such as Black Sections, as well as organising sales of our pamphlet on the miners.

For more info about Briefing and youth contact Martin Huseyin, 18 Terminus St, Brighton. Tel: Brighton 25295.

SOUTHERN REGION CONFERENCE

ALTHOUGH only recently set up, *Southern Region Activist* is already supported by 13 LPYS branches in the south. It has no strict editorial body, which consequently allows it to be informal and flexible in its structure. And it is not dogmatic in its approach to issues and in the opinions it expresses.

Rather, for the growing number of activists in the LPYS, *Activist* provides a forum for discussion and debate around wide ranging issues. However its supporters are all united by the conviction that the only way to build a mass socialist youth movement which will defeat the Tories and all that they stand for, is to align ourselves with those already struggling against oppression in our society.

The current LPYS leadership has failed to lead the rest of the movement to get involved in and actively support the struggles of working people and in particular the striking miners, blacks, lesbians and gays, women and CND etc. This has resulted in a cruel waste of the potential political force in young people.

The forthcoming southern region YS conference therefore, must be a time in which we as activists assess the past year and plan our position accordingly. What is important is a clear commitment to policies which will stimulate and co-ordinate more active campaigning in the region in 1985.

The conference is in Brighton on January 26/27.

Hannah Purbrick (Worthing YS)

Why I am standing

by Chris Woolls (Worthing YS)

THE MAIN REASON why I am standing for West Sussex and southern region representative position is because of the differences which exist between a large number of the rank and file LPYS members and the LPYS leadership.

These differences have become more apparent at recent SR conferences. The main field of disagreement covers areas such as race issues (particularly the lack of support for Black Sections), gay rights, the women's struggle, CND and other related issues.

The YS leadership should also be criticised for their lack of action over the most important struggle facing socialism for years: the miners' strike. It is imperative that the whole of the LPYS, especially the leadership, give the miners the kind of physical suport and solidarity that they so desparately need to ensure total victory.

If elected, I would hope to ensure that positive action on all the above mentioned issues is implemented.

Victory to the Miners!
Jobs not Bombs!
Mines not Missiles!

YCND Conference

ON FEBRUARY 15 and 16 in Newcastle, Youth CND will be holding its fifth annual national conference. Thousands of youth have joined and been active in YCND since it was set up and membership is growing rapidly. Many major youth initiatives have been organised around mass action and linked up other struggles with the fight for nuclear disarmament.

The most important of these has been the link up with young miners in their fight to save their communities. Young miners have spoken on many YCND platforms, resolutions have been passed by the NC in full support of the miners and many activities have been organised around the slogan 'jobs not bombs'.

Many Youth CND members not only understand the need to link up with other struggles but also see the need to take the feelings of the youth movement into CND as a whole, to put pressure on the CND leadership and their move to the right.

Last year YCND played a leading role in the fight for a demonstration on Reagan's arrival to Britain and an important part in organising and building the 150,000 strong march on the streets of London.

For the LPYS members active in YCND it should be an important conference. We aim to strengthen the links Youth CND has made, especially around the miners' strike; support for Greenham and a young womens' conference; for a continuation of mass action in '85; for building on the positions Youth CND has taken around the attacks on Nicaragua and the need to build Youth CND among Black and Asian youths.

It is also important to give the LPYS some profile. Despite the LPYS's poor record towards YCND, gains have been made in getting young people in YCND to join the Labour Party.

The YCND conference will be a time for youth in the disarmament movement to exchange ideas and experiences and to debate around a whole number of political issues — both on the conference floor and in the many workshops and meetings being held over the weekend.

Observer and visitor status will be available, phone the YCND National Office for more details (01-263 0977).

Jobs Not Bombs! Victory to the Miners!
By Sam (Hackney YCND)

SPIRIT

Another, 'We, Back on the Dole and Bleeding to Death', deals with the realities of unemployment:

They said coming to London would open doors for us
Well, we still on the dole and bleeding to death
They standing on our necks, we living with pain
They standing on our necks, we going insane

The book will be published by First Class Publications, 258 Coldharbour Lane, Brixton, London SW9 and costs £1.50.

Mr Smalling can be contacted at First Class Publications, tel: 01-289 4513.

STUDENT CONFERENCE

On the miners; rate-capping; YTS

Saturday February 16. Probably at City of London Poly. Called by Socialist Students in NOLS and sponsored by Manchester Area NUS, Manchester Poly, Central London Poly, North East Surrey College Of Technology and others.

Contact: Dave Brennan, 20A Upper Addison Gdns, London W14.



TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Day conference jointly called by Target Labour Government and Labour Briefing

SATURDAY 16th FEBRUARY 1985
DIGBETH HALL, BIRMINGHAM

10.00–10.30	Registration
10.30–11.00	**What Type of Labour Government?** *Ken Livingstone, Merle Amory, Jeremy Corbyn*
11.00–12.40	Workshops on Policies a) Economic policy b) International & Defence policy c) Justice, Freedom and the State d) Social policy
12.40–1.00	Reports back from workshops
1.00–2.30	LUNCH BREAK – Food and a Bar will be available
2.30–3.45	Workshops on Accountability and Positive Action
3.45–4.00	Reports back from workshops
4.00–5.00	Rally – **How To Get Rid Of The Tories/ Forward to Victory**: *Bernie Grant, Tony Benn, Sharon Atkins*

Sponsorship: The following are sponsoring the conference: Women's Action Committee, Black Sections Steering Committee, Labour Committee on Ireland, Labour CND, L.A.W.

Creche: There will be a creche available, to be booked in advance.

Registration: To cover the costs of the venue/publicity etc the registration will be £2 for waged and 50p unwaged. Contact: 60D Barnsbury Street, N1.

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

No disabled access.

Accountability –

Target Labour Government was set up to promote the selection and election of parliamentary candidates who will represent those whose needs the Labour Party as a socialist party must defend. Most particularly it recognises that women and the black community are oppressed in this society and that their experience and participation is essential to a future radical and campaigning Parliamentary Labour Party.

Unfortunately both recent media coverage and countless discussions on the left of the party have revolved around the political credibility and reliability of the few black and women candidates now emerging.

From the left there are shouts of careerist, and from the right of the possible electoral consequences of losing votes by standing black or women candidates. Both these attitudes thinly disguise centuries of racism and sexism, in that both groups are unable to see the person beyond their sex or race.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

On the other hand, it would be naive not to admit that a black woman, for instance, will face a number of conflicts of interest and accountability when called upon to respond to the demands of her constituency, her community and a PLP similar to the present one. But two questions have to be raised. Would white men not face such a conflict if their interests were not so dominant in their community, the PLP and their constituency? And is it not true that women or black candidates by the very fact that they will be the exception in terms of race and sex, will be seen to be accountable in some ways to women as a group and to their own black community?

Further it would be liberalism to believe that merely the experience of being black or a woman necessarily leads to a person becoming a radical defender of either group. In fact years of exploitation militate directly against members of these groups having the courage and experience to become their own champions. It is doubly or trebly difficult for a black woman to stand up and promote herself after years of conditioning designed to force her to deny her own worth.

Positive discrimination and accountability

The following article is a draft paper which will form the basis of a series of workshops on Positive Action and related issues at the Target Labour Government Conference on Saturday February 16th.

Positive discrimination – a strategy for reducing inequalities by redressing the balance in favour of the most disadvantaged – cannot possibly succeed unless the position of others, relative to the disadvantaged, is altered.

This fact, above all the blandishments, must be understood by socialists committed to radical change, or we are merely deluding ourselves and engaged in no more than 'tokenism'.

The lessons of American society in the Sixties, as well as nearer home the Plowden experiments of 'Educational Priority Areas' and Government sponsored 'community development' and 'urban' programmes all show that whilst in the short term cosmetic changes are indeed possible, the net long term effect represents no more than 'marginal' gains for the very poor – usually at the expense of the less poor!

Labour must no longer allow this to happen, particularly as now, at least on the left, 'positive discrimination' is increasingly being seen as the mechanism for redressing the political disadvantage and under-representation of Black people, gay people, women and the disabled – possibly in that order – the most under-represented groups in society.

What is required, in line with the notion of putting principle back into politics (which, after all, is what accountability is all about) is a clear appreciation of the need for a real strategy, if positive discrimination is to be implemented.

SHIFTING RESOURCES AND POWER

This means that it must first of all be recognised that positive discrimination must mean shifting resources and power away from those who have to those who have nothing in the first instance, and then to those with less.

This, obviously, calls into question the notion of 'merit' which given its class and economic bias can, at this point in time, be no bad thing. The fact is to remain rigidly tied to present day definitions of what counts as 'merit' is to do no more than further institutionalise disadvantage. If change is seriously intended, then this concept must be fundamentally challenged.

Secondly, action must be taken at several levels rather than at one in isolation from others.

In other words, if all that is meant by 'positive discrimination' is more grants to projects for disadvantaged groups, but no political involvement in discussions on overall expenditure patterns, then it amounts to no more than yet more short-term placebos.

A good example of the short-term folly of this approach is the clear failure of post-war policies for regenerating inner city areas. In such areas despite programmes and government grants of various sorts, the real needs of people were ignored, leaving aside the fact that the programmes themselves were meagre in the extreme. The result was the riots of the early Eighties, and great areas of discontent and dissatisfaction today – smouldering now like tinder boxes under the pressures of unemployment.

Thirdly, real and lasting shifts in power must be demonstrated on the structural level, or we are simply 'tinkering'.

REAL LASTING GAINS

Accountability surely demands that the effects and consequences of policies are explained and ultimately justified. Therefore, so far as the disadvantaged are concerned the yardstick for measuring whether positive discrimination is working, is for politicians to show that the disadvantaged are indeed making real lasting gains.

The logic of what is said above suggests that when we talk of positive discrimination we either mean shifting power away from the present holders as part of a concerted package that can be readily demonstrated, or we are merely engaged in games of delusion with ourselves, and possibly with others.

The real test now for the Labour Party as it deals with the question of political power through its process of accountability, is to show its true position on whether or not the unrepresented or under-represented will be positively supported or, as usual, the powerful will cream off positions of real power for themselves, leaving the powerless, once again, to scrap between themselves for whatever is left, or not thought worthwhile having.

Russell Profitt

to whom?

We are all aware of falling into the trap of promoting individuals well known in the party and thereby exposing them to probable failure in the long term and certain isolation in the short term. Lists of likely faces will not change an inherently racist and sexist structure. And the white men who dominate the political structures can quite easily absorb a few new black and women faces. They will even endeavour to make mileage out of it.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

What they will not tolerate is black and women candidates who can develop a political analysis of the present situation that comes from their own collective experience of what it means in economic and social terms to be black or a woman in Britain in 1985.

Furthermore, the existence of such a strong group would strengthen a future PLP in a whole range of areas as well as in its challenge to racist and sexist practices and structures. Additionally they will have behind them the power of their communities with whom they can campaign to ensure that parliamentary changes actually impact on outside society.

Individuals alone will not be able to challenge years of acceptance of immigration control or the inequalities of women's pay.

Changes in policy will have to be fought for collectively through the whole structure of the Party until they are accepted commitments in the Manifesto.

It is in line with this recognition of the need for collective and accountable action that Target Labour government has established a number of ongoing policy discussion groups. Not to write an alternative manifesto, but to give voice to the experience and knowledge of women and black comrades who have been silenced too long.

These workshops will also tackle the complex issue of accountability . . . for who ultimately does a candidate represent if she/he becomes separated from her/his constituency/community/workplace? And how can this situation be changed so that the black and women comrades do not feel and seem to be mere tokens?

Nadine Finch
Narendra Makanji



Russell Profitt with his children

Labour Party Photo Library

RESELECTION
No sell out of black people

by Black Labour Activities Campaign (BLAC)

A process has just begun which will decide once and for all whether or not Labour deserves the continuing support of Britain's have-nots. Black activists particularly, bloodied but unbowed by the leadership's disgraceful hatchet job on Black Sections, will be watching to see whether the hard-fought-for gains of mandatory reselection are relevant to our cause. Given that Conference failed us, we are now waiting to see if Constituency Labour Parties strong on anti-racism 'deliver up' on Black Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs). As activists engaged in the struggle to turn 'No representation', in the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) into 'Fair representation', our greatest hope is the selection and reselection process.

Like other disadvantaged members of society, we have been excluded from power for much too long and we are fighting back. The movement must now act positively to demands for fair representation from Black people, Women, Gay people and the Disabled. If we are ignored the Party will surely perish. But first, past experience tells us, a good deal of humbug needs to be overcome for fair representation to be achieved. General Management Committees (GMCs) have got to stop using as an excuse that good Black candidates are 'opportunists' or 'careerists'. There are 209 predominantly male and middle-class White opportunists and careerists in the PLP. What GMCs must do instead is make sure prospective candidates fully endorse their democratically decided policies. And, just as importantly, if sitting members do not support these policies then they should be summarily deselected.

STRIKING A BLOW FOR EQUALITY

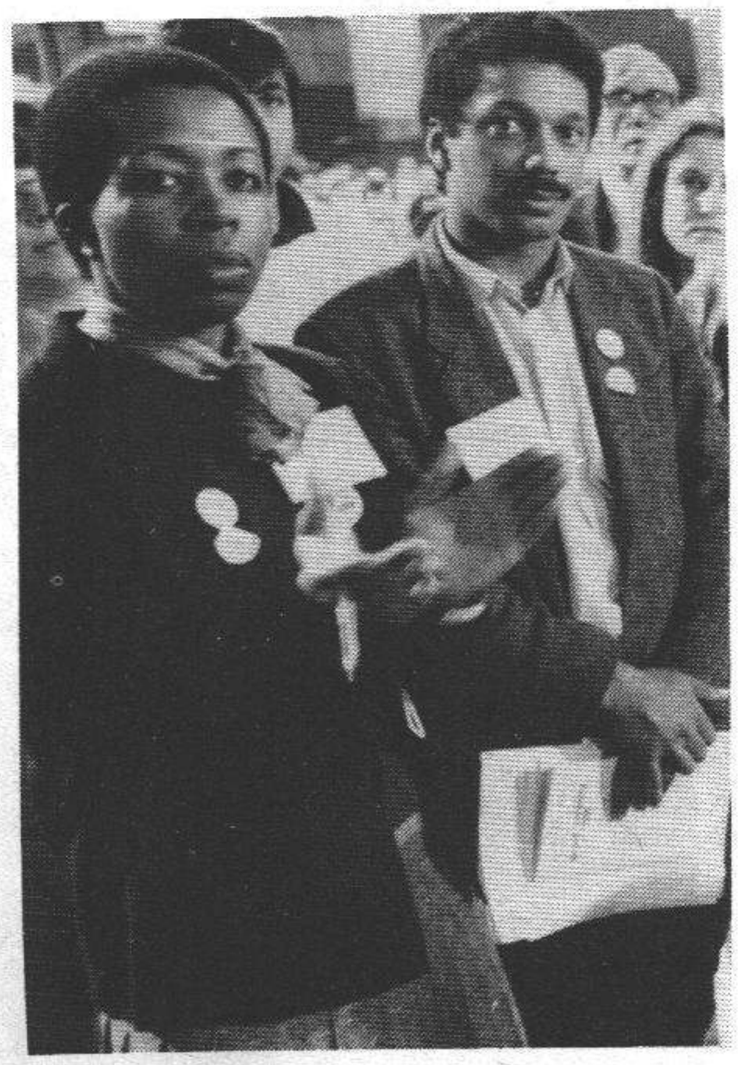
Reselection and selection is the ordinary party member's powerful opportunity to decide the political and social complexion of the PLP. The process must be used decisively and bravely. The movement must, in 1985, strike a telling blow for true equality. We urge all CLPs who back Black Sections to demand a positive declaration of support from your chosen candidate. This includes CLPs that support us despite the corrosive influence of Militant, the most vociferous and spiteful opponents of Black political self-organisation in the movement. We have already put on record our disgust at what they are doing to the Black community in their Liverpool stronghold. And twice in 1984, we took the fight to their heartland (the YS Summer Camp and Coventry South East CLP). Both times we defeated their bankrupt opposition to Black Sections. This should be a lesson to the rest of the movement.

It can no longer be tolerated that the top of the Party is dominated by an unrepresentative clique. The present PLP is little different to the House of Commons as a whole – a White, middle-class gentleman's club. As Socialists we have an urgent duty to smash this cosy tradition. At the last General Election up to 90 per cent of Black people who went to the polls voted Labour. In all, we provided the party with a million votes. We are one in eight of all supporters electorally. Arguably, we are Labour's most loyal supporters yet we have nothing to show for it in the Commons. Year after year in resolution after resolution the movement states its opposition to racism without doing the obvious thing within its own ranks to eradicate this great social evil.

CLPs MUST DELIVER

Black voters can no longer be conned by paper support. CLPs must deliver on representation. We have seen through Labour's charade of choosing just six Black PPCs at the last election, and all of them in impossible seats. Meanwhile, seats made super-safe by large Black electorates were fought predominantly by White males. There are at least 25 seats where Black candidates should be selected – genuinely 'anti-racist' hopefuls should look elsewhere. We have divided these seats between 12 'Tory marginals' we say we can win for Labour and 13 'safe Labour' seats where we say we would probably increase the majority. The marginals are Leicester South; Leicester East; Edmonton; Oxford East; Nottingham East; Bradford North; Westminster North; Feltham and Heston; Lewisham East; Dulwich; Lewisham West and Slough.

These constituencies have Black populations ranging from eight per cent in Oxford East to more than 25 per cent in Leicester East. Potentially, the proportion of votes the Black electorate can give a Labour candidate is higher than the New Commonwealth and Pakistan (NCW&P) statistic suggests because it does not take account of the burgeoning 'second generation'. If you take the fact that Black people are four percent of Britain's overall population, we should have around 30 MPs. Labour's safest seats are, significantly, those, in the main, with the largest Black population. A number are likely to be vacant at the next election because the MP has announced his retirement. We urge MPs with 'fat majorities' provided by Black voters to stand down, if they are over retirement age. Syd Bidwell (Ealing Southall) should do the decent thing. It would be his greatest contribution yet to the fight for racial equality.



J.R. Smith

1984 Labour Party Conference. Black delegates applaud attempts to re-time the black sections debate.

After all, Southall – second only to Brent South in size of Black population – is a national symbol. It has a large Asian population and deserves an Asian MP.

EXCUSES

White activists in Southall who have the final say must stop spouting clap-trap excuses about Asian disunity. The spreading of such thread-bare falsehoods can only benefit the gaggle of ambitious White males who have their eye on the seat. John Silkin (Deptford) should follow his fellow Tribunite out the door for reasons best explained by his local party. And Peter Shore (Bethnal Green & Stepney), so out of step with the views of a constituency where Bengalis get the rawest deal, should make way for a Black successor. Other seats made safe by the 'Black vote' range from Brent South (47% NCW&P) to Bow and Poplar (16%) where Ian Mikado has already announced his retirement. These seats are: Brent South; Birmingham Smallheath; Tottenham; Hackney North and Stoke Newington; Brent East; Bradford West; Battersea; Warley East; Walthamstow; Wolverhampton South East; Coventry North East; Perry Barr and Bow and Poplar.

The short-list for selection of a PPC in these constituencies should consist entirely of good Black candidates. It is no use CLPs hoping this will happen somewhere else. If this cannot be achieved because no nominations for Black candidates are received from a local branch then the party's Executive Committee has the power to make a nomination itself. The EC should use this power positively. Finally, our message to all those White, middle-class males currently agonising with their conscience is: Stand Down or Stand Aside in 'Black seats'. Too many of you have already built careers as 'race experts' – advocates of the principles of race equality. Yet, like Alf Dubs (Battersea) the 'Shadow' spokesman on race, you bottled out when faced with the chance of going somewhere else to allow in a good Black alternative. Black people must never be denied like this again. NO SELL-OUT!

The next national editorial board wil be on either 23rd or 24th February. Please telephone Graham Bash at 01-533 2593 for details

Deadline for articles: Monday 11th February

Next issue out: Thursday 21st February.

Briefing's new address

Please send all correspondence and articles to 162 Millfields Road, London E5.

Working to lose

by Reg Race

On January 4th, readers of Tribune received their first copy of the newspaper in the New Year. The front page lead was a massive editorial with the headline, "Working to Win", over a large picture of a cheerful Mr Kinnock. The message of the editorial was simple: "... it should not be impossible to construct a majority centre-left coalition around the Party leader".

The editorial — which must have been written by Tribune's new editor, Nigel Williamson — also argued for joint work between the Tribune and Campaign Groups in Parliament in order to shift the balance of power in the Shadow Cabinet; for an end to "unrealisable demands" such as calls for a general strike in support of the miners; and for a shift in the attitudes of the leadership over key issues such as one person, one vote and the witch-hunting of socialists in the party.

In essence, Tribune appears to be calling for the left and the leadership to sink their differences and work together. The political questions that Tribune readers must ask themselves is not whether such an outcome would be for the best in the best of all possible worlds, but whether it is in any way possible, and therefore likely to happen.

Mr Kinnock's record since October 1983 does not inspire confidence that he will seek to unite with the left in order to defeat the Tories, support workers in struggle, and prepare the ground for an active left-wing Labour Government. His record in office is quite the reverse. He has:

★ Consistently ducked away from the coal strike, hoping it would "go away" — witness the refusal for months at the beginning of the dispute to have a debate in Parliament to support the miners' case; witness the consistent activities of his private office to brief the Press on Kinnock's opposition to "violence", thus helping to make it the main political issue of the strike; witness his coldly calculated snub to the miners' leadership in refusing to go on their platforms.

★ Changed the power structure of the party, by encouraging trade unions to vote for right-wing candidates for the NEC; by turning up personally to the NEC and its committees to vote against left-wing candidates for committee chairs; and by abolishing the NEC sub-committees, which in previous years have been the source of many of Labour's detailed policy proposals.

★ Shown his deeply-held desire to ensure the continued domination of the PLP over the movement by, for example, appointing PLP/NEC "study groups" on policy on which the PLP has an overwhelming majority, and which are a clear attempt to minimise and downgrade the importance of the NEC.

★ Demonstrated his hostility to the democratic reforms in the party by sponsoring the "Evans amendment" to introduce the so-called one person one vote formula; the briefing documents supporting the Evans proposals were typed in his office and distributed to the Press by his staff.

★ Demanded and obtained a substantial watering down of Labour's policy on jobs and on defence through the documents presented to the October 1984 conference, and which pave the way for a compromise 1988 General Election manifesto which will please the right-wing majority in the PLP.

★ Denounced "law-breaking" by the miners and, potentially, by local councils — ignoring the fact that it is impossible for any self-respecting socialist councillor in Boroughs such as Haringey, Lewisham and Hackney to implement cuts in services on the enormous scale demanded by the rate-capping legislation.

★ Shown little inclination to give real leadership in policy areas where Labour's position is backward-looking and reactionary: thus, opportunities to come out strongly in favour of women's rights and against civil nuclear power have been missed.

What we have had from Mr Kinnock since October 1983 has been a torrent of words, a determined snuggling up to the reactionary forces in the PLP, a stout defence of Parliamentarism, and little evidence of strategic thinking about Labour's electoral plight.

I am absolutely convinced that the Labour Party's election prospects will gradually worsen until we install a collective leadership that can convince working-class voters that a new Labour government would behave in totally different ways from the Labour Governments of the past 20 years.

The Labour Party is not losing support because of changes in the class structure. Most of Labour's lost millions of votes are from social classes C2 and D/E — the classic working class; and other Western nations have seen similar changes in class composition without having experienced the disastrous political decline of their working-class based, left-aligned political parties. If we want to explain the widespread disaffection with Labour, we must look to the working class's experience of Labour in office, and to issues inside the party.

The desperate need of the Labour Party is for a leadership that will unite with the radical, left-wing forces in the party; that is capable of persuading Labour's lost millions that things will be different; that is prepared to regard issues such as women's rights and the needs of black people as being of enormous significance; that is prepared to isolate the PLP right wing and defend conference policies; and that is prepared to see far-reaching changes in the composition of the PLP and its organisation as a guarantee of this radical approach and a necessity for its implementation.

We do not presently have such a leadership. We have new men with old ideas.

In this context, it is far-fetched for Tribune to call for the construction of a coalition with the present leadership. Such a coalition would be against the long-term interests of the Labour Movement.

One trusts that Tribune will soon revert to its "traditional" role of support for a clearly-defined left-wing strategy. If "coalitionism" is pursued, it will lead inexorably to the Dick Clements syndrome — a boring newspaper, a plummeting readership, and declining influence. Come off it, Nigel — you can do better than that!

Tribune's new realism



Working to win

THE next general election will be won or lost over the coming year. That statement may sound dramatic given that the election may not come until 1988, but one of the lessons of Labour's 1983 defeat was that elections are not decided in the brief duration of a three-week campaign but are determined by the image which a party presents over a much longer perspective.

1985 is likely to prove critical for a number of reasons. First and foremost, of course, there is still the unfinished business of the miners' strike.

Then there are the Government-imposed ballots which trade unions must hold on the political levy over the next 12 months with potentially [illegible] results for both Labour and the unions.

Thirdly, the Labour Party itself will be the focus of great attention with the bulk of [illegible] MPs facing reselection [illegible] year. The [illegible]

VICTORY TO THE MINERS

[illegible]top the Tory attacks

age our chances of winning the next election.

THE centre of gravity in the party has shifted to the Left in recent years. Neil Kinnock is the product of that and while it is depressing to see him siding with the Right so consistently, it should not be impossible to construct a majority Centre-Left coalition around the party leader. Such a coalition would reflect the wishes of the party in the country far more accurately than the Centre-Right forces which currently dominate both the National Executive and the Shadow Cabinet.

The building of a majority Centre-Left coalition would also be assisted if the two Left groups within the PLP, the Tribune Group and [illegible] Group, co[illegible] ing wi[illegible] don[illegible]

WOMEN AND 'TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT': the problem of white men

By Ann Pettifor, national organiser, Labour Women's Action Committee (in personal capacity).

Feminists in the Labour Party wanting to work exclusively to advance the interests of the women of our class, face major obstacles. The reason for these obstacles is self-evident: the Labour Party is a men's party. Any feminist work therein needs first to serve the interests of men who exercise power within our movement – before securing authority to advance the interests of women. Thus most Labour Party feminists subordinate their work for women, channelling their energies instead into securing the support and authority of powerful men.

However, although Labour women accept as pre-conditions the constraints imposed on them by their membership of a men's party (and they do this because they recognise the Labour Party as the only democratic political force capable of advancing the interests of our class as a whole) – there is no reason for feminists to abandon completely the task of advancing the interests of the majority of working people.

All this has a bearing on the subject of women and their links with a campaign set up to advance left wingers, women and blacks in the forthcoming round of parliamentary selections – Target Labour Government.

The promotion of women parliamentary candidates, committed to advancing the interests of working class women, has been the foremost political objective of Labour Women's Action Committee. WAC therefore welcomed the support of TLG in this objective.

Submit to tests

However, it was not long before this worthy campaign came under the influence of those who believe that it is not sufficient to support women and black candidates; but that these candidates have to submit to tests to determine their position on certain policy matters.

A series of policy workshops and discussions followed: these differed markedly from the debate around the 1981 GLC manifesto – which had, after all, taken place within the democratic forums of the London Labour Party. There can only be one purpose for these discussions, and that is the development of a particular line of policy on a range of issues, followed by the testing of candidates to determine their suitability for support by the group around TLG.

For women the implications are straightforward: we will once again be expected to jump hoops and overcome hurdles – in order to prove our acceptability to a group of (mainly) white men – who have it in their power to organise for the candidatures of women. The same will apply to blacks.

It is my conviction that women and blacks will fail these tests; will stumble over hurdles and knock down hoops – and that white men will be justified (once again) in maintaining the status quo: the representation of women's and black interests by – white men!

In the selection process candidates undergo gruelling, if clumsy and inept, tests to determine their political acceptability to the constituency in question. Any person aspiring to a candidature, and not carrying the weighty baggage of labour movement credentials awarded to those who have the time, mobility and approval of the men that run this party, knows full well how gruelling a test the selection process can be. To add to this yet another test of acceptability – this time to a small group without a democratic mandate, can only be described as arrogant.

It is more than this: it is another block to women and blacks. These groups do not need to overcome any more hurdles to prove themselves acceptable to the white men that control this party. On the contrary, they need genuine and hard worked-for support to deal with the existing, quite formidable hurdles.

Women are quite familiar with the process whereby they create for themselves (through struggle) a small political space, only to find it being colonised by well-meaning, left-wing men.

Overtaken by white men

This will happen in the forthcoming selection process: women who have made an effective case within the party for an increase in the representation of women's interests, and blacks who have done the same, will be overtaken by white men who will nobly volunteer to advance the interests of these groups; who will convince many on the Left of their commitment to women's and black rights; and furthermore will argue their ability to advance these interests more effectively than these groups themselves could be expected to do. These men will be hard left, theoretically well-developed men, but white men all the same they will be.

Feminists in the Labour Party, well schooled in subordinating their interests to those of men, should resist these moves. We should, politely, thank those male feminists volunteering their services on our behalf, and refuse their overtures. Now is the time for all good feminists to come to the aid of the Labour Party, and to organise, autonomously, the support women candidates need.

The Labour Women's Action Committee has already circulated briefings to its members and is drawing up a list of potential women candidates for circulation to parties. We need to do more: to raise funds for women on the parliamentary circuit in need of travel and childcare expenses; to organise workshops on procedures, and to exchange best practice. Women wishing to support our national campaign to advance the candidatures of women, should write to the Secretary, Judy Sadler, at 56 Milton Road, London SE24.

THE ROCKY ROAD FROM WEMBLEY

Whilst attention in the labour movement has focused on the miners' strike and the ballots on continuing union political funds, what Employment Minister Tom King has described as a "quiet revolution" has been developing in union attitudes to Thatcher's anti-union laws – the Employment Acts 1980 and 1982 and the Trade Union Act 1984. John McIlroy traces the main steps along the way.

April 1982. TUC Special Conference at Wembley. General Council state need for co-ordinated opposition to 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts, "the movement will not stand idly by if a union in a weak position is attacked on an issue of importance to the movement generally". Agreed that trade unionmists must not participate in closed shop ballots under the laws or take money for ballots offered by the government. If a union is attacked by the courts the General Council is given power to "co-ordinate action by other affiliated unions in support of the union in difficulties including, if necessary, calling for industrial action".

October 1983. Injunction awarded against Post Office Engineering Union for boycotting connecting up of Mercury as part of anti-privatisation campaign.

November-December 1983. Escalating fines against the NGA for defying injunction against 'secondary' picketing in the Stockport Messenger dispute culminate in state takeover of union's assets. TUC refuses request for extension of action under Wembley principles on the grounds that 'dispute not winnable/the TUC cannot help or its assets will be taken over'.

January 1984. SOGAT defies injunction granted to Labour Party member Robert Maxwell in BPCC dispute. Maxwell pays contempt fine.

March 1984. NCB wins injunction against Yorkshire NUM under 1980 Employment Act to restrain picketing of Notts pits. Faced with defiance they back down.

July 1984. South Wales NUM fined £30,000 for contempt in disobeying injunction granted to Read Transport against picketing of their lorries at docks.

September 1984. Most unions take decision to collaborate with 1984 Trade Union Act by participating in the ballots on continuation of political funds. COHSE is a prominent exception but other union leaders say they must be brought into line.

September 1984. While criticising Len Murray over NGA dispute, TUC Congress votes down resolution for automatic TUC action when a union is attacked and allows the General Council continued discretion on whether it will call extended industrial action or not.

October 1984. Labour Party conference votes down motion calling for industrial action in solidarity with unions penalised under the Tory laws – whilst supporting illegal action against rate-capping!

October 1984. GMBATU accepts an injunction granted to Ilford's on the grounds it has not held a secret ballot as required prior to industrial action by the 1984 Trade Union Act. The TUC advises it on how to conduct a ballot to comply with legislation it is supposed to be fighting.

November 1984. Provisions of 1982 Employment Act requiring secret ballot with majority

Letters

Dear Comrades,

I was pleasantly surprised by the November Briefing. It seemed that you had normal human feelings when it came to the Brighton bombing. By December, Briefing correspondents had gone through the necessary moral acrobatics, to fit their analysis to the "IRA good, Tories bad" formula. The bombing was justified because the Tories are oppressors and the Irish the oppressed. So now every armed gang from an oppressed group has "carte blanche" to eliminate its political opponents. Come back Baader Meinhof, all is forgiven.

Once violence becomes the approved tactic for political advance, not merely the last resort for community defence, revolutionary movements become distorted. Militarism, machismo and murder take over. Those who enjoy killing become the leaders, capable of destroying all who disagree. The revolutionary movement now mirrors and justifies the oppressive state apparatus it so rightly abhors.

The way to destroy the British ruling class is not by murdering individual members. Only the mobilising of the people around a programme for radical change, will topple this selfish vicious Government and the class it represents.

Yours,

Jon Baston

Dear comrades,

I found some of the statements in Joy Hurcombe's article in *Briefing National Supplement No. 13* both amazing and distressing. I am amazed that anyone except intransigent Stalinists can claim that opposition to Soviet nuclear weapons will aid CND's opponents. One of the most frequent charges against CND is that it is an instrument of Soviet foreign policy and as such more concerned with anti-Americanism than with peace. A campaign against Soviet nuclear weapons and a call for the withdrawal of SS20 missiles from the GDR and Czechoslovakia would nail this lie once and for all.

I am most distressed at Joy's and CND's refusal to support the independent peace groups in the USSR and East Europe at a time when they are suffering severe repression. For example, Alexander Shatravka, a sawmill worker, has been imprisoned for three years for distributing the proposals of the Moscow Group to Establish Trust Between the USSR and the USA amongst his fellow workers. In prison he has been subjected to forced labour, beatings and deprivation of mail, medical treatment and proper sleep. Unable to bear the strain, he attempted suicide. For this he was sentenced, without trial, to a further five years. Others such as Alexander Vorona and Vladimir Gershuny have been interned in madhouses and forcibly dosed with dangerous drugs. None of these people see themselves as "dissidents" nor do they oppose Soviet government policy. All they ask is to be allowed to carry out the obligation to work for peace placed on Soviet citizens by the Constitution in their own way. Surely, the labour and peace movements can't turn a blind eye to their suffering.

Real dialogue to bring about peace and freedom can only take place between working people not between tyrannical and militaristic governments, and Soviet history since Stalin's time shows that in this respect the government of the USSR differs but little from its Western counterparts. Support from CND and the Labour Party for the independent peace activists in the East and opposition to Soviet nuclear arms would be a great contribution to such a dialogue and would greatly increase their standing and support amongst working people everywhere.

Yours for peace and freedom,

Terry Liddle
(Woolwich & Eltham Labour Party)

Dear Friends,

We are writing to correct the interesting but fanciful interpretation of the Jewish Socialists' Group's (JSG) reaction to the recent conference on Anti-Arab Racism (see Briefing supplement 13).

Presumably on the basis of the JSG's anti racist activity, and our efforts for a just Middle East peace, we were invited to lead a workshop at the conference. After careful consideration we declined and communicated our reasons to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, from whom we received no reply.

The conference literature enclosed with the invitation clearly saw anti-Arab racism in London and elsewhere as being almost completely reducible to Zionism and Israel's influence. While the JSG has a clear and principled critique of Zionism, and while we see anti-Arab racism as an important issue, we nevertheless refuse to accept such a crass and dangerous analysis.

We communicated our position to the GLC, and to the Jewish community through the letter columns of the Jewish Chronicle. *Individuals* from the mainstream of the JSG attended the event but we did not participate as an *organisation*.

However to equate the considered criticisms of the conference from a group with a sound anti-racist record with those of the likes of the Daily Mail and Lady Porter is frankly rather insulting. The mentality that if the Right attacks something as wrong on particular grounds, then the Left should automatically defend it on any grounds is one which our movement has surely discarded long ago.

With best wishes,

David Rosenberg

Dear Briefing,

The letter of Mike Heiser of the Jewish Socialists Group bears no resemblance to what actually happened when the NF staged their march in Brighton.

As Chief Steward for the ANL at 2 of the last 3 such demonstrations in Brighton I have no doubt that this was our most successful anti fascist mobilisation.

Given the massive police presence it was never likely that the NF would be "stopped". Even at Lewisham in 1977, the NF marched despite 7000 counter demonstrators, but to equate this with "control of the streets" by the NF is absurd. On 2 (not 1) occasions determined efforts were made to stop them and it took the police ½ hour before they could get the march started. As the JSG delegation arrived late they may not have realised this.

Sheer fantasy is the assertion that "for most of the march" anti-fascists "were actually outnumbered by the NF". Despite having only a weeks notice of the march over 200 people gathered at the start and another 300 had joined us by the end, cf to 40 Nazis.

There were no banners, JSG apart, not because the CLPs/TUs were not present but because this was not an occasion to show off ones banner. There are none at mass miners' pickets either. A majority of the counterdemonstrators were schoolkids and local youth — precisely those the NF tries to recruit.

Given that it was an "explicitly anti-Jewish march" why no reference to the absence of the local Jewish community? Or does the JSG want to avoid the obvious conclusion regarding Zionism, that if you support racist Israel it's hard to fight against racism directed at yourself?

Mike Heiser's doom and gloom approach reflects that of the Zionist Jewish Chronicle report 'Brighton NF march frizzles". Compare that to the local Evening Argus, no friend of the ANL, whose headlines were 'NF Marches Into Anger' and 'Anti Nazis Stop the Front Rally'. For the Zionists the fight against anti-Semitism is futile, from the JSG one expects better. Even Martin Wingfield, organiser of the march and editor of NF News, stated that "he didn't expect there to be another NF march in Sussex for several years."

Finally when Mike Heiser next attacks Ken Livingstone in the JC (2.12.84) I hope that alongside there isn't a similar letter from Herut — the fascists' Zionist equivalents.

Tony Greenstein
(Brighton Anti Nazi League)

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of 80% of those eligible to vote before a closed shop is protected become operative. Shop stewards of many unions participate in these ballots in violation of TUC policy. Unions take no action. EETPU officials declare they support participation.

November 1984. **ASTMS conference upholds decision previously taken by Executive to accept lock, stock and barrel the 1984 Act. They write to TUC calling for a change of policy on taking money for ballots.**

November 1984. **Joint Negotiating Committee at Austin Rover has called strike after delegate conference and mass meetings – the normal democratic procedure. Injunction awarded against unions as no strike ballot was conducted. EETPU and AUEW comply and "repudiate" their members. GMBATU, UCATT and Patternmakers also comply with legislation and "disavow" the strike. Only TGWU keeps to spirit of Wembley conference. It is fined £200,000 which is taken from its bank accounts.**

December 1984. **Fleet Street employers decide to pursue case for damages against NGA for losses from one day strike arising out of Stockport Messenger dispute. They also sue four individual NGA officials.**

December 1984. **EEPTU takes decision to breach TUC policy and take money for ballots. AUEW recommends that its members should agree to the same and ballots them to that effect.**

December 1984. **Spate of common law actions taken against NUM by working miners have come to a head with state takeover of union assets and appointment of a receiver to control its assets. NUM request TUC help. Although action not under employment laws the principles are the same. TUC refuse to provide offices or pay staff for NUM, let alone call for industrial action. Norman Willis states this cannot be done as it would involve the TUC in breaking the law. His enunciation of principle first formulated by Murray in NGA dispute draws no dissension from TUC lefts Ray Buckton and Bill Keyes.**

December 1984. **GMBATU chief David Basnett states on Weekend World, "When it comes to the law itself, I, for instance, would not advise my executive to act contrary to statute or criminal law . . . I would not advise my union to place itself in contempt . . ." AUEW chief Gavin Laird, asked if the logic is total compliance with the Tory legislation, replies "That is what I am saying".**

December 1984. **TUC agrees to start review of policy on the anti union laws by asking affiliates for their views. The success of these laws is absolutely vital to Mrs Thatcher's strategy. The success of existing legislation has already led to new plans to abolish wages councils and limit strikes in essential services. One point is obvious. You can't fight these laws unless you are prepared to break them. If we are to stop the rot, the labour movement's attitude to opposing the legal straightjacket must be urgently debated in party wards, GCs, in union branches, and stewards committees. The issue is simply too crucial to be left to the TUC.**

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

"Terrorists" in the Commons — yet again a man gets all the credit

It was all very curious. A nearly two-month-old story, which caused not so much as a single eyelash to twitch at the time, suddenly became a pre-Christmas sensation. *'Whip to see MP.' 'MP says he'd do it again.'* And that was just the 'quality' end of the market. The sewer tabloids predictably went barmy in their attempts to whip up anti-Irish and anti-Labour Left hysteria.

Poor Jeremy Corbyn MP got a real pasting from the media and from the Labour establishment, both of whom had obviously been tipped the wink. Though why so long after the event maybe only Michael I'll sue' Cocks knows. Way back last October, Jeremy arranged for ex-Armagh prisoner Linda Quigley to address other MPs on the strip-searching of women in Armagh. Jeremy, Chief Whip Cocks notwithstanding, and unlike so many, many Labour MPs before him, remained implacably attached to the political ideals he'd been elected on. 'Unrepentant' the *Guardian* called it. Oh sin, sin, and sin again Jeremy! For not only was Jeremy acting on the policies he has always stood for, he was also well within party policy; annual conference having, no more than two weeks before Linda's visit to the Commons, and against NEC advice – overwhelmingly condemned the strip-searching as deplorable and degrading.

And what do you know, but at that very conference Peter Archer had spoken at the LCI fringe meeting with – yes, none other than Linda Quigley. Peter Archer is, as it happens, Labour's front bench spokesperson on Ireland and has condemned the strip-searching of women in Armagh personally. So what on earth was it that just before Christmas made Mr Cocks get his knickers so twisted?

More to the point is what Linda Quigley was doing in London at the end of October in the first place. So *Briefing* prints the facts no-one else bothered to even find out.

Linda was in London courtesy of London Labour *women.* She had been invited by the Regional Women's Committee to be an official guest speaker at the Regional Women's Conference. When Linda addressed the crowded hall, describing what it feels like as a woman to be strip-searched, the attentive silence made the ticking clocks sound deafening. The conference reiterated its call for an end to the strip-searching and also supported all Irish women fighting for British troop withdrawal. Linda also spoke at a Labour Women for Ireland fringe meeting.

So there you have it. Linda's speech to the Women's Conference was certainly every bit as 'sensational' as Jeremy Corbyn's invitation to the Commons. But then as even an ex-editor of *Tribune* once said, Irish women just aren't newsworthy. Particularly when they are being sexually harassed in the name of British security, eh?

Labour Women for Ireland

STOP THE STRIP-SEARCHES
END POLITICAL POLICING!
FRIDAY, JANUARY 25th 1985
7.30pm

ST. MATTHEW'S
MEETING PLACE THEATRE,
BRIXTON HILL, LONDON SW2
WHEELCHAIR ACCESS VIA LIFT

CRECHE

LINDA BELOUS
(Vauxhall Labour Party Black Section)
CHRISTINE CRAWLEY MEP
KEN LIVINGSTONE
MANDY MOORE
(National Labour Women's Armagh/Belfast Delegation)
MUNIRA THOBANI
(Hornsey Labour Party Black Section)
SOUTH WALES WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES
SHEILA HEALY
(Labour Women for Ireland)

ANNOUNCEMENT: When a London Labour Women's Delegation to Armagh met with relatives of women who are and have been strip-searched we were asked if we could help organise a relatives' visit to England. Together with Labour Women for Ireland we are attempting to raise support for such a delegation in March. We need:

★ ***sponsorship:*** *resolutions of support from trade union branches, women's sections, women's councils, GCs, Local Government Committees, council women's committees, women's groups.*

★ ***finance:*** *air fares to bring the relatives over are costly. Please ask your group to make as large a donation as possible even if it's only £10 or £20. Cheques payable to Labour Women Stop the Strip Searches Campaign or LWSSSC.*

LABOUR WOMEN FOR IRELAND

Promoting a dialogue with Republican women and other Irish feminists, campaigning against the strip searches in Armagh Jail, solidarising with the Northern Ireland Abortion campaign. As women and feminists we believe that British withdrawal is necessary for a United Ireland and that national liberation is inseperable from women's liberation.

Annual membership. Please send £5.00 (£1.00 unwaged)

Affiliation: TU, LP, YS, Women's Sections. Please send £5.00 (over 250 members: £10)

Cheques payable: 'LWI' c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, WC2

LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND

The LCI together with the LWI campaigns to end bipartisanship and a put a commitment to British withdrawal and Irish unity at the centre of Labour's policies. To break the Unionist veto over political progress in Ireland and bring a democratic solution closer we are active in all sections of the Labour movement, arguing our case and providing a platform for the Irish labour, republican and feminist viewpoint. Why not join the LCI or get a speaker to your local ward, constituency or union branch? We can organise meetings at any Labour or Union conference. To help camaign PLEASE add on a donation to the very reasonable membership rates.

Annual membership. Please send £5.00 (£1.00 unwaged)

Affiliation: TU, LP, YS, Women's Sections. Please send £5.00 (over 250 members £10)

Cheques payable 'LCI', BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

BE A SELLER!

Labour and Ireland is trying to build up a strong network of sellers. We are looking for supporters who will take a bundle of magazines to sell at Labour Party and Union meetings, Irish clubs and demonstrations, at work and to friends. For orders over 10, we give a discount of 20 per cent, so the seller keeps £1.00 for every ten sold. To start off, why not take a bundle on sale or return? You just pay for what you sell.

Write to: Labour and Ireland distribution, c/o LCI, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX

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Britain £3 (multi-users £6.00)

Overseas £4.00 (multi-users £7.00)

Please send cheques payable to 'Labour and Ireland' to:

Labour and Ireland subs, c/o LCI BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING welcomes articles and contributions. Please contact Nadine Finch or Sarah Roelofs c/o 31 Cranwich Road, N16

South Africa:

Two events of 1984 will continue to influence events in South Africa during 1985. These are the signing of the Nkomati Accord with Mozambique in March and the introduction of a new constitution in September.

The Nkomati Accord was intended to put a halt to the armed struggle being waged by the ANC inside South Africa, and from the Mozambique side to put a halt to the activities of the South African-sponsored Mozambique National Resistance (MNR). The new constitution, which purportedly introduced a measure of power-sharing with the 'Coloured' and 'Indian' national groups, did not usher in an era of inter-racial co-operation and harmony but led instead to widespread popular resistance to the regime.

On signing the Nkomati Accord the apartheid rulers predicted a rapid end to armed incidents

US VICTORY IN GRENADA!

The new US-selected government of Grenada was officially installed at the opening of parliament in St Georges on Friday December 28th 1984. In that act, Washington took another giant step in asserting its hegemony over the English-speaking Caribbean and declared its intention to pursue a policy of continued suppression of self-expression of peoples of the region.

The elections were anything but free and fair. As early as October 29th, when Mr Roy Chateau, the Grenadian supervisor of elections and 25 of his staff were fired by the Governor-General, Sir Paul Scoon, and replaced by representatives of the United States' Eastern Caribbean collaborators, the writing was on the wall. Mr Chateau had previously submitted his resignation in protest against attempts by representatives of invading countries to seize control of the electoral process.

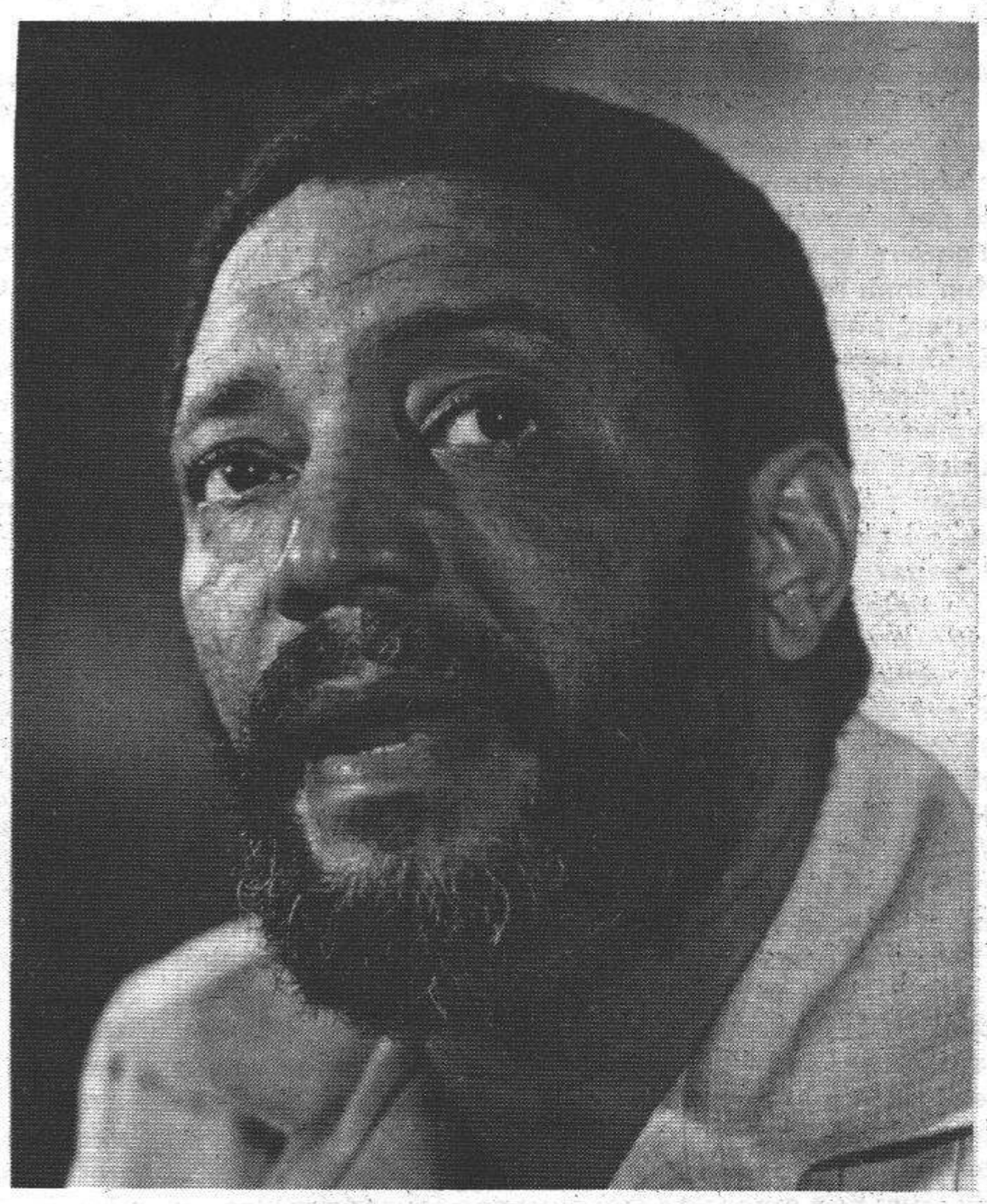
A PUPPET REGIME

This undemocratic and anti-worker act highlighted the plan to put in power a puppet regime favourable to the United States. Voting lists were incomplete and left out thousands of young Grenadians who were denied their right to participate in the so-called 'democratic process'. The taking of photographs and other aspects of the registration created fear among many Grenadians that information given would be used against them later.

Invitations were extended by the Governor-General to the United Nations and the Commonwealth, but the negative response of these international organisations supposed that they were not prepared to participate in an electoral process in a country under occupation by foreign forces and consequently there was no genuine international observation.

The Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement contested the elections in response to demands by its supporters and also because it provided a vehicle and an avenue to engage in the struggle to regain the sovereignty, independence and self respect of Grenada. It was the only party which called for an immediate withdrawal of the occupation forces and which made a commitment in its manifesto that no foreign troops will be based in Grenada.

Realising the unpopularity of the Grenada National Party (their preference) and conscious of the fact that the MBPM campaign was gainning momentum, the United States, using their lackeys in the region, brought four centre-right parties to Union Island (a dependency of St Vincent) and forced them to form an alliance to contest the elections. Within days the alliance started to crumble and the party of Winston Whyte dropped out.



Maurice Bishop

Labour Party Photo Library

NEW NATIONAL PARTY

The remaining alliance, the New National Party, spent over three million United States dollars and employed five hundred workers. Their campaign was characterised by a mass buying of votes, fixing of rooves, cash payments, distribution of clothing, rum and food. There were even aeroplane flights dropping leaflets and trailing NNP banners. This highlighted the orchestration of the NNP campaign.

Even before a vote was cast, the NNP were celebrating a landslide victory in pre-election parties all over the country. The rigging of the US-controlled elections surpassed South American proportions in terms of extent and sophistication.

Today, the euphoria of the NNP victory has dissipated and people are again concerning themselves with bread and butter issues. Grenada now has to take its place in the Caribbean Basin Initiative, but Grenadians know what happened to Jamaica, one of the main beneficiaries of the CBI, whose economy is in disarray. According to local phraseology 'The basin spring a leak in the Caribbean'.

Joe Charter
Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement

the year ahead

Lynn Maseko
(African National Congress)

inside the country. The opposite in fact happened. After Nkomati there was an escalation in the number of incidents until the end of September, whereafter the number of incidents did decline. This proved the falsity of police claims that ANC actions were hit and run operations carried out from bases in Mozambique. Operations carried on at a high level for six months from bases inside the country.

The ANC has always admitted that Nkomati was a setback to the liberation struggle, while understanding the pressures under which Mozambique was forced to sign the Accord. Shootouts with guerrillas and discoveries by the police of arms caches at the end of December indicate that bases are being replenished for a stepped-up campaign of armed struggle during 1985.

APARTHEID WITH A NEW FACE

The new tricameral parliament has already shown itself for what it is – apartheid with a new face. All major decisions are still made by the ruling white National Party while 'Coloured' and 'Indian' 'parliaments' have shown that they are as powerless as the councils they replaced.

Not one of the 'leaders' elected to these fraudulent sub-parliaments condemned police brutalities during the township uprisings which began last September. On the contrary they have become the most enthusiastic supporters of state repressive actions to maintain 'law and order .

There is no reason to believe that there will be any abating of popular resistance to apartheid institutions in the coming year. Already this year there are reports of unrest in townships not far from Johannesburg. None of the peoples' demands have been met and the economic conditions which led to the outbreak of unrest have steadily worsened. Inflation and unemployment are increasing, forced removals continue and the demands of students have been ignored. The regime believes that simply by detaining and imprisoning leaders of popular organisations law and order will be re-established.

QUANDARY

The regime is in a quandary about its future. The new constitution was shown to be overwhelmingly rejected in the elections last year. Plans to discuss the constitutional future of the African people are doomed even before they start because no African leader of stature will talk with the regime. Apartheid administrative structures are breaking down because those who serve on them have been identified as servants of apartheid. The only response known by the regime is repression, but such an approach, as they know, only weakens their bargaining position for the inevitable day when they will have to talk to the true leaders of the people.

The future of New Socialist

It's been all change in the editors of the main left journals recently. Last month Briefing interviewed Nigel Williamson, new editor of *Tribune*. So we spoke this month to Stuart Weir, appointed editor of the new monthly *New Socialist* magazine about his plans for the journal. Former editor, James Curran, was firmly identified with Labour's Bennite wing.

Davy Jones: What plans do you have for the magazine, and what changes do you envisage from the bimonthly magazine?

Stuart Weir: My first effort was to make it more popular and more accessible to people both within and outside the Labour Party, to improve the general look of the magazine. I think that's very important, but other than that I didn't have in mind any major changes from the existing policy, which I considered was about right. Except that I am making much more effort to get into the magazine what I would describe as political and working class testimony, allowing people to speak for themselves as far as possible. I'm also trying to launch a new series of articles: one of these will be on a socialist foreign policy for Britain, another will be on domestic policy issues. So I suppose there will be more policy-oriented articles in the magazines over time.

Do you see any difference in relation to the political projects of the different left wing journals? For example New Statesman *is very much identified with the centre, if not the right, of the party.* Marxism Today *is developing a very coherent project around a new version of a Popular Front orientation, especially in the writings of Eric Hobsbawm.*

I think it would be a huge mistake for us to define ourselves in terms of Eric Hobsbawm or *Marxism Today*. It's very important that we allow *New Socialist* to grow as the intellectual forum for the Labour Party, and for the ideas which are seizing people in the Party to be debated in the magazine. If you say am I more hopeful than *Marxism Today* about class politics, then I would say 'yes'. I share the spirit of the Future of the Left (the book of previous articles from *New Socialist*), and would like to take it further from setting out values and ideas, and saying how can we make these values and ideas really tick and mean something. That seems to me the next task for *New Socialist*.

How important is debate and discussion within the magazine?

We obviously must be a magazine that anyone with serious ideas in the Party can contribute to and know that they won't be rejected simply because their politics won't suit.

What do you think has been the major constituency for the magazine within the Party? I would guess that it was broadly speaking been from the broad Bennite current, in terms of who sells and reads it in general. Do you think that will remain the case, even if your retain a broad spectrum of views within the journal?

I would have thought that the majority of our readers are what was once called 'Bennite'. When we asked readers who they most identified with Tony Benn came first and it was others generally on the left who got most votes.

How important do you see Marxism as a trend to be represented within the magazine and the party as a whole?

Plainly Marxism is enormously important for all socialists. I think that there are aspects of Marx's thought that I would like to see more emphasised. I think that the libertarian nature of Marx is greatly underestimated for example. I would also want to emphasise other socialist traditions as well, and other traditions of thought which are relevant to us as socialists. I am thinking now of a series of articles which would pick up people like, for argument's sake, Rosa Luxemburg, Emma Goldman, William Morris, Cole, and in a more contemporary sense, Raymond Williams and Sheila Rowbotham. I would also like to look at other people outside the socialist tradition who have something to say.

How critical can the magazine be of the party leadership, not just on little things, but on major issues too and its overall orientation?

Well, I have every intention of being as critical as the situation might require. I think it's vital that the magazine is not constrained by woolly ideas of loyalty or solidarity. It's very important that the magazine is able to speak out when it's important to be critical of the leadership or rank and file or any institution that deserves critical analysis. It's obviously got to be done seriously with genuine thought and in a balanced way.

There are not any constraints on you in the form of pressure?

Plainly there are all sorts of constraints and pressures and no doubt they would get more intense if the magazine were seen by one group of people or another to be behaving badly. I have every intention of ignoring all such constraints.

How do you see the miners' strike from the point of view of its effects on the Party? It has clearly been a major test for all the different groups within the party.

I think it has had a major galvanising effect within the Party at a local level which has been enormously good for everybody. The tragedy is that the miners have not had the all-round support that they should have had. In a way there is a danger that the Party will be consumed by the miners' strike, at local level, whereas we have a major struggle in local government coming up. Obviously that's very important and will require a lot of energy at local level if we are not to lose that struggle.

Just finally, whereabouts do you situate yourself in the Party?

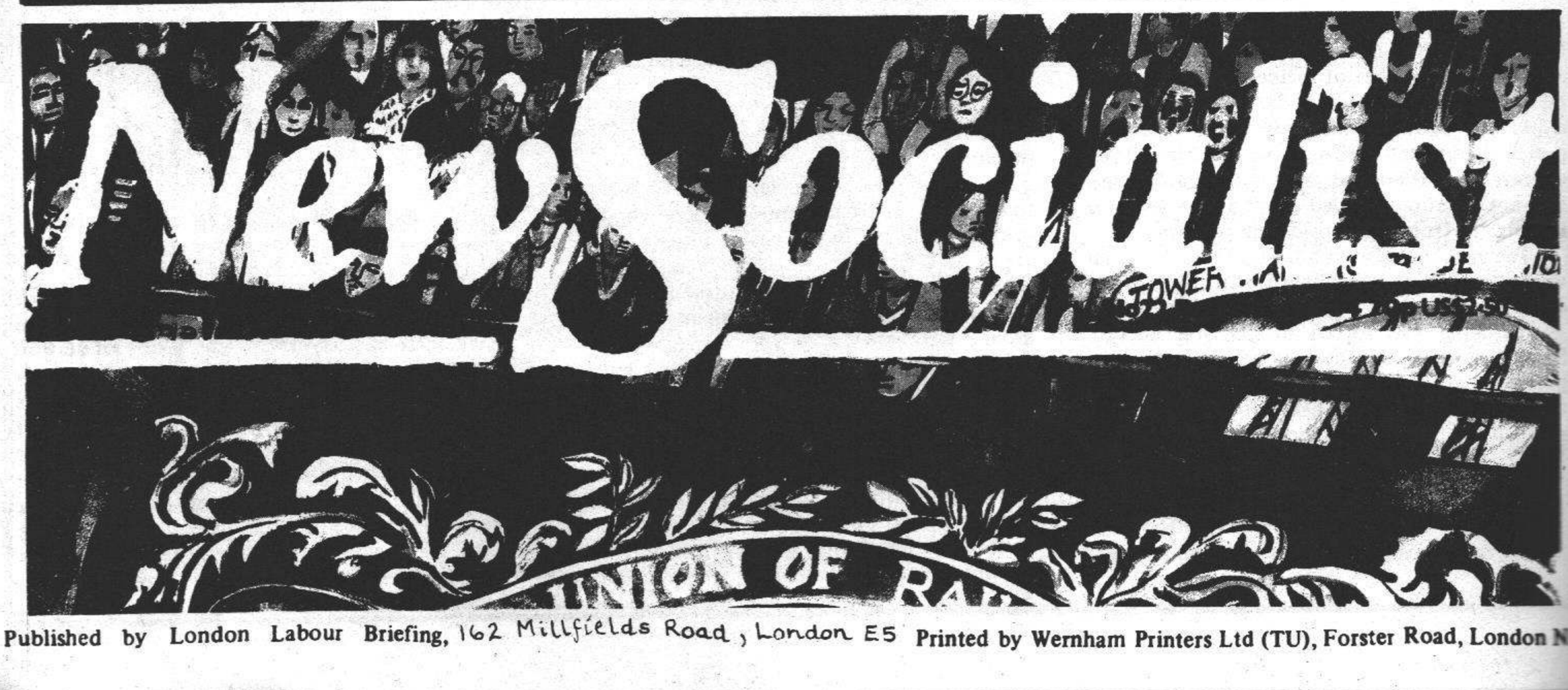
I think it's on the record. I edited a book called *Manifesto* which made it pretty clear what my politics are. But I wouldn't want to make too much of that because I think it's very important that I'm not seen as a factional person.

How do you see your role as editor then? Do you allow your own views to broadly direct the journal?

Well I try very hard to make the magazine open to different views, and there is a demand from our readers for a wider spectrum of views within the magazine. I don't think it's possible for anyone to edit a magazine without allowing their views to affect things, but I try hard to ensure that it doesn't.

Are sales going up?

When we went monthly we predicted something like a 15 per cent loss in circulation, and we budgeted on that. But it seems tentatively that we are holding most of our readership. You have to realise too that we have a large 'unseen' readership as *New Socialist* gets passed around within groups, families and other communities.



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