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LAMBETH SAYS: NO RATE! NO SURCHARGE!

DON'T LEAVE US TO FIGHT ALONE!

Joan Twelves, Secretary, Vauxhall CLP, and Regional EC member
Greg Tucker, Chair, Lambeth Local Government Committee

Lambeth councillors are facing possible surcharge and disqualification from office. Because they have consistently refused to comply with ratecapping, 32 of Lambeth's Labour councillors have received letters from the District Auditor stating he is 'calculating the losses consequent upon the Council's delay in making a rate'. An 'extraordinary audit' has been ordered. The Government has finally responded to our challenge to their attack on local democracy.

The only way the Tories can now implement the Rates Act is by removing elected councillors from office. The slowness in which the District Auditor has moved is an indication that the Tories are reluctant to take this step. The labour movement now has to ensure that we can turn that reluctance to our advantage.

Lambeth has stood by the policy of the London Labour Party – overwhelmingly agreed at two conferences. Now individual councillors who have accepted the Party's mandate are at risk. They could be declared bankrupt and disqualified from holding office. If they are found guilty of 'wilful misconduct' they will be personally liable for thousands and thousands of pounds. If they don't pay, they could lose all their property and possibly face imprisonment. The whole labour movement has a duty to protect those who have stood firm on its behalf.

For the past three months the struggle against ratecapping has centred on council chambers. Councillors were put under enormous pressure. People who were elected to manage bin-emptying, social services, housing repairs, were asked to be the standard bearers for the movement. It was a war of nerves, with the Government sitting tight as it waited for the Labour Party, true to form, to crumble in the face of the threat of legal action.



Voting not to set a rate. June 5th 1985. John Chapman

The collapse of the miners' strike the debacle at County Hall, the lack of support from the Party's leadership, the defection of right-wingers, all contributed to the failure of other councils to stick to the agreed strategy. But a unity has been forged in Lambeth between the

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

ISLINGTON: HARDLY A SHOT FIRED

On May 31st, the final date given to them by the District Auditor, Islington Council set a rate. It did so after a process of consultation which resulted in a two to one majority at a joint meeting in favour of setting a rate. Roughly similar proportions of party and group voted for each position and all the wards which supported continued defiance had at least one councillor arguing that position if not both. A political divide ran through both party and group about the next step to take.

Labour Group decided not to impose a whip at full council, and to a large extent the debate there was refreshingly around different political positions rather than personal attacks. This was unfortunately marred by the behaviour of Councillor Alan Clinton, who made a petulant attack on those putting forward a no-rate position, supposedly on the basis of accountability. Certainly the party has to ask itself serious questions about the way consultation can be a conservatising force, but his behaviour was clearly against the spirit of both the joint meeting and Labour Group.

It became increasingly clear during the consultation process that the strategy put forward by Margaret Hodge relied on Jenkin coming to the negotiating table without industrial action being taken. She was criticised from all sides about the scaremongering which was indulged in which implied that 700 redundancies was the inevitable result of the Tories' legislation being implemented. The eleventh hour budget does appear, after much cynicism and scrutiny to imply that there will be no cuts in jobs and services this year. There will, however, be real problems in the future, particularly as the Tories will be more confident to go further in their attacks. It will also be extremely difficult to mobilise the workforce, the community and tenants' groups and the party next year when the battle was abandoned with hardly a shot fired.



Alan Clinton: 'petulant.'

The Joint Trade Union Committee in Islington took a position that Islington along with the other councils should continue to defy the legislation, but that if Islington were the only council left by the 31st and they could implement a 'no cuts' budget the unions would not oppose them doing so. (Debate is going on within the unions at the moment about whether the position adopted was the correct one). In the event, of course, Islington was not alone and so the JTUC intervened at both the Joint Meeting and full council to argue for continued defiance.

Terry Conway,
Islington North GMC
and Islington NALGO
(personal capacity)

Lambeth (CONTINUED)

councillors, council trade unions, local Labour Parties, tenants associations and community groups which has helped ensure the councillors know they are not being asked to stand alone. That unity has to be continuously nurtured, but we all know that compliance means the destruction of many local services and positive initiatives.

Lambeth hasn't found any crocks of gold in the cupboard. The cuts would be for real in a borough where at least one in three households are on or below the poverty line. Compliance would also mean stabbing the council workers in the back.

But the question is being asked. How can Lambeth stand alone? The tactic of not setting a rate was specifically aimed at providing a focus for unity amongst the ratecapped authorities. However, most Lambeth councillors and activists recognised from the start that we had to make a stand irrespective of what other councils decided. The fact that there was general agreement over strategy and tactics was to everyone's advantage, but it was anticipated that not everyone would be able to keep up the fight.

Support for Lambeth now has to become the focus of a new unity. All those councillors who stood firm in other councils – and those who caved in, all those trade unionists fighting the cuts in jobs and services that ratecapping is all about, councillors and trade unionists fighting cuts and privatisation in Tory areas, all those who voted for the policy of non-compliance, all must rally to support Lambeth. We have heard a lot about the fight against ratecapping being over for this year, defeated. *We are not defeated in Lambeth.*

NEXT YEAR

The ratecapped targets for next year are about to be announced. We've always known this year's were soft to undermine our fightback. The London borough elections are next May. The Tories are planning increased attacks on councils with their plans for wholesale privatisation, restrictions on spending and advertising, bans on contract compliance, etc. If other councils want to fight back next year, the only way is to start by making sure that Lambeth wins now.

Lambeth Labour Group, the CLPs and the trade unions are mobilising to win support. Councillors are touring the borough, talking to local people and community organisations – the Vauxhall GLC by-election on 11th July will give an indication of the support we have. But we are also calling on the labour movement nationally to support us. NALGO conference has overwhelmingly pledged support and will back industrial action when the time is right. Other trade unions must follow suit. Labour Group has set itself the aim of organising fringe meetings and platform speakers at this year's major union conferences. Cllr Jock Quinn, Chair of the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC), has been given the job of co-ordinating trade union support.

In parallel with the political campaign, the councillors will be fighting the issue in the courts – not that we have any faith in Tory judges. This costs money. To run the campaign, to afford to go to court, and to prepare for all eventualities, the London Bridge trade unions are aiming to raise £¼million in London alone. Labour Group and the Local Government Committee have each set up Fighting Funds, and Party members are being asked to pledge regular contributions. Both the NEC and TUC have agreed to fighting funds on paper – these have to be turned into hard cash and political support. The buckets will be out on the streets once more!

Lambeth Council meets again on 3rd July. Labour Group intends to continue its policy of not setting a rate. A massive mobilisation of support will show the Tories that Lambeth is not alone!

THE BATTLE FOR LAMBETH

NO RATE! NO SURCHARGE!

MAJOR RALLY
ORGANISED BY LAMBETH
LABOUR PARTIES

SATURDAY 22 JUNE, 3pm

BRIXTON RECREATION CENTRE,
Brixton Station Road, SW9

Speakers include:

TED KNIGHT
JO RICHARDSON

Hackney after the debâcle

By Hilda Kean ex-leader and Andrew Puddephat ex-deputy leader, Hackney Council

What is telling about the final debacle and the aftermath of the rate capping spectacle in Hackney is how much the left has learnt from the campaign — and how little the right.

For us the campaign was totally linked with our commitment to be accountable to the party as a whole in Hackney. The monthly written reports we made to both GMCs, and circulated to all wards and councillors; the dissemination of council documents on our financial situation and our written responses to them were no token gestures. Our regular meetings with the Joint Shop Stewards Committee to discuss rate capping tactics were not mere lip service. Party activitists, trade union stewards, and those representatives attending the weekly 'Working for Hackney' campaign were all recipients of the same information as ourselves. They became equal participants with us in discussing and implementing the subsequent political strategies.

When the 24 Labour councillors turned their backs on the people of Hackney, they turned their backs upon this method of working, this accountability in action.

The right wing failed to comprehend the results of this process. When Tony Millwood, who moved the cuts budget, attended Hackney North GMC to explain, after the event, his proposals (though he declined to stay and hear the subsequent discussion). He failed to realise the information that delegates had received. Over recent months delegates had received copies of information from the director of finance, and our critique of it, and our response to Tony Millwood's budget and therefore understood the figures and their interpretations.

Special Borough Conference

A similar incomprehension was expressed by the right wing at a special borough conference and labour group called to elect a new leadership and chairs of committee. They argued, in somewhat sterile fashion, that next year was the year to fight (as they said last year too . . .) and that the campaign must carry on as usual.

They seemed to assume that the campaign had grown spontaneously overnight. They 'forgot' that it was the result of months of hard work and political debate throughout the Hackney labour movement. They also assumed that the movement has a short memory . . .

A further indication of the lack of political understanding was given in the speech Tony Millwood made in his candidature for leader. He argued that how council services were paid for was not an issue of principle! This ignores that the people of Hackney are paying for the services through a rate increase double the level of inflation. This also conveniently forgets that the basis of our campaign was to get the government to accept its responsibilities for the crisis Hackney faced by returning the rate support grant taken from the borough since 1979. The question of whether the working class pays for a crisis not of its creation is central to the discussions of our political strategy.



25th May. Occupation of Hackney Council Chamber John Chapman

Opportunist

While the right wing councillors now talk of 'unity', there is little unity in their own political line, which is an opportunist mishmash of different recipes for defeat. This was even reflected in the elections for councillors to fill leadership and committee chair positions. No candidates were put forward for deputy leader, chief whip, chair of social services, community development, health and consumer rights because they could not even agree amongst themselves who should stand!

However, it would be wrong to give a pessimistic impression of the situation inside the party in Hackney. Those of us who consistently opposed rate capping are determined to continue with our defence of jobs and services and our opposition to cuts. This means continuing our opposition inside and outside the council chamber. Attempts to push cuts through the committees will be met with fierce opposition, from left councillors and co-opted representatives from black and community organisations.

A planning meeting for representatives of labour movement organisations has already been arranged to discuss the wider campaign within the Hackney population.

Not reselected

Within the party the left will also be active in ensuring that councillors who voted for cuts and against accountability are not reselected. Left activists are coming forward as potential future candidates.

None of us will forget the destructive acts perpetrated against the working class of our borough by the Conservative government ably assisted by 24 Labour councillors. More positively we must remember and continue to build on the co-operation and collaboration that has existed between different sections of our community so that a campaigning socialist Labour Party can be strengthened.

VAUXHALL G.L.C.
BY-ELECTION

HELP NEEDED –
SUPPORT LORNA BORELAND

Come to Campaign HQ,
6 Brixton Road

Monday-Friday 6.30pm
Sunday mornings 10.30am
Help also wanted in daytime –
phone 582 2955 for details

WE MUST BE CERTAIN NEXT YEAR

GREENWICH: LEARNING THE HARD WAY

Some 17 hours after the Council meeting began on Friday evening 7th June, Tories on both sides of the chamber in Greenwich voted to set a rate at the maximum permissible level under the Rates Act on a motion proposed by the Deputy Leader. Only 19 of the 40 Labour members present voted consistently to defer setting a rate and against a rate being set in line with Party and Local Government Committee policy. The rest sold out the future of the Borough.



Martie Volk

Greenwich Deputy Leader Dave Picton votes against deferring a rate.

The 19 were: John Austin-Walker (Leader of the Council), Tim Barnett (Chair of Community Affairs), Tom Carter, Jin Draper (Vice-Chair of Social Services), Danny Evaristo (Chair Education sub), Bob Gosden (Chair Social Services), Phil Graham (deputy Mayor), Bill Jeavons, Serena Lovelace (Vice-Chair Housing), Claer Lloyd-Jones (Chair of the Labour Group), Lance Mulcahy, Brian O'Sullivan (Chair DLO), Ron Robinson (Chair Leisure Services), Bill Strong (Vice Chair Labour Group), John Wakefield (Whip), Karen Waters (Chair Womens sub, Vice-Chair CAC), Julian Wells, Dave Whyte (Chair health sub), Brian Williams (secretary of the Labour Group).

The events leading up to the final vote are riddled with manoeuvering, vote switching, and a fundamental display of lack of accountability to the Party by the majority of the Labour Group who were also prepared to break the whip.

FIRST REAL TEST

At the Labour Group meeting on Thursday evening 6th June the whip was established, by a small majority on each occasion, to vote for continued deferral and against the motion put forward by 12 members of the Labour Group to set a rate. We were advised by the Solicitor to the Council that our legal cover had gone despite our impending action for Judicial Review against the Secretary of State, and that if we voted to defer on Friday night we would be open to surcharge and disqualification from office for incurring losses by wilful misconduct. Most of us had expected to reach this situation at an earlier stage, as other authorities had; however, this was to be our first real test.

The Party General Councils and the LGC were quite clear that we should continue to defer, at least until the outcome of the Judicial Review was known.

It was clear when the votes were taken to establish the whip for Friday night's Council meeting that a number of people who wanted to set a rate were prepared to break the whip and vote with the Tories in Council to ensure this happened. Only three people were prepared to say categorically they would not break the whip, six would not say. At that stage it was just possible that the whip would carry in Council and we would not set a rate.

During the course of Friday it became clearer that a sufficient number of people were prepared to break the whip for it to be almost impossible for the motion to defer to be carried in Council.

At the very start of the Council meeting on Friday night an adjournment was moved and a re-vote forced in a hastily assembled and 'unofficial' meeting of group members. The result on the motion to set a rate was reversed. The majority of group officers did not consider that this meant that the whip had changed since the previous evening, that it was still in line with Party and LGC policy, and many of us announced our intention to continue voting to defer and against setting a rate.

The first motion on the Council Agenda was to defer setting a rate. It was lost by 24-36 with members of the Labour Group voting with the Tories and Alliance to defeat it.

The bitter disappointment felt by those of us who followed Party Policy was echoed by the disturbances from the Public Gallery which followed. The Mayor adjourned Council for half an hour during which time the occupation started. The people who occupied the Council Chamber did so in an orderly and peaceful fashion. They were trade unionists, workers and managers from voluntary organisations, representatives from community groups and local political parties. The occupation lasted for some three hours during which time a debate took place about how resistance to rate-capping should be pursued.

At 12.25am the Council tried to meet in another part of the building but this was again disrupted. The Council then tried to meet yet again at 2am but was still disrupted. The Mayor adjourned the Council until 8am.

At 8am there were still two items remaining on the Council Agenda, a Tory motion to set a rate and the motion to set a rate in the name of 12 members of the Labour Group. The Tory motion was defeated. When the vote was taken on the remaining motion, it was also lost because the Tories voted it down. The Council then adjourned for an hour for a Labour Group meeting to take place. We had not set a rate but it was clear that there was a majority in Council to do if the right combination of words could be found to get Tory support. The Tories objected to paragraphs criticising the Government and promising to raise the rate above the ratecapped level if we won the judicial review.

Group decided to vote unanimously in favour of a motion committing our budget for 1985/6 to incorporating the 4m of growth agreed in the draft budget.

The whip did not change on the issue of deferral of a rate but clearly such a motion was not going to be carried in Council. Group then agreed by a narrow majority to propose a bare motion to set a rate. The 19 indicated that they would vote against this in Council.

Amazingly enough the Tories continued to vote this down. It was not until after a further adjournment and advice from the solicitor that they must vote for it or be guilty of misconduct that the vote to set a rate was carried by 40 votes to 19.

It is difficult to describe fully the extent of the disappointment and bitterness felt by the 19 at the conclusion of the meeting. We had all considered our personal positions a long time ago and were prepared to accept the consequences of illegality. Those members of the Labour Group who were never prepared to do so and did not resign have sabotaged our struggle against ratecapping. They have committed an act of gross dishonesty. I can only but applaud the Labour Group in Lambeth for remaining firm where we fell down.

In the aftermath of having set a rate there are actions that must be taken now and actions that must be taken with a view to next year.

DESELECTION

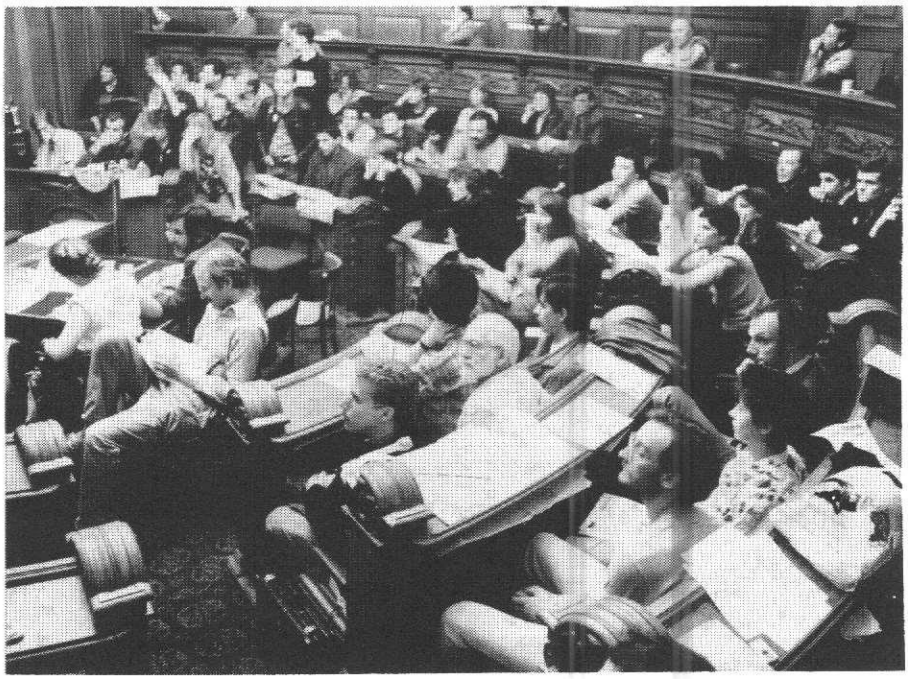
In the short-term the Parties must decide what level of disciplinary action should be taken against those members who broke party policy in conjunction with the group officers. The opportunity of re-selection and de-selection lies in the Party's hands. If the Labour Group cannot sustain illegal action

this year then the composition of the group must be changed and made up of comrades who know from day one that they will be called upon to break the law.

We must also develop a strategy which will not tie the hands of the next Council when it is elected in May next year. The crucial period lies between March and May. What should be proposed is a formula which is acceptable to those who will not fight but which will not prejudice the incoming Council.

By setting a rate now Greenwhich can survive this year with no cuts by creative accounting and eating into next year's 'seed corn'. This will leave us with a totally unbridgable gap of 17 million pounds next year. The 19 are pledged to ensure that no cuts in jobs and services take place this year.

The best tactic that can be adopted next year to avoid cuts would be a deficit budget. On current performance this would not be carried by the presently constituted Labour Group. The best option would seem to be to set a rate, but not to set a budget and leave the option open for the incoming Labour Group to set a deficit budget should they have a majority in Council to do so. The election issues for next May could not be clearer. There will not be an option of waiting until the following year.



Martie Volk

'The People's Council'. Orderly, peaceful occupation of Greenwich Council Chamber.

CAMDEN: NOW BUILD CAMPAIGN OUTSIDE THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

Dave Joseph (Chair, Hampstead and Highgate CLP)

John Chapman

In the early morning of 6th June Camden Council agreed to set a rate. At the end of a tense and bitter meeting nine Labour councillors — Bethell, Birtles, Cane, Green, Bayley, Kirk, Jowell, Stein and Shaw voted with the Tories. They betrayed the Camden Labour Parties, the Town Hall trade unions and community groups who, throughout the campaign against rate capping, had been resolutely behind the Labour Group's 'no rate' strategy.

The Council must now levy the maximum rate allowed under the Rates Act. It may be possible to close the gap between the rates revenue and the proposed budget by a package of creative accounting. This remains to be seen. Any such proposals must be thoroughly investigated by the Labour parties, trades unions and community groups. The Labour Group must expel all doubts that there will be any cuts in services or redundancies.

It is also necessary for the Camden Labour Movement to examine why the anti-rate capping campaign did not achieve its objectives. This is an urgent priority since Camden will not escape the Tories' hitlist for rate capping in 1986. We will have to talk bluntly about the nine Labour councillors who voted with the Tories. They cannot be allowed to stand as Labour candidates in the 1986 borough elections. We cannot afford to have similar splits in the future.

There is a need to assess our own imput into the campaign of opposition to rate capping. The campaign was



Lambeth Labour Party members support Camden Councillors who opposed setting a rate, 5th June.

focussed on activities in the Council Chamber. All too frequently the unions, the parties and the community put their faith in councillors' ability to negotiate a compromise with the Government. The fact is that only a strong trade union movement, linked to an active community, could have forced Patrick Jenkin to make cash available for the rate capped Councils. The failure to organise this movement, and develop the necessary tactics, is the crucial cause of Camden's compliance with the Rates Act. With a strong movement outside the Council Chamber there would have been the impetus and pressure on the councillors to develop the struggle.

This year's campaign against rate capping ended in stalemate. Neither Camden nor the Government won. Next year the Tories will impose real and savage cuts on the borough. Our ability to fight back will depend on the strength of the campaign outside the Council Chamber. Our work in the coming months must address itself to this issue.

RATECAPPING: LESSONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEES

Martyn Day, Secretary of Association of London and Local Government Committees.

Amongst the many lessons to be learnt from the ratecapping conflict there are two which need to be dealt with urgently by Local Government Committtes (LGCs). Firstly in the lead up to the 1986 Council elections LGCs must do everything in their power to ensure that Party members who stand for election are prepared to abide by and support Party policy and secondly LGCs should try and tighten up the accountability of their Labour Groups once they have been elected.

There is now just under a year before the council elections in May 1986 and most LGCs will be starting their process of building a Panel of candidates for Wards to choose from in their selection meetings later in the year. In most LGCs, over past years, the process of endorsing nominations that have come through from CLPs has been almost automatic, with little attempt to weed out any but the totally unsuitable. This has meant that there have been large numbers of councillors on Labour Groups who have shown little interest in supporting Party policy. This is particularly true of the rotten Boroughs like Tower Hamlets but recent events have shown it is also true of some councillors within the more radical boroughs. LGCs must, therefore take upon themselves the power of ensuring that only Party members who support Party policy are allowed onto the panel.

REFUSE TO ENDORSE

Under Clause VIII(v) of the Party Rules on LGCs in London, LGCs have the power to refuse to endorse any nomination for whatever reason it sees fit. That power should be used to question all nominees, closely, on their preparedness to support Party policy not just on "no cuts in jobs and services" but also on issues such as "Freemasonry", "equal opportunities" and "councillors relationship to the Town Hall unions".

Those nominees who do not support the policies laid down by the local Party should be excluded from the Panel. Those excluded would then have the right to appeal against their exclusion, to the Regional Executive. The Executive's recent decision to call on all Wards not to select councillors who voted to comply with the Government on the "no rate" issue would seem to indicate that appellants would get little joy there.

Following the change in Rules at the last Party Conference sitting councillors, who are interested in restanding, are automatically entitled to be on the Panel. The Association of London Local Government Committees recently made the decision that there is little to be gained in trying to exclude any councillors from the Panel but what I think can be done is that they should all be invited to attend an interview, as with the other nominees, and if they refuse, or clearly do not support Party policy, that should be made clear on the Panel when it is circulated to Wards. In that way, whilst there may well be a few Wards who are not interested in Party policy, we can at least ensure that the position of the Party in the Borough is clear.

ACCOUNTABILITY

On the second issue of Group accountability the past year has shown how important it is that the Party has a close relationship with its Labour Group and is able to weald a degree of power over the Group other than its ability to deselect every 4 years. Over the past 2/3 years major inroads have been made by a small number of London Boroughs, including Lewisham, Hackney, Greenwich, Islington and Wandsworth, in their development of an electoral college process for the election of the major posts within the Council, ie the leadership, Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs and Group Officers. Each Borough has adopted a slightly different process but the basic principle is that these posts are elected at a joint meeting of the Labour Group and the LGC. The results of the college are then voted en masse by the Group at their formal AGM, to validate these decisions as the electoral college princi-ple is not as yet a part of Party rules.



John Chapman

"Important that the party has a close relationship with its Labour Group". Hackney Town Hall, May 21st.

This process has a twofold benefit. Firstly, it nas meant that where councillors have clearly not abided by Party policy the Party can have a direct and immediate input into ensuring that those councillors are not elected to posts of influence within the Council, which of course ensures that Group members think twice about voting against Party policy. In Lewisham, for example, at the electoral college meeting in May the names of 6 councillors who had refused to deny being Freemasons was read out at the beginning of the meeting. Secondly, the process ensures a higher degree of interest by the Party in local government.

I would therefore urge all LGC· to press their Labour Groups, during the course of this year, to adopt the electoral college within their standing orders. Recent events in Hackney have shown that the electoral college needs to elect all the major posts and not just a selective few. In May the left leadership in Hackney was reelected by the electoral college, set up last year, but as the Chairs and Vice Chairs were not a post of the college most of these posts went to the centre/right of the group leaving the leadership in an impossible position.

LGCs have it within their power to ensure that the new Labour Groups, whether or not they are in office, are firmly linked to the Party, both in terms of their commitment to Party policy and their level of accontability. If the London LGCs are prepared to take on that power, the move towards municipal socialism will be greatly advanced.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Why councils caved in to rate-capping

Terry Connolly
Greater London Labour Party Executive

Joanna Fawkes
London Bridge Committee

Hilda Kean
Former Leader, Hackney Council

Mick O'Sullivan
London Bridge Committee, Socialist Organiser.

Monday 1st July 7.30

Speakers in a personal Capacity

Red Rose Club 129 SEVEN SISTERS ROAD, 5 minutes Finsbury Park tube.

Socialist Organiser

THE COST OF ABOLITION

KEN LIVINGSTONE

One of the dubious achievements of the present Tory government has been to redefine the meaning of the word "savings'. Before Thatcher, savings were something that people put in the post office or stuffed under mattresses for that rainy day. Very commendable too. However, monetarism Tory style has unleashed a whole new language – a kind of Friedmanspeak with which to bamboozle the public.

Thus 'enterprise' really means 'piracy', 'overspending' means 'providing public services' and 'savings' means cuts in jobs, cuts in services, like housing, hospitals and schools and, following Norman Fowler's recent social security review, cuts in income for families already living on the breadline.

The argument that savings will be made has been used to justify every product of of Thatcher's monetarist ravings. Her plan to abolish the Greater London Council and metropolitan councils is no different.

Never mind that this policy has been produced on the back of an envelope in a taxi between Whitehall and Chelsea, never mind that it was shoved into the Tory manifesto to plug an embarrassing gap on local government policy – abolition would save the hard-pressed ratepayers cash.

Or so the story went. However the government's White Paper which announced the abolition proposals back in November 1983 was notable for its absence of figures. The savings were unspecified and largely a figment of the Tory imagination. Indeed, over the next 18 months despite repeated questioning from all sides, the government was unable to produce a single piece of arithmetic to justify its claims of savings.

Finally earlier this year, the government gave in. Plucking the nearest figure out of thin air, doubling it, then adding the number they first thought of, they came up with a figure of £50 million.

The whole apparatus of abolition, the better part of a year of civil service effort and a whopping great slice of Parliamentary time was devoted to saving £50 million – roughly the sum spent on wire in-trays at the Department of the Environment.



John Chapman

But even this figure was nonsense, of course, and our own careful sums showed that abolition will actually end up costing people more. However the difference between us and the government was that we were prepared to subject our figures to outside scrutiny, they were not.

That's why we invited Coopers and Lybrand, the leading accountancy firm, and the firm which had already carried out an analysis of the cost of abolishing the met counties, to perform the same operation on the GLC.

The results are nothing short of devastating for the supporters of abolition, those that are still to be found, that is. Coopers and Lybrand estimate that the cost of abolition will range from between £122 million and £167 million, depending on the degree of co-operation that the boards, commissions, quangoes and boroughs manage to cobble together in the aftermath of abolition.

Even that massive figure does not include the cost of servicing the present GLC debt – a debt which currently gobbles up one third of the Council's total spending.

It *does* include massive redundancy payments of between £80 and £100 million (more than five times the paltry sums the government has estimated it will cost to buy off sacked staff). And it includes the £30-40 million required to pay off the enormous changeover in town hall computer systems.

Coopers and Lybrand do identify some savings. There's the cost of abolishing the democratic system of local government in London. For instance, in future, ratepayers won't have to worry about the cost of elections, councillors or servicing the committees which take the day to day decisions on how London is run.

This will save them the sum of £4-5 million. To give this money back to the ratepayers, the government will have to mint a new coin. None of the existing ones is of low enough denomination to put in their pockets. In fact, Coopers and Lybrand point out that all the possible identifiable savings that can be made in the GLC, and they have been over the place with a toothcomb and calculator, can be achieved without altering one single part of the GLC structure.

And if the GLC is abolished, add the firm, the government ought to ensure that services like fire, land use and planning, waste disposal and housing strategy are all run on a London-wide basis – otherwise it is going to cost even more money.

So there it is. Even the accountants whom Thatcher admires so much have confirmed that abolition will be a costly disaster. So desperate is she to get rid of us that she is prepared to let ordinary ratepayers fork out an extra £167 million to pay for her policies.

In return Londoners will get more bureaucracy, poorer services, chaos and confusion, and the loss of control over the running of London. If they are lucky, they will get an extra 15p a year in their pockets – the price of a packet of crisps.

Thanks largely to abolition Labour has a 20 point lead in London, enough to ensure Labour control of nearly all of the London boroughs in the elections next year. Perhaps this is one price that even the so-called Iron Lady will not be willing to pay?

Tottenham Constituency Labour Party

SATURDAY
6th JULY
2-8 pm
a day out for everyone

All day beer tent
Ices
Food stalls
Inflatables

Swing boats
Side shows
Races
International dance and theatre

FUNSPLASH

Panchita
Passion (dance group)
Audrey Clarke

Far I Daughters
Take 4
Chats Arkestra

SOUNDS BY QUADROPHONIC

Chestnuts Park
St Ann's Rd. N15
Bus 171, 67

BLACK SECTIONS

'We won't give in' says Russell Profitt

Narendra Makanji for Briefing interviewed Russell Profitt. He's seen to be the standard bearer of the fight for black sections, following his selection as parliamentary candidate for Lewisham East and the subsequent refusal of the NEC to endorse his candidature because black sections delegates took part in the selection.

John Chapman



Russell Proffitt after his selection, with Jim Mallory, chair of Lewisham East CLP.

NM: The participation of black section delegates in the selection has led to the NEC refusing to endorse your candidacy. What has been the reaction of local party activists?

RP: Well I think many party activists can't understand why the NEC can't interpret the constitution in a more sensitive and liberal light than they seem to be wanting to do at the moment. The Labour Party is a federal party. It's made up of a number of interest groups – groups that campaign for change within the context of a socialist movement. It's obvious that at the moment the black dimension is simply not being taken account of. What the black sections are seeking to do is to strengthen the Labour message by putting forth a view from the black community of matters of interests – political interests of the day – so that they could then be taken into the general debate which is taking place and have some authenticity in as much as they are coming directly from black people. It is the same essential point which working class people have been fighting for within the Labour movement. It is nonsensical for middle class Oxbridge graduates to say that they are speaking on behalf of the working class people in this country. Working class people have been campaigning to get that fact established within the Labour movement, and within the Labour Party. Now it's the same issue which is again being taken up by women, by gay people, by people with disabilities; they are simply saying that no-one who has not had a first hand experience of their plight could actually speak with authenticity on their behalf. That is what black sections are attempting to do and the leadership is totally misunderstanding what is at stake. It is leading the Labour Party into the wilderness because it is not offering the variety of different groups within our community some hope for the future. And if there is anger and frustration it is because that whole debate, that whole argument, is passing over the heads of the leadership as it slides on some separate cloud looking for an electoral victory at the general election. If that victory is to mean anything, it has got to mean something to people who are disadvantaged, the traditional supporters of the Labour Party.

NM: The movement for black sections began in London, and is strongest in London and for this reason some people in the Labour Party seem to dismiss it. What is your reaction to that?

RP: Black sections now exist in parties right throughout the country. They exist in the places where black people live. It would be foolish to expect a black section to be set up in areas where few black people live. The whole thrust for change began in London but right from the outset there has been a national perspective. Comrades outside London are not yet as organised as those of us in London. It is not because they lack the willingness to get organised – it's because it's so much harder to fight racism from outside of the strength that we have within the Greater London area. It is to do with the ease of communication and a more active Labour Party that exists in the Greater London area.

NM: Outside the Labour Party, particularly amongst people in the street to whom you are the candidate for Lewisham East, what has been the reaction?

RP: A lot of support. I happen to know quite a lot of people around Lewisham and it's good to be a candidate who is known in the area. Most people who have been aware of what is going on have been extremely supportive and regret that we will have to take the issue up again at some stage in the future, whereas we would much prefer to be kicking the Tories out in Lewisham come the next general election – we want to get on with the campaign.

NM: There is an overwhelming mood amongst the rank and file of the party to kick out the Tories and to win the next general election. What would the essential elements of a successful socialist manifesto be?

RP: That question has to be put into context. Sure everybody wants to win and I guess the reason why we become involved in politics is to ensure that changes occur in the directions that we would like to see them happen – so winning a general election is paramount. But you have got to keep on asking what the terms of winning are as well. I certainly think that the way the debate is going at the moment is taking us away from the fundamental socialist principles the movement was established to strive for. By that I mean that we should attack the positions of wealth and privilege within British society and start working in such a way that we can give working people more of a share of the wealth that is created in this community. In the current debate there isn't much talk about redistribution of wealth. There isn't much talk about attacking the position of capital in this country; there isn't much talk about breaking down the powerful institutions which in many respects dominate what is happening – by that I mean the civil service, taking control of the elements which perpetuate capitalism within our community, the judiciary, the ways of ensuring that we get a fairer press than we have – none of that seems to be coming through. All of the issues which I as a socialist want to see us campaigning on are the ones that are being sidelined in the hope that if we keep quiet about these things, people will get taken off by this image of Hattersley and Kinnock holding hands and walking off into the sunset. I just don't think that's the sort of campaign Labour Party people want to fight. They want to feel that if they're voting Labour they are voting for real change.

Miners' strike

NM: With regard to campaigning there have been four major campaigns since the advent of the Kinnock/Hattersley leadership, namely the national health campaign, the campaign on local government, the miners' strike and now Jobs and Industry. From your experiences on the ground, how successful do you think these campaigns have been and how can we ensure that future campaigns take into account any shortcomings that have been identified?

RP: Well, I think the miners' strike was completely separate from what the Labour Party leadership was doing which is a tragedy. However, the tremendous support received by the miners came from Constituency Labour Parties and the Miners' Support Network which was created at constituency level certainly demonstrated how it is possible to mobilise people – young people, old people, black people, white people – around a cause, something which stirred the hearts of the labour movement. But sadly, as I say, that was not due to the performance of the leadership – anything but.

The other campaigns that you mentioned, I suppose one is tempted to say "what campaigns?" I don't think that they have actually set the pulse racing and caused a great stir of concern on the part of the British electorate to galvanise itself to support Labour. I don't think that they have been that well organised, which is sad because if we are going to

pose the radical alternative to Thatcherism then it's quite right that we should begin doing this now – not when the election is upon us. The obvious reason is that socialist ideas take a lot longer to get over and they have to be repeated and they've got to be argued through on the basis of principles much more so than ever is the case with Tory policies; so there is a great deal of work to be done. I don't think it is being done as best it could and I would have thought that learning lessons of what the movement was able to do in the miners' strike would certainly galvanise Walworth Road so that it can come back with better thought through ideas.

NM: It is difficult to think of Walworth Road ever being galvanised! Continuing on the same theme, the Jobs and Industry Campaign is the most important campaign that we will need to win. What is your view of the policies that are accompanying the Jobs and Industry Campaign?

RP: The message which is coming over is that we are seeking to create full employment for the future. There is a further dimension to the campaign which is not worked out and is not getting through, which is – how are we going to do it? Now, it's all well and good to have a national government elected which will create opportunities for local government to spend but where is the link up between that sort of policy and what is happening at local government now? I can't see that many Labour councils are gearing themselves up at the moment for the return of a Labour government. For a start, most councils are still trying to get to grips with the crisis caused by rate-capping and the short-term planning considerations that have emerged through Thatcher's administration. So what I'd like to see happen is Labour-run areas at the moment to start saying "Look, when the Labour government is in power, on Day 1, we will be slapping in these plans and programmes to the Department of Environment so that financial resources can be released for us to start building again and investing in our areas to create more jobs".

So we must now begin to mesh in at local level what successes we have had; I think a number of local councils – Lewisham, the GLC and others – who have set up employment and industry units and enterprise boards and so on, have had some measure of success. This has got to be linked in to the strategy for jobs.

NM: What sort of measures can the trade unions and other people in struggle expect from the next Labour government?

RP: The least thing that they should expect from a Labour government are policies that will guarantee that their rights taken away through Thatcherism are restored! Obviously, the repeal of the anti-trade union legislation which we have had over the past few years. I also think that we need to see the legislation which outlaws discrimination, whether it be discrimination on the grounds of sex or disability or race. We need to see those pieces of legislation brought up to date. They must be strengthened if we are going to have any impact on creating genuine equality for vast numbers of people or groups within our community who are looking to the future with a great fear. I think that there is a need for much work to be done; particularly I am thinking of the elderly groups within our community and also the under-fives where we are still not creating the opportunities we talk about. So there really is quite a lot to get done and the planning of it must be done now, so that we can get over that message and at the same time have plans ready for when we take office after the election.

Imperialism

NM: On Labour's international policies, there seems to be little understanding of the nature and effect of imperialism within the party. How do you think that the party's foreign policy needs to be improved?

RP: Well, I think there is understanding of imperialism – what there isn't is a desire to remove it. I certainly hope that we would act in concert with Third World countries at all the international platforms that we occupy, particularly the United Nations and its various subsidiaries. I think we should act to ensure that there is a united force against Reaganism and against the hawkish attitudes of pro-Reagan sympathisers which threaten the future stability of the world. I think Britain should be speaking up for the independence movements in South and Central America and throughout Africa, and in particular Southern Africa so that it could be seen quite clearly that within Western society there is a voice that is striving to establish that equality on an international scale which at the moment doesn't exist. Only a Labour Party – only a socialist Labour Party – could do that. I certainly hope that this would be the central thrust on any foreign policy.

NM: One of the key areas of foreign policy is going to be unilateral nuclear disarmament. There is an apparent anomaly between the fact that Labour wants to pursue a non-nuclear defence policy and yet be part of an alliance whose strategy is based on the first use of nuclear weapons. How do you think this will affect the next general election?

RP: It is an anomaly which must be put right before the next general election. Clearly the Party is a unilateralist Party – it's gaining support through being a unilateralist Party and there is overwhelming support in this country for unilateralist positions as explained by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and we must now come to terms with ceasing to play any part in NATO. I would have thought that we need to clarify that position long before the election to avoid any more Foot-shooting exercises, or was it Callaghan-shooting exercises, as we had at the last general election.

Ireland

NM: The biggest issue on British imperialism at the moment is the issue of Ireland. How do you think that you would like to see that subject?

RP: I think that the Irish question should be a central question in the general election. The Labour Party should be campaigning for the withdrawal of troops from Ireland, the stating of a period of time after which British imperialism will cease in Ireland and the Irish people will be left to work together to find solutions to their common problems. Their common problems are the same in many respects as the problems faced by countries that were exploited by colonialism in previous times. The divisions that were created were used to perpetuate vested interests. I think that as long as we continue to encourage those divisions within the Irish community through the presence of troops and through the support of what is happening at the moment then we won't actually be working towards any long term solution. So I would be in favour of British withdrawal and I would be in favour of a united Ireland. I think that if we campaign on those issues then I think we would make it quite clear where we stood.

NM: On the issue of the SDP/Liberal Alliance taking votes away from Labour, particularly from within the black communities, what's your view of the fact that the Liberal Party certainly has a reasonable image within the black community?

RP: If we went on the manifestos presented by the parties for the last three general elections, the Liberals have certainly presented a very progressive set of policies which have attracted support from quite a number of black people. However, I think black people would want to see the policies on race within the context of other policies on international affairs, economic affairs and matters to do with improvements to the standard and quality of life here in this country; taking all those into consideration, most black people would favour the Labour Party even though they would have reservations on questions about its policies on the specific question of race. Now I don't know how long that is going to continue. If we were to ask black communities whether they would support the Alliance or whether they would support Labour, then the majority would be pro-Labour but if the Alliance manages to secure more positions of power up and down the country and can demonstrate that they are able to deliver on promises then – not withstanding the wider considerations I raised earlier – I think Labour could well be in trouble.

NM: Finally, the two individuals who stood in the way of black candidates succeeding in the last general election, Alf Dubs in Battersea and Robin Corbett in Hemel Hempstead both voted against black sections in the working party. Do you have any comments?

RP: Apart from a sense of disappointment in the way they voted, I think that it shows a certain thinking which exists within the labour movement. That is the view held by a number of white people that they know what's best for black people. When we first made demands for black sections, in order to fob us off, we were told "let us go through a period of consultation". Now throughout that period of consultation – which was meant to be an open ended exercise in which the issues would be exposed for discussion and debate and people draw their conclusions – the collective weight of the leadership of the Labour Party has been thrown against us, the whole of the trade union movement was ranged against us and those who are now supposed to be Party spokespersons on race were making promisory noises about things coming good in the end. It is quite clear for the black communities to see just how empty those promises were and how important it is for us to organise if we are to ensure that within the labour movement we get what we want. The voices that are being used to deny us our demands are the old voices of the past. If those people say that they are representative of the black community, then they are wrong. If they asked the black community through the consultation exercise, they would have seen the overwhelming majority who spoke were in favour. Now why are they being denied their rights in the end? That's the quality of thinking within the labour movement that we are setting out to change, and if Kinnock doesn't like it, then he'll have to lump it because we won't give in.

BEATEN UP AT COURT

Man Mohan,
Deptford CLP Black Section.
Chair, Lewisham Asian Assn.

The Old Bailey trial of the 'Newham 7' was held up after allegations that Parvaiz Khan, aged 17, had been beaten up by prison officers during the lunch adjournment. He was later taken to St Bartholomew's hospital for a treatment for *"an unprovoked attack of a serious kind"* **after refusing to eat a pork pie because of his religion. Khan's counsel Ian McDonald produced Khan in the dock after the lunch-time adjournment with a badly swollen face and two black eyes. Counsel McDonald pointed out that his client had been in** *"perfect"* **condition before the adjournment –** *"he has been badly beaten up by the prison officers looking after him". "This statement is fact"* **and** *"There was also racialist abuse. If, in the face of what had happened, prison officers cannot be trusted to look after a defendant of Asian origin during a trial, then we are in a very serious situation".*

An early radio report on that day reported that Judge Neil Dennison apparently rebuked Ian McDonald, the Counsel, for raising the issue in the presence of the jury. The reaction of the judge to what happened in his court was extra-ordinary indeed.

Surely the safety and well-being of accused persons who have surrendered their bail to the court for the duration of their trial is something that falls peculiarly within its jurisdiction and within the age-old principle that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done. It is surprising therefore that the learned judge did not order an immediate inquiry into the facts as alleged by Khan which were as serious and appalling as could be imagined in the context of proceedings actually taking place in a court.

If a group of white Britons were being tried in a similar situation in a so-called black banana republic and if one of them were to suddenly appear bruised and beaten while in official custody, the media, the politicians and the people here would be up in arms. It is a blot on British justice that an unconvicted person under the protection of a court was injured and assaulted by those guarding him and the judge in charge of the case at the Old Bailey did not even order an investigation.

At times like this people who believe, and preach, that it is more important to be British than just black or ethnic minority should find it difficult to explain to those affected the working of white institutions, their laws and their general apathy in relation to the rights and representations of black people and minorities.



Andrew Wiard (Report)

27.4.85 Outside Forest Gate Police Station

A key prosecution witness was a police 'informer' – one of the key prosecution witnesses in the trial of the 'Newham 7', Maria Isen, a part-time waitress at the Wimpy Bar, Upton Park, admitted at the Old Bailey that she'd been a police 'informer' in the period before and after 7 April 1984, the day of the incident which led to the arrest of seven Asians. Cross-examined by defence counsel McDonald for the 'Newham 7', she said that her 'contact officers', PC Steven Knight and PC Ray Wood (whom she addressed as 'Steve' and 'Ray') were only interested in collecting information on Asian youths. She said she was shown photographs of the events of 7 April 1984 by the two officers, and told that her identification of Asians could lead to more arrests. The following day, 8 April, the 'Newham 7' defendants Zaffer and Parvaiz Khan were arrested.

WENDY SAVAGE MUST STAY!

Wendy Savage, the only female consultant in Tower Hamlets who looks after women who are having a baby, need an abortion or face gynaecological problems, has been suspended without warning by the local health authority.

She has been accused of malpractice in five cases. The underlying reasons for her unprecedented suspension involves a row over important issues about women's health care, both in Tower Hamlets and further afield. Other consultants believe in medical intervention at birth and less choice for the mother. The removal of Wendy Savage will reduce local women's say in when, where and how they have their babies. At a teaching hospital it is a direct attack on Mrs Savage's methods that she introduces to new doctors.

Tower Hamlets has a high rate of peri-natal mortality and an ILEA survey revealed the area as multi deprived with the highest rate of unemployment, over-crowding and parents with English as a second language. Yet against these odds, Mile End Maternity Unit has been included in the top ten in a *Women's Own* poll for maternity provision.

However the DHA intends to run down the unit and split the services by transferring obstetrics to Whitechapel, the main hospital for the region. Labour council reps have a poor voting record in opposing these moves, particularly recently – the privatisation of laundering, catering and cleaning services. The threat of closure of the casualty at Mile End must be linked with any moves to decrease the quality of the service, as with Wendy Savage's suspension.

The removal of Wendy Savage would clear the way for further cut backs, especially in the services for women which as the only consultant in her field committed to NHS care, serves working class women's needs. It would also clear the way for a privatised facility clinic that other consultants are keen to set up – serving only those able to pay.

A campaign has been formed to re-instate her and is calling for an investigation of the whole department. They will be holding a march to protest and pressurise the DHA to rescind the decision.

Under the slogan – 'Wendy must stay – Wendy is best. Investigate the rest', the campaign has collected thousands of signatures from local women. Although there is an obvious focus around the individual doctor, the campaign is calling for a public enquiry into women's health needs. Other consultants have large private practices, spending less time with their NHS patients.

While she is suspended her work in the community is effectively frozen. She is the only consultant to visit local clinics. The number of early safe abortions has decreased dramatically. The suspension and appeal will take months and will be financially costly. No locum has been prepared for, or is likely to be supported. Women will have a change of consultant, but even that has not been thought over. The maternity and other services will be depleted. There are real fears for the future which must be organised against.

Although the campaign has a professional bias to it, the CHC and Health Campaign are organising local meetings to raise the issue of improving maternity services, especially for ethnic minority women. It poses a test for the Labour Party to get involved and ensure local services are kept for women, on their terms with doctors of their choice to replace their DHA reps.

Susan Carlyle

FIGHT RACISM, FIGHT SEXISM!

Narendra Makanji
Target Labour Government

The number of registered unemployed has reached 400,000 for the Greater London area. This is the largest concentration of unemployment in Western Europe and is the direct result of Thatcher's capitalism. As the table of statistics indicates, the working class areas of London are hardest hit with boroughs such as Hackney and Tower Hamlets with nearly a quarter of the "economically active" population being on the dole.

As a result, those who are still in work have had their wage-levels depressed and the working conditions have deteriorated dramatically. Health and safety conditions are not being implemented resulting in more injuries, accidents, fires, deaths, etc. Many people in low-paid jobs are forced to work regular hours of overtime in order to earn enough money to make up a living wage. Industrial democracy is a disappearing concept.

Women and black workers are the hardest hit sections and are in the forefront of the fight-back. The Labour Party in London has an important task to ensure that the economic policies being prepared for the council elections in 1986 and for the subsequent general election are not blind to this. The labour movement will not be a united and credible force whilst racism and sexism persists within its policies. The Party has made a good start by selecting parliamentary candidates such as Russell Proffitt, Mildred Gordon, Jenny Edwards and Paul Boateng. Women and blacks must be – and be seen to be – part of the policy-making processes that will lead to a socialist victory.

Parliamentary Constituencies	PRESENT MP	1985 POLL OUTCO 1985	UNEMPLOYMENT MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL %	RESELECTION—PROGRESS CHART
Barking	J. RICHARDSON (L)	LAB	2980	1123		
Battersea	A. DUBS (L)	LAB	4824	1908		A. Dubs (WM) selected. Shortlist of one
Beckenham	P. GOODHART (C)	CON	2164	1053		
Bethnal Green and Stepney	P. SHORE (L)	LAB	5962	1641		Reselection delayed
Bexleyheath	C. TOWNSEND (C)	CON	1427	930		
Bow and Poplar	I. MIKARDO (L)	LAB	6256	2084		M. Gordon (WF) selected from s/list of 7 (4 F, 3M, 2B)
Brent East	R. FREESON (L)	LAB	4421	1972		K. Livingstone (WM) selected.
Brent North	R. BOYSON (C)	LAB*	2085	1052		Closing date 13.6.85. Support for Black candidate.
Brent South	L. PAVITT (L)	LAB	4594	2031		Paul Boateng selected. All Black shortlist.
Brentford and Isleworth	B. HAYHOE (C)	LAB*	2698	1488		
Carshalton and Wallington	N. FOREMAN (C)	LAB*	2024	1014		
Chelsea	N. SCOTT (C)	CON	3029	1328		
Chingford	N. TEBBIT (C)	CON	1727	858		
Chipping Barnet	S. CHAPMAN (C)	CON	1277	781		
Chislehurst	R. SIMS (C)	CON	1601	658		
City of London and Westminster South	P. BROOK (C)	CON	4251	1552		
Croydon Central	J. MOORE (C)	LAB*	2492	1061		
Croydon North East	B. WEATHERILL (C)	LAB*	2454	1357		
Croydon North West	H. MALINS (C)	LAB*	2570	1325		Closing date 6.9.85
Croydon South	W. CLARK (C)	CON	1276	764		
Dagenham	B. GOULD (L)	LAB	3233	1306		
Dulwich	G. BOWDEN (C)	LAB	3365	1486		Closing date 1.7.85. Support for F candidates. Key marginal
Ealing Acton	G. YOUNG (C)	LAB*	3156	1470		Begins after selections for Council candidates are completed.
Ealing North	H. GREENAWAY (C)	LAB*	2474	1243		Begins after selections for Council candidates are completed.
Ealing Southall	S. BIDWELL (L)	LAB	3579	2260		Reselection after NEC inquiry on "infiltration" by Black members
Edmonton	I. TWINN (C)	LAB*	2797	1242		Selection on 27.6.85. Key marginal
Eltham	P. BOTTOMLEY (C)	LAB*	2519	1105		
Enfield North	T. EGGAR (C)	LAB*	2404	1007		Key marginal
Enfield Southgate	M. PORTILLO (C)	CON	1767	897		
Erith and Crayford	D. EVENNETT (C)	LAB*	2661	1529		Closing date 26.6.85
Feltham and Heston	P. GROUND (C)	LAB*	3001	1735		Key marginal
Finchley	M. THATCHER (C)	LAB*	1903	1075		Selection in 1986 — Probably after Council elections.
Fulham	M. STEVENS (C)	LAB*	3697	1752		Key marginal
Greenwich	G. BARNETT (L)	LAB	3267	1341		Application invited by 28.6.85
Hackney North and Stoke Newington	E. ROBERTS (L)	LAB	7148	2668		Social for PPCs to meet Party members on 22.6.85
Hackney South and Shoreditch	B. SEDGEMORE (L)	LAB	7474	2908		
Hammersmith	C. SOLEY (L)	LAB	4945	1867		
Hampstead and Highgate	G. FINSBERG (T)	LAB*	4163	2044		Closing date 5.10.85. Support for positive action. Key marginal
Harrow East	H. DYKES (C)	LAB*	2176	1301		
Harrow West	J. PAGE (C)	CON	1653	944		
Hayes and Harlington	T. DICKS (C)	LAB*	1744	1095		Closing date 28.6.85. Little support for positive action. Key marginal
Hendon North	J. GORST (C)	LAB*	1961	895		
Hendon South	P. THOMAS (C)	LAB*	1918	1024		
Holborn and St. Pancras	F. DOBSON (L)	LAB	6638	2536		
Hornchurch	R. SQUIRE (C)	LAB*	2197	1058		
Hornsey and Wood Green	H. ROSSI (C)	LAB*	4992	2418		Selection on 7.7.85. All women shortlist agreed
Ilford North	V. BENDALL (C)	LAB*	1932	984		
Ilford South	N. THORNE (C)	LAB*	2767	1305		Closing date 18.9.85.Support for positive action. Key marginal
Islington North	J. CORBYN (L)	LAB	6423	2557		J. Corbyn (WM) selected. Shortlist of one
Islington South and Finsbury	C. SMITH (L)	LAB	5125	1996		Reselection in 1986
Kensington	B. RHYS-WILLIAMS (C)	LAB*	3869	1733		CLosing date 10.10.85. Support for positive action
Kingston upon Thames	N. LAMONT (C)	CON	1703	797		
Lewisham Deptford	J. SILKIN (L)	LAB	5452	1993		Reselection after Party Conference so that Black Sections can be included
Lewisham East	C. MOYNIHAN (C)	LAB*	3323	1376		R. Profitt (BM) selected. NEC refuses endorsement. Key marginal
Lewisham West	J. MAPLES (C)	LAB*	3648	1514		Horniman Branch requesting applications by 10.6.85
Leyton	H. COHEN (L)	LAB	3704	1478		Closing date 7.6.85. Shortlist of 1 likely (WM)
Mitcham and Morden	A. RUMBOLD (C)	LAB*	2474	1126		Closing date 27.9.85. Key marginal
Newham North East	R. LEIGHTON (L)	LAB	3898	1655		Closing date 17.6.85. No serious challenge likely (WM)
Newham North West	T. BANKS (L)	LAB	4045	1634		No reselection without Black Section
Newham South	N. SPEARING (L)	LAB	4207	1502		N. Spearing (WM) reselected after a contest
Norwood	J. FRASER (L)	LAB	6398	2543		Reselection stopped due to exclusion of Black Section
Old Bexley and Sidcup	E. HEALTH (C)	CON	1142	706		
Orpington	I. STANBROOK (C)	CON	1511	730		
Peckham	H. HARMAN (L)	LAB	6550	2240		Shortlist of one likely (WF)
Putney	D. MELLOR (C)	LAB*	2811	1215		Closing date 27.9.85. WM candidate likely to be front-runner

(continued next page)

Miners' Support Committee Hackney

Bethan Webster
Jeanette Findlay
(in a personal capacity)

The Miners' Support Committee Hackney (MSCH), which during the strike was one of the biggest and most active in London, is still in existence, now focussing its activities around the issues of sacked and jailed miners. Although numbers attending the weekly meetings have dropped from around 100 during the strike to about 25, those comrades most involved in organising the work of the committees have remained, and several new members have joined since the end of the strike.

The links made during the strike with South Wales and Notts. (both of which areas had miners based in Hackney) have been maintained and new links have been made with Kent through the sacked miners based in Hackney Town Hall.

The most difficult task is to keep alive in the minds of the public the continued threat to pits, jobs and communities as well as the attack on the working class represented by the sacking of 700 miners and the imprisonment of 200 — around 80 of whom are still in jail. One of the ways in which we do this in Hackney is by producing regular leaflets on the current situation which are distributed on street collections together with copies of the The Miner. The decision to continue street collections was based on the feeling that the importance of distributing propaganda outweighed the fact that public financial support has dwindled. MSCH always placed more emphasis on political support (e.g. mounting regular pickets at Neasden and Tilbury power stations, organising factory and workplace collections and visits by miners, giving support to other struggles and campaigns in Hackney etc) than merely on fundraising.

However, fundraising has always been important and we continue to raise money in the same ways as during the strike — benefits, socials, selling badges, running stalls, street and workplace collections. The levies from local unions are still coming in, e.g. NUT and council workers although the Labour Party levies have dropped off. Weekly income has dropped from around £2000 and upwards during the strike to around £600.

The money we do manage to raise has been going mainly to Kent since the strike ended but the committee is also affiliated to NOMPAS and the National Rank and File Miners' Movement — we have also agreed to help fund and distribute the Rank and File newspaper. There is some debate within the committee as to how money should be apportioned and to what extent the various campaigns should be supported. During the strike the various political forces within the committee were held together by our agreement to abide by NUM national policy on disputed issues (for example, the committee never twinned with a pit) and the lack of firm support for these campaigns from the NUM has caused some hestitation within the committee about outright support. We have had representatives from both groups to speak at meetings and we are currently awaiting information from the NUM before we make a final decision.

Given the number of pit closure announcements since the end of the strike only three months ago, it is clearly important that support committees stay together, not only to campaign for the sacked and jailed miners, but also in order to be ready to support any future action by the NUM in defence of pits and jobs.

MSCH meets every Monday at 7.30 at Hackney Centre for the Unemployed, 485 Kingsland Road, Hackney, E8. For more details phone 249 8086.

Labour Committee on Ireland (West London Branch)/Brent East CLP public meeting with Ken Livingstone, Maire O'Shea and other speakers.
Monday 8 July 1985.
7.30 p.m. music. 8.00 p.m. speakers.
At the Cricklewood Hotel (corner of Cricklewood Broadway and Moira Road).
"The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland".

Briefing Meeting

"Feminism and the Labour Movement

Thursday 18th July at 7.30pm at County Hall. Speakers include Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar Parliamentary candidate).

London Labour Briefing Public Meeting

Black People and the Labour Party

Tuesday 25th June at 7.30pm at County Hall

Speakers

Russell Profitt
Nazreen Subhan
Lorna Borland

Next London Editorial: Monday 22nd July at 6.30pm at County Hall

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FIGHT RACISM, SEXISM! (CONTINUED)

Ravensbourne	J. HUNT (C)	CON	1207	738	
Richmond and Barnes	J. HANLEY (C)	LIB*	1809	997	
Romford	M. NEUBERT (C)	LAB*	1958	972	
Ruislip-Northwood	J. WILKINSON (C)	CON	1059	697	
Southwark and Bermondsey	S. HUGHES (LIB)	LAB	5333	1691	Key marginal
Streatham	W. SHELTON (C)	LAB*	4715	1904	Some support for positive action
Surbiton	R. TRACEY (C)	CON	1053	507	
Sutton and Cheam	N. MACFARLANE (C)	CON	1312	851	
Tooting	T. COX (L)	LAB	3892	1738	No serious challenge (WM)
Tottenham	N. ATKINSON (L)	LAB	6833	2751	Selection on 5.7.85. Three male candidates (2W, 1B)
Twickenham	T. JESSEL (C)	LIB*	1487	812	
Upminster	N. BONSOR (C)	LIB*	2274	969	
Uxbridge	M. SHERSBY (C)	LAB*	1764	849	
Vauxhall	S. HOLLAND (L)	LAB	7723	2937	No selection without Black Section
Walthamstow	E. DEAKINS (L)	LAB	2786	1198	Closing date 12.7.85. No serious challenge likely (WM)
Wanstead and Woodford	P. JENKIN (C)	CON	1447	758	
Westminster North	J. WHEELER (C)	LAB*	6141	2597	J. Edwards (WF) selected. All women shortlist
Wimbledon	M. HAVERS (C)	LAB*	1825	940	
Woolwich	J. CARTWRIGHT (SDP)	LAB	4089	1920	J.A. Walker (WM) selected. Key marginal
		* = Lab gain	276673	121096	

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25p

LABOUR BRIEFING

NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 19 JULY 1985

SINN FEIN-LABOUR PARTY: CEMENT THE LINKS!

BRIEFING INTERVIEWS GERRY ADAMS

Shortly after Sinn Fein's success in the Northern Ireland council elections *Briefing* discussed the new political situation with Gerry Adams, President of Sinn Fein.

Labour Briefing: ***What are the prospects for Sinn Fein after your successful campaign in the local elections? How will it affect your political work?***

Gerry Adams: We went in with limited objectives – mainly to develop a middle leadership in our organisation and to consolidate our existing support. We achieved that quite substantially. We got people elected in every area where we stood and we now have a fairly representative middle leadership. It gets us away from the whole danger of having a party leadership that revolves around one or two personalities.

So internally it's all part of the thrust forward and the drive towards a more disciplined, united and ideologically sound party.

Externally it means that the British government and the unionists are going to have to deal with the reality of republicans participating in the council chamber.

The unionists have threatened to disenfranchise our electorate and to disrupt council proceedings. The British government have indicated that they may – if local councils don't function as they 'should' – disband them and replace them with commissions.

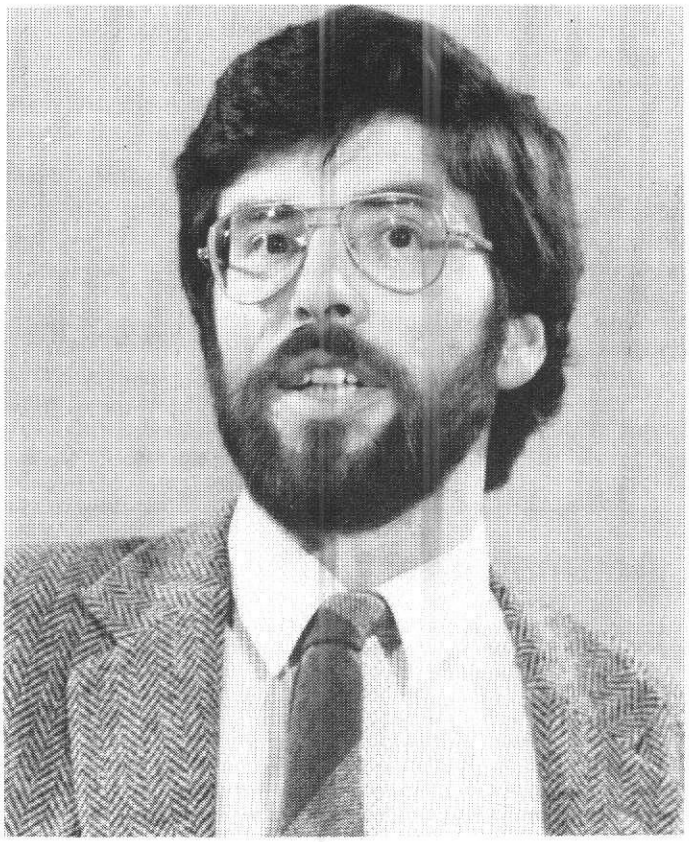
Even if it doesn't come to that, the unionists' stance clarifies even more the undemocratic nature of colonial rule here and exposes the undemocratic credentials of unionism.

How does Sinn Fein plan to respond to this campaign of ostracisation?

We had a major meeting of all our councillors and decided that in those councils where we held a balance of power we would not disenfranchise the unionists but would give them the opportunity of making meaningful representations and playing their part on council committees.

How can the election of the Sinn Fein councillors be used to further the dialogue with progressive forces in Britain, particularly in the Labour Party?

It should strengthen the hand of those comrades who are arguing for a dialogue. Those arguing against have no real reason other than ignorance or a benign colonial attitude. Also there will now be many more people to have a dialogue with



Universal Pictorial Press

especially at the important level of the dialogue between grass roots activists in Sinn Fein and the Labour Party.

There have already been some small but significant exchanges. A Labour Party councillor from Liverpool recently spoke at a meeting in Belfast dealing with the problem of high rise flats. A number of activists in the Divis flats campaign also

Local government: Sinn Fein and Labour Left

UNITE THE STRUGGLES !

If we think local government in England is having problems we should examine the present situation in councils across Northern Ireland. The election of 59 Sinn Fein councillors in the May elections has produced daily political melodrama that outstrips Coronation St. and the GLC's rate-capping furore combined.

While the unionist and loyalist apoplectic antics have moved even the 'liberal' *Guardian* to write of 'childish, kindergarten stuff', the element of farce should not obscure the real 'shock horror' story unfolding before our eyes. The very basis of the unionist supremacist Northern Ireland state is being challenged. As some of the newly elected Sinn Fein councillors pointed out, Northern Ireland's town halls are symbols 'of gerrymandering, discrimination, loyalism and British rule', but now any 'attempt to return to the days when nationalists and their representatives could be treated as second class citizens will not succeed.'

ABOLISH DEMOCRACY!

In the few weeks since their election the Sinn Fein councillors have managed to divide the unionists; win the support of local SDLP councillors *and* the British legal system, while an egg-bespattered Northern Ireland Office keeps repeating like a stuck record 'no, we won't meet them – we won't, we won't!' No mean feat. It comes as little surprise therefore, to hear talk of councils being closed down. Typical Brit democracy – rant and rave about the natives must use the 'proper democratic process', but when they do so consistently to your disadvantage, despite every rule change to stop them, why – abolish democracy! The Tories have a certain weakness for this sort of thing. They don't like working class people voting Labour in London – despite many changes they *will* keep on doing it – so abolish the GLC elections and the GLC! Bernadette McAlisky, Irish freedom fighter par excellence, made the point at a large public meeting in Camden at the end of May – 'What the Brits just can't understand is that we vote Sinn Fein because we like to!'

In Omagh, Sinn Fein councillor Seamus Kerr has been elected as Chairperson, while the Unionist pact to ostracise Sinn Fein fell apart leaving Democratic Unionists (the Reverend Ian Paisley's lot) and Official Unionists haranguing each other. In Fermanagh, Unionist councillors nominated four SDLP members for Chair, but each in turn withdrew their names in favour of Sinn Fein representative Paul Corrigan who was elected by 13 votes to 10. An SDLP councillor was elected as Vice-Chair. At Magherafelt District Council fighting erupted leaving one Sinn Fein councillor with a head wound, after the election of an SDLP Chair and a Sinn Fein Vice-Chair. Unionist controlled Craigavon Council attempted to exclude Sinn Fein councillors by means of a special committee to conduct virtually all council business only to have Sinn Fein take them to court and win. A High Court action has prevented the committee from meeting and given two Sinn Fein councillors leave to apply for a judicial review as to its legality. In Derry a Sinn Fein suggestion to sell mayoral trappings in aid of the Ethiopian famine appeal has provoked the Unionists to seek legal advice. And so it goes on, with the new councils hardly a month in existence.

REMARKABLY SENSIBLE

Labour Party response has been remarkably sensible for once, though insufficient. Northern Ireland spokesperson Peter Archer disagreed sharply with the NIO's refusal to meet Sinn Fein councillors. '. . . However much you disagree with them . . . you can't say you won't talk to them'. Again unlike the Tories he welcomed people voting whether they voted Sinn Fein or not. However, he explained the Sinn Fein vote as that of the 'very alienated' and implied people would stop voting Sinn Fein if unemployment was reduced, if the social services were improved and if there was progress on the constitutional question. While this analysis might have been appropriate 15 or so years ago, as Bernadette said, people vote Sinn Fein now because it is the political alternative they positively support.

Particularly with our experience of the Labour GLC (whose election also provoked an hysterical response) and 'municiple socialism', we should immediately initiate a 'councillors' dialogue'. Sinn Fein councillors should be invited to meet with Labour councillors in cities and towns all over the country. Public meetings, rallies, conferences as well as more in-depth discussion sessions should be organised. For the first time ever Sinn Fein stood women candidates and six have been elected, which is a boost to all women's confidence. Labour women councillors involved with women's committees could invite a delegation of Irish women councillors from Sinn Fein to discuss what local government can do for women. It is for us to show that some Brits at least stand by democracy, that we respect those who have voted Sinn Fein and will not be participating in various attempts to explain away the Sinn Fein vote. Instead we will be working for an open constructive dialogue.

Sarah Roelofs
Labour Women for Ireland
– personal capacity

Adams Interview (Continued)

spoke to activists in Britain recently. One could hope that that small beginning would grow.

There are other issues where we can develop a common attitude. We have taken the position that Sinn Fein councillors will, to the best of their ability, try and dispense with the symbolism of some councils – the chains of office, the pomp and ceremony. And we aim to have a meaningful involvement of people's organisations in work on the councils – women's groups, tenants organisations, cultural organisations and so on.

This is the first time Sinn Fein has stood women candidates. How successful has this been and will it strengthen the women's department and the politics of Sinn Fein?

Yes it will. We have an attitude of positive discrimination in favour of women's participation inside our party. For instance there is a mandatory quota of places for women on our national leadership. There weren't enough women standing as candidates for Sinn Fein in the election. But the fact that in West Belfast two of our *successful* candidates were women will strengthen this strategy and the role of women in republican politics.

What is the possibility of agreements between Sinn Fein and SDLP councillors at a local level?

There are discussions taking place today and there are a number of things that can be said about it.

Firstly the SDLP don't have a uniform attitude towards us. In some districts they are supportive and in others antagonistic. What is important is that the SDLP leadership have asserted categorically that there would be no discussions and contrary to that, these discussions have and are taking place between Sinn Fein and SDLP councillors.

BRIEFING INTERVIEWS SINN FEIN TRADE UNIONIST

Daisy Mules, member of the Executive Committee of Derry Trades Council and chairperson of Sinn Fein's trade union Committee was interviewed for *Labour Briefing*.

Does the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and its Northern Ireland Committee (NIC) represent the interests of the working class in the North?

Both the ICTU and the TUC realised that to effectively oppose sectarianism in the work place or in the community would bring them into direct conflict with the British government. They weren't prepared to do this. The TUC and the ICTU hid behind the NIC. The NIC is an autonomous group of six county trade union officials who in 1964 traded the right to raise issues about the constitution of Northern Ireland for recognition by the, now discredited, Stormont government. Every year the NIC report is accepted by both the TUC and ICTU as the basis for their position on Ireland. We believe the truth is otherwise.

The NIC has failed to raise the question of state repression, time and time again, including the murder of its own trade union members. Brian Maguire is a classic example. An AEUW shop steward, he was hanged in Castlereagh detention centre in 1979. There was a mock hanging technique used to interrogate so-called suspects – Brian Maguire died. The NIC refused to do anything about it. At the ICTU annual conference in 1979, they buried the call from the grass roots of the TU movement for an independent inquiry into his death.

In 1980, the RUC held a secret seminar with the NIC. At the end the NIC stated, 'there is no ambiguity in our support for the RUC'. So here is the leadership of the trade union movement supporting the RUC.

Is the NIC's record on 'bread and butter' issues any better?

It has lost credibility in mobilising workers against the staggering job losses of the last few years, on top of the already appalling level of unemployment in the six counties. For example in 1981 over 20,000 manufacturing jobs were lost – not all in republican strongholds. The NIC and the trade union movement accepted these job losses – they did nothing. The NIC has failed to take up job discrimination against sections of the work force, the majority against the Catholic population.

. . . the major difficulty is how to raise issues in unions which block 'political' discussion. A lot of trade union constitutions do not allow any discussion of politics under any circumstances. So we are not allowed to discuss anything which is related to the six county statelet or what is happening in Northern Ireland. We're not even allowed to discuss what is happening in other countries.

What about developments in the British unions?

We see a change in attitude towards Sinn Fein, especially since we have engaged in electoral politics. Also I think the miners' strike showed British people what we have been going through in the six counties for the last 15 years. The police that were used on the picket lines learnt their techniques through police work in the six counties. The links which were made are very important for both the Irish and British working class.

In relation to what you should be doing . . . Organise your own delegations to Ireland, speak to the NIC and the ICTU leadership, but also visit and speak with the working class people, both loyalist and republican in the six counties and the 26 counties and then make up your own mind about the situation there.

For those of you in the Labour Party there is the Labour Committee on Ireland. We ask you to support this and through it and your union branches, demand that the Labour Party supports a position of British withdrawal.

DEFEND RICHARD STANTON

When Brighton Labour Party sponsored the 'August 18th Committee"s demonstration in favour of British withdrawal last year we achieved the first small but significant break with Brighton Labour Party's rotten history on the question of Ireland. A party with a deserved left-wing reputation which uncompromisingly calls for the nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy could not address itself to Britain's war in Ireland. When we did occasionally discuss Ireland, we were reduced to calls for working-class unity without a clue of how we could achieve such a unity.

At its May General Committee (GC) Brighton Labour Party did address the question of Ireland. After a debate which involved vigorous opposition from comrades in the Militant the GC agreed to sponsor a local Troops Out Movement (TOM) meeting on the subject of 'Ireland and the Labour Movement'. The meeting was sponsored in the spirit of dialogue as Daisy Mules of Sinn Fein's Trade Union department was the major speaker (see elsewhere in this issue for an interview with Daisy). At this point all looked well and it appeared that at last Brighton Labour Party was to embark on a reasoned and informed debate about how we could formulate a policy to achieve the Labour Party's stated aim of a 'United Socialist Ireland'.

Richard Stanton, a local Borough councillor, appeared on local television as a spokesperson for TOM. Unfortunately the interviewer was more interested in Richard's view of the Grand Hotel bombing than how to achieve a just peace in the whole of Ireland. Last autumn Richard's views on the Grand Hotel bombing became public when he stated in Brighton Labour Briefing and the local evening paper, the Argus, *"I abhor violence. But I personally feel the Republican movement is entitled to use force against the British state, as part of a war we started"*.

On television Richard reiterated his position and also expressed the view that in the context



of *"... a war for 15 years against the nationalist people of Ireland"* the bombing was a *"justifiable political act"*.

The following day the Argus led with the front page headline *"I back IRA hotel bombers"*. This headline was a deliberate distortion. As a passionate advocate of Irish self-determination Richard does not support any Irish military or political grouping. For Richard that is a question for the Irish.

Last year's Tory mayor declared that in his view Richard *"... deserved to be blown up himself"*. Unfortunately this hysterical outburst was reflected to some extent amongst Labour councillors. One councillor called for Richard's expulsion. Others could do little more than parrot ritual condemnations of violence. An exception to this was Dave Lepper, the Labour Group leader. Dave gave a fair presentation of Brighton Labour policy. Whilst he did 'condemn violence', he argued, *"Sinn Fein won a fair number of seats in the elections... Being able to hear these views and argue with them might be a step to finding a solution"*.

Within the local party there now appear to be a number of leading party figures hell-bent on promoting a witch-hunt of Richard Stanton. They shall remain nameless for the moment in the hope they may see sense. Next year it is more than likely that we shall have a Labour majority on the Borough Council and the party is united in its determination to win. Hopefully comrades will remember the experience of Bermondsey Labour Party and Peter Tatchell. A party disunited by witch-hunts and infighting will be far less effective and many Labour Party members will not be prepared to see Richard sacrificed to please the Argus, local opposition councillors and witch-hunters.

Bryn Griffiths,
Brighton Labour Party.

Labour Committee on Ireland

Campaigning in the labour movement against bipartisanship and the loyalist veto and for a British withdrawal and Irish Unity. For speakers, literature and membership, write to LCI, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX. (Annual membership £5.00/unwaged £1.00/over 250 members £10. Cheques payable to 'LCI'.

Labour Women for Ireland

Promoting a dialogue among Republican and feminist women in Britain and Ireland, campaigning against strip searches and for withdrawal, solidarising with the Northern Ireland Abortion campaign. Write to LWI, c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment WC2 (membership same as LCI, cheques payable to 'LWI').

New Labour and Ireland

Campaigning journal that promotes a dialogue with anti-imperialists in Ireland and covers a wide range of views, news and topics from British strategy to the church. Includes regular coverage on womens struggles, trade unions, youth and students. Individual issue 50p; annual sub £3.00 (multi users £6.00). Bulk discounts available. Write to LCI (address above) cheques payable to 'Labour and Ireland'.

Help the Tamil asylum seekers

Jeremy Corbyn, MP, Islington North

'We will stop Tamil "flood" vows Brittan' was how the *Daily Express* reported the Government's decision to impose visa restrictions on the arrival of Tamil asylum seekers from Sri Lanka. The *Sun* led with its own headline 'It's time to close the door'.

This was just a little of the flavour used by the gutter press to stir up anti-Tamil feeling and play on the racist prejudice that succeeded in generating the backlash that passed the 1968 Immigration Act and has been used to sustain the same inhumane policies ever since.

What the papers were trying to do, on behalf of the Home Office, was to take attention away from the issue of asylum seekers from Sri Lanka and create a racist tide to mask their decision. What the papers were also trying to do was ignore the real situation facing people in Sri Lanka.



Labour Party Photo Library

POLITICAL EXCLUSION

Essentially the problems that Tamil people face now stem from more than twenty years of political exclusion, to the extent that the sixth amendment to the constitution of the country prevented MPs taking their seats if their parties did not support the unity of the State of Sri Lanka. Thus the Tamil United Liberation Front has no MPs in Parliament and the exclusion of the Tamil people continues.

The killings of 1983 have been followed by selective and appalling atrocities by the army – much of it now well documented – as they systematically moved through the northern and now eastern parts of the country picking up any young men on the grounds that they are potential members of the Tamil Tigers.

Indeed a journey to the Jaffna peninsula through the notorious 'Elephant Pass', a narrow sand isthmus which connects Jaffna to the rest of Sri Lanka, is like a journey to occupied territory with massive army checks and the ominous and ever present sight of army vehicles trundling past the bicycles and 1955 vintage cars of the local Tamil people.

The deaths of so many thousands of Tamil people and the burning of villages has forced many to seek refuge in India where there are now upwards of 300,000 refugees in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and some have gone to Europe.

Up until April 1984, there was no special status for Tamils arriving in Britain. Only after intensive pressure from MPs did the Government concede that they would grant an exceptional leave for Tamils who expressed a fear of returning to remain in Britan, but with no rights attached to it.

In February of this year the Government was still, officially, expressing 'concern' at the denials of human rights. In April Mrs Thatcher visited Sri Lanka to open the Victoria Dam project, and to renew her admiration for President Jayawardene's monetarism and increasingly close relationship with Ronald Reagan.

On May 20th Home Secretary Leon Brittan delivered the first of three moves to prevent Tamils coming to Britain when he claimed that the situation in parts of Sri Lanka was 'improving' and that the word of the asylum seekers would no longer be automatically accepted but they would be subject to interview. It subsequently transpired that the decision was based on reports from the British High Commission in Colombo who had not visited Jaffna.

On May 24th the Home Office told MPs taking up Tamil cases that they had twenty four hours in which to put all their detailed representation to the Government and finally sealed the door on May 29th when they announced that all Sri Lanka nationals travelling to Britain would need visas prior to leaving Colombo.

Thus a queue of terror has been created in Colombo, as people desperate to escape the attentions of the army and the chauvinistic mobs seek to leave. And in Britain some 3,000 people, many with nothing but the cloths they stand up in, wonder what their fate is.

Ireland: developing a socialist policy

Since its formation, Labour's tradition has been one of downplaying debate on foreign policy in favour of 'bread and butter' issues. The attitude of the party leadership to the empire was always to make it a nicer place to live in and spread its fruits wider. In practice this always meant defending imperial interest against all external threats and rebellions. Any serious attempt to develop a socialist foreign policy must include recognition of the right of Irish people to self determination and consequently support for the demand for unconditional British withdrawal from Ireland. It will also have to be based on an understanding of a range of related policies that have stifled discussion and enforced reactionary ideas.

Firstly there is bipartisanship. This is the tradition of Labour leaders agreeing not to differ with the Tories on Ireland, personified by Roy Mason. Steps forward have been made recently, but we are yet to see Kinnock defending even party policy in public and opposing strip searches or the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The fight for an independent Labour line on Ireland, at all times, is vital.

Secondly there is the unionist veto. This states that the consent of the pro-union majority in the North is a pre-condition for implementing any other policy such as withdrawal. Because the unionist majority is defined by the border, support for partition becomes the framework in approaching Irish politics and any solution to the national question is pre-judged. This is a lowest-common-denominator view of politics akin to tailoring socialist policy in Britain to the values of the 30 per cent of British workers who vote Tory. If the Unionist veto represents the wrong starting point, the left needs an alternative based on the interests of the Irish people as a whole.

Thirdly there is NATO and defence. Britain's security and defence 'needs' have always been placed as obstacles in

STOP GENOCIDE OF PALESTINIANS

Behind the latest massacres of Palestinians in Lebanon stands the Syrian government. Their refusal to step in and halt the bloodbath being perpetrated by the Amal militias in Sabra and Chatila and Bourj al-Barajneh camps, indicates their complicity in the genocide of the Palestinians – a process begun by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The scale of the tragedy in the camps may never be fully known, with the censorship of media coverage and the banning of the Red Cross. The offensive against the Palestinians is not being restricted to Lebanon. According to *Le Monde* on 5th June, 700 Palestinians were arrested in Syria, and some shot during protests in areas such as the al-Yarmuk camp. At the special Arab League meeting in Tunis this week (called by the PLO) the Arab League refused to censor Amal's atrocities and opposed an inquiry into the massacres.

What is behind all this? Has a deal been struck between Israel, Syria and Amal over the future of Lebanon and who rules what? Has Syria guaranteed Amal joint control over Lebanon together with the Maronites and under Syrian hegemony? If so, then the price for this would be the destruction of the Palestinians, who pose a potential revolutionary threat in the area. In return for finishing Israel's dirty work against the Palestinians, Amal may have been promised control over South Lebanon with Israel guaranteeing withdrawal up to their security zone. This is a possible explanation for the recent events. For if the instability in Lebanon is not settled to the satisfaction of the two main regional powers, Israel and Syria, then the next stage in the conflict would in fact be a major Israeli-Syrian war. It may be this threat of a war with Israel that has persuaded the Syrian government to deal a final cynical blow to both their allies in the PLO (PFLP, Abu Musa forces, PFLP-GC)* and the pro-Arafat forces.

ARAFAT

Of course the person who comes out on top in this is Arafat and his right-wing leadership in the PLO, who are pointing an accusing finger at the left wing parties in the PLO who have had support from Syria. The abandonment of the Palestinians by the last Arab state to take a stand against Israel will give the right wing the justification they need for continuing to push for a Jordanian/Palestinian Federation and recognition of the zionist state of Israel as the only option open now to the Palestinians. This is also what Syria and the Arab League states are telling them.

But can Israel be bullied into accepting this federation by the US? It would mean they would territorially lose Eastern Palestine (occupied West Bank) even though they would control the area economically and militarily. Why should they agree to this? The settlement building in the occupied territories has proceeded at an alarming rate in the last few years, and indicates that the West Bank and Gaza are non-negotiable given the large numbers of Israelis who now live there. And despite the Palestinian defeats elsewhere, the largest concentration of Palestinians still live under Israeli occupation in these areas. They have not been defeated and future resistance will be focussed here. The release of 1,150 prisoners last month in exchange for 3 Israeli soldiers has been the only cause for rejoicing in the Palestinian community in years. However, they are being followed around by right wing Israeli thugs who are openly calling for their abduction and murder. The Israeli right-wing have been heckling for mass expulsions of Palestinians from the occupied territories for years – will a Jordanian/Palestinian Federation give them the excuse they've waited for – that all Palestinians can now go live in Jordan?

It must give the zionist Israeli immense satisfaction to see what is going on in Lebanon right now. But let's not forget who started these conflicts. What we are seeing is the legacy of British and French colonialism and the results of the settler-colonial state of Israel's occupation of Palestine and expulsion of the Palestinians. More recently, the internal strife in Lebanon was set in motion by the Israel invasion and 3-year-long occupation. The failure of the Arab states and PLO to deal effectively with Israeli aggression clearly shows the redundancy of bourgeois Arab nationalism (as epitomised in the Syrian regime and the Arafat leadership of the PLO). Neither have been able to lead the Palestinians to liberation.

As to the future of Lebanon, some stability may come with an Amal-Maronite run state – in the short term. In the long term, Israel remains a threat. They will still retain an occupied strip in the south, and the axe will one day fall on Amal's head too when they step out of line.

The urgency at the moment lies in the fate of thousands of Palestinians who are in danger for their lives. What will happen to those who have fled Beirut into the Druze controlled Chouf mountains, those in Syria and those under Israeli occupation? The genocide of a people is in progress. The labour movement has a duty to condemn any actions taken against Palestinians, and to provide concrete help to alleviate the suffering that has been inflicted on them. Medical aid is desperately needed in Lebanon. The killing continues and Palestinian males are being rounded up every day. Please send donations to 'Medical Aid for Palestinians' (MAP), 8 Durweston Street, London W1H 1PH.

Sue Grant

*PFLP = Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.
PFLP-GC = Popular Front General Command.

the way of a total British withdrawal on the grounds of the possible 'threat' that an independent Ireland would represent. This fear of 'destabilisation' underlies many of the 'bloodbath' objections to pulling the troops out – a fear based more on British chauvinism than saving Irish lives.

Lastly, the arena of social policy, especially women's rights is directly relevant to the fight for a socialist policy on Ireland. British rule and partition have reinforced a reactionary social policy in the North – for instance on abortion, divorce and gay rights – and strengthened the church in the South. Despite this, the colonial attitude that somehow the Northern Irish community would be transported back to the dark ages in a united Ireland still gets trotted out. Combatting this will involve supporting all struggles and self-organisation of the oppressed in Ireland, alongside Irish self-determination.

The first step to breaking any of the chains that tie the British labour movement to oppression and imperial interest is organising the widest possible discussion on the matter. The 1981 NEC working party on Ireland was pushed – by the struggle in Ireland and some internal pressure – towards the principle of Irish unity, however vaguely. The 1985 NEC working party will set the pace for the period up to the next election – it must be used to push that debate a lot further.

Piers Mostyn,

Holborn and St.Pancras CLP

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MEANS TESTING THE DEAD

After months of leak and counter leak Norman Fowler's much heralded 'Review' of the social security system has been announced. The process of 'placed stories' in the press has had its effect; with a cut of only £2 billions. Norman Fowler is supposed to be the moderate whilst Nigel Lawson who wanted cuts of £4 billions is the extremist – such has been the concern of the Tories information controller, Bernard Ingham, to soften the blow of the plans.

The effects of the Tories destruction of the welfare state will be enormous and affect up to seven million people; in parts of the country at least half the population will suffer from the plans.

The main points of the plans are:

* *The State Earnings Related Pension Scheme will be phased out, affecting the retired living standard of the eleven million workers in the scheme.*

* *Housing benefits are to be cut for at least three and a half million people as they have to pay for at least 20 per cent of their rates and the 'high rate' clause is to be abolished.*

* *Claimants are affected as most of the current benefits become payment at the discretion of the local DHSS manager and not as of right, however obscure that right may appear at times.*

* *Heating allowances will go; blind allowances will go; laundry bills and special diet payments go; single payments for furniture, bedding, clothing and removal go altogether.*

* *The Death Grant, currently a miserly 8 per cent of the cost of an average funeral, goes.*

* *Maternity grants are to be abolished, except for women receiving Family Credit, or Income Support.*

* *A local loan system is to be established run from the DHSS offices.*

The basis of the plan from the Tories is one huge cost cutting exercise and linking the 'review' of Social Security to the Government's economic strategy. They are telling us that the cost of Social Security is too high and cuts must be made.

The effects of the 'Review' will be to cut the living standards of all the poorest people in this country, to give the DHSS enormous powers of social control and promote the private sector in pension matters.

The Tories subtlety is breathtaking when we learn that one of the members of the working group on pensions that advised Norman Fowler is Mark Weinberg – the Managing Director of Hambro Life Assurance.

After all the months of softening up that has been done by the media on behalf of the Government the actual announcement appears to some as an anti-climax. Nothing could be further from the truth and the gauntlet now passes to the Labour Movement to fight the issue.

There is a danger that the Labour Party will fall into the trap of arguing on the grounds that economic 'performance' would be improved under Labour and thus a Labour government would be able to fund a new and higher benefit system.

Levels of Social Security payments should be tied to basic living standards and payable as of right. The concept of means testing was reviled in the 1930s; now the bereaved will have to go through the humiliation of asking the DHSS for a loan to bury their dead and those moving into an unfurnished flat will have to explain to the DHSS why they could not get a furnished flat, and then why they need furniture for it.

It is the campaign against the plans that is so important and the opportunity presented by the reviews has never existed before. In one single act the Tory Government has affected more people than anyone else – in work – out of work – retired – at school – employed by DHSS – employed by local government – millions will be opposed.

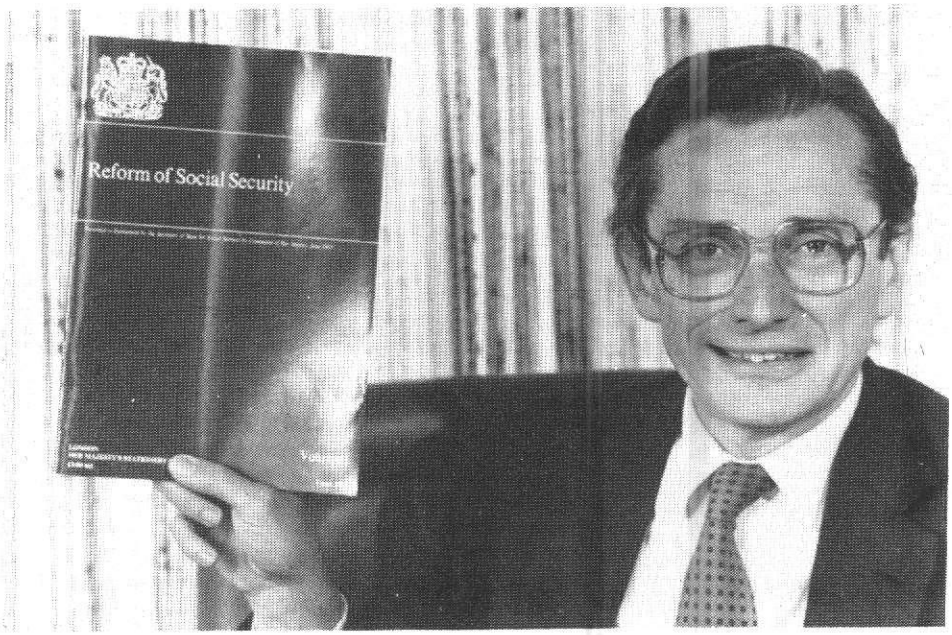
Now is the time to go out and form local campaigns on Action for Benefits. Don't be defensive about the existing system, but demand an entirely new system.

It does the Labour Movement no good to be eternally seen to be defending the indefensible. This is the issue to go and campaign for a civilised system and make it a campaign of demands – not of passively returning to the misty days before Thatcher.

Jeremy Corbyn

Useful address: Action for Benefits, 8 Bradbury Street, N16 8JN, tel: 01-249 3334.

Press Association Photos



3rd June. Secretary of State for Social Services, Norman Fowler, holding the green paper document *Reform of Social Security*.

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■THE RELEVANCE OF TROTSKY TODAY with **Tariq Ali** and **John Molyneux** (Sunday 7pm at Institute of Education)

■MARXISM AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION with **Ann Petifor** (Labour Womens Action Group) and **Lindsey German** (Saturday 7pm at University of London Union)

■STUDENTS IN THE EIGHTIES with speakers from the National Organisation of Labour Students and Socialist Workers Student Societies (Wednesday 7pm at University of London Union)

■IS GRAMSCI RELEVANT TODAY? with **Quintin Hoare** (*New Left Review*) **Alan Hunt** (*Marxism Today*) and **Chris Harman** (Monday 7pm at University of London Union)

■Also discussions on TRADE UNIONS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST THE TORIES and on THE WORKERS' REVOLT AGAINST APARTHEID (Thursday 7pm University of London Union)

★ SPECIAL MEETINGS

□**Tony Cliff** and **Paul Foot** on REFORM OR REVOLUTION? (Friday 2pm at Friends' Meeting House)

□**Ken Loach** on TV AND CENSORSHIP (Tuesday 3.45pm at University of London Union)

□**Nigel Harris** (author of *Bread and Guns*) on IMPERIALISM (Tuesday 7pm at University of London Union)

□**Ricky Tomlinson** (of Shrewsbury building workers and *Brookside* fame) on THE POLITICS OF SOAP OPERA (Sunday 7pm at University of London Union)

□**Steve Smith** (author of *Red Petrograd*) on THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION (Tuesday 10am at University of London Union)

□**Pia Fearing** (from the International Socialists of Denmark) on THE DANISH MASS STRIKE (Monday 7pm at University of London Union)

□**Peter Fryer** (author of *Staying Power*) on CAPITALISM, SLAVERY AND RACISM (Saturday 11.45am at University of London Union)

□**Nigel Fountain** (of *City Limits*) on MODERN POLITICAL NOVELS (Monday 7pm at University of London Union)

□**John Deason** on THE FIRST SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT (Sunday 10am at University of London Union)

□**Sheila McGregor** on THE TRADE UNION BUREAUCRACY TODAY (Sunday 3.45pm at Institute of Education)

□**Tony Cliff** on ZIONISM (Monday 10am at University of London Union)

□**Paul Foot** on RAMSAY McDONALD (Saturday 7pm at Institute of Education)

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□Prospects for revolution today
□A history of the Labour Party
□Socialism and culture
□Women's liberation and socialism
□Duncan Hallas gives three talks on the development of Marx's ideas
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□The rank and file and the trade unions since the war
□The left in American Labour History—five talks by members of the International Socialists of America

★ SOCIAL

□Bands include **Rent Party** (Saturday night), **The Men They Couldn't Hang** (Monday night) and **The Happy End** (Thursday night)

□**Cabaret with Skint Video**, magician **Ian Saville**, comedian **Jeremy Hardie** and compere **Mark Steele** (Sunday night)

□Films include **1984** (Tuesday evening), **Rosie the Riveter** (Thursday evening) **Battle of Algiers** (Wednesday evening) and **Blue Collar** (Sunday evening)

The cost of Marxism 85, including entrance to all meetings, debates, entertainment, accommodation and creche is £20 for the whole week and £10 for the weekend. The week ticket will only cost £16 if registration is received before 27 June. Day tickets are £4 (weekdays) and £6 (weekend); Session tickets are £2 (weekdays) and £3 (weekend).

For further details and registration write to Marxism 85, PO Box 82, London. Or telephone 01-729 0862.

TORY HYSTERIA ATTACKS THE RIGHT TO MARCH AND PICKET

The Government's White Paper on Public Order Law dramatically extends police powers to prevent and restrict peaceful demonstration or picketing, creates up to four new criminal offences, criminalises for the first time organisers of demonstrations and widens the definition of a number of existing offences. Despite the inclusion of the usual reassuring phrases about "the need to strike a balance" the bland language of the document barely conceals an underlying hysteria about the nature and form of protest in a democratic society. Its premise is that peaceful demonstrations can be distinguished from those where the demonstrators' *"real aim in demonstrating is not to persuade others of their point of view, but to prevent them by force from doing what they have a lawful right to do, or simply to foment disorder".*

It starts by an emotive comparison of this sort of demonstration with those of the Fascists in the 1930s. By the end of its proposals it is however clear that all of the following would certainly be included by the government in the "coercive" category: animal rights protests, the Stop the City demonstrations, and mass picketing at Grunwicks, Warrington and (inevitably) in the miners' strike. There is also mention of the 1979 Southall demonstration, Greenham Common demonstrations and demonstrations by the "anti-nuclear" (or peace?) movement generally. The sole criteria adopted is public order so marches by the National Front and football hooliganism are lumped in too. Peaceful protest by anti-racists is bracketed with NF thuggery; football violence with passive non-compliance. In all of this the government will rely on the moral panic produced by the nasty scenes at Brussels to increase the potential for police violence.

The White Paper adopts the Law Commission's proposals for new statutory offences of riot (maximum sentence: 10 years) and affray (maximum sentence: 3 years) which it is hoped, will make it easier to secure convictions. In the past, riot charges have been thrown out by juries after disturbances in St Paul's in Bristol in 1980 and more recently in the miners' strike.

The pre-publicity about the White Paper has emphasised that it only adopts one out of two new offences recommended by the Law Commission. But what it does is to adopt the more serious "violent disorder" and then to extend the definition to include the conduct covered by the less serious offence proposed by the Commission. Thus "violent disorder", punishable by a possible five year prison sentence or fine, will apply not only to three or more persons present together using unlawful violence to persons or property, but also to those who *threaten* it, who would under the Law Commission's proposals only have been subject to a maximum sentence of two years.

The only qualification to the new offence is that the conduct of the three or more persons taken together must be such as would cause a person of reasonable firmness *if* present at the scene (i.e. no-one actually has to be there) to fear for their personal safety. There is little difference between this and the existing offence of threatening or abusive words or behaviour under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1936, especially since the latter is to be amended to make the test whether the words or behaviour are: *"intended or likely:– a) to cause another person to fear unlawful violence or b) to provoke the use of unlawful violence by another".*

When three or more persons can be jointly charged, it is clear that the more serious offence of violent disorder will become the norm. As the White Paper states, *"The government anticipates that it will be used in the future as the normal charge for serious outbreaks of public disorder. But it will be capable of being applied over a wide spectrum of situations ranging from major public disorder to minor group disturbances involving some violence."*



Molesworth, Easter 1985. Would this demonstration be made illegal? L.P. Photo Library

Since the new offence includes violence to property or the threat of it, it will include Greenham Common women cutting down fences and animal rights protestors freeing tortured animals as well as three or more demonstrators coming into conflict with the police at any demonstration. The powers of the courts to deal with relatively minor offenders at demonstrations will shoot up from six months imprisonment (maximum sentence for section 5) to five years – a sentence heavier than that applicable in most other European countries for the equivalent of the more serious offence of riot, which involves proving serious violence.

As if this was not enough, the White Paper then goes on to propose an entirely new offence not even contemplated by the Law Commission of "disorderly conduct" punishable by a fine of £100 and aimed at precisely the sort of rowdy behaviour by kids in the streets which the police should (in the name of community policing) be being encouraged to deal with without making arrests and criminalising the perpetrators.

The unbalanced nature of the White Paper is even clearer in its treatment of picketing. During the miners' strike the police were widely criticised for reviving an ancient criminal offence of "watching or besetting" under an 1875 law (s7 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875). The phrase "watching or besetting" appears to mean no more or less than picketing. Despite the Paper's frank admission that it was used in the strike against pickets as well as those demonstrating outside private houses, it simply claims that: *"the circumstances of the miners' dispute have shown how important it is to have an offence penalising conduct of this kind."*

Important one may well ask to whom? Clearly it is important to the government since they propose to make it arrestable and to increase the maximum penalty from three months imprisonment or a fine of £100 to six months or a fine of £2,000.

If this seems like a knee jerk reaction to the experience of the miners' strike, it is as nothing compared to the new powers proposed to be given to the police to impose any condition on pickets and static demonstrations as well as marches, as to numbers, location and duration. At long last the police are to be given the power they wanted so much in the miners' strike, to restrict the pickets to six in number and disperse the rest. The "voluntary" Code of Guidance on picketing under the 1980 Employment Act is to be voluntary no more. Anyone who knowingly fails to comply with conditions imposed by the police will be subject to a maximum fine of £400 but organisers and "incitors" of mass pickets which break conditions will be subject to a maximum penalty of three months imprisonment or a fine of £1,000. What the unpleasant Tory MPs who bayed for Scargill's blood wanted is not far off.

The tests for the imposing of conditions on marches and pickets will be firstly serious public disorder (including damage to property), secondly "to prevent serious disruption of the normal life of the community" and thirdly "to prevent the coercion of individuals". In relation to picketing the third test is crucial. During the miners' strike the courts decisively rejected the

idea that any mass picket, however peaceful, could be non-intimidatory. In his judgement in Thomas and Others v NUM (South Wales Area) and Others (a case which created a new civil wrong of mass picketing) Mr Justice Scott stated that: *"sheer weight of sufficient numbers on the picket line would be sufficient by itself to be intimidatory."* He rejected the submission by Counsel for the South Wales NUM that: *"a large number of sullen men lining the entrance to a colliery saying nothing but simply standing and glowering"* would not be intimidatory. He also presumably rejected a similar submission made at the same time (to which he did not refer in his judgement) that the non-violent resistance movement led by Gandhi in India could not have been intimidatory. His judgement means that there is no such thing as peaceful mass picketing recognised by the courts. The claim in the White Paper that the police will have to be reasonable in imposing conditions on pickets because their decisions can be challenged in the courts is therefore meaningless. The new power is no less than a blanket licence to the police to stop a large number of people exercising their right to demonstrate or picket.

And it will mean nothing that it is a spontaneous picket or one called by more than one organisation. It is simply untrue and misleading for the White Paper to state that: *"Pickets whose purpose is peacefully to persuade or to communicate information will have nothing to fear from the new controls because their picketing will not breach any of the three tests."* However peaceful their purpose, pickets will be able to be stopped from picketing purely on the basis of numbers. If that is what the government intends, let it come clean.

Apart from the threat to peaceful picketing, marches too are likely to be seriously affected. Under the proposals marches can be re-routed by means of the new powers to impose conditions on the basis of the second test of "disruption to the normal life of the community" All marches aim to pass through busy streets because the purpose of demonstration is to convey the message of the protest to others. This provision if used at all widely could lead to increasing attempts to prevent marches taking place in Central London or in local shopping areas.

Finally the White Paper furnishes some powerful disincentives to anyone to organise a demonstration or picket. If the participants break conditions imposed by the police or (in the case of a march only) a ban, an organiser could find him or herself in prison for up to three months and there is an additional nasty proposal that organisers of the wrong kind of demonstrations or pickets (the "coercive" variety) could find themselves liable at civil law for the cost of policing it, if police conditions are breached. On top of this organisers of marches will be liable to a potential fine of £400 if they fail to give seven days notice to the police, although the police or court (if a prosecution is brought) may allow emergency marches if notice is given "as soon as is reasonably practicable". There is no consideration in the Paper as to what kind of test will be used to determine who the organisers are or on what basis they can be held responsible for the behaviour of pickets or demonstrators who attend. Organisation of protest where there is strong feeling is most often a self-policing function rather than a drumming up of people. Once an event is publicised it gains its own momentum. It will be outrageous if new laws deter organisations from trying to regulate demonstrations (e.g. by organising stewards) to ensure they are peaceful; more still if organisers of demonstrations have to go "underground".

There are, it is true, one or two good things which could be said about the White Paper (the much needed extensions to the offence of racial hatred, the power to ban single marches instead of blanket bans) but these small measures are swamped in a mire of extreme and paranoid proposals not worthy of any democratic regime. Nowhere in the White Paper is the question seriously addressed of whether the new proposals will really prevent public disorder. Important questions like the impact of different methods of policing and the implications of criminalisation are left wholly out of account. The Paper does not examine the implications of giving the police enormously wide powers to suppress protest, which can only be exercised on a political basis – determining which forms of protest are to be judged as "coercive" or "disruptive". There is no mention of trade union rights to strike and the long tradition associated with the use of peaceful picketing to persuade fellow workers. The straightforward aim of this document is to frighten people from exercising their rights and to criminalise those who do. A government which is so scared of dissent is certainly on the road to fascism and the whole labour movement has a responsibility to start taking seriously and campaigning against the repressive action of the state.

Louise Christian,
Streatham CLP

THE CONVOY AMBUSH – Police State tactics tested.

STOP ARMY DESECRATION OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS

THE BLOODY, BRUTAL and premeditated attack by police on the so-called 'hippy' convoy in early June is nothing short of a conscious step by the police and their political chiefs towards a police state. The attack must be vigorously denounced by the labour movement.

AFTER THE MINERS STRIKE

This is Britain after the Miners' Strike. Just as in the decade before, the police tested out their paramilitary tactics on minority groups – particularly squatters and blacks in England, and Catholics in the north of Ireland – they are again testing their methods on 'fringe' groups. But now the state violence has been upped a notch. Babies and pregnant women are also justifiable targets. The Wiltshire police, like most forces, have stock piles of rubber bullets. They are intended for us, if they can up the level of 'acceptable state violence' another notch.

The labour movement response to the massive police operation has been patchy. In fact it is Lord Cardigan – a Tory of the 'Government by consent' variety – who was so personally moved by what he witnessed that he championed the 'hippy' cause.

Years ago Angela Davis warned: 'If they come for me in the morning, they'll come for you in the night'. The labour movement must not be blinded by anti-'hippy'/squatter/black/Irish rubbish nor conned by the 'reasons' peddled by the media for *every* act of state violence. The 'Smash Hippies to defend Ancient Monuments' line of the media is a complete and utter fraud. Of course ancient monuments must be defended absolutely but it is crystal clear that if one tenth of the estimated £1 million of our money spent on the ongoing police operation in Wiltshire were spent on organising a festival in suitably monument-free fields in Wiltshire there need be no trouble.

It is believed to be the case that in the course of their preparations to 'defend the monuments' the Authorities dug trenches near Stonehenge (presumably to stop vehicles moving) *without* the supervision of archaeologists. Such actions make a mockery of their stated intentions to defend ancient monuments.

Moreover, the army on Salisbury Plain use ancient barrow monuments for tank exercises and are now attempting to close ancient public rights of way across the Plain in order, it is believed, to keep the public away from missile related manoevres. It's a bit ironic that the 'Step-up-state-violence' wing of the Tory Party call for the Army to be used in the 'war to defend our heritage'.

The victims of the police attack on the convoy must be defended and the whole operation against the Stonehenge Festival challenged. There are many issues which should be raised around the question, such as opposition to missile bases and the strong state associated with them. It is no accident that many of the members of The Convoy (which is no more of a bunch of oddballs than *Briefing* readers or the members of any leftish group) were central activists in the Molesworth Peace Camp. The police know this. At Molesworth they were 'reds', in Wiltshire they are 'hippies', next door to you or me they could be me or you.

FIGHTBACK RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions are now urgently needed whereby each organisation:

★Condemns the police ambush on The Convoy.

★Calls for an Inquiry to be made into the police attack on The Convoy and the whole basis and cost of the associated police operation against the Stonehenge festival; and disciplining of those responsible.

★For the provision of a safe monument-free festival site near Stonehenge (which would cost a fraction of the police operation).

★An end to Army desecration of Ancient Monuments in Salisbury Plain and total opposition to the Ministry of Defence's moves to close public rights of way across Salisbury Plain.

Resolutions should be widely publicised and copies sent to MPs, the media and the Stonehenge Festival defence campaign.

Piers Corbyn Bermondsey CLP

ALTERNATIVES FOR EDUCATION

'Young people thrived in Secondary Modern Schools'. **Lord Young on Radio 4 (27/5/85).**

The 'Great Debate' of the late '70s, initiated by Jim Callaghan's Ruskin speech, marked the end of the concensus on education established by the 1944 Education Act. Now the driving force for 'reform' in education is the Tory government through the DES. Since the Tories came to power we have seen the extension of the YTS scheme, the development of the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE), the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and a series of reports laying down guidelines on the content of education in most subject areas. For the Tories the battle is not the explicit breakup of the comprehensive system but to undermine it from within by controlling the content of education. Their aim is to produce a separation within comprehensive schools of the academic stream from the rest of the students, whose education is to be determined by the needs of industry.

The Tories argue that standards in education are not high enough yet they are forced to concede in the White Paper 'Better Schools' that 27% of students leave school with five or more 'O' level equivalents and only about 10% leave without any exam grades. While it is true that exam success is not the only measure of standards in schools nevertheless the rise in the pass rate in exams over the last 15 years must indicate that schools are achieving some success. The Tories wish to assess schools on their ability to 'promote enterprise and adaptability in order to increase young people's chances of finding employment or creating it for themselves and others! To this end it now seems that Lord Young (late of the MSC) is calling for a lowering of the school leaving age to 14!

Labour Party

In the face of this onslaught on education the response of the Labour Party seems very muted. Apart from ritual statements about the need to maintain comprehensives the Labour Party seems to have no vision to match that of the Tories in education. Yet with the council elections looming and the possibility of a directly elected ILEA next year, it is important that the local Labour Parties begin to debate how to protect and extend the education system. To this end the Socialist Teachers Alliance would argue that the following areas of education need to be prioritised.

1) Defence of the comprehensive system.

a) *Against streaming.* The White Paper 'Better Schools' argues in favour of subject teaching in primary schools and even hints at establishing streaming into these schools. At a stroke one of the main strengths of primary education, its ability to present an integrated approach to education, is to be removed and the students are to be 'prepared' for secondary education from the age of nine. This at a time when most teachers would argue that secondary schools have to change to become more like primary schools in their integrated approach, certainly in the first few years. The introduction of streaming into primary schools will be divisive in that it encourages a sense of failure in those not chosen for the top streams and will only increase the number of students 'turned off' schooling.

b) *Against centralisation.* The introduction of guidelines for most subjects and the development of national criteria for the new 16 plus GCSE exams shows that the Tories want to directly control



Labour Party Photo Library

the content of education. This will seriously affect the ability of schools to adapt their education to the needs of the local community and will result in the marginalisation of some important subjects, like media studies, humanities, etc., which are not covered by the guidelines. Coupled with this centralisation there are also moves to introduce regular assessments in each subject to meet externally determined criteria. Such a move can only increase the divisive moves to streaming in education.

2) Tertiary Education.

One of the responses of the Tories to mass youth unemployment has been the development of the concept of 'vocationalism' and they have established a new range of courses collectively called the CPVE. Central to these courses are the concepts of 'transferable skills' and 'social and life skills'. However, as Philip Cohen has pointed out in 'Schooling for the Dole?' – "What 'transferable skilling' corresponds to in reality is the process of deskilling set in motion by new information technologies". Social and life skills courses often do no more than attempt to change students' behaviour so that they can be more successful in the 'job market'. Somehow our students were deficient in these skills and so a new form of disciplining was needed. What is most disturbing about this development is that Labour LEAs have gone for it hook, line and sinker. To take one example, the GLC/ILEA.

The GLC, through its Popular Planning Unit is attempting a radical approach to London's political economy and social life. Yet the ILEA is not encouraging the development of courses based on this assessment but tamely following the CPVE guidelines. This problem is closely linked to the debate over the low staying-on rates into post-16 education over much of Inner London. ILEA seems to be pinning its hopes of improving the staying-on rates by organisational means, the restructuring (rationalisation?) of provision and the development of tertiary colleges. Changing the structure of post-16 education will not, in and of itself, increase the staying-on rate. Only the provision of courses that meet the needs and aspirations of this age group, and that fit into the overall job creation strategy of the GLC and the local councils, will encourage students to stay on in post-16 education.

3) Under Fives Provision.

The White Paper 'Better Schools' makes it clear that the Tories have no plans to extend nursery education. They see nursery education as mainly compensating for 'socially or economically deprived backgrounds'. Nursery provision is not seen as a right for all children, but as a compensatory mechanism to counteract some 'deficiency' in the child's background. Such a view must be countered and plans developed to meet the actual needs of the under 5s since children learn more in this age range than at any other time in their lives.

4) Racism.

The question of anti-racist teaching is conspicuously absent from the White Paper 'Better Schools'. There is a section on 'The Education of Ethnic Minority Pupils' which makes no comment about the need to combat racism within education. The subject guidelines issued by the DES/HMI again ignore the problem of racism. It appears that racism doesn't exist for the Tories. The Labour Party needs to recognise the extent of racist practices within education and develop policies that can actively combat and change these racist practices. These policies must include:

a) The development of an anti-racist statement of intent on the part of all Labour LEAs.

b) The recognition of the need for anti-racist teaching strategies to be developed in *all* schools and subjects.

c) The development of positive practices that will counter the confining of black teachers to the lower scales of teaching and the use of temporary and supply contracts to keep their employment position insecure.

d) The provision of bilingual and ESL teachers to be based on actual need in schools.

e) The need to involve ethnic and community groups in the development of educational practices that can actively combat racist views and practices.

f) The need to develop, with the unions within the education sector, structures that can discipline those expressing racist views within the education sector.

These four areas are not the only priorities for education but hopefully they will stimulate a debate within the CLPs on educational policies so that the Labour Party can develop a vision of education that can effectively counter the reactionary views being pushed by the Tories.

Jon Duveen
(Hackney N & Stoke Newington CLP and Socialist Teachers Alliance)

TRADE UNION BRIEFING

TOTAL AMNESTY – NOTHING LESS!

Bob Pennington

I doubt whether rock singer Bruce Springsteen would call himself a marxist or even a left socialist. But his gut reaction in supporting the victimised miners puts a lot of Labour and trade union leaders to shame. His £16,000 donation to aid the victimised miners means that he recognises that all the jailed the victimised men are victims of ruling class justice. In the time-honoured words of the labour movement they are class war prisoners.

As Springsteen said he saw his own father's spirit broken by years of unemployment. All the labour movement owes a debt to those in jail and all others victimised by the courts and the NCB, because they fought so that millions more people would not be demoralised by unemployment and the indignity of the scrap heap. And there are no exceptions. Every miner from those framed for the most minor offence, to the two sent down for murder, were guilty of only one offence – they dared to oppose mass unemployment and stood up against the Tories' right to consign whole communities to misery and deprivation

For doing just that, the whole wrath of capitalist society bore down on them. The judges and magistrates jailed and fined them. The police trumped up charges against them. The media misreported and lied about them. That should not surprise us. The courts were set up by the ruling class to administer their justice. The police are there to make sure its carried out. The media is controlled by, and is responsible to the establishment.

Yet the Kinnocks and the Hattersleys, along with Willis at the TUC tell us we must obey the law. According to them we should leave Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland in prison for another 20 years because the due process of law must take place. So the others in jail, those fined and those sacked can stay sacked. True enough this won't help the class-war victims, but the Labour leaders obviously think it will brighten up their image of respectability and that seems more important than the rights of the victimised militants.

The labour movement must reject this reasoning. We agree with Tony Benn when he said in Chesterfield 'Tory laws . . . have been used against decent people whose only offence has been to defend jobs.' And he showed the way when he argued a future Labour government should release and pardon all miners in jail and pay back all fines and sequestered funds. The labour movement can and should do nothing less than that.

This is why we must start campaigning now inside every Labour party and every trade union for a full amnesty for every miner. The aim must be to force the next Labour government to carry out a full and complete amnesty. Resolutions should be on the agenda of the TUC insisting that this is done. Resolutions to this effect must be on the agenda of the Labour Party Conferences. We owe this to the victimised miners and their families. And we also owe it to every other person who in the months ahead dares to challenge the Tory government.

Trade Union Briefing *proposes the following* **model resolution;** *we call on all supporters to push it through their party and union branches.*

–This trade union/Labour Party recognises that all the miners who were jailed or fined and as a result were sacked by the National Coal Board, were victimised for defending every person's right to a job.

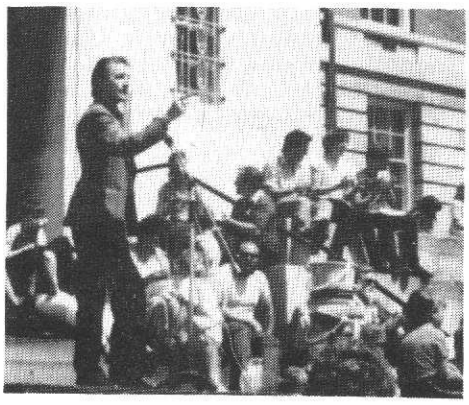
– We therefore call upon the TUC/Labour Party Conference to insist that the next Labour Government gives an unconditional amnesty to all jailed and fined miners and repays to them the fines imposed by the courts; and that it reinstates all miners with no loss of service sacked for alleged offences during the strike.

FIGHTING N.H.S. PRIVATISATION

In a strike against privatisation, over 100 ancillary workers in Chesterfield are challenging the Government's plans to destroy jobs and patient services in the NHS.

On June 1st, a march through the town was boosted by local Labour Parties, and contingents from Addenbrookes Hospital (on strike 8 months), Barking Hospital (on strike 15 months), Hillingdon COHSE and London Health Emergency. Tony Benn, the local MP, gave a rousing speech that challenged Kinnock's softly-softly road to socialism. The strikers from Barking & Addenbrookes gave well-received messages of solidarity and pointed to the victory by Oxford COHSE at Littlemore Hospital, who put back the privatisation plans through a two-week strike. Anne Denman, who chairs Scarsdale Hospital NUPE in Chesterfield, was given the best response of the day, and pointed out that anyone who wasn't suffering the hardships of weeks on strike couldn't know what it was like, and should join them on the picket line.

Dennis Skinner chose the occasion to make a no-holds-barred attack on the NUPE leadership, whose representative on



the Party NEC, Tom Sawyer has supported witchunting moves against the Young Socialists and refused to support councillors facing surcharge over ratecapping. Roger Poole, NUPE's national officer, did his best to respond but is was difficult to believe his statement that "there are no witch-hunts in NUPE" when their conference had just voted to support the expulsion of members of Militant from the Labour Party. Skinner's most telling remarks were on the future of the NHS. He said

Kevin Flack East Lewisham CLP

"The first task of the next Labour Government is to undo all of this government's acts of privatisation. Nothing less will do for me."

He is right, and we should all be campaigning for the Party to adopt this immediately. NHS workers, particularly women, are in the forefront of the fight against the Tories. They have to be given the wholehearted support of the Labour movement.

Support:
SCARSDALE HOSPITAL STRIKERS
c/o Chesterfield Labour Club
113 Saltergate
Chesterfield
ADDENBROOKE HOSPITAL STRIKERS
c/o 272 Hills Rd
Cambridge
BARKING HOSPITAL STRIKERS
c/o Barking Hospital Strike Committee
14 Porters Avenue
Dagenham
Essex
You're needed on the picket lines now.

TRADE UNION BRIEFING

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN: CHALLENGE UNION ORTHODOXY!

Women's struggles for workplace equality are often in conflict with traditional trade union priorities, particularly the manual unions affiliated to the Labour Party. This article looks at this struggle, taking in the double and treble handicap of being a woman and black, disabled, older, working class, where possible. What follows is a trade union agenda for women, starting of course with PAY.

Most unions go for percentage settlements linked to cost of living indices such as the RPI. Pay talks can devolve to an arid fiscal debate between their clever young (white, male) monetarists from Oxford and your clever young (white, male) Keynesians from Cambridge. Percentage settlements favour the better paid, preserve existing differentials and fail to tackle issues of relevance to women such as low pay and equal pay for work of equal value. The latter is taken under "Grading" but on low pay, women get on average 75% of men's earnings and there are two million low paid women. Low pay can be tackled by special supplements or flat rate increases, but many unions show little enthusiasm for these measures.

Traditional pay bargaining also mitigates against women in its obsession with monetary reward over, for example, longer holidays or shorter hours, so useful for women with domestic responsibilities. Many employers cost concessions on such items into the pay bill, giving the unions the choice of the money or the time; in practice many choose the former.

GRADING

There has recently been a flurry of casework on "equal pay for work of equal value", equating traditional male/female skills, for example machinist/fitter and regrading accordingly. Among the latest victories are Hull women fish packers and clerical workers in the textile industry. Many of these cases are now being brought with union support, but it has to be remembered that when Ford women brought the first one, all of 17 years ago, they did so with the T&G against them. If this kind of regrading starts to bite, the awareness that women are higher earners and taking a greater proportion of the pay bill could cause another backlash of culture shock and resentment. In local government, for example, 80% of women are low paid; one or two successful cases could add substantially to local authorities wages accounts at a time when many are already stretched by rate-capping.

Another grading issue for women not particularly advanced by the unions is the creation of intermediate grades in bottom-heavy structures to which women can realistically aspire in the short term.

RECRUITMENT AND ADVANCEMENT

The question of recruitment of women into well paid male manual strongholds and their promotion to the male dominated higher levels in virtually all organisations are where the prejudices of the average male trade unionist bite deepest. When, as now, well-paid jobs are scarce, competition becomes red in tooth and claw and reasons for the unacceptability of women will be found. In addition, and probably more importantly in the long run, motions about who should and should not achieve in our soceity reach into the masculine and class subconscious. It is comforting to believe that a handful of relatively advantaged women have succeeded because they have had class and cultural privileges not enjoyed by the average trade union man. It is less so to see women suffering from the double and triple jeopardy of being black, Irish, working class, succeeding since to do so admits that such women are more able than yourself. Hence trade unions, both in what they ag ree with management and in their own organisations, favour procedures and criteria which disfavour all women, but especially black and working class women. Despite union rhetoric that feminism is all about the demands of a handful of unrepresentative middle class women, unions are among the worst offenders themselves when choosing women for anything or negotiating on management criteria for selection. By contrast, working class men are allowed to achieve, with the class disadvangates (lack of written skills, for example) played down in favour of their strong points. Until a cross section of women — pretty/plain, formally educated/shop floor, tactful/blunt, middle class/working class, black/other ethnic groups — are allowed to achieve, there will be appalling pressure on women competing for anything to suppress strong views, and modify externals such as accent and appearance.



SEE YOU IN AUGUST
(*Socialist Worker* 23 November 1974 p.8)

The unions' response to the male domination of well paid manual crafts and skills has been derisory. Their line on the male middle class monopoly of promotion has been to emphasise seniority, training or experience. But these measures are useless if women have a break in service due to child rearing, cannot break into masculine training or experiential strongholds, eg skill apprenticeships, and persistently do badly at selections favouring sex, race and class stereotypes designed to test surface confidence rather than real skills and abilities. But the unions often show themselves hostile or myopic on proposals for improvements. These, often promoted by womens groups or progressive local authorities, include modifications to seniority requirements, inclusion of part-timers in those eligible for promotion, equality targets and positive action, particularly where women are under-represented. Again without much of a formal union input, selection techniques are being improved to widen the field of women and re-examine criteria to eliminate decision making based on stereotyping.

WOMEN AS PARENTS AND OTHER CARERS

Women need flexible working to enable them to combine a job/career and domestic responsibilites. These range from child care facilities through enhanced maternity leave and pay to part-time working and job-sharing. Women also need extra unpaid leave for domestic crises and in school holidays. Trade union indifference or hostility to these demands centres on three main points: the fear that women are getting "something extra", the problems of cover for absent women colleagues on domestic leave, and views about the implications of part-time working for the work-force as a whole. The last mentioned is the most contentious; some unions reject part-time working completely, calling it "hire and fire" labour and arguing that it will lead to the lapsing of full-time posts and overtime, or the introduction of undesirable working practices such as split shifts. The answer is not a knee-jerk rejection of women's needs, but an analysis of how they can be met without any of these dangers becoming reality, for example, by limiting part-time working to 16 hours or more, when part-timers have job protection.

WOMEN AND HEALTH

Cervical and breast screening, PMT, pregnancy, period problems and sexism related stress are often treated by male trade union reps as embarrassing or the product of female "neurosis". The answer is often to rubbish the problem or purge the complainant.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

This is probably the major flashpoint between men and women trade unionists. Tackling it challenges masculine attitudes to women that hold them both sexually available and fit to be punished by sex if they are "bad girls". Working class and black women are greater targets because they represent a greater threat and are seen as less "respectable"; sex-

TRADE UNION BRIEFING

Keeping the Political Fund Political

Tessa van Gelderen NUR

The results of union ballots on the political fund have, to date, been an overwhelming Yes. The small and widely dispersed Furniture makers union, FTAT, forced to hold a fully postal ballot had a 3:1 vote in favour. Unions have beeen forced to organise their members at the workplaces, some perhaps for the first time in a long time. Many have discovered that many branches are virtually non-existent and have been forced to put their house in order. Despite our continued opposition to the Tory legislation, there is a certain irony in this law making our union leaders realise that they cannot forever rest on an inactive, apathetic membership.

But there is a price to pay for these decades of neglect. The union leadership, while insisting that all issues facing its members are 'political', are desperately trying to keep 'party' politics out of the ballot — in particular all mention of the Labour Party. Over and over again the message union after union is sending out to its members is the same. A leaflet APEX issued, which has a remarkable similarity to many other unions' literature, declares:

> **"If you vote 'YES' in the ballot *you will not* be voting to pay the political contribution. If you currently pay the political contribution you can vote 'YES' and then, if you wish, withdraw from further payments."**

And if that were not enough APEX continues:

> **"In fact those members who do not pay the political contribution get a *double benefit* — a voice in Parliament at no cost to themselves!" (emphasis in original)**

The unions believe that emphasising the links with Labour will be detrimental to the result. Mike Molloy, SOGAT's campaign organiser, explained that the union's key campaign message was that members could vote 'yes' to a political fund but not pay the levy. "If we had not got this across we would not have won the ballot," he said. Throughout all unions' campaigns the issue of representation in Parliament has been stressed rather than the link with the Labour Party.

Even my own union, NUR, which has strong historic links with the Labour Party and where, even now, all branches have to affiliate to their local CLPs whether or not they are able to send delegates has tried to play down the issue of the Labour Party.



Union propaganda: stressing democratic rights but at the expense of the Labour Party

But, while its mass distributed leaflets carefully avoid the question, the NUR's campaign bulletins to activists does at least take up Labour's policies on transport, jobs and employment.

Here, of course is the rub: what did the last Labour Government do for public transport, the NHS and so on that was in the interests of working people? For union activists who are trying to raise the importance of the links with the Labour Party this is the problem they confront. But for our union leaders that, unfortunately, is not the problem. After all, they generally supported the anti-working class policies of the Wilson/Callaghan government and are now throwing their weight behind Kinnock and Hattersley. In fact, what the unions are afraid of is the 'left' image portrayed by the media.

The unions should have been using the 'opportunity' forced on them by the government to both reactivate the membership and to bolster the numbers paying the political levy. It will be interesting to compare before and after the ballot the figures for those opting out. The Labour Party has a big interest in the result of the ballot — not least because it relies on the unions to keep it going financially. The Party is keeping a low profile claiming this is 'union business'. At the end of the day a 'Yes' vote may well result in less funds finding their way to the Labour Party. And the Labour Party and its friends in union headquarters will only have themselves to blame.

What is needed now is for the Labour Party, both locally and nationally to work with the unions explaining why, despite all the difficulties, Labour is the only party that trade unionists can support. At a time when union members are being forced to think about issues this is an ideal opportunity for the Labour Party to be campaigning not only to increase the political levy contributions but party membership as well. And to do that the union leaderships have to take an up-front, positive attitude to trade union links with the Labour Party.

As activists we should be arguing for this in our unions. We should be arguing why we are in favour of the political contributions to Labour, why we are in the Labour Party and how we are fighting for policies that are in the interests of trade unionists, unemployed, women, black people, the old and so on. While all the pundits are claiming that the results of the political ballot are a slap in the eye for Thatcher, Labour may be paying a terrible political price: the severing of the links, its lifeline, with the unions. We must all campaign for a 'Yes' vote but as Labour Party members we must come out of the closet.

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ual harassment represents a reworking of the "whore/madonna" split in men's perceptions of women, with "nice, white, middle-class girls" taking the place of virgins. The worst conflict occurs when women press for disciplinary measures against harassers. Then, like as not, the union machine will swing behind the accused rather than the accuser. Unions should press for preventative training, but where this fails, they must be ready to support women bringing cases.

NON UNIONISED AND UNEMPLOYED WOMEN

Private sector women, particularly home-workers, often suffer appalling pay and conditions. Unions, often strongest in the public sector and in unified sites and industries, could work harder to represent private sector women, or press for better conditions for them through contracts compliance machinery. This, again pioneered by Labour local authorities, regulates the working conditions of employees of firms receiving large public contracts.

Women's unemployment has increased three times faster, and black women's ten times, than men's in recent years. As the recession has deepened, the innate prejudice in recruitment that has always favoured the apocryphal married-man-n-two-kids has been used to squeeze women out of areas that have been traditionally theirs such as catering, telephonist and shop assistant.

In conclusion, many unions now play lip service to women's demands. But after the UN's supposed women's decade, and an out put of paper probably denuding several acres of the Amazonian rain forest, true gains for workplace women seem as remote as ever. Tokenism for a handful of "acceptable" women is not enough. The unions should reach to their own bedrock — black and working class women. Measures to tackle deeply ingrained class, race and sexual prejudice using new research and techniques from education, psychology and local government could prove more important than mechanistic or paper exercises.

By Josie Edwards

Next month's **Trade Union Briefing** will include articles on:

– the current situation within the NUM, and Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC and NUM members).

– the campaign for a national energy policy (Energy Policy Workshop of the Mineworkers Defence Committee).

– left strategies for teachers: the debate in ILTA.

– follow-up article on the re-run TGWU ballot results (Alan Thornett).

NEXT MEETING OF TRADE UNION BRIEFING: Friday 5 July, 6.00 County Hall, London SE1. Further details from Ed Fredenburgh (convenor), 49 Milner Square, London N1; 01-607 4773 (eve) or 01-622 9231 (day).

PAUL BOATENG FOR BRENT SOUTH

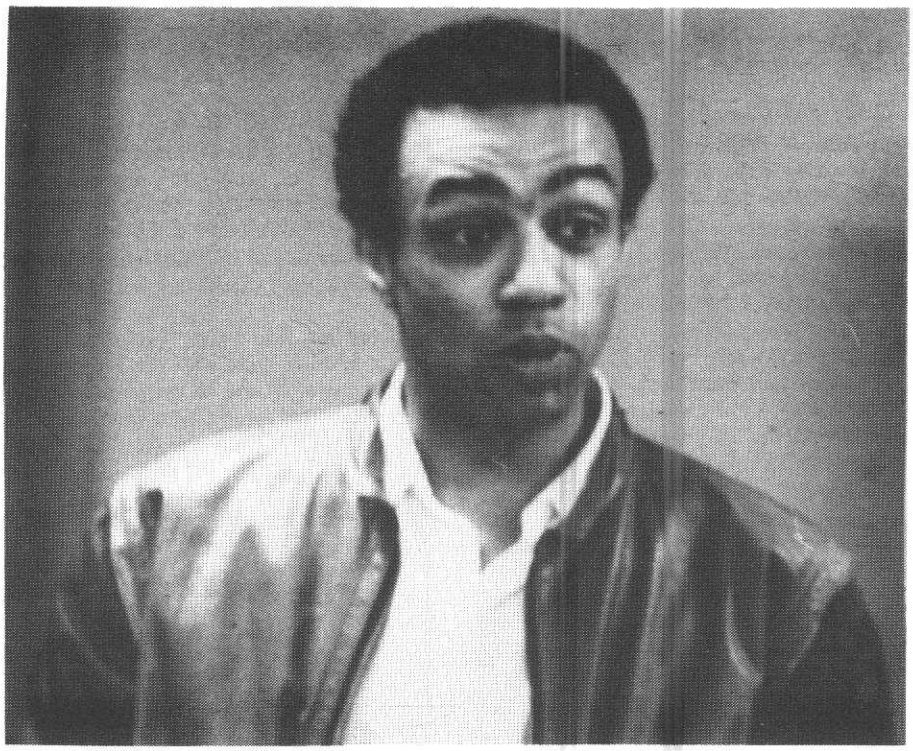
Paul Boateng has been selected as Brent South's parliamentary candidate. He is the first black person to be chosen for a safe Labour seat.

Brent South was determined that in an area which has one of the highest number of ethnic minority voters, it was vital to have a black MP. Its shortlist of three was composed only of black candidates.

The reselection process was well conducted. It had been agreed early on that where necessary only our chairperson was authorised to speak on the CLP's behalf. This did not stop one white male councillor running to the local press claiming, utterly falsely, that we were going to select a white middle-class male. Nor did it present a black male councillor, who did not get shortlisted, from stating that none of the three candidates were really black!

But now is the time to look forward. Paul Boateng, who won on the first ballot, has to begin to work with a united local party on the vital issues confronting the mass of the population in a borough that, as he pointed out, is the fifth most deprived in the country. We hope his selection, along with that of Russell Profitt, will be the signal for the emergence of many other black candidates, and his election to Parliament the beginning of a real change in the composition of the PLP.

Tessa Van Gelderen
(Brent South CLP)



John Chapman

BLACK SECTIONS - Don't Patronise Us!

The NEC Working Party on black participation in the Labour Party has now completed a report which recommends acceptance of Black Sections. The response of the Organisation Sub-Committee, which met on June 10th, was to reject the report.

Roy Hattersley moved the motion against endorsing Black Sections, saying that setting them up would be patronising! No, Roy, it is *you* who is patronising us, particularly when you tell us that it is difficult to say who is black. The Home Office has no problems with definitions when it deports hundreds of our sisters and brothers. Police officers have no problems when they harass black youth. So why should black people have problems in defining themselves? If you are oppressed by racism and identify yourself as black, then you are welcome in the Labour Party Black Section.

The Org. Sub. did say it would be in favour of setting up a National Advisory Committee, an officer responsible for the affairs of black people and the ethnic monitoring of the party's activities. These moves will be nothing but patronising tokenism unless recognition is given to the right of black people themselves to organise and tell the party what moves are needed to combat racism.

Another proposal put forward by Poale Zion is that black sections should be allowed to form as affiliated socialist societies. This ducks the issue. It loses black representation in a plethora of special interest societies. And instead of recognising the need of the party to tackle racism in its own ranks and outside, this manoeuvre *would* amount to ghettoising black members. It is sad to hear that Eric Heffer and David Blunkett are supporting the Socialist Society option, rather than giving us the full support we need.

The NEC are discussing the Working Party Report on Monday June 24th. The Black Section calls on all its supporters to join the lobby of this meeting from 9am onwards at 150 Walworth Road.

Chris Khamis,
(Assistant Secretary, Labour Party Black Section)

Where we must support black candidates

Positive discrimination in favour of blacks and women at selection conferences for councillors and MPs is a principle Labour party activists have fought hard to establish in many constituencies. But there is a danger that on occasions the claims of these two groups may clash. What should comrades do if faced with two candidates, equally good, one a woman, the other from an ethnic minority?

At such times other factors, particularly the nature of the constituency, must come into play. Obviously we all hope that one day black candidates will be able to fight any ward or constituency in the land with a good prospect of success. But at the moment their best chance of actually getting elected is in areas with a large ethnic vote. In practice this usually means the inner city constituencies. Here their presence will serve the dual purpose of securing better representation for the ethnic minorities and at the same time providing an opportunity for the members of those communities to become politically involved. At present many blacks feel alienated from institutions and from a party which seems to be dominated by white, middle class men.

If the party is serious in its intention to increase minority representation then determination will be needed from party members in those constituencies with a large number of black voters to ensure their short lists contain as many blacks as possible. Ideally they should aim for all black short lists. In addition self discipline will be needed from white candidates, women as well as men. They have the whole country to choose from and should keep away from those constituencies where blacks stand the best chance of winning.

In London I am thinking particularly of places such as Kensington, where Ben Busquet is trying for selection, Brent North, where several blacks, including Briefing supporter, Vidya Anand, have put their names forward, Brent South and my own constituency of Westminster South. I very much hope Labour Party members in these areas will not follow the unhappy precedent set by Brent East, where a black woman was passed over for a white male careerist.

Paula Watson
(Westminster South CLP)

Style Council — Our Favourite Shop

Before you play this record read the quote from Tony Benn on the inner sleeve,

"But as history teaches us, time and time again, it is not enough to speak or write, or compose songs or poems about freedom if there are not enough of us who are ready to devote their lives to make it all come true."

Bang goes the myth that Paul Weller thinks that a hard lyric and a punchy tune can change the world. Style Council, same as the Jam before them, are making a contribution. "Our Favourite Shop" is probably the best and most timely contribution that Weller & Co have made so far.

I could go through every track on this LP as each one has a stack of views and observations to offer, instead I'll touch on a few of the many peaks. Each tune has been lovingly crafted, the production itself is a triumph.

Forget any ideas you may have that the Style Council lack direction. They've by no means got all the answers and they make mistakes, but they're pointing a way forward. See the attack on Frankie Goes to Hollywood's cynical manipulation in "Walls Come Tumbling Down".

"You don't have to take this crap
You don't have to sit back and Relax."
Then comes the alternative,
"Governments crack and systems fall
Cos Unity is powerful ...
Are you gonna get to realise
The class war's real and not mythologised
Lights go out, walls come tumbling down."

Kids on the dole, YTS or whatever will be saving up their pennies to buy this album. The least we can do is back it up with a politics that's both accessible and immediately relevant to their everyday lives.

The edge on the lyric gets a whole lot harder on the slow, painful "A Stone's Throw Away",

"Wherever honesty persists — You'll hear the snap of broken ribs ...
In Chile — In Poland
Johannesburg — South Yorkshire
A stone's throw away: Now we're there."

The Style Council's popularity will ensure that these words are bouncing around living rooms up and down the country. As the frustrated thrash it out on the terraces and fascism finds fertile ground are we still sitting around in Alternative Strategy workshops sorting out who's got the most "dead on" position?

"We used to chase dreams now we chase the dragon
Mine is the semi with the Union Jack on."
Come to Milton Keynes

If this record does anything it at least highlights the urgency of the current situation, and the Style Council aren't the only people on our side. Billy Bragg's critical, yet highly visible, support for the Labour Party also opened a lot of eyes but desperately needs to be built on.

The schoolkids strike organised by the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign gives a pointer to the way ahead. Again, Weller, Bragg and others were there in support. But they're just a catalyst. How many women and men under 25 are likely to be selected in winnable Labour seats?

There are no bolt-together solutions, but records like "Our Favourite Shop", which is guaranteed to sell hundreds of thousands, should not be underestimated by the Left.

For God's sake buy this album, better still buy two and give one to the kid next door. You'll be doing us all a favour.

Reviewed by Geoff Martin, Mitcham & Morden CLP

LESBIAN & GAY PRIDE MARCH 29th JUNE

By Peter Tatchell

Since the re-election of the 'Victorian Values' Thatcher government in 1983, lesbian and gay rights have increasingly been under attack:

- The recent AIDS backlash has resulted in more and more homosexuals being sacked from their jobs, barred from pubs and restaurants, and beaten up by 'queer-bashers'.
- Since last year, HM Customs have mounted a sustained campaign of harassment against the radical bookshop, *Gay's The Word*, whose directors now face 100 criminal charges of importing 'indecent' gay literature by internationally acclaimed authors such as Allen Ginsberg and Gore Vidal.
- In 1983, the Conservative-controlled Harrogate Council evicted lesbian Mary Simpson from her council flat soon after the death of her lover Nikki Rodrigo on the technical grounds that the tenancy was in Nikki's name and not Mary's.
- The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 created a new anti-gay 'sus' law which empowers the police to arrest people in order to 'prevent an affront to public decency'. Under this clause, for an offence to be committed, no act of indecency need take place. Instead, the police can make an arrest on the mere suspicion that a person *might* be about to commit an act of public indecency!

The lesbian and gay community is appealing to the entire Labour Movement to show solidarity with our struggle by supporting the massive Lesbian and Gay Pride March in London on Saturday 29th June, assembling at Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park, at 2pm and marching to Jubilee Gardens, County Hall, for a rally and musical carnival at 4pm.

It is hoped that many CLPs and TU branches will send delegations and banners. Will yours be one of them? Don't depend on others to defend gay rights, they may be depending on *you*!

Further details: Dave Bunnett 01-482 2740.

Science briefing

NERVE GAS COMING

Greenham Common and Molesworth US war bases are not just for nuclear weapons. The Bigeye VX Nerve gas bomb is scheduled to arrive in Britain by 1989.

Already chemical and biological war equipment is operational alongside nuclear installations at Greenham. Whitehall Officials on March 29 confirmed to a top US Commission on Nerve Gas Weapons that they are willing to allow deployment of US Nerve gas bombs in the UK. Having seen cruise installed at Greenham and Hassletime playing a junta-esque role at Molesworth Thatcher's regime is now eager for this island of ours to become a total all-round arsenal for Reagan.

REVULSION TO CBW

Chemical and Biological Weapons (CBW) development was essentially halted in the late '60s due to massive public outcry in the US and Europe arising from CBW outrages in Vietnam and a series of accidents in the US when for example 6000 sheep were killed near a testing ground in Utah. In the '70s strong European opposition to CBW stopped the US Congress from voting the funds to go into CBW expansion. Now a combination of the new cold war; bogus (?) claims of Russian use of nerve gas in Afghanistan; "safer" storage systems for nerve gas; and, *crucially*, the grovelling servility of Thatcher to Reagan's warplans have changed the situation. The Commission and Congress are expected to vote 1.4 Billion dollars to Chemical weapons including 207 Million dollars for binary nerve gas bombs.

THE BIGEYE BINARY BOMB

The Bigeye 500lb bomb contains VX nerve gas in binary form — two components which can be stored seperately for safety and loaded into seperate compartments in the bomb just before use where they combine to make VX gas on impact.

STOP CBW

It is now vital for the Peace Movement, CND, the Labour Party and Trade Unions and Labour MPs to launch a massive campaign against US development of Bigeye and any CBW. Quite apart form the safety angle where accidents such as Bhopal give us no confidence that we will not ourselves be asphyxiated by stored nerve gas chemicals, all weapons of mass destruction must be opposed. A megadeath is a megadeath whether caused by Trident, Cruise or Bigeye. All US bases must be removed from this island!

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP

Contributions, requests for information and speakers to Science Briefing, 55 Innis House, East Street. London SE17 2JN. Tel 01-701 5691.

Editorial statement

ORGANISING FOR POWER!

Labour Briefing's 'left unity' initiative has now resulted in two meetings of groups, campaigns and individuals. Constructive and realistic, the meetings have been characterised by an awareness of both the crucial necessity for organising together and of the limitations to the unity that can be achieved.

Labour must prepare *now* for power in such a way as to avoid at all costs repeat performances of previous Labour Governments. Campaigning left unity in defence of the *whole* of our class and for socialist policies is therefore vital. But we are not about the setting up of another left group on every issue in the socialist dictionary.

As a result of this tentative, but determined approach much has already been achieved:

1. Agreement that joint work round specific objectives is useful and possible.

2. Recognition that some campaigns do not have a political mandate on various issues under discussion.

3. Agreement to prioritise the following:

a) Defence of the GLC and metropolitan authorities against abolition
b) Joint action against cuts in local services and jobs
c) Opposition to the Powell Bill or any similar anti-woman legislation including the Gillick judgement:
d) Support for the Newham Seven
e) A dialogue with Sinn Fein, especially the newly elected councillors
f) Defence of the political levy
g) Defence of the NHS against privatisation and support for the 29th June demonstration.
h) Support for a joint appeal for an amnesty for the sacked and victimised miners to be circulated throughout the labour movement.

4. We have agreed to co-operate at Labour annual conference in jointly sponsoring a meeting and discussing the format of a joint daily conference briefing.

5. We have held a useful preliminary discussion aimed at maximising left unity in the NEC elections. We were concerned both to avoid any candidatures that might endanger Audrey Wise or Jo Richardson's NEC places and to avoid perpetuating an all-white NEC.

6. We agreed to compile updated information on expulsions and suspensions from the Labour Party with Labour Against the Witch Hunt with a view to bringing the issue to the wider attention of the labour movement.

7. We agreed to joint appeals at Conference on reselection for LWAC's and Black Sections' demands, and Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights' fight for a debate.

We think the above record speaks for itself. We agree that broad single issue campaigns cannot align themselves on issues outside their ambit. And we completely support women's, black people's and lesbians' and gay men's autonomy. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has made the point that for obvious reasons it does not have any policy on NATO, while the Labour Committee on Ireland, for example, would not wish to align itself with any particular left grouping. We would argue indeed that such campaigns should look to what demands they would wish to make on us rather than to which of our proposals they agree with. We feel that it is for us to offer practical support (such as circulating notices of conferences, helping to promote a campaign's initiatives etc).

During the miners' strike we saw the beginnings of the kind of united campaigning action we so obviously need. Women Against Pit Closures' exemplary political organisation was an inspiration to us all. We must continue our practical united work in support of all our working class communities fighting repression, racism, sexism and the inhuman Tory government. 'Participatory unity', nice as it sounds, *is* perfunctory lip-service unless it is explicitly based on autonomy – the *self*-organisation of oppressed groups. Autonomy, literally self-government, is power. This is why our present leadership is so opposed to Black Sections – it would give power to black Labour Party members. Working class people too need their own 'autonomous' socialist party. Labour in government should be the whole of the working class in power.

The next issue of Briefing will be out on Thursday 18th July
Deadline for articles: Monday 8th July

Next National Editorial: Sunday September 1st (For details ring 01-533 2593)

Powell down... ...but not out!

The anti-woman ideas encapsulated in the Powell Bill may be down, but they are certainly not out. Marge Berer, from the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign argues strongly that 'While we are all obviously pleased that Enoch Powell did not get away with his tricks the fact remains that he had a majority for his Bill in parliament. While we managed to out-manouevre him (and I was in the House and I thought Dennis Skinner was brilliant), we have not won a political victory. Apart from 100 or so MPs, about two-thirds of whom are Labour, there wasn't any serious opposition.'

Marge also expressed concern about the lack of organised opposition to Powell's Bill from outside of parliament. Much of the opposition that has existed has been from the media (remarkable though it may seem) and the scientists lobby – neither of whom have *women's* interests at heart. Marge almost pleads – 'People – women especially – *must* organise to show the Tories and Enoch Powell that there is mass opposition to his proposals. That opposition exists *must* be made clear.' Marge adds that she feels that women's organisations concerned with this issue should get together to discuss some proposals for positive legislation in support of all women.

Marge also paid tribute to the tremendous work of Jo Richardson, who together with Frank Dobson, played a major role in co-ordinating a campaign of opposition to Powell's insidious Bill. But the campaign is not over yet.

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Sarah Roelofs

Briefing AGM: County Hall, London, SATURDAY JULY 20TH

10am: Labour Briefing opening address by Graham Bash
10.30-12.30: *Organising for Power*
Speakers & discussion
Sharon Atkin — Black people & the Labour Party
Josie Edwards — Women in the trade unions & the Labour Party
Mildred Gordon — Getting socialist women into parliament
Kay Sutcliffe — Women Against Pit Closures
Jeremy Corbyn — Campaign Group of MP's (personal capacity)
Sarah Roelofs — Labour Briefing
12.30-2pm: Lunch
Women's meeting
2pm-3pm: Reports
3pm-5pm: Resolutions

Voting by supporters card. Cost £2 (£1 unwaged)
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