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RATECAPPING: LEARNING LESSONS OF DEFEAT;

PREPARING THE FIGHTBACK

Dave Burn and Johanna Fawkes, Nalgo National Ratecapping Liaison Group.

With Lambeth and Liverpool Councillors still facing disqualification through their continued non-compliance with the Rates Act, it may be a little early to write a definitive assessment of the 'no rate' campaign. However trade unionists nationally have begun to look at the lessons of the past year and identify the issues that confront us in the coming months.

Clearly the priority must be maximum support for Lambeth and Liverpool who are planning a summer of action against the District Auditor's attempts to get councillors surcharged and disqualified from office. The role of the Scottish authorities is also becoming central to the fightback and some of the rate-capped authorities which set a rate months ago are now finding themselves in bigger financial trouble than they anticipated. Those who have fought for the no rate position must now fight to make sure that ttrade unionists and councillors still in the frontline are not left to fight alone.

However such support will be much harder to obtain in the current climate of cynicism over the ratecapping campaign: those who dismissed the whole strategy feel comfortably superior in their negativity and 'new defeatism'; those who fought hard will have difficulty recreating the mass campaign that peaked in March.

In that first week of March, there was unity and enthusiasm among the councils and the trade unions. By the end of the month, that unity and confidence was fatally damaged by the much publicised capitulations of the GLC and ILEA, and slightly less public collapses of Mersey side and South Yorkshire, which all set rates.

From the date of the first Council meetings it was down hill all the way, as first one then many authorities gave in, unable to secure the united front they had based the campaign on. As threats from the auditors and courts materialised, small groups of councillors broke away from Labour Groups and voted with the opposition to set legal rates. Although authorities met together in an organisation called the Local Government Information Unit – made up of Council leaderships and national trade union officials (*not* local shop stewards committees) – no attempt was made until too late to mobilise all the affected Labour Councillors to plan strategy and maintain morale.

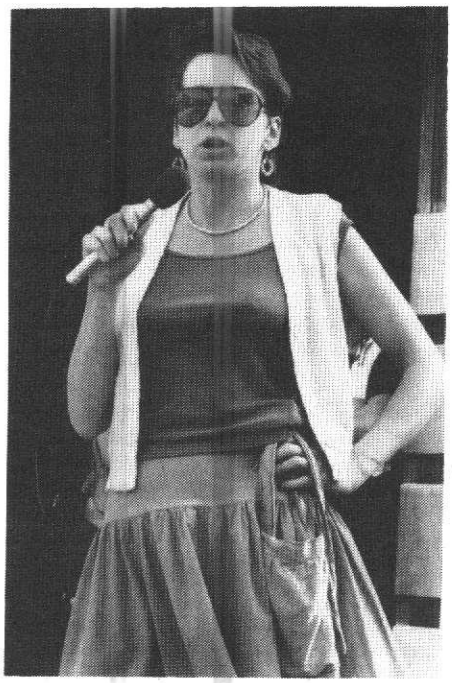
False Unity

The major unresolved problem with the 'no rate' strategy was that it united groups of Councillors with completely different political objectives. There were those who wanted to force a confrontation with the government – by involving the trade unions – and who were prepared for the threat of surcharge and disqualification. And there were those Councillors who saw it as a means of negotiating with the government, but had no intention of going over the legal brink.

The fact that this second group made it plain that their intention was negotiation not confrontation allowed Patrick Jenkin to sit it out, which threw the councillors into disarray and broke up that fragile unity.

The role of the Local Government

(CONTINUED OVER)



John Chapman

Johanna Fawkes,
speaking at Lambeth Town Hall

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

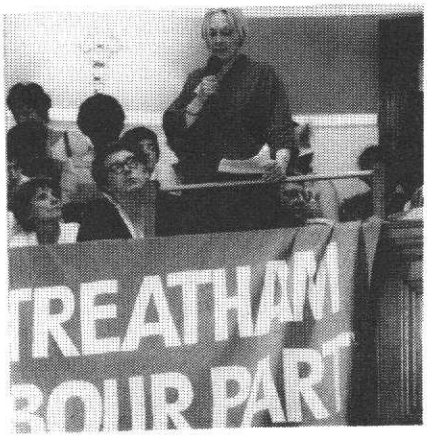
LAMBETH LABOUR GROUP FIGHTS ON —

The quickest sell-out in history? Five minutes after voting that 'the NEC calls upon all sections of the Party to offer maximum support to those councillors in Liverpool, Lambeth and Edinburgh threatened with disqualification and surcharge', Neil Kinnock was telling the press that it was all the councillors' fault anyway. Comrade Neil forgot to tell the press he voted for the resolution, which also reaffirmed 'the right of all councils to set budgets to meet the needs of their own communities'.

Even though a rate has now been set everywhere, the fight to defend local democracy and services and protect council jobs is going to remain high on the political agenda over the next year. Labour's leadership must stand up and publicly declare – as Eric Heffer has done – that 'we will do everything to support the councillors – they are carrying out Party policy'. With more councils facing ratecapping, and with Patrick Jenkin frantically casting round for yet further ways to smash Labour councils, resistance to Tory policies will continue to centre on the fight for the Town Halls.

Maximum support now for the councillors in Liverpool, Lambeth and Edinburgh will be a crucial factor in whether we can win that fight. And it will also be crucial in showing both to the working class and to Kinnock and the right-wing that Labour's policies are popular and that the electorate supports a Party which stands firm and sticks by its promises.

In Lambeth, councillors carried the banners of the three CLPs through the 'no' lobby on 3rd July, demonstrating the continued unity between Group, Parties and Trade Unions for a policy of non-compliance. With one councillor having resigned and two defectors, Group



John Chapman

ANNA TAPSELL

knew before that meeting that 'no rate' would be defeated. However, the intervention of the District Auditor, who had already issued letters saying 32 councillors were liable for losses of £126,947, meant that the battleground had already begun to shift. The 'no rate' tactic has now been replaced by a dual fight. On the one hand, for the right of local councils to oppose Tory policies and in defence of our councillors. On the other, against any cuts and for a real deficit budget.

On 3rd July, video screens were set up in neighbouring rooms to ensure maximum community involvement. A powerful speech from the public gallery from trade unionist, Anna Tapsell, made it clear to the Tories and renegades that they would not get away with cuts.

The Tories had come prepared to cause disruption, but despite continuous attempts to provoke, it wasn't until voting started that they succeeded in their ploy to distract attention from the real issues. Having pulled a Party banner down from the gallery – and nearly pulling down the comrades holding it too – they created an excuse for physically attacking Labour councillors who tried to retrieve it from being trampled on. Terry Rich was held in a headlock by four Tories and Jo Sinclair suffered considerable bruises on her arms from Tory thugs. Having provoked a row, the Tory who started it all then whipped out a camera so he could sell photos of the 'Labour mob' to the press!

Lambeth has the highest per capita unemployment in London – and three of the largest employers in the borough are being threatened by the Tories. Abolition of the GLC will mean the loss of thousands of jobs for local workers at County Hall, mainly cleaners and manual workers;

PREPARING THE FIGHTBACK (CONTINUED)

Information Unit (LGIU) in the development and downfall of the no rate strategy was crucial. A major weakness was the fact that trade union representation was at national official level and did not reflect Branch organisation within the authorities (or the growing importance of London Bridge). As such the LGIU became a vehicle for the avoidance of local consultation. Nalgo's National Rate Capping Liaison Group did manage to communicate with the LGIU by means of Nalgo national representatives, but it was no real substitute for direct communication and coordination.

Spectator Sport

For trade unionists in the local authorities a number of problems have been highlighted by the failure of the no rate strategy. The first and foremost is that there was no role for the trade unions, apart from as spectators and as bodies for demonstrations and lobbies, with the occasional direct action or occupation (which was often disapproved of by Councillors). Being cheer – or boo – leaders as the Councils caved in was demoralising for workers. There is simply very little control or actual organised response possible for the trade unions in this kind of campaign.

Many workers had been mobilised by the Councils' insistence that setting a rate would lead to massive cuts and redundancies in the first year. As Finance Directors succeeded in closing the gaps (often with the knowledge and collusion of Labour leaders) that mobilisation evaporated. Trade unionists who believed the early publicity – and many were not given access to the relevant financial information – will not accept similar doom-laden warnings a second time. And those who thought the whole idea was a waste of time feel vindicated.

Confidence in the campaign was also critically undermined by the decision to defer rather than refuse to set a rate. This not only focused attention on the right of Councils to raise rates rather than defend services, it also meant each meeting became a 'will they, won't they' drama. Refusal to set a rate would have clearly identified the nature of the campaign as directed against the government. Deferral turned the issue into an extended agonised debate amongst Labour Councillors, where defections of small numbers led to the collapse of the whole strategy.

Looking Forward

Strategy for the next year must avoid these pitfalls and – as trade unionists – we must also deal with a range of new attacks on local government jobs and services.

It is possible – we won't know until the second hit list is announced – that the government will decide to demote the Rates Act from the central plank of its attacks on local authorities and simply use it as part and parcel of its overall control of local spending. If so – and the rumours arethat there will only be another eight authorities on the second hit list – this should be considered a victory for this year's campaign. The Rates Act has not succeeded in decimating local authority spending, though the ability to tighten the screw every year remains with the government, and we should have no expectation of an easier life ahead. The Rates Act will join the rate support grant mechanisms as a system for limiting elected authorities' ability to determine local levels of service, and the much heralded review of the entire rates system is unlikely to extend or restore local councils' rights.

Jenkin's recent proposal to withdraw targets and penalties shows that the system has not been effective or popular. But reliance on the Whitehall-dictated GREA system will further isolate a small number of Labour authorities, portrayed as massively overspending when compared to 'objective' guidelines.

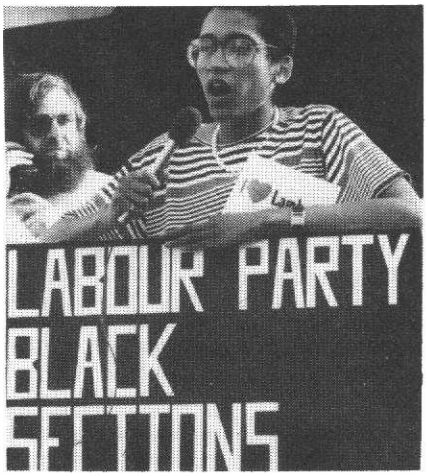
The other main route of attack is privatisation which aims to control finances by hitting services directly, rather than the other way round. In many ways local government has escaped the full brunt of privatisation, except in Direct Labour Organisations, when compared to the health service, for example. Because the

RALLY TO OUR CAUSE!

if Lambeth Council complies with the limits imposed by the maximum rate and does not get back the millions stolen by the government through reductions in the rate support grant, the latest estimates are that 1,000 jobs will go; and West Lambeth Health Authority is being forced to shut two hospitals and choose between retaining the medical school or withdrawing most general surgical services at St Thomas' in order to comply with the cuts the Tories 'aren't' making in the health service. Lambeth's councillors and Party members on the health authority have fought hard and convinced the in-built Tory majority to oppose these cuts and not make a cash-limited budget. Now the Tories are threatening to dismiss *all* the members of the health authority if they don't agree to make a further £1 million cuts.

Within a month, three sets of public representatives in Lambeth are being told to close down because they won't do the Tories' dirty work. We are under siege! All public services in Lambeth could soon be being run by government commissioners – our fight to retain democratic control isn't restricted to the local council!

The resolution passed by the Council on 3rd July was put by the two Labour defectors and included a freeze on recruitment. But, working with the unions, Labour Group is determined to block this. Amelda Inyang, Lambeth's Chair of Management Services, said, 'It made me so angry – I visualised it going against everything we'd promised the trade unions. The people who put it don't see that it's cuts – no workers



John Chapman

Linda Bellos speaking at steps of Lambeth Town Hall, 3rd July

mean no services'. A formula has already been worked out between Group and the unions to ensure recruitment continues and when Group gets its majority back on 1 August after the byelection the official policy will be reversed.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The council trade unions have embarked on a rolling programme of industrial action, which has already included delaying the rate notices being sent out. Anna Tapsell, Chair of Lambeth NALGO and Vice-Chair of the Joint Trade Union Committee (London Bridge) feels that a mixture of events – the announcement of next year's ratecapped hitlist, the abolition of the GLC, continuing cuts in public expenditure – are coming together in such a way that council trade unionists will have no choice but to respond. 'Events will dictate a reaction more widespread than just in Lambeth', she says. 'We are organising, but need the precise trigger upon which members will act, although it's difficult to keep up the momentum as the government is keen to drag it out. We are aiming for the beginning of the court action, both with a major demonstration from Lambeth to the Law Courts and for more long term action. We will not wait until the councillors are finally disbarred.'

Lambeth Labour Group contains a mixture of young and old, Black and white, women and men; we have comrades with disabilities, we have pensioners, we have parents with small children. But they have stood firm with a determination which has put others to shame. When Eleanor McLaughlin, the Deputy Leader of Edinburgh Council, spoke at a rally in Lambeth, she said, 'When you come from naught, it isn't too hard to go back to naught'. Many Lambeth councillors have expressed similar sentiments. 'Even if they take everything I've got, I'll still be better off than most of my constituents' is the way it's put in Lambeth.

Except the Labour Movement has to ensure that the councillors *don't* get penalised for carrying out Party policy. The miners' strike showed there was a union which was prepared to fight for its members. Lambeth councillors took that lesson to heart to show that here was a Labour Party prepared to fight for the community.

The fight against surcharge and in defence of Lambeth councillors, as well as the comrades in Liverpool and Edinburgh, must be top priority for Party activists throughout the country. Invite a speaker, rally to our cause – send money now!

Joan Twelves
(Vauxhall CLP and Regional EC member)

RALLY FOR LAMBETH

Rally for Lambeth, 29th July, Assembly Rooms, Lambeth Town Hall, 7.30pm. Speakers include Arthur Scargill, Dennis Skinner, Joan Maynard, Ted Knight, Linda Bellos.

concept is familiar to most people, we are unlikely to get the bishops and Lords entering the battle in the name of democracy. However, vast numbers of workers and growing numbers of service users know for certain how damaging privatisation is. There is now a considerable catalogue of disasters we can refer to, and we also have the experience of other public sector workers to draw upon. Unlike ratecapping, privatisation is a battle that has largely been fought by trade unionists against employing authorities. It may provide a better frame for joint action, as the Green Paper makes it clear all local authority workers will be affected.

We will have to resist: extensions to the Land and Planning Act, due next April; legislation arising from the Green Paper on privatisation: and the plans to contract out social services, both of which will come into effect over the next eighteen months or so. These attacks must be resisted now – before the Acts are written, let alone passed. We left the ratecapping fight for too long – we cannot afford to wait till privatisation of all local government services is law.

On the immediate horizon is the increasing pressure from the government on local authorities and trade unions to comply with the hand-over of functions following the abolition of the GLC and the Met Counties. As the government presses harder, splits in the ranks emerge and the TUC Local Government Committee is now talking to Patrick Jenkin about staffing. Nevertheless, the trade unions say they wish to maintain the policy of non-cooperation, though the Labour Party front bench see the policy as irrelevant once the legislation has the Royal Assent.

Don't Comply

Local trade unions and Councillors need to fight for the extension of the non-compliance policy, not its erosion. There are many other areas where legislation exists or is planned which threatens jobs and services. Authorities are currently comply with many forms of privatisation – we should be examining *all* aspects of working with contractors and consultants and competitive tendering.

On ratecapping, a re-run of last year's campaign is out of the question. But we can start planning now how to coordinate our resistance to the Rates Act, privatisation and abolition. If such a joint campaign is organised we must aim to bring together action in the Council Chamber with industrial action among the workforce. Whatever precise tactics are adopted, these must be formulated after the widest possible consultation, not imposed on Councils or unions by our leaderships. And the 'lowest common denominator' approach must be discarded. A position of non-compliance must be established as early as clearly as possible.

In order to make such a stance successful, councillors and trade unionists must organise locally and nationally, through the ALA, LGIU, London Bridge and Nlacc and through local shop stewards organisation and union/Labour Party contact.

If we are not only to defend existing jobs and services, but fight to improve them, we have a lot of work to do.

LAMBETH 31 DEFIANT

Ted Knight

Ted Knight, Leader of Lambeth Council, interviewed by Joan Twelves, Secretary of Vauxhall CLP, after Lambeth had set a rate on July 3rd.

Joan: *Now that a rate has been set in Lambeth, what happens next?*

Ted: The first action of the majority of the Labour Group is to state firmly that no cuts will be made in Lambeth, either in jobs or services, and that the Council will be operating a true deficit budget.

The government is fully aware that it cannot force cuts on Lambeth through a vote in the Council chamber and so they have used a state official, the District Auditor, to remove elected Labour councillors from office. The Labour Group and local CLPs have agreed that the fight to protect the right of elected councillors to resist government policies without being charged with wilful misconduct is a principle for which the movement as a whole must fight. The council trade unions are also giving their support.

We have the by-election in Larkhall on 1 August to replace Mike Bright with a candidate, Linda Bellos, who is standing on a platform of no cuts and non-compliance. The Lambeth Parties have taken a position that only those who support a continued struggle against the Rates Act should be on the by-election panel at the present time. Do you think it likely that we will need to replace the 31 councillors threatened with surcharge before the borough elections next May?

The next stage is the issue of the certification of surcharge, which in itself is an instrument which executes the penalty. This could be received from the District Auditor anytime from the end of July until September. The councillors then have to appeal to prove their innocence of the charges and it could take some time before we reach a final decision. In order to influence the outcome both of the District Auditor's intentions and of a court decision, the maximum industrial action is needed to convince the government that to follow through the course of action it has adopted will lead to disruption of local authority services not only in Lambeth but throughout the capital city. Therefore, the prospect of by-elections to replace the 31 councillors is not necessarily immediate, but we must be ready with comrades who are prepared to carry forward non-compliance. The budget for 1986/7 will be decided in March before the borough elections and we need to have a policy of refusing to make cuts in that budget too.

The councillors have been mobilising massive support for the Fighting Fund. Do you think we should have done this sooner – and what is the role of ordinary Party members in all this?

Labour councillors are engaged in two projects at the moment. One is to maximise public support for the arguments against the District Auditor and Tory policies and to demonstrate that the threat of removal from office because of wilful misconduct is a weapon that the government will use extensively if the precedent is set.

Secondly, the Fighting Fund to enable Labour's councillors to resist within the courts is essential because the labour movement cannot accept the right of a state official to carry out this action. The Fighting Fund could not have been established before the direct action of the District Auditor because the issue was too abstract.

Labour councillors cannot present their case without the full support and activity of Labour Party members generally. The task is too great and the political issues too important for it to be left to 31 members and therefore in Lambeth we are seeking to involve other Party members in contacting their trade unions and other Labour movement organisations, together with the community groups which they are in contact with.

Another criticism we've heard locally from some groups has been that because the fight is solely aimed at preserving Labour's right to manage the local state, it has not mobilised the working class, and is therefore opportunist.



Chapman

The ratecapping fight set out to turn a section of the state machine, ie. local government, against the state itself. And mobilisation of public support for the jobs and services provided by councils has been successful. During the campaign it was necessary to persuade the trade unions to sink sectional differences and unite in a common fight against the government, and this too has been successful. The decision of the government to resort to the District Auditor as its final weapon in forcing its policies on Lambeth and Liverpool has in practice taken the fight into the broader community. A united front has been formed between Lambeth's councillors, CLPs, trade unionists and community activists; the struggle has shifted from one of management of the local state to that of mobilising a working class community.

A further criticism – from a different quarter – is that we shouldn't be doing anything which could threaten the Labour leadership's efforts to win the next general election.

The fight against ratecapping, like the struggle of the miners, far from damaging Labour's electoral prospects actually shows Labour Party representatives as being prepared to carry out a serious fight against the Thatcher government. This mobilises support from the working class who are seeking a real alternative to Thatcher's disastrous policies, but even if we are talking about an attempt to win the middle ground – this always moves to the strongest side within a fight. A decision to take a low profile and engage in totally parliamentary opposition to Thatcher is counterproductive, even in voting terms. An example of our success, for instance, is in the fight for the political levy, where council workers appear to be recording firm decisions in support of their trade unions continuing to have political funds.

The local Parties are currently discussing the manifesto for the borough elections in 1986. What effect do you think this year's struggle will have on those elections?

The effect that the firm stand of Lambeth's Labour Group, with the support of the CLPs and trade unions, will have on the electorate can already be seen in the by-elections that have taken place in Lambeth over the last year. Labour is getting its arguments over and Labour voters are responding to a fighting front against Thatcher. For the 1986 elections, the Labour Parties in Lambeth must present a manifesto based on the *needs* of the borough and must commit its elected members to fight in unity with the trade unions to achieving that. The defence of services is not enough when those services are already being deprived of financial resources outside the control of councillors and therefore we have to win working class support on the basis of what is needed and how it can be fought for. The actions of the Lambeth Labour councillors are a valuable experience, and provide evidence that what we promise to do will actually carry out.

How do we link the fight in with winning the next general election? What demands must we place on the Party?

As well as the whole Party organising support in defence of Lambeth now, the next Labour government must be firmly committed to restoring the rights of councillors, restoring the money taken away and provide compensation, and also restoring local government finance, the Rate Support Grant, to pre-1979 levels. Lambeth councillors have no intention of being left to fight alone.

LAMBETH: FROM THE COUNCIL CHAMBER TO THE WIDER MOVEMENT

The Lambeth fight continues apace — despite the surcharge threats, despite attacks from the Government and the Labour leadership, and despite legal moves to disbar Lambeth's 31 no-rate Labour councillors from office. A rate was set in the borough only because a councillor resigned at a time which ensured the no-rate position would fail in the council chamber by a single vote. But that decision was merely a last ditch attempt by the Conservatives to prevent the tide of Labour's policies continuing to roll throughout Lambeth.

Labour has a majority on every committee, has set up apparatus with the unions and the organised community to look at the financial running of the council, and we will use those advantages to effectively ignore the decision to set a rate.

Spending will continue as before, services will not be impaired and no job loss will take place — Labour is in business in Lambeth, and from August 1st we will return to a majority no-cuts position following a by-election victory in a seat now vacant in one of the party's strongest areas.

The 31 Labour councillors believe they have no choice. The Government wants us to:

— *"freeze" all vacancies, irrespective of the effect on services to the public*
— *increase rents for the 50 per cent of the population in council property*
— *lose up to 1,500 jobs in one year from the 10,000-strong workforce*

We are instructed to resist those effects by the 1984 Labour Party national conference decision calling on Labour councils not to cut services; this was endorsed by the 1985 special London conference explicitly backing the no-rate strategy. In Lambeth we have the additional support of the town-hall unions and the community, with us wholeheartedly.

Even the party's national executive committee passed a resolution calling on the movement as a whole to respond to Lambeth's position, and to contribute to a fighting fund to legally resist that threat from the district auditor on behalf of the Government. So, in line with that statement, the fight now changes venue; from the council chamber we move to the wider Labour movement for support in continuing the struggle.

District Auditor

The right of a district auditor — an unelected, unaccountable bureaucrat — must be reduced to nothing as compared to the right of a Labour council with the proven electoral support of a population with needs to be met. The audacity of a state official who dares to personally 'fine' 31 councillors for implementing commitments must be countered.

The undemocratic nature of an auditor who threatens to throw out of office 31 people — ranging from full time councillors to those who combine jobs with their council work, from pensioners to young parents, including black members from the borough's multi racial composition — must now be exposed. The auditor is simply acting as another, insidious agent of the Government. He is coming today to remove democracy from Lambeth — tomorrow, it could be any other area which dares to resist the dwindling force of Thatcherism, which can no longer rely on any public support to remain in power.

Proudly Plead Not Guilty

Lambeth's 31 councillors are therefore rightly challenging the powers of the auditor. We proudly plead not guilty when we are accused of "losing", through alleged "wilful misconduct", some £127,000 at least. Instead we point to the Government, whose own statistics show Lambeth to have multiple deprivation caused by unemployment, deliberate reductions in central cash help to improve housing, to cater for the single-parent families and to provide for the growing needs of those who rely on council services.

That resistance, however, costs money; over £50,000 may be needed merely to fight the case in the courts.

The Labour movement must now see the strategic value of Lambeth's cause. We are now fighting for our rights in a way which any other Labour borough may have to fight next year or the year after; we are now fighting to resist the kinds of threats being posed to authorities throughout the country as the Government's privatisation legislation channels specifically towards local authority services.

We need financial and political support; we need to bring into reality the promise made to the two Labour traitors and the Conservative/Alliance councillors who voted to set a rate — that if any action is taken against the Lambeth 31, London will come to a halt.

If necessary, local government throughout the inner city areas should be made almost impossible to run until the threats made to the homes and livings of the 31 councillors are removed.

The Labour movement has no time to lose. More rate-capped councils will be announced by the Government soon and the need to resist as Lambeth has resisted will be seen nationally as council after council refuses to neglect its populations and its workforces.

The war is here — whose side are you on?

Graham Norwood
Lambeth council deputy leader

LAMBETH FIGHTING FUND

Stuart Holland MP **John Fraser MP**

RATE-CAPPING APPEAL

The Labour Councillors of Lambeth are continuing the fight against rate-capping.

These councillors are fighting to protect services, jobs and local democracy, in support of the policy of their Party and the trade unions.

THESE COUNCILLORS FACE LEGAL COSTS, SURCHARGE AND BANKRUPTCY.

They cannot use public money to defend themselves.

The Lambeth Fighting Fund is being launched to offset legal and other costs. The Trustees of this fund are John Fraser MP and Stuart Holland MP.

PAYMENT DETAILS – LAMBETH FIGHTING FUND

Please send donations to:

Lambeth Fighting Fund, c/o Cllr S. Bubb,
Chief Whip's Office, Lambeth Town Hall,
London SW2 1RW

Phone: 01-274 7722 x 2312 and 274 1714/1847

Cheques etc should be made payable to:
'The Lambeth Fighting Fund'

Please tick if you require a receipt ☐

Should you require a spokesperson for a meeting please ring 274 1714/1847.

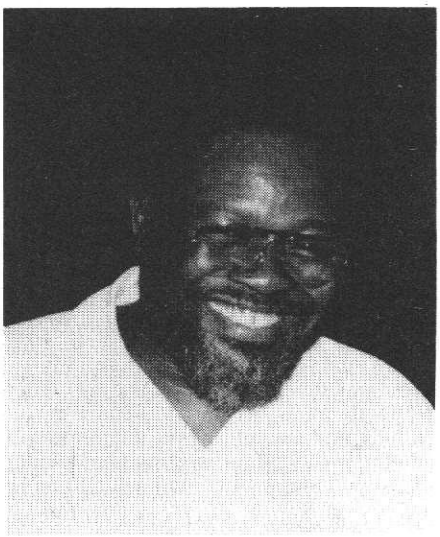
LAMBETH BACKS LABOUR!
LABOUR BACKS LAMBETH!

TOTTENHAM — A DIFFICULT BUT A COURAGEOUS DECISION

The delegates to the Tottenham GC who faced a difficult task at their reselection conference recently, voted decisively in favour of Bernie Grant as their candidate for the next general election. This brings the number of black candidates selected by Labour to 4. Bernie Grant, a local councillor is the only black person to lead a local authority in the country. Tottenham being a safe Labour seat, he is expected to be one of the few black MPs in the next parliament. He unequivocally supports black sections and is at present the chair of Tottenham black section.

The task of selection was made difficult due to equally strong claims by the nominees in the short list of 4; a woman – there is an urgent need for more women MPs; a black candidate – there are no black MPs but 3 selected (1 safe seat & 2 marginals) before Tottenham; an ex-MP with good but short record who lost his constituency due to boundary changes and Tottenham includes a part of his previous constituency; and the sitting MP who represented Tottenham for 21 years with good constituency and parliamentary records. All four candidates are considered to be on the left of the party but their style and approach to issues appeared to be different.

Re-selection process with sitting MPs always presents a difficult problem for the CLPs. One cannot find many Labour MPs who always agree with CLP policies. The issue of accountability did play a minor role in Tottenham's selection. However, the issue of black representation was seriously considered in the party. Tottenham CLP's record on combatting racism and welfare of the disadvantaged is as good as any other organisation in the country. It strongly supports the call for establishment of black sections in the party. With a large black population in the constituency, it is disappointed with the leadership's position on black sections. The result of the selection



Labour Party Photo Library

Bernie Grant

conference is not a negative step to oust an undesirable MP but a positive step in favour of black representation in Parliament.

There is a clear message to the leadership of the Labour Party. The call for black representation is not a demand by a handful of black activists in the party. It is the overwhelming desire of the ordinary members of the party (only 4 of the 72 delegates are black). It is not ghetto politics as you say. It is the politics of reality. The leadership may ignore the importance of the black dimension in the party but the members don't agree with them. It is sad that a good MP may be a victim of Kinnock's intransigence.

Saba Sabaratnam Tottenham CLP Secretary of Black Section

Re-Selection in Brent South

Paul Boateng was selected as the Black Prospective Parliamentary candidate in Brent South. What has ensued as a result of the selection has been a deluge of ill-informed and unwarrented media coverage from Labour Party activists outside of Brent South — mainly because of the decision of the Brent Black Section not to become involved in the re-selection process. It is this decision that I have sought to address.

First of all it needs to be stated that in the past Brent South has had an element of doubt cast over previous re-selection procedures and therefore Brent Black Section was quite aware of the turmoil that could be caused in defying regulations.

The decision that Brent Black Section made — not to be directly involved in the re-selection process or ask the GMC for deferment — was affected by several factors which were taken into account when the decision was made; namely, the freeze date of re-selection didn't include Brent Black Section or any new delegate to the GMC. This was compounded by the fact that many delegates in Brent South also lost their right to participate in the re-selection for various reasons.

Secondly, Brent South unlike many constituencies, made rule changes incorporating Black Sections into the structure of the CLP and was adamantly comitted to a Black MP who certainly wasn't prepared to renege on this principle. Above all, Brent Black Section considered the deferment or involvement to be tactically wrong. We strongly hold the view that by choosing to continue with the re-selection process, the candidate chosen would equally highlight the philosophies and struggles of the Black Section and encourage the participation of the wider black community in Labour Party activities.

We accept that one Black MP is not enough and that local Black Sections should be supportive to each other. However, the decision taken by Brent Black Section does not in anyway rule out the effectiveness of the tactic adopted by Lewisham East. In fact the selection of our candidate enhances the struggles of Black Sections and hence Black MPs. Brent Black Section therefore did not make a decision in isolation, unaware of the current issues in the overall struggles of Black Sections. What is undoubtedly clear is that Brent Black Section has every right to make a decision that they think is best for their locality. Ill-informed individuals with misconstrued ideas serves only to create acrimony amongst Labour Party activists outside and inside of Brent South.

Esmée Sargeant Brent South GC Secretary, Brent Black Section

HORNSEY: VICTORY FOR POSITIVE ACTION, DEFEAT FOR THE LEFT

In the run-up to the selection meeting in Hornsey and Wood Green CLP all was not well beneath the right-on surface of many a GC delegate.

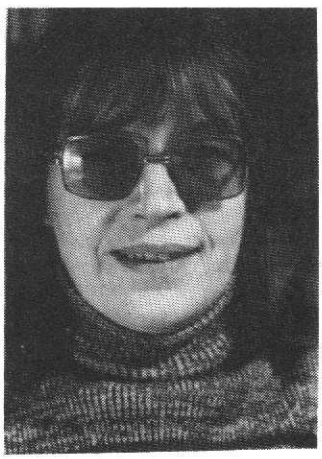
In a constituency where the left have spoken strongly in favour of positive discrimination and the rest have smiled smugly in its direction, the Womens Section were confident that their recommendation for an all-women shortlist would be overwhelmingly accepted. But this was not to be. The debate at the GC lasted over an hour amidst cries of:

— "surely this discriminates against black people"

— "women *already* have *over* 20 MPs in Parliament; isn't this enough for over 50% of the population?"

— "women should be standing down in favour of black men".

The Right flapped around desparately trying to find a loop-hole that would let their man through: their bobbing and weaving was amazing to see . . . one minute speaking



Defeated Val Veness

against positive discrimination for women, the next speaking *for* positive discrimination for black people — and sometimes even managing to speak on both at the same time!

Their cry of "racism" totally ignored the *existence* of black *women*, and the fact that black women had been shortlisted at the Wards. In a feeble attempt to divide and rule they set one oppressed group against another.

But eventually disappearing up their own loop-hole, the Right were defeated and the Womens Sections won the day. So comrades, be warned! nasty things may be lurking beneath the stripped pine at *your* GC!

Unfortunately, though the final selection meeting was a victory for positive action for women, it was a defeat for the left as Barbara Roche narrowly won the nomination over left winger Val Vaness

Linda and Madeleine Haringey Briefing Group

MINERS COLLECTORS ACQUITTED IN WEST LONDON

Three people who were charged with unlawfully collecting money for the miners in Acton, West London have had their cases dismissed by the Acton Magistrates Court. The three — Anne Otterwill, David Otterwil, and Jerome Spring — were all members of the Ealing Acton Miners Support Group. This is the first aquittal in London which relied directly on the regulations themselves. Other cases such as that of James Wood a collector in Camden who was originally acquitted and then convicted by the High Court claimed that the Regulations were unlawful.

The police evidence consisted solely of the evidence of one police officer who had just returned from picket line duty in Nottinghamshire and who clearly wanted to use the same tactics that were being used by the police in the coalfields. He admitted in Court that he did not really understand the Regulations and also that he did not know that there was an exception in the Regulations which allowed collections after an open air meeting. The "Acton Three" had in fact organised a series of street meetings with the full permission of the Co-op on whose premises these activities took place. The Co-op sent a London Committee member to give evidence.

The case took 4½ hours to be heard and lasted over two days. The Magistrates took 45 minutes to reach their verdict. An application for costs was dismissed because the Magistrates felt that the police had "brought the case properly". Had the defendants used a barrister and paid themselves — no legal aid is available — the case would have cost them £600 even though they were innocent. Such is the legal system in this country.

There are approximately 60 cases awaiting trial in West London and many others throughout the city. Pressure must be brought to bear on the police to withdraw these charges because of the Acton decision.

KEITH VAZ
Solicitor for the "Acton Three" and Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Leicester East

Defend the Bromley Ten

Dear Comrade,

Many thanks to the 'LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING' for carrying details of the 'Defend the BROMLEY 10' Campaign in your May edition. I hope that you can afford us some space in your next issue to publicise the lobby of the Labour Party NEC, the lobby of Bromley Magistrates Court when the trial resumes on September 2nd and the BROMLEY 10 Defence Fund which is needed to pay any costs and fines arising out of the case.

"The trial of the BROMLEY 10, ten people arrested in Bromley High Street, in Kent for collecting food and money for the starving families of the striking miners, began on May 7th. The court was once again noisily lobbied by about eighty supporters, of whom at least fifty-odd filed into the cramped public gallery to hear the case.

It soon became apparent just how flimsy the evidence of the police charge of 'wilful obstruction' was. The Prosecution's so-called 'independent' witness turned out to be a retired police superintendent. The police inspector responsible for the police sweep that lifted the BROMLEY 10 from their regular collection spot on the Saturday prior to the end of the strike attempted to stick to his transparently falsified story but was exposed by the defence cousels aggressive cross-examination. Indeed, so badly did the inspector fare in the dock during defence counsel questioning that the prosecution counsel was forced to step in at the end of this cross-examination to repair his tattered case!

The magistrates attempts to rush the trial was thwarted by the defence counsel and the trial will reconvene on the 2nd and 3rd September, having run out of time on May 7th.In the meantime, the 'Defend the BROMLEY 10' Campaign has been working to build the fund and spread the message. The campaign was able to put on an exhibition at the Albany Empire theatre one evening when the 'Battle for Bermondsey' was being performed and campaign leaflets were distributed and money was collected.

Mindful that many collectors have now received summonses to appear in court for offences relating to the miners' strike, the campaign has organised a lobby of the Labour Party NEC on July 24th at the party's Walworth Road Head Office at 9am. Primarily, this event is designed to draw the party leaderships attention to the case of the BROMLEY 10 and other summonsed collectors and to attract practical financial help and support from them. In addition, it reminds them that, for the Labour Party rank-and-file if not for its leadership, the miners' strike was a major political event from which socialists should draw lessons. In this case we see that, even without the new public order laws, the police can suppress political activity and create a climate in which people become unwilling to take any sort of political action for fear of police harassment.

To build for the lobby, the campaign has circulated leaflets to the Miners Support Groups and CLP's. All London Labour MP's have received a letter outlining the above and explaining that, if the Labour Party leadership expects its activists to go out and campaign to get a Labour government elected, then it had better support those who will be doing the campaigning.

JOIN THE LOBBY OF THE NEC (24TH JULY 1985 — 9.00AM, WALWORTH ROAD) ON BEHALF OF THE 'BROMLEY 10' AND ALL THOSE WHO WERE ARRESTED FOR COLLECTING

(Contact Mike D'Arcy on 01-466 1297 for information)

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the campaign has been in contact with sacked miners from the Kent coalfield and they have offered the BROMLEY 10 their whole-hearted support. Indeed, we expect a contingent of sacked miners on the lobby on the 24th. In this way, the issue of the BROMLEY 10 can be used to highlight the plight of sacked miners and remind the party's grass-roots, its leadership and its erstwhile 'Lefts' that the miners are still fighting on to regain their jobs in the face of British injustice and Coal Board duplicity. We hope that party activists will support the lobby of the NEC and contribute to the Defence Fund

Yours for Socialism

Mark Cole, (Ravenbourne CLP) on behalf of the 'DEFEND THE BROMLEY 10' CAMPAIGN.

Make Cheques Payable to:-
Ravensbourne Labour Party (Appeal)
& Send To: Sue Yates, Secretary,
Ravensbourne CLP, H. G. Wells Centre
St. Marks Road, Bromley, Kent.

LOBBY THE COURT in South St., Bromley at 9.30am — Be There!
Mon. 2nd & Tues. 3rd Sept.,

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Islington and rate-capping: learning the lessons

Not with a bang, but with a wimper. Admittedly it was a unified wimper, in the sense that Labour Group policy was also Party policy, and Islington managed not to tear itself apart in personalised recrimination, but the end of Islington's stand against rate-capping was one magnificent anti-climax. The Grand Old Duke of York had nothing on us. We had marched the local community, the tenants, and the unions to the top of the hill, and then gently tobogganed down the far side. Ward after ward passed motions to set a rate, and headcounts made it clear that neither in the LGC nor in the Group was there a majority to continue the struggle. Those who argued that we should not renege on the 'no rate' position were told that martyrdom was pointless, that the most important fight was for jobs and services, that carrying on was 'headbanging'. End of story?

Not really. Next year, there's the encore. Ratecapping year two, privatisation, legislation to compel us to co-operate with GLC successor bodies. And there are some lessons to be learnt from this year's debacle.

First, are we fighting on principle or pragmatism? We never established, in all the debates on rate capping, whether it was 'jobs and services' which we were defending, or whether we were taking a principled stand against ratecapping *as a means of* defending jobs and services. Islington's alternative budget strategy was clearly based on the premise that we had taken the former position. Next time, are we fighting privatisation because we believe in municipal socialism over against cut-throat capitalism, or just because we want to save NALGO and NUPE jobs? Again, I believe that it should be the principle which governs our practice, and becomes the means to save those jobs.

Secondly, there is a need for collectivism in the way in which we run our campaigns. Despite regular meetings of Labour Group, it was the Council leadership which triggered the mechanism for capitulation. By the time the matter came to the joint meeting of LGC/Group, the decision to abandon the 'no rate' position was cut and dried.

Collectivism means a greater degree of Group involvement in decisions which are currently taken by the Leadership alone, and more consultation with the Party, through the Local Government Committee, before important policy decisions are taken.



Thirdly, the tendency to 'hype up' campaigns must be abandoned. Some comrades were so overwrought by their own hyperbole that they even got to the stage of believing that 'hundreds of jobs would go ... ' Nobody in the community will ever believe us if we go out with that kind of campaign on privatisation, even though it is likely to be nearer the truth.

Fourthly, we must sort out the issue of accountability. If the policy of the party is expressed through the Local Government Committee (and we in Islington have been fighting for that position for a very long time), then it is spurious to claim that a vote against mandate or policy is justifiable by appeal to some other authority, whether the Greater London Labour Party, or the 'people who elected me'. The SDP defectors in 1981 used that second excuse for ignoring LGC policy, and we should not resort to it now. Arguing for accountability to Ward policy has a greater degree of coherence, though in the end if the Ward policy defeated at LGC, it is hard to sustain the argument that Ward policy should override LGC policy.

Fifthly, tactics should not be confused with shibboleths. 'No rate' was a tactic (I happen to think that it was the best tactic, and should have been continued with). But it became a shibboleth, a virility symbol, an end rather than a means. Months ago, at a Laobur Party Local Government Conference, comrades from the GLC, ILEA and Merseyside said they could never deliver 'no rate'. They argued for deficit budgeting, and lost the argument. While not supporting the way in which they subsequently conducted the argument at County Hall, there is a lesson about diversity of tactical options which we need to learn. Diverse tactics keep Jenkin guessing.

Finally, on the way to May 1986, we need to look carefully at the selection process. The list of candidates and their candidature is the property of the LGC. While Ward autonomy in selection is important, there is also a need for the LGC to take its responsibilities seriously by excluding from the panel of candidates those comrades at both ends of the political spectrum who have no intention of conforming with Party policy. It is all very liberal to shortlist the lot (which is what happened in 1982). As it happened, half the 'shortlist' then withdrew after the defeat of the 'three noes' position in the Party. Personally, I'd rather we had a bit more regard to the credibility of candidates before we get to that kind of positon again.

Pete Broadbent
(Islington Labour Group — personal capacity)

Why I eventually voted to make

Nearly two years ago every member of the Labour Group in Greenwich personally signed a statement saying they would not co-operate with central Government in making any cuts in jobs or services. On 8th June at the Council meeting which also agreed to make a rate, the entire Labour Group voted to bring forward a budget which defends the present level of jobs and services and adds about 5% growth, including a rent freeze and a reduction in the working week.

I start at this point because in the debate about our strategy over ratecapping, there is considerable confusion about ends and means, and a conspicuous failure in some quarters to distinguish between the objective of defending jobs, services and local democracy and the tactics employed to achieve this end.

For the past twelve months I argued for the tactic of not making a rate as the best means of uniting ratecapped Councils in the struggle against the Government and forcing the Secretary of State to re-negotiate the rate support grant settlement, or more correctly, negotiate for the first time.

Initially the tactic succeeded in creating an alliance of Council leaders, an unprecedented event in itself and something on which we can still build if we resist the temptation to tear ourselves apart in the inquest. However, that was the easy bit; once we passed the initial date of 7th March, the fragile quality of the alliance soon became obvious, cracks appeared, and as Jenkin himself gloatingly remarked, the bottles started to fall off the wall.

We can point at the failure of the Party Leadership to give us support, and in some cases their deliberate attempts to undermine us; we can say the same of the TUC Leadership. I am still sore at the failure of the GLC and ILEA Leaderships to thrash out the issues in their groups in January and February and let us know in the ALA and LGIU what they were going to do. But learning political lessons is rarely advanced by too much emphasis on the role of individuals; it is much more to the point to evaluate the level of political consciousness and the balances of forces arranged in any conflict, which brings me back to why, eventually, I voted to make a rate in Greenwich.

No victory possible

By mid-April it was clear that no major victory was possible, that the best that could be achieved was forcing a few concessions, holding together and regrouping for subsequent battles. It was clear, but it couldn't be said publically, because re-establishing confidence and determination was needed, not the demoralising consequences of admitting the battle was not going very well. In hindsight, far too much energy had gone into bringing about the collective actions of 6th and 7th March; far too little thought had gone into preparing groups for sitting out a war of nerves after that date when all the legal pressures would be exerted.

By 7th June when we met in Greenwich only Lambeth of the other ratecapped Councils had not made a rate; Liverpool had left the LGIU and was going to pursue its own course of action. The tactic of not making a rate had failed to force negotiations; there was no chance of concessions; the balance of forces was for the time being hopelessly weighted against us.

There was no chance that continuing to defer fixing a rate would assist in defending jobs and services, the purpose behind our action. There was a very real prospect that it would lead to surcharge and disqualification which most of us had been ready to risk in order to force Jenkin into negotiations, but made no sense in the situation that then confronted us. I argued for and eventually proposed, a rate supported by a narrow majority of the Labour Group but against the wishes of the local party.

I could have sat on my hands, pure to the last and (by allowing others to make rate)

The GLC in Hounslow

Hounslow's Trades Council (HTUC) and the GLC will need to see some changes if any lessons have been learnt by them from the fight for funding by the Hounslow Police Monitoring Group (HPMG). Arrangements for the funding of the HPMG were frozen last year as a result of the unfortunate intervention of Hounslow's GLC representative Peter Pitt, and only now are the protracted arguments allowing a conclusion to be drawn.

Certain key members of the Trades Council, who objected to the HPMG from the start, were forced to obstruct debate at the June meeting of the Trades Council in order to prevent the HTUC expressing its own opinion, or changing its position. But large sections of the normally dutiful Community Party members on the HTUC failed to rally in support of the Executive while allegations of racism and sexism remained unanswered. At the July meeting, when debate was allowed, supporters of the Police Monitoring Group were defeated but only after the Chair of the Trades Council "arguing from authority" pointed out that Peter Pitt, the Community Relations Council and the Leader of the Labour Council, Alf King, were all still opposed to the group.

The Trades Council Executive have assumed throughout, on the basis of assurances seemingly given by Peter Pitt, that they could demand a dominant bloc of delegates on the HPMG and no funding would be agreed without them. They left it to the GLC to implement their demands but their cast iron guarantee seems to be rusting and it is upon this rethinking by the GLC that funding now depends.

The GLC's attitude over the year has raised stark questions about the implementation of its policies on anti-racism, anti-sexism, police accountability and the defence of the rights of gays and lesbians. Even to this stage, the GLC have expressed an unseemly desire to pander to sections of the trade union movement whose attitudes on racial and sexual discrimination remain totally unconstructed and blatantly prejudiced.

This unseemly desire, apparent in other areas of GLC funding in Hounslow, as elsewhere, is not only directly and obviously at the expense of black, women's, gay and lesbian interests, but fails miserably to mobilise support for the objective of self-organisation and against discrimination in the labour movement and strengthens the established and conservative elements rather than promoting new initiatives.

A serious commitment on the part of the GLC would never have allowed the Trades Council's disgraceful opposition to result in the delay in funding of the Hounslow Police Monitoring Group for over a year.

What it also shows is that automatic deference of Labour Party members to the trade unions and Trades Councils is misplaced. Such deference is not a reflection of a commitment to trade union work but its negation and no useful relationship can exist in the political arena between the trade union and party organisations based on a protection of each other's sectional interests. Instead, the relationship has to be based on commitment to the elimination of private property, racism, sexism and poverty, and the promotion of these goals above short-term individual and sectional interests. This is what seems increasingly lacking in the trade union and labour movement today, as splinters join the unarrestable moving right show. Adopting "realism" and dumping class issues. But it is only when the labour and trade union movement, along with its councillors and MPs, are prepared to stand by these principles, and the people whose livelihood depends upon them, that we will truly be ready for the assault on Thatcherism that Britain awaits.

Theo Dennison

a rate

avoided all the flack which has since come my way. I could have avoided being called a 'Tory' in 'Briefing' by one of my comrades. But it was important that a rate below the maximum wasn't set as in the GLC, that together we committed ourselves to the budget on which we consulted the people of Greenwich, and that the Labour Group didn't split into warring factions. That looks like being achieved.

What of the comrades in Lambeth? I don't expect Ted, who has shown remarkable leadership, to be enamoured by this account. He is still in the very thick of the fight, now engaged in a legal battle to which we must give massive financial support. It is likelly to drag on for many months, possibley into the New Year, and by then our solidarity with them must also be translated into a fresh stand against the Government's attempts to force us to make cuts.

But haven't you hopelessly undermined next years struggle by voting to make a rate this year, some will say. That thought certainly preoccupied me on 6th and 7th June, but the reality was that the damage was already done and the year's campaign had already failed in its main objective. Like the miners' leadership, we have to pick up the pieces, learn some lessons and rebuild for further struggle.

Had we made cuts, had we foresaken the poor, the elderly, the tenants that depend on our services and the jobs of those who provide those services, we would be hopelessly compromised. But we haven't done that in Greenwich, nor in most other boroughs. We haven't sold out but we do have a credibility problem which has resulted, in part, from elevating the tactic 'not setting a rate' above the objective, 'not making cuts'. And that is a problem for *all of us* whichever way we voted in Council Chamber or party meetings.

My comrade writing in Briefing last time implicitly accepts this; she writes of next year, "the best option would seem to be to set a rate, but ... leave the option open for the incoming Labour Group to set a deficit budget." I'm not sure I agree with that — I want to give it more thought — but it does firmly restore the decision about whether or not to set a rate to the status of tactic rather than principle. If we are not to be hoist on our own rhetoric next year, many more comrades need to learn that lesson and return to the arena of calm, reasoned, comradely discussion which is a better basis on which to build class struggle.

Dave Picton
Deputy Leader
Greenwich Council

Apologies to Claer Lloyd Jones

Sorry Claer! We omitted to credit you as the author of "Greenwich: Learning the hard way" in Junes Briefing.

Fighting bias in the media

On the 17th June the Committee for Socialist Renewal, in alliance with the Quaker Socialists, held their second meeting in the House of Commons under the chairmanship of Eric Heffer, M.P. The Committee is a London based discussion group concerned with putting forward programmes for considerations by the labour movement in those areas where official party policy is considered inadequate.

Their first meeting, held in March 1985, was on the Labour Party and common ownership, when a general view emerged that the best way of achieving expansion without inflation and implementing clause 4 was to convert the bulk of Britain's 500,000 privately owned companies into workers' co-operatives.

The second meeting was devoted to the media. Both the speakers, Vidya Anand, chair of the race relations committee of the Regional Executive of the Greater London Labour Party, and James Curran of Goldsmith's College, formerly editor of New Socialist, argued that the media, particularly the press, were unbalanced and heavily biased against the Labour movement. Such bias was inevitable in Curran's view given the current state of ownership in the press, where all the national and most of the local newspapers are owned by five rich men and two multinationals. Television tends to present a centrist view, reflecting the bias of most of the people who run and work in it.

Vidya Anand stressed the media's failure to reflect accurately a mutli-cultural society and the difficulties experienced by ethnic minorities in gaining access to the press, radio and T.V.

As the Labour Party at present has no policy for the media, the meeting came up with a minimum programme, based on ideas advanced by James Curran. I stress that this is a *minimum programme*. Ideally, the media as part of a socialised economy should be taken into common ownerhsip under workers' control, but given the present Labour Party leadership, party members might like to consider some or all of the following suggestions, with a view to getting discussion going in their local parties and sending resolutions through to the NEC.

1. The next Labour Government should pass a law limiting the number of national and local newspapers and magazines any one proprietor or company can own.
2. Media enterprise boards, on the lines of the Greater London Enterprise Board, should be established at both local and national level to help finance independent newspapers and to provide funds for groups making their own T.V. and radio programmes.
3. The next Labour Government should establish an equalisation fund, whereby advertising revenue can be re-distributed to help socialist papers.
4. A statutory right of reply should be established.
5. Repeal of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act.
6. An Act compelling newsagents to carry all newspapers and magazines, thus ending the arbitrary discrimination practised at present.
7. The B.B.C. and I.T.V. need to be re-organised on far more democratic lines with proper access for minority groups.
8. The Labour movement should try and establish a Sunday paper.

The next meeting will be on Monday, 18 November 1985 in the House of Commons. The subject will be local government.

Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP.

WHICH COMMUNITY WILL COMMUNITY RADIO SERVE?

Richard Barbrook (Hampstead and Highgate CLP)

"Community radio will promote self-help, increase freedom of speech and be of value to many local communities." **With these words, Leon Brittan announced the government's intention of licensing community radio stations in Britain. But what does *he* mean by community radio? And how far will his version be different from the stations of this type found abroad?**

The suspicion is that the Home Office's ideas about community radio derive from Radio Jackie. This is a pirate radio station broadcasting in South London. It presents a bland selection of middle-of-the-road pop music, interspersed with adverts for local shops. It is a small-scale copy of London's IBA station, Capital Radio, right down to the idiotic patter of the djs. Despite the proclaimed Tory dislike of lawbreakers, this station has the support of a local MP, the infamous Angela Rumbold. So it is likely that we are to have small business*mens'* radio, hiding behind the name of community radio. Following the failure of the cable TV experiments, this represents another attempt by the Tories to "privatise" the mass media. Competition between rival radio stations will lead to cheap programmes, mainly Top 40 record shows and mindless phone-ins. Anything controversial will be avoided, so as not to offend the listeners or advertisers. This free market dystopia can be seen in the USA, where stations duplicate each others programmes to obtain the advertisers' dollar. With the Peacock Committee being pressured to recommend advertising for financing the BBC, the Tories seem set to adopt the American model fully.



A group of gay men making an access programme on Radio Populare Milano

Defend the BBC?

What is to be the Left's response to these proposals? Should we defend the BBC to protect the last vestiges of public service broadcasting? This sounds suspiciously like many socialists' defence of all types of state ownership: we fight for what it should be in theory, rather than what it has been in practice. After the Polish revolution and the 1984/5 Miners' Strike, socialists should have no illusion that state ownership is a sufficient conditon for democratic accountability. Historically, the BBC has jealously guarded its limited distance from the Establishment. But it has more eagerly resisted any demands for public access or scrutiny. It has been as responsive to the demands of its workers and consumers as any other nationalised industry, that is, not much!

The BBC and IBA radio stations do not fulfill the needs of wide sections of the population. Ethnic communities rarely appear on-air. Broadcasting in foreign languages is almost non-existent. Other communities are systematically ignored or marginalised. For example, there is no programmes made for or by lesbians or gays. Oppositional ideas of all kinds are vilified. A large academic literature has grown up demonstrating the systematic bias within the broadcast media. Many see this narrow range of views presented in the media as a major obstacle for working people trying to defend themselves. The miners have been only the latest to suffer from the mass media — and their denigrators included the state-owned and publically-regulated BBC. Some think that the appointment of an "ideologically sound" Board of Governors for the BBC would solve everything. But socialists in Britain should not be campaigning for a Left elitism in broadcasting, whatever its Leninist credentials. Instead we need to offer solutions which can harness the energies of those excluded from the present system in new, democratic forms of social ownership. These new media need to be "participative" in the real sense of the word!

The dnager of not producing such a solution is clear. The uncritical defence of the BBC is an unthinking reaction to the threat of more commercial stations. For the BBC is unable and unwilling to provide new radio services. If the BBC won't, then there are the commercial operators hungry for licences. A Greek listener will prefer to listen to a commercial Greek station than not to have such a service at all! The political friends of Radio Jackie are well-known. Already a Turkish pirate radio station operates in London which has backing from fascists within the exile community. The danger is obvious, but what form does the solution take?

Solution

Ironically, the solution can be found in the land of free enterprise. Faced with an entirely commercial system, activists in America hit upon a response. This they called community radio. This was not Radio Jackie, but the anitidote to stations like Jackie. After many years experience, they distilled their ideas into three main principles: non-profit-making, listener access to the airwaves and a democratic system of management. Such stations have sprung up across the world. Community stations are run by and serve many different audiences. In Canada, stations broadcast to the scattered Eskimos in their own languages. In Paris, Frequence Gaie provides a round-the-clock service to the city's lesbians and gays. In Sydney, Radio Skid Row makes programmes by ex-prisoners or addicts. In Milan, Radio Populare is the voice of the trade unions and Left parties. Yet in the cities of Britain there is nothing. We should learn from both the successes and failures of this experience. We should campaign to set up community radio stations here.

It is not as if the demand for cooperatively-run radio stations is very radical. Even Roy Hattersley and the Liberals have realised that workers' cooperatives make good electoral copy. More seriously, GLEB has tried to develop cooperatives as part of its industrial regeneration strategy. Community radio is simply the application of such principles to the radio industry. Abroad, community radio stations have trained large numbers of people to make their own radio broadcasts. They have encouraged listeners to become involved in their stations. Radio Populare's success as a news station depends upon the contribution of its listeners, who form a city-wide pool of potential reporters. By phoning the station, they can report news as it happens over the airwaves. But the potentiality of using technology in new and wonderful ways should not hide the problems of community radio. The difficulty of money is central. Some get limited public funds, others raise money from their listeners or accept limited advertising. Most are forces to combine all three. But their greatest resource is the unpaid efforts of their volunteers, who make most of the programmes. Professional workers are needed to provide continuity of service, but are limited by the problems of funding.

MAIDA VALE TENANTS FIGHT THE GENERAL SYNOD

On 6th July 50 private tenants from Maida Vale, worried and angry about threats to their homes and security, lobbied the annual meeting of their landlords. They were joined by Labour Councillors, Labour Party members and other local residents.

The setting was unusual – Church House, next to Westminster Abbey, meeting place of the General Synod of the Church of England. All the tenants live in rooms and bedsits in 30 large Victorian houses owned by the Church Commissioners. All had received a curt letter informing them that their homes were to be sold and that in a few months they would be told who their new landlords were.

For anyone who knows the area, the tenants' fears are easy to understand. The Church Commissioners' disposal of their property holdings in Maida Vale has unleashed an explosion of property values. The consequences are tearing the local community apart.

In one recent conversion of an ex-Church property just like those now on offer three bedroom flats have been marketed at £295,000. The Church has been doing very nicely – it has raised £72 million from property deals in Maida Vale in the last three years. But many of the protesting tenants have friends who have been 'persuaded' to leave their homes in one way or another after Church disposals to private developers. They all know only too well that the new landlords' first priority would be to achieve vacant possession as quickly as possible.

The tenants have responded with a fierce and determined campaign demanding that the sales are stopped until local Housing Associations can buy the properties. Labour Councillors and the local Branch Parties have given their full support, visiting all the tenants and discussing how to plan the campaign. This has been in sharp contrast to the local Tory MP and Council who have refused to urge the Commissioners to stop the sales.

Labour Councillors initiated the idea of the lobby of the Synod which attracted wide publicity on local television and radio. Many tenants were dismayed at the succession of speakers who had been put up to support the official line. But the loudest applause was for the one speaker who supported their case and the lobby forced the subject onto the agenda. The consummate hypocrisy and lack of concern for the tenants' plight from this supposedly Christian assembly was perhaps no surprise from an organisation which claims to have an ethical investment policy aimed against companies operating in South Africa or in armaments but whose Annual Report shows investments of £2.6million in Barclays Bank and £1.6million in Racal.

This is the latest in a long series of campaigns in Westminster in which the local Labour Party has shown by its actions its determination to support local residents against the property mafia. The credibility which has been won through such campaigns and their successes means that many individuals and Tenants' Associations naturally turn to Labour Councillors and the Party when they need support. This time too the tenants and the Party are determined to keep up the fight until we win.

Neale Coleman



Philip Wolmuth

Tenants of Church Commissioners' Maida Vale properties lobby the Synod of the Church of England against the proposed sell-off of their homes, 4th July '85.

But a station which provides a real service to its listeners will survive, whatever its recurrent crises!

In London, the GLC has been helping the emergent community radio movement. It is trying to aid potential stations by building radio studios through grant-funding. This is because when John McDonnell called the GLC Local Radio Forum, many groups pressed for the establishment of community radio stations. Such is the dissatisfaction with the existing local radio services, that new stations seemed to be the only solution. Given that many of the communities involved are poor, some grant money was necessary. A different version of community radio to Radio Jackie's is possible. Now it is necessary that socialists take part in the campaign to get them licences.

Thus we must distinguish between those who use the words "community radio" to promote more commercial stations and those who wish to put a new and different service on-air. Both the enemies and apologists of the BBC like to present the choice as being between commercial exploitation and bureaucratic despotism. Community radio gives socialists another alternative. The Left should not simply fight against bad Tory policies, it should be campaigning for positive proposals for change. As with many issues, the GLC has followed this policy in local radio. It has promoted community radio stations as a new form of service for London. It is now necessary for the Labour movement in Britain as a whole to support these proposals. Not only will it prove electorally popular, it will also provide us with some exciting and entertaining radio stations!

For further information on community radio in London, contact the GLC Community Radio Research and Development Unit, Room 502B, County Hall, London SE1. Telephone 633 6948

Also see 'Making Waves: Radical Science Journal No. 16 (£4.95 from Free Association Books, 26 Freegrove Rd., London N7 9RQ) and Labour Briefing No.31.

STRUGGLE OF LANGUAGE

'A kind of Friedmanspeak with which to bamboozle the public' was Ken Livingstone's description in last *Briefing* of the Thatcher Government's language used to sell its evil policies.

Clearly Ken Livingstone realizes the need to cut through Thatcherspeak but unfortunately he too employs a vocabulary of deceit behind which to hide. Most socialists must have cringed when they heard the terms of the current main debate on the left defined by him and *Marxism Today* Stalinists as 'participatory left' versus 'vanguardist left'. From our point of view the debate would be better defined as 'careerist left' versus 'accountable left'.

In Orwell's 1984 the Ministry Of Truth declared many words illegal and eliminated them from all usage so the masses would not have the concepts with which to understand what was going on or grasp what to do about it. In Thatcher's Britain the concepts we need such as class, exploitation, socialism, human need, freedom . . . are not declared illegal but are ostracized, smothered out, or simply taken over by the enemy.

The mass media ostracize 'undesirable' concepts by association with undesirable ideas; so we have mental chains like class – conflict – violence – terrorism. The concepts we need get smothered out by bogus Toryspeak like 'the national interest' (meaning capitalist interest), 'savings' (meaning cuts) and so on. At the same time concepts such as 'freedom' and 'democracy' are invariably used by the Right as if they were their property. We should not allow this hijacking of the English language but use these 'good' words frequently ourselves.

LANGUAGE FIGHTBACK WORKSHOP

We need to continuously create new language with which to combat theirs and promote our own direction of social change. ASTMS publicity, for example, refers to 'privatisation' as 'commercialisation'. That is great; we need more language fightback like this. Instead of 'rate capping' we should talk about 'Rate Support Grant robbery' or 'Social Wage robbery'. There are loads more Tory concepts we have to unmask. We should structure the question of dealing with their language into the rhythm of our own political activity.

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP

TRANSEXUALS — AN APOLOGY

David Drake

'She forfeited and gave up her rights as a parent the day she had the operation.' These words were spoken about me by a Judge in the Family Division of the High Court in an Access Case concerning the daughter of whom I am the father. I and transexuals like me could take the attitude which led to this remark as containing all the prejudice and ignorance which we attract. Further we could assume that we are singled out for some special sort of trivialisation, marginalisation and invalidation which sets us apart.

If we make this assumption we are wrong, as tragically many lesbian parents fighting for custody and access in the courts could testify. However, we are isolated from the struggles of lesbians and gays as well as from much of the feminist movement. Some of us believe that this is our own fault because we have accepted the role cast for us by what Janice Raymond calls 'The Transexual Empire', (Women's Press, 1979).

Raymond points out that the transexers (doctors, social workers etc), 'engage in the religious and political shaping and controlling of "masculine" and "feminine" behaviour'. She is right. Unfortunately she then goes on to invalidate the experience of transexuals and further, leaves us with no hope of salvation. In the past transexuals have fallen into the trap of trying to write the script of 'The Empire Strikes Back', rather than begin to think about 'Transexual Empire II or Transexual Republic'.

'The Empire' makes the implied assumption that patients approaching it for help are wanting a change in gender role. Surgery and other methods of treatment are in order that he (or she), can 'live' as a woman (or man). The only exclusively t.s. organisation, the Self Help Association for Transexuals, colludes with this assumption by constantly stressing in its publications fetishism, role playing and 'passing'.

Prospective candidates for transexual surgery usually go through identification with gay or lesbian or transvestite solutions to our problems before confusedly realising that at most, if at all, these are only part of our condition. Emerging into a realisation that our needs are for a physical change, we are forced to collude with the opinions of the Empire' in order to obtain treatment.

Add to this that our friends in SHAFT, as well as all the available literature, assumes a need for a gender role change and it is little wonder that we end up not knowing who we are. This is my apology for the deplorable lack of political consciousness of most t.s.'s.

MYSTICAL DELUSIONS

I think it probable that the confusion that t.s.'s experience is the reason why almost all literature about the experiences of transexuals contains large amounts of Christian mythology, 'spiritual' explanations and mystical delusions.



Rachael Webb on left, with Anne O'Halloran, chair of the committee which employs Rachael as a Housing Rights Worker

The 'Empire' plays its part in this circle of confusion by providing definitions like 'A transexual is a person whose gender orientation (or psyche) is that of the opposite biological sex'. It is only a short step from this to such meaningless statements as 'a man trapped in a woman's body'.

Due to the confusion that exists, transexuals like myself who are active in the labour movement feel uncertain about our relation to the Women's Movement as well as to the Lesbian and Gay Movement. In order to break out of the role that has been cast for us we must begin now to define our situation like it is – rather than to accept the invalidation by the 'Empire' which leads to our own collusion with basic sexist assumptions.

I have been through the mill at the hands of the 'Empire', like about a thousand others in Britain, I have moved from somewhere labelled 'male' to somewhere labelled 'female'. Having done this I still do not where I have moved from or to. All of the explanations that come from orthodox medicine leave me with a strong conviction that my experience has been denied me by being represented as other than that which it is. I assume that women who doubted and questioned the role which was cast for them experienced similar feelings before women began to establish a worked out theory that defined women's oppression.

IMPORTANT DEFINITION

At this stage the only definition of a t.s. that I can give is of someone who needs medical treatment in order to alter their bodies from one apparent sex to the other. I now define myself as a transexual woman. The definition is important as some sections of the Women's Movement deny that m. to f. t.s.'s have a place amongst them. I do not see that I could be labelled a man. However, I also do not have the historical experience of being a woman from birth, and therefore I ask for admission to the Women's Movement on the basis of being a transexual woman.

Our legal status is ambiguous. Although m. to f. t.s.'s are physically women the law treats us as men. For example if we are the victims of rape our assailants cannot be charged with this crime. If we are imprisoned we risk being sent to a man's prison. Worse than the oppression that the law dictates is the invalidation we experience if we chose to be honest about our past. If we chose to deny our past then we are living a lie by denying our history.

Central to our oppression are the sexist nature of Gender Identity Clinics. A starting point for us is to work for non-sexist Gender Identity Clinics. It might be that to make this demand is like asking for a non-sexist society as from tomorrow, but we have to begin somewhere, sometime.

Rachael Webb (Ms)
(Streatham CLP)

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LABOUR BRIEFING

NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 20 AUGUST 1985

Support Benn~Heffer memorandum — Fight for a

SOCIALIST MANIFESTO!

Jeremy Corbyn MP

The Brecon and Radnor by-election was a massive defeat for the government and raises the prospect of a Labour victory at the next General Election. The Tory-dominated media claim that politics have moved to the right, and that for Labour to win an election the appeal must be moderated to gain acceptability in the illusory middle ground. The reality is that by the time of the next General Election there will be 3,500,000 out of work, spending on arms will be even more massive and cuts in social spending and in the health service will have created an even more divided society than at present. Only a radical programme from Labour is likely to gain credibility from the electorate.

To ensure the debate on policies is not left to the opinion pollsters of the media or the Sunday newspaper columnists, the Campaign Group is supporting a sixteen point memorandum on policy submitted to the National Executive by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer as a proposal to form the basis of Labour's programme 1986.

If we are to win the election the programme and the call have to be precise; it is insufficient to be against health cuts, or the Fowler Reviews of social security without offering an alternative. To do anything else will be to put us in the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Editorial

Party unity – yes!

Blank cheque for Kinnock – no!

Labour is on course to defeat the Tories in a general election and form a government. That is increasingly the message coming in from all sources, the Brecon and Radnor by-election result (our best in a by-election for 13 years) being a clear confirmation of the trend. Yes, the Alliance won – just – but the arithmetic of any surge in Alliance support in Tory-held seats could well result in electoral disaster for the Tories whilst Labour emerges with an absolute majority of seats.

The danger of a minority/coalition government cannot yet be ignored. Yet only a year ago the media were claiming that Labour was an electoral write off, the prospect of a Labour government having been buried, perhaps for good. By any standards it is a remarkable turnaround.

Where, now, are all those who only a year ago were enthusiastically expounding the theory of "Thatcherism" as an innovatory, populist and irresistibly-potent "ideological force"? Where are all those – on the "left" as well as on the right – who so recently were pouring scorn on the idea that Labour could remain the viable political expression of the organised working class? And what has so suddenly happened to "Thatcherism"? Is it that the ideological skill or political charisma of Neil Kinnock has single-handedly pierced through all the Tory mystifications about free market forces? Or do we need to look deeper for the causes of Tory decline?

When historians come to look back on this period, they will undoubtedly point to the miners' strike as the real turning-point for the Tories. Thatcher tried to turn her war against the miners into a political re-run of the Falklands War. In fact, she succeeded – but in reverse. Whereas the Falklands adventure launched Thatcher towards her second term of office, the miners' conflict set her on course towards almost certain electoral defeat. The British working class was never effectively mobilised behind the miners, but instinctively it recoiled from what Thatcher was doing to the mining communities. Thatcherite "populism" lost its appeal as the mask slipped to expose the nakedness of Tory class rule. Arthur Scargill and the miners may claim a large share of the credit for Labour's successes today.

Yet of course this is the last thing Neil Kinnock will ever admit. Kinnock and his office are assiduously propagating the superficial myth that we owe our successes to the current leadership of the party. The truth of the matter is that almost any leadership of the Labour Party would have benefitted from the new conditions created by the heroism of the miners' struggle, and that Kinnock has nothing in particular to claim credit for. Indeed, our successes have been achieved despite the betrayal of the miners, despite the debacle of the anti-rate-capping struggle and despite the role played by Kinnock in ensuring these and other defeats. Unity is indeed a necessary ingredient for electoral success, but our leaders have squandered an immense fund of trust and goodwill with their scabbing during the miners' strike and their continual attacks on the left; a genuinely unifying leadership would now have placed Labour in an even stronger position than we are in today.

So any concessions to the "don't rock the boat" argument must be resisted. Arthur Scargill was absolutely correct to demand of a future Labour government that it take steps to democratise the running of the Coal Board. And Kinnock's attempt to pin blame for our near-miss at Brecon and Radnor on this moderate demand will only have lost us support. Likewise with Kinnock's shameful repudiation of Tony Benn's private member's bill on an amnesty for sacked miners, his opposition to black sections and his obsequious compliance with British imperialism in failing to oppose the so-called "Prevention of Terrorism Act". We cannot collude with Kinnock's attempt to woo the middle-class vote at the expense of the bedrock component of our movement. We are for unity – but on class struggle terms.

One particularly dangerous trend has got to be fought. A number of trade union leaders now seem prepared to accept some form of incomes policy "for the sake of party unity"; and even on the left, an equivocal position is becoming fashionable. To those who repeat the argument that free collective bargaining leaves women, the unemployed, black people and the low paid to go to the wall, as an excuse for supporting an incomes policy, let us simply reiterate that allowing the capitalist state to keep down organised workers' wages will do nothing to help the various oppressed groups.

Uncompromising opposition to any form of incomes policy under capitalism coupled with the struggle for a statutory minimum wage is as vital now as it has always been, Labour govnernment or not.

Only when we have a Labour government which has taken into its hands real state power can a genuinely fair policy for the planning of incomes be realised.

And fighting for such a Labour government means no let-up in the struggle for socialist policies now.

SOCIALIST MANIFESTO

(CONTINUED)

camp of the defenders of the waiting lists, the queues and the means test. Those who have suffered the worst from the monetarist nightmare will not automatically vote Labour unless they can see some prospect of real change under a Labour government.

The main points from the Benn/Heffer memorandum are:

*Restore full employment.

*Common ownership of the major finance institutions and largest companies.

*Repeal of all anti-trade union legislation.

*Genuine democracy in public institutions.

*Immediate control over the powers ceded to the EEC in 1972 Act and an internationalist perspective unconfined by the Treaty of Rome.

*Replacement of the means tested social security by a system based on right.

*An end to nuclear weapons and major defence cuts.

*Critical reappraisal of the relationship with the USA.

*Abolition of the House of Lords and change in local government to give them greater general powers.

*Outlawing of all forms of discrimination.

"The Labour Party has always done best when it has presented a radical programme to the electorate, based on socialist concepts, and has been believed by the voters, to be in earnest about implementing it – as in 1945, 1964, 1966 and 1974.

Our worst results have always been when our manifesto was vague or lacked support from the leadership as in 1951, 1959, 1970, 1979 and 1983.

This time the sheer gravity of the crisis will lead to an expectation from the voters that if they elect a Labour government there will be a real and serious effort made to advance towards a fairer society.

Socialist policies, of the kind outlined above also have a special relevance now, since the Tory Wets, the SDP and the Liberals have already moved into the anti-Thatcherite, non-socialist – and bitterly anti-socialist – middle ground of politics.

It we were to model ourselves on their approach the electorate will see no difference and will fee free to support any, or all of these parties and groupings with the likely consequences that we may end up with a hung Parliament and a paralysed government.

Labour's best chance of victory lies in its appeal to all sections, epsecially the organised working class who are deeply opposed to monetarism and militarism, and to millions of others who do not bother to vote because they cannot see any difference between the parties.

Such people would be more likely to respond to a serious socialist alternative that offered jobs, homes, education, good health, dignity in retirement, the prospects of peace, greater human rights and democracy – backed up by a readiness to will the means as well as willing the ends."

This year's conference will lay many policy grounds and the 1986 conference will conclude much of the pre-election debate. The questions are for full discussion everywhere – not just the media.

NEWHAM

'Powder keg waiting to go off'

Four of the Newham 7 were found guilty at the Old Bailey on Wednesday July 10 1985. Reserving judgement, Judge Denison called for social reports to consider their suitability for community service orders. They were bailed for a month while reports are prepared. The other three Asian defendants in the trial were cleared of all charges. They left the court to loud cheers from demonstrators. The three racialists were found guilty and were convicted of common assault and fined £100 each.

After more than 13 hours' deliberation, the jury of nine whites, two West Indians and a Sikh found four members of the Newham 7 guilty of affray. They were cleared of conspiracy to damage property and possessing offensive weapons. In the words of Leonard Woodley, a defence counsel, the incident was the culmination of "years of misery" for the Asian community at the hands of racist thugs".

This was the end of an eight week trial on charges arising out of a series of inter-racial confrontations in Newham on April 7, 1984. Long before the trial began, which cost more than £500,000, it was clear that the case had become entirely symbolic. The Newham 7 campaign has established it as a landmark in the history of both the relationship between the races; and that between black people and the police. The Newham Seven and the Asians like them, are now brought up to expect attacks from racists and have also learned to fight back. The gulf is now dangerously deep, made worse by the incidents during protests against the case itself. Umesh Desai of Newham Monitoring Project said: *"It was not just the Newham Seven who were on trial, but the whole community; it was not the case, but the issues. Newham is now a powder keg, waiting to go off."*

The campaign, demonstrations, pickets, and night vigil outside the Old Bailey were subjected to further cases of numerous arrests and police harassment. The heavy and provocative policing has been mainly directed to young people. Pickets have been subjected to racist intimidation and abuse with police officers making up their own laws as they go regarding the timing of the pickets, when they should stop, etc., etc. Police dogs were used, unnecessarily, to clear the 100-150 people who supported the picket with mounted police and SPG units kept in reserve. Police video teams have also been observed filming the pickets. On Wednesday night, July 3, a peaceful vigil held by the campaign outside the Old Bailey was broken up by police, and 34 arrests were made.

There was a sustained effort to demoralise and defeat the campaign through mass arrests and intimidation by police.

The defence campaign and Newham Seven did not dispute the main facts of the case, that the Asian community regarded the Duke of Edinburgh pub as the "fount" for a series of violent racial attacks. They believed that the pub was the base for, and might still be sheltering, a gang which carried out a series of assaults operating from a silver Ford Granada car. As the details of the racial attacks and police indifference to Asians emerged in the courtroom, the essense of the case came to be expressed in the defence campaign's slogan – "self-defence, no offence". The defendants were innocent of anything other than protecting their community from racialist attacks. Bahadur Khan said *"The Asians had to do something about the racial attacks and police indifference. I am not going to the witness box to say I was not there; that I did not throw stuff, because I did. I was defending my community. Whether they find me guilty or not."* Like other Asians the Newham Seven also know what it is like "to be on the receiving end of a racialist attack and police indifference.

The Newham Monitoring Project recorded 93 serious racial attacks in 1984. The prosecution in the trial also agreed that police figures (for racial assaults were 67 in 1983; 58 last year and 27 so far this year) showed an increase of racial attacks of nearly 50% in 1984 over 1983.

The relationship between Asians and the police is so poor that most attacks are never reported, because experience shows that the police fail to respond to such attacks. There are areas in Newham which are even in broad daylight not safe for Asians. While the case was in progress at the Old Bailey, one Asian youth was stabbed in the High Street at the peak of the Saturday shopping rush hour.

Detective Sergeant Gillie, who conducted the investigation, told the court that the high number of attacks was inevitable simply because there were many Asians in Newham. If the percentage was lower, he said, there would be fewer attacks. *What a poor and miserable state of affairs. This is our police!*

It is an encouragement to the fascists and racists. In the 1983 general election, the National Front in Newham had the highest votes. They collected 2300 votes in the three constituencies in the borough taken together, reaching nearly 4% in Newham South. In Newham, NF posters are regularly put up in the heart of the Asian community, as fast as they are removed. And there are regular clashes between NF paper sellers and anti-racist groups.

Asians believe than an attempt is being made to "criminalise" some Asian youths in Newham, in the same way that other blacks were allegedly criminalised in Brixton. Khan said that "once they know you, they never leave you alone."

The fight goes on. The fight against the racists and fascists has just begun. Given the issues at stake and the importance which the trial of the Newham Seven has acquired, it is essential that these important issues are brought to the attention of the widest possible audience.

The fight of the Newham Seven and the support given to them by all progressive forces was a victory and the alliances that we have developed in the course of this struggle must be continued.

Man Mohan, Secretary,
Deptford CLP Black Section
Chair, Lewisham Asian Association

FACING UP TO THE ALLIANCE

By Narendra Makanji

The result of the Brecon and Radnor by-election has established that the discontented Tories are flocking in their thousands to the Liberals as the alternative right-wing party. The narrow defeat of the Labour candidate – a Kinnock clone – was, nevertheless, an excellent result which will send shockwaves in the Tory Party. Coming in the wake of the County Council elections, the left in the Labour Party will have to pay particular attention to this phenomenon and prepare from now to ensure that the anti-Tory feeling is converted to a positive pro-Labour feeling.

Recent political statements by Owen and Steel have shown up the wide splits that exist within the electoral "Alliance" Party. In fact, on all the major issues – defence, trade union ballots, the miners' strike, local government – the Liberal view is considerably different from that of Owen, who appears to be making policy for the SDP all on his own. The coming months will show increasing tension between the Owen/Steel leadership and the grassroots activists of the Liberal Party.

The leadership is rightly regarded by the activists as being autocratic. There have been charges that the statements of the leaders are based on the readings of the opinion polls, thus making policy statements which are widly fluctuating and having no basic principles or strategies to back them. This was particularly noticeable during the miners' strike when Dr. Owen adopted a tone that was even more hardline than the tone adopted by the Tory government.

The lack of grass roots support for the SDP has also meant that the Liberals are able to win more seats on local councils. In the May County Council elections, the Liberals won five times as many seats as the SDP and are now in many of the leadership positions on the Alliance groups.

Splits are particularly noticeable on issues such as race equality, women's equality and environment issues. It is only a matter of time before the distinctive SDP presence on councils disappears – gobbled up by the Liberals.

In these circumstances, Labour cannot just rely on bashing the Tories; a careful analysis and exposure of the tensions between the SDP and the Liberals will also need to be carried out and then countered. In all local leaflets and publicity, the positive alternative of the Labour Party must be projected against the destructive policies of the Tories and the market-oriented mixture of the SDP and the Liberal Party. Under no circumstances should there be any reference made or recognition given to the "Alliance Party" – there is no such entity. In other words, the electoral politics of the country are a four-party affair and three of the Parties are right wing – varying only in their severity.

Campaigning and canvassing will also need to be reoriented. Every branch and constituency should discuss this matter and make the necessary changes in preparation for the 1986 borough and district elections when the Liberal Party will be fully stretched and the potential fo the Labour Party to make sweeping gains is already there. After all, if a Kinnockite can come within 550 votes of winning a very safe Tory seat, then the way must be open for left-wing Labour candidates to capture hundreds of council seats. For the Tories, there are no safe seats.

TRADE UNION BRIEFING

STOP THE SLIDE TO THE RIGHT

Alan Thornett

Every available indicator, from the county council elections to the Brecon and Radnor by-election, suggests that the Tories will have serious problems in winning the next election unless they can pull something very dramatic out of the bag. Such has been the effect of the miners' strike and subsequent Tory policy on their electoral popularity.

Essentially, however, the miners' strike was not about electoral popularity. It was about creating radically new conditions at the point of production. Of shifting the balance of power significantly away from the working class and the labour movement towards the employers and the state.

Looked at in this way, the outcome of the strike is rather different. The bargaining power of the NUM is very weak. Pit closures are going ahead linked to speed-up and reorganisation for those that remain open. In other sectors of industry the employers have been strengthened and are imposing new levels of speed-up while the advantage is there.

But these employers' measures are not happening because the organised working class as a whole has been cowed by the defeat of the miners. They do feel weakened, but strike struggles are continuing. We face nothing like the disastrous situation which existed after 1926. On top of that the conditions being suffered are very much an imposition and are likely to break into militant action at a later stage.

What holds this potentiality back is the slide to the right which is now taking place in both the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Kinnock and Co. are trying to shift the ground to facilitate a coalition government with the SDP in the event of a hung Parliament after the election. The miners' strike was in any case an acute embarrassment to them.

At the same time the trade union leaders, with very few exceptions, draw the conclusion that strike action doesn't pay and the time has come to make peace and compromise – which is what they wanted to do in the first place.

The most dramatic development in this direction – and probably the most decisive – was the decision of Jimmy Knapp and the Broad Left leadership of the NUR to push compliance with the ballotting requirements in the 1984 Tory legislation through the NUR conference.

If one of the most left unions surrenders the implication for the rest are pretty obvious. The UCW quickly followed the example and the TUC leaders are involved in detailed preparations to abandon the Wembly 1982 decisions at the September Congress. "Flexibility" is to be the factor used. The General Council will recommend "continued support" for the Wembley decisions, but with "flexibility". Very nice!

The TGWU conference decisions to maintain the main planks of its policy – opposition to the anti-union laws and against incomes policy – is more a product of recent events surrounding the TGWU than a serious counterweight to this trend. In other aspects – such as the attitude to the victimised miners – the conference followed the predominant drift. Astoundingly, the conference accepted without a voice against, a recommendation from the standing orders committee to ban the victimised miners from taking a collection at the conference.

Another aspect of this has been the weakness and disorganisation of the left in most of the union conferences. To the extent that the TGWU conference was to the left was due to the attitude Ron Todd chose to take. The left was weaker and the right more vocal. If he had decided to go in the other direction things would probably have been very different.

The attitude adopted to the victimised miners is probably the best indicator to the current situation in the unions. 600 sacked miners and 50 still in prison remains the most important issue facing the labour movement, yet the unions at official level have been dropping them as quick as they can. Not a single trade union leader outside of the NUM made as much as a verbal protest when the two outrageous life sentences were meted out in South Wales.

If they were to organise or support protest marches and demonstrations the campaign for the victimised miners would be in a dramatically different position. The WRP stepped into the vacuum with their march to Wembly and their crassly ultraleft demand for a general strike now to get the miners out of jail. The problem is not for a left group to set itself up, but to shift the labour movement over the issue. That is the only way sentences will be dropped and miners reinstated.

The most important exception to the drift to the right has been represented by the NUM itself in its Sheffield conference. There Scargill has begun to give a very important lead. He has very correctly called upon the Labour Party conference in September to pledge a future Labour government to reinstate the sacked miners and squash the jail sentences. A special NUM conference is to be called to discuss the victimised miners. At the same time Tony Benn has placed a Bill before Parliament calling for the release of the jailed miners.

These moves should now become the focal point of a campaign throughout the labour movement. They can be backed up by demands on the TUC Congress to release money to the NUM (which is still in the hands of the receiver) and perhaps to call a national demonstration on the issue.

Scargill was also very correct at the NUM conference to project a confident attitude and talk about future renewed action by the miners. He knows that is difficult but it strikes the right note and brings back some confidence for workers far beyond the NUM. It must have been right because it attracted even harsher denunciation from Kinnock than even Tony Benn received for his Amnesty Bill.

The left should follow Scargill's lead and not be intimidated by the situation. The fight must be rejoined and confidence rebuilt. The miners' support groups in particular have a role to play in this. They should not be disbanded, but rebuilt and strengthened to take up the campaign.

N.U.R.: Secret Ballot Sell-Out

In the same week when the Transport Union voted against pay policies under *any* government, the National Union of Railwaymen gave a big boost to the Tories when it agreed to ballot members before calling for industrial action. This decision, argued for by general secretary, Jimmy Knapp, came in the wake of the fiasco on the London underground when a strike against job losses was called off after less than 24 hours.

The lessons NUR delegates learnt from that dispute were the wrong ones. It was not that the strike should never have been called without a secret ballot of the membership. Instead, the NUR AGM should have been critical of the way the union executive called the strike. The London Transport District Council of the NUR had been carefully preparing its members to take industrial action in the lead-up to further introduction of Driver Only Operation (DOO) and job losses in other grades. The national executive called the strike for a Monday at such little notice that it was not possible to fully inform members of the nature of the dispute. Furthermore, the union leaders, instead of stressing the loss of jobs of *all* grades, informed members through the media that this was a dispute about length of breaks on DOO trains. It was inevitable that without a united membership in full possession of the facts and without the backing of the train drivers' union ASLEF, the strike was doomed to failure.

The decision to hold secret ballots comes at a crucial time for the rail industry. On London Transport jobs are fast disappearing on the underground and on the bus side (although this does not directly concern NUR members) management is trying to push through productivity deals while hiving off more and more bus routes. Driver Only Operation is now on the cards, after its implementation on the Bedford-St Pancras line, on British Rail in its Eastern Division. The Kings Cross suburban line is all set for October with others to follow soon after.

OFF THE HOOK

NUR's policy is to oppose these developments and as Jimmy Knapp himself said at the recent grades conference of guards and shunters, it will be

(continued next page)

NO INCOMES POLICY! FOR A STATUTORY MINIMUM WAGE!

Mick McKeever

In recent months the Labour Party leadership has begun to prepare the ground so that it can renege on democratically agreed policies when it is in a position to form a Government. One of the main areas where this has been apparent is on economic strategy. Hattersley has, for instance, been floating the idea of a 'voluntary' incomes policy. In place of statutory controls he envisages using moral blackmail, in that the unions will be warned that any 'large' pay increases will result in less new jobs. In other words the working class will once again be made to pay the price for the failure of capitalism. We as socialists should now be very clear about both the politics and aims of incomes policies and mobilise to prevent their reappearance.

Incomes policies were first developed in the early sixties as a direct response to the end of the post war boom, full employment and a fragmentation of the collective bargaining system, with the rise of a strong shop stewards movement. Indeed the major aim of both incomes policy and tripartite corporate planning (eg NEDC) was to disarm and suppress working class militancy in order to hold down wages and to bolster inefficient and failing British Capitalism. Thus incorporating the labour movement into the Capitalist system at a higher level, and attempting to institutionalise militancy and conflict.

Some will argue that the real function of incomes policies is to redistribute wealth, by curtailing the bargaining power of the groups of workers with strong trade unions and thereby improving the wages and conditions of the low paid.

But this is a false analysis of the situation. As Panitch* has pointed out, there has never been any mechanism or pool by or into which wages forfeited by one group of workers is transferred to other lower paid workers – they are just left to become higher profits.

An even more fundamental error is made by claiming that some trade unions have too much power and have to be restrained. Indeed it it completely wrong to claim that the struggle is about redistributing wealth on an intra-class basis, eg take away from the high paid worker to give to the low paid, to take from men to give to women. This is to argue for a levelling down of wages to a lowest common denominator, whilst the capitalists escape in many cases with enhanced profits. It is essential therefore, if we are serious about tackling low pay, to fight for a decent statutory minimum wage and to mobilise the labour movement, at rank and file level, to support the demands of the low paid.

We have to moblise and fight within both the Labour Party and trade union movement to ensure that we 'lock in' the Labour Party leadership to policies we have agreed to at conference. It is imperative that we send a clear message to the leaders of the labour movement, that we will never again tolerate any form of incomes policy.

Michael McKeever

* L. Panitch, 'Hard Pounding', *New Socialist*, Oct-Nov '82.

NUR sell-out

(CONTINUED)

necessary to take industrial action. What the members need, after years of misleadership under Weighell, is not secret ballots but confidence that their present leadership will fight all attacks from British Rail. Workshops are closing down, guards and platform and booking office staff and many other jobs are on the line. Secret ballots lets the leadership off the hook and places the responsibility, utterly wrongly, with the membership. The situation looks grim on British Rail, undoubtedly now at the top of the Tories' hit-list after the miners.

There is no doubt that the miners' strike and its aftermath has had a big effect on many, previously militant, unions. The train drivers' (ASLEF) annual conference meeting, just before the NUR's, forced back members who were already on strike in Tyne and Wear in order to hold a ballot. Now both unions seem set to call for such ballots even when unofficial action is taken instead of making the strike official.

COALVILLE

The BR workforce doesn't need secret ballots and it doesn't need leaders who advocate them. The unions in British Rail need to build on the support that was there for the miners when hardly any coal was moved on the railways. They need to learn from the tremendous struggle that workers at places like Coalville waged. Coalville itself is now under threat of closure. Having shown how strong NUR can be, our leaderhip now wants to take that strength away and demand ballots. Allowing members' jobs to be sold is one of the most undemocratic decisions yet taken by the Rail unions.

Tessa van Gelderen
Brent South CLP
NUR

SUPPORT THE AMNESTY!

Jeremy Corbyn MP

In 1980 the government introduced the Southern Rhodesia Amnesty Order and thus gave a total free pardon to *everyone* who had committed acts of terrorism in the fifteen year guerrilla war.

Thus the illegal killings of the Smith regime were pardoned; the sanctions busters were exonerated and the prisoners of the people of Zimbabwe were allowed to go free.

The press at the time hailed Mrs Thatcher's performance at the Lusaka Conference as a 'triumph'; it put Britain's new Prime Minister firmly on the international stage. It was described as a necessary act of magnanimity towards those who had pledged white rule for evermore.

The Campaign Group of MPs have produced and introduced a Bill into Parliament which gives the same amnesty, in the same terms, to all who are convicted of acts in relation to the miners' dispute and prevents further prosecution.

The reception by the press was not short of hysterical. A bear baiting session would have been peaceful compared to the hysteria of the press in their treatment of Tony Benn who introduced the Bill to Parliament.

During the miners' strike the government created a national police force, abused social security legislation to try and starve the mining communities, encouraged the courts to be as severe as possible against striking miners, encouraged the NCB to become an extra judicial judge, jury and execution of sentences and directed the media against the miners' very just cause of defence of jobs and communities.

Miners' Amnesty (General Pardon)

A

B I L L

To provide for a General Amnesty for all those who were fined, imprisoned or otherwise punished by the Courts, the National Coal Board or others, for acts done or offences committed during the 1984–5 strike by the National Union of Mineworkers; to secure that full Pardons, reinstatement at work, and compensation shall be offered to all the persons involved and for purposes connected therewith.

Presented by Mr. Tony Benn
supported by
Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Terry Fields, Mr. Martin Flannery, Miss Joan Maynard, Mr. Bill Michie, Jo Richardson, Mr. Martin Redmond, and Mr. Dennis Skinner

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The labour movement have done insufficient to back the miners and must now do its bit to support the amnesty campaign and continue raising money for the sacked and imprisoned miners.

The Campaign Group have made the call for support for the Bill and for a further round of financial commitments for the miners.

YOUTH BRIEFING

Youth Fightback — a new paper in the LPYS

By Tracy Doyle,
Brighton LPYS

Youth Fightback is a new paper in the Labour Party Young Socialists. This has followed on from the setting up of 6 regional 'Activist' bulletins in different YS regions, over the last 2 years. These were a great success in bringing together the left in the YS and drawing in youth from the campaigns such as Youth CND. LPYS activists who had been involved in these bulletins, especially from the West Midlands and the South, saw the need for a national focus to begin to organise this support on a national level.

Since YS national conference, where it was agreed to estabilsh more coordination, a series of meetings have been held and the first issue of YF was out for the Gillick demo on June 23rd. 200 copies were sold that day, and over 800 in the next 2 weeks. The number of YS branches sponsoring the paper is growing steadily and includes several branches that were not previously involved in a regional bulletin. Many branches have sold 50-100 copies. We have had loads of letters and donations. The paper is obviously a success. We will be producing another copy for September and holding a big dayschool/conference. We also hope to take a lot of people to YS Summer Camp at the end of July and will be holding a meeting there as well as supporting meetings organised by Lesbian and Gay Young Socialists, youth in Black Sections, etc.

Youth Fightback is not counterposed to the YS. We are part of it, and we are based on YS branches. We feel the need to organise because we do not have a voice in the official YS paper 'Socialist Youth'. The miners' strike has proved beyond all doubt that the present leadership of the YS is inadequate and unable to respond to the needs of youth.

Despite a lot of good work by individual YS branches in solidarity with the miners, the YS nationally failed both to organise any national events in support of the strike, or to link with the rest of the left against the scabs Kinnock and Willis. They have also failed to recognise the importance of the self-organisation of women, black people, and lesbians and gay men — which led the NUM to support their demands at 1984 LP Conference — and still remain viciously hostile to black sections, for instance. On international questions, the YS leadership is still lagging behind many members of the mining communities on the need for self-determination for the Irish people and the need to oppose British imperialism. And the YS has failed to grow out of the strike, to recruit the thousands of youth who radicalised to defend the NUM. This was clear when ⅓ less branches were represented at the YS National Conference at Easter.

To be included in YF, YS members have to agree with only two things. Firstly we want to build the YS. This means turning out to the struggles of youth, and capitalising on the recent school strikes. Secondly, we oppose all witchunts and attacks on the YS. Within this framework we welcome debate, letters and participation in our open meetings.

One thing we see as very important is our relationship to the Labour left. We welcome all attempts to unite the left around specific issues and campaigns. Many YF supporters are also supporters of Briefing. We welcome subscriptions — why not take 10 issues to sell in your ward or GMC?

For us the fight is just beginning — if we are to win the leadership of the YS we still have a long way to go. But we are confident that Youth Fightback has that potential, and is the best attempt yet to build a current capable of building a mass campaigning YS. This is backed up by the amazing response that we have had so far. We ask for your support, and especially your donations and subscriptions.

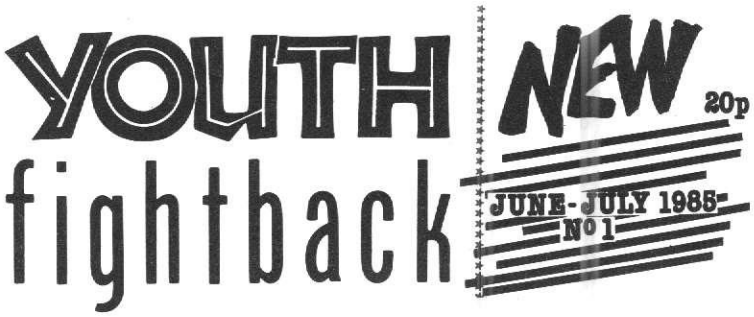
"SUBSCRIBE TO YOUTH FIGHTBACK!"

Youth Fightback — Issue 1

8 pages including articles on Gillick, YTS, YCND, Newham 7, a YS delegation to Ireland, an interview with a Young Sandinista, a young sacked miner on the amnesty campaign, and a double page spread on lesbian and gay liberation by Lesbian and Gay Young Socialists.

Issue 2 will include an interview with Jimmy Sommerville (ex Bronski Beat).

There are 2 prices for subscriptions and bulk orders — one for LPYS members and one for Labour Party members willing to give us some financial support.



SUBSCRIPTIONS LPYS MEMBERS £1 for next 3 issues (postage etc included)
LABOUR PARTY MEMBERS WHO WISH TO BE SUPPORTING SUBSCRIBERS £3 for next 3 issues (postage etc included)

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LPYS rate 10 for £2.00 plus 50p p&p
More than 10, 15p per copy plus 50p p&p
HIGHER RATE 20p per copy plus 50p p&p

PLEASE SEND TO YOUTH FIGHTBACK C/O 39, CHIPPENHAM RD, LONDON W9.

BASRAA FAMILY DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Britain's racist immigration laws are week by week destroying more and more families. Last year over 40 people were deported. Women and children are having to wait up to two years, especially on the Indian subcontinent, just to receive an interview about joining their husbands here. As many as half of those subsequently interviewed are then refused entry to Britain, often because they cannot 'prove' to the immigration officials that they are related to their husbands as they claim, and in virtually all cases are. Despite the ruling by the European Commission of Human Rights is seems unlikely that this situation will change.

The immigration service is equally zealous in hounding those families that are already in residence. Two cases have reached the National press because of the campaign being supported by NALGO. Muhammad Idrish and Shahid Ali Syed are both NALGO members and are threatened with deportation along with their families. The pressure exercised by NALGO has, in part, helped them through the long judicial processes of appeals and counter appeals.

Another case has recently begun. The family of Arshad Anwar Basraa has been threatened with deportation. Mr Basraa has been in this country since 1978. He was joined by his wife, Zaibunnisa, in 1980. Two children have been born here. In 1984 his mother and the other two children, twins aged 10, came to Britain. They were allowed in temporarily after intense interrogation, although the family had been refused further leave to remain. The pressure put on Arshad's already unwell mother was such that she took her life. The blame for this tragic event can be laid fairly and squarely upon the immigration laws and the way they are put into practice.

Arshad Basraa is a member of the TGWU. He has been on long term sick leave because of the pressure placed upon him by the authorities and the tragic death of his mother. The family need all the support they can get. Please get in touch with the defence campaign to obtain literature, petition forms etc.

Contact: The Basraa Familiy Defence Campaign c/o WFTURC 26, St. James Street, London, E17 7PF. Tel: 01-509 2243

BEST PRIDE YET!

15,000 people took to the streets of London on July 29th to celebrate the annual Lesbian and Gay pride festival. What made this year special, apart from the numbers, was the presence of 70 members of the Dulais valley, south Wales, mining community, with their lodge banner. This, along with union banners, including the national NALGO one, and the 'Lesbians & Gays support the miners' contingent, complete with Brass band, made the day highly political and underscored the massive advances we've made this year. Kinnock's message came as less of a shock with everything else that was going on!

We had fun as well! With a five-hour carnival in Jubilee gardens, and parties in the night.

All in all, and despite the scene's attempt to turn our celebration of the spirit of Stonewall into a commercial event, a fab day!

Paul Canning

MESSAGE TO LESBIAN AND GAY PRIDE CARNIVAL '85

I am unable to join you today because I have to be at an event in my constituency in South Wales.

I send you my good wishes for a successful Carnival and I re-affirm my Party's support for the principle of respect for and equal treatment of all individuals, irrespective of their sexual orientation.

We must all work to rid society of the fear and guilt that has victimised gays and lesbians and to create conditions in which people can conduct their personal relationships without persecution.

This year we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the victory over Fascism and as we do so we remember that gays and lesbians were amongst the millions murdered by the Nazis. Prejudice permitted that horror as it produces others – that is why we strive to defeat it.

Neil Kinnock
Leader of The Opposition
June 29, 1985



WE'RE ON OUR WAY TO BOURNEMOUTH!

The campaign for a debate on Lesbian and Gay rights at this year's party conference, organised by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, is progressing well. A debate seems likely, and alongside LCLGR resolutions a number of CLPs have chosen 'Out' Lesbian or Gay delegates.

The next stage of the campaign is around amendments and ensuring that any debate has a high profile at Conference. Becuase of the way that amendments are organised by Walworth Road – the resolutions booklet is published on July 22nd and you then have three weeks until August 16th to obtain amendments – life is hard for campaigns such as LCLGR. However we have produced model amendments to the Islington South resolution, aimed at tidying up an eventual composite rather than introducing new topics. In the next few weeks we will be producing further amendments including one on AIDS to Health resolutions. Please obtain copies from the contact below.

LCLGR has also agreed to launch a major 'call for a debate' campaign to last until conference in late September, aimed at securing the wides possible support for us and at taking the issue right through the Labour and trade union movements.

We are asking supporters to obtain signatures from labour movement bodies, campaigns etc., and trade unions, as well as from prominent indivuals such as MPs and leading councillors etc., for the statement below to be publicised at conference and before, and presented to the conference arrangements committee. Tied to this we ask that you secure conference greetings for our magazine 'Lesbian and Gay Socialist' (rates start at £10) and also, if possible, affiliation to the campaign. Details from contact below.

'CALL FOR A DEBATE' STATEMENT

"Lesbians and gay men suffer systematic discrimination in society at large and also within the labour movement. One aspect of this discrimination is highlighted by the fact that annual conference has never discussed the issue; another is that the party has a policy that is discriminatory (i.e. different ages of consent for gay men and heterosexuals). This cannot go on any longer if we are to show to lesbians and gay men that the Labour Party has anything to offer them.

We therefore support the LCLGR campaign to have the issue debated at this year's annual conference."

LCLGR, 39 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH for details of affiliation, speakers, copies of amendments etc, or phone 01-587 1643 (ansaphone).

Paul Canning, LCLGR

WOMEN'S RIGHTS — MOBILISE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

By Ann Potter,
NAC Steering Committee

The relief felt when Dennis Skinner talked out the Powell Bill last month may be rather short lived. For although it put an end to a very dangerous, ill thought out and far reaching Bill, it marked the defeat of only the first of many attacks which are being made on women's fertility rights.

The House of Lords are still considering the Gillick ruling, the result of which is not expected until September or October. Whichever way the decision goes, we can expect a campaign to reverse the decision; either from pro-choice groups if Gillick wins, or from the "moral majority" if the decision goes against her.

The government has also made it clear that it will give extra parliamentary time to any private member who wishes to introduce a Bill to lower the time limit. This is expected to be recommended in a report being drawn up by the Royal College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians to be published in the autumn.

Very little activity

In the face of these attacks it is rather depressing to understand why the Powell Bill failed. Unlike John Corrie's Bill of five years ago it was not defeated by the weight of the labour movement fighting with pro-choice groups and the women's movement. The TUC lead demonstration against Corrie was 50,000-strong, this year we could muster only 3,000 against the Powell Bill. Indeed although there is interest and concern amongst Labour Party and trade union activists, and a lot of information about Powell and Gillick was produced at a local level, there is very little activity on this question. Resolutions passed at the Labour women's conference, the Scottish TUC and elsewhere are not an adequate alternative to participation in mass actions.

The Powell Bill was defeated by a parliamentary trick. It was allowed to fall by a government which is sympathetic to many of the ideas contained in the Bill and is preparing a Bill based on the Warnock Committee Report which will certainly contain many elements of the Powell Bill within it. Indeed what the Powell Bill has done is to "soften up" Parliament so the government can introduce an extremely restrictive Bill which may again give embryos rights; will restrict research into congenital diseases and causes of miscarriage; and make it more difficult for infertile women to obtain treatment. But this time the government will give the Bill all the time it needs to become law.

Labour Party split

The Labour Party has once again been split over the question. More Labour MPs voted for Powell than against the Bill on its second reading, and many more just absented themselves from the House of Commons at the crucial time. How long is the Labour Party going to allow its MPs to be unaccountable to its policies or its members on these key issues and leave it to the consciences of MPs?

Those most immediately concerned with these issues inside the Labour Party – women – have overwhelmingly passed resolutions against Gillick and Powell at their conferences this year. Women's sections have built both demonstrations and organised meetings on the issue. However, until the free vote is abolished and abortion made a key issue at selection and reselection meetings then MPs will continue to vote in a way convenient to them.

If we are to defeat the attacks which are being planned on women's rights, then we must have the active support of the whole labour movement. The question of a TUC or Labour Party organised demonstration to show their support for women's rights is essential if women are to maintain even their limited rights to fertility control.

We need to prepare the ground inside the Labour Party now by attempting to commit the leadership to call a demonstration if any restrictive legislation is introduced into Parliament.

For more information and details of affiliation to the National Abortion Campaign, please write to: NAC, Wesley House, Great Queen Street, London WC2.

Women's safety
Time for Labour to act

The Kerb-crawling Bill is now about to become law. Under its official title of the Sexual Offences Bill, introduced by Janet Fookes, Tory MP for Plymouth Drake, it eventually got through.

This Bill was introduced in response not only to proposals from the Law Commission, but to the problems encountered by non-prostitute women who were harassed by kerb crawlers. Thus it was not a clear-cut issue for many Labour MPs who, whilst uneasy about increased police powers, were nevertheless conscious of the need to protect women in public places from being solicited for the purpose of prostitution.

The Bill had a chequered passage in the House. The Opposition expressed considerable misgivings about it, pointing to the need for legislation to deciminalise prostitution. The National Labour Women's Committee opposed the Bill on the grounds that police powers are already sufficient to protect women if there was the will to do so, and that to increase those powers would only result in police harassment of prostitutes and of black people, and that many innocent men – simply asking the way for example – might be inadvertently caught. But there were a number of Labour MPs who were pressed by harassed women constituents whom they felt should be able to walk about in safety without being pestered by kerb-crawlers.

Two Tory MPs attempted a filibuster which nearly succeeded. One of them, Tony Marlow, MP for Northampton North, not the most noted of supporters of women's rights, clearly did so because he was opposed to *men* being penalised – and he found himself the hero of the English Collective of Prostitutes and Wages for Housework.

No thought out policy

Many people clearly thought the Labour Party should have opposed the Bill completely. I have considerable sympathy with this view, but the plain fact is that the Party has not thought out its policy on prostitution and the need to provide means by which prostitutes can meet their clients without being subjected to arbitrary pouncing by the police.



Labour Party Photo Library

Such a policy must also ensure that women who are not prostitutes are from from the harassment of men seeking sex; and must protect innocent men from being arrested for offences they have not committed.

I believe the Bill when it becomes law will do none of these things. There needs to be a wide-ranging discussion throughout the entire Party on all these issues – domestic violence, sexual harassment and prostitution – that formulates proposals to show that the Labour Party is seriously concerned about the safety of all women.

Jo Richardson MP

LABOUR WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

NUR delegate Rose Knight spoke on the last morning of the three-day 60th National Conference of Labour Women – '. . . parts of our movement have not broken with the inheritance of colonialism. Self-determination should be the principle we stand on. We have to break completely with the notion that we have the right to tell the Irish, the South Africans, the Chileans, or the Nicaraguans how to organise their revolutions. When we've managed one ourselves – then maybe we can stand as equals and discuss differences.' Speaking in the Latin American debate, Rose summed up – to loud applause – the feeling of the vast majority of delegates. Jane Prust, delegate from Cardiff, who also spoke in the debate, put it neatly from our perspective as *women* – 'We don't want men telling us what to do – and neither is it for us as *British* women to be telling other women what to do.'

In 1982, Women's Conference, the only national section of the Labour Party to do so, opposed the Falklands war. By 1985 a strong feminist anti-imperialism had emerged which well and truly – unlike at previous conferences – vanquished supporters of Militant. The latter repetitiously insisted that the solution to all our ills – including famine in Ethiopia – was class unity and socialist plans of production under workers control.

BLACK SECTIONS

There was one debate however – the most contentious – where Militant women were able to win broader support particularly from trade union delegates. Card vote number one was on Black Sections and it was here that the 'class unity' argument, as opposed to the basic principle and right of autonomy, picked up a few more votes – though not nearly enough to defeat clear support for Black Sections.

Rose's reference to colonialism's inheritance – racism – was highly pertinent; all the more so as it is not just Militant supporters whose thinking is corrupted by it. Labour's leadership has referred to Black Sections as a form of apartheid and advocate instead 'white people's Black Sections' – groups to discuss black people's issues open to whites.

As it happens Labour's leadership, in the form of Neil Kinnock (first time ever that a Leader has done so), and General Secretary Larry-new-broom-sweeps-clean-Whitty, addressed the conference. Their speeches – leading men addressing rank and file women – were the only aspect of the conference to be reported by Fleet Street. Both were short and to the point – women's equal rights. Mr Whitty even told us that men must move over – be gently pushed if needs be – to make room for women.

There are two ways of interpreting this. One is to say that the Labour leadership has finally acknowledged the correctness of women's demands, applaud such fine examples of anti-sexist Labour men and refuse to indulge in petty and 'vanguardist' criticism of them. The other is to welcome the political change in our favour, to refuse to rest on our new found laurels but politely enquire as to what the Labour leadership are proposing to do *themselves* to win support for our 'correct' demands from our trade union brothers, and to *also* acknowledge – not dismiss or ignore – the bitter criticism from so many other women who may not be in such privileged positions in society as us.

FEELINGS OF BETRAYAL

For it was bitterness and feelings of betrayal towards the leadership in respect of the miners strike that also emerged in several debates. This was most apparent in the discussion on whether Women Against Pit Closures should be able to affiliate to the Labour Party. Working class women from mining communities angrily referred to the equivocal support from the leadership during the strike and described how, even now, women from some of these areas who wished to join the Labour Party – to change it! – were being prevented from doing so by all manner of curious means. Some of Labour's leaders may now support some justice for women, but do they support any of the justice being demanded by Women Against Pit Closures? Conference was *un*equivocal – WAPT should affiliate to the Labour Party should they so wish.

Lorna Boreland, speaking at Labour Briefing Women's very successful fringe meeting, was similarly unequivocal and angry. Describing how many black women have joined the Labour Party as a result of the Black Sections campaign, she pointed out not only the racism of the leadership, but how self-defeating in their own terms is their opposition to Black Sections. Many new black recruits will simply leave again.

Another sharp debate was on Ireland. With only five votes against (out of approx. 600) discussions and dialogue with Sinn Fein and other Irish feminists on British withdrawal was supported. Labour Women for Ireland had organised a fringe meeting with one of the newly elected Sinn Fein women councillors and the issue of working class people consistently voting for Sinn Fein and their increasing participation in local government dominated the debate. With talk of abolition of Northern Ireland's councils in the air, parallels were drawn with the abolition of the metropolitan authorities here – 'If voting or elections changed anything they would abolish them.' And so they are.

WOMEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE

For the third conference running overwhelming support was given to the demands of the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC). Women's Conference is not only not recognised as worthy of much note by Fleet Street and even by most Labour men – in actual fact it has no power. It is not a formally constituted section of the Party in the manner that the LPYS is. By way of direct action to educate for change the conference voted for shadow elections to be organised for the NEC's women's section at next year's women's conference, thus illustrating in practice LWAC's demand that the NEC women's section should be elected by – and accountable to – Labour women. Similarly, on the one occasion when the vote went against the National Women s Committee's recommendation, conference voted for the Committee to be elected by the conference to act as an executive for it, rather than regionally as at present.

Many other important – the more so given their lack of attention by the rest of the party – issues were discussed including women's reproductive rights, abortion, and women's health rights. The National Abortion Campaign organised a fringe meeting to discuss the Gillick judgement. Women's demands and needs were discussed at a meeting organised by women from the Local Government Campaign Unit which was also addressed – unfortunately only briefly – by the now surcharged Chair of Lambeth Council's Women's Committee.

The 1985 conference will long be remembered as one of the most united feminist conferences. In clear recognition of the feminisation of Labour's women's section the platform backdrop featured a dramatic feminist symbol incorporating Labour's red flag. There was a strong sense of fighting sisterhood and well deserved pride in our achievements.

But we know that our successes come only from our own *self* activity as women, such as is so clearly evidenced by LWAC and WAPC and not from any patronising pats of Labour men. We want *class* socialist unity too. But it will not be achieved by ignoring our differences. Middle class, white, heterosexual women with good educations can easily come to dominate our movement. We can draw strength from our differences by *openly* acknowledging and discussing them and supporting each other. 1985 National Women's Conference was a brilliant case in point.

Sarah Roelofs
(Hornsey and Wood Green Women's Section)

Briefing is taking a summer break and the next issue will be out on September 18th.

Deadline for articles: Monday September 9th.

Next National Editorial Board: Sunday September 1st at 1pm (Phone 01-533 2593 for details)

Send your greetings to Labour Party Conference!

All Constituency parties, branches, union branches, womens sections, YS's, ethnic groups, community groups, Council Labour Groups, Briefing Groups etc are invited to send a greetings message to Party Conference.

This will appear in the 'October' issue of Briefing. The cost is £5 per column inch and cheques must be sent with copy to Briefing at 162 Millfields Road, London E5 by September 9th.

BRIEFING INTERVIEWS MILDRED GORDON

"NATIONALISE THE CENTRES OF POWER UNDER WORKERS CONTROL"

Mildred Gordon, member of the Executive Committee of the London Labour Party and Joint Chair of the Policy Committee, was selected as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Bow and Poplar at the end of May. She is awaiting endorsement of her candidature by the NEC.

Why do you think you got selected?

I think luck always plays some part – a series of coincidences – being in the right place at the right time. But basically I think that the delegates recognised me as a socialist fighter with a deep lifelong hatred of capitalism and the misery, inequalities and destruction of talent and waste that are ingrained in the capitalist system. Bow and Poplar is one of the most deprived areas in the country and they were looking for a combative candidate who would stand firm, with whom they could organise and join in struggle to improve the quality of life in that area. The fact that I was born and bred in the East End of London was also a factor. I said that I would be the only member of Parliament who had brought up a baby in a cold water flat on the third floor and had boiled kettles of water to wash napkins. That gives me a different approach to issues from all the others. By selecting a woman of my age the Bow and Poplar Labour Party dealt a blow against sexism, racism and ageism in one fell swoop.

What do you see as the importance of feminism?

It depends what you mean by feminism. I have always fought for women's rights. As a teacher I witness daily the crippling effect that conditioning of little girls to accept the role assigned to them by society has on both girls and boys. I know how overpowering this conditioning is and how early it begins. Together with other teachers I have worked to produce non-sexist materials and non-sexist programmes for schools, but our efforts are a mere drop in the ocean.

Middle class feminist groups have done a lot to raise the issues of women's burdens and lack of opportunity in this society. But many of the things they think important leave me cold. Like most working women, whether they work inside the home or outside or both, I appreciate a door opened for me or a chair held out, when I feel exhausted at the end of my working day. A little courtesy from men is a plus. Many of the issues raised by some of the 'feminist' groups are peripheral issues. It seems to me that there is one basic issue in the fight for women's rights and that is economic. The heroic struggles of the suffragettes did not advance the power of women as they expected because they did not gain economic power for women. We must continue to struggle to raise the aspirations of young girls, for equality of pay and in the grading of jobs; and for adequate payments of women, and men, who work in the home. Financial independence is all important to women. The fight against rate-capping, privatisation and the cuts in social services is a vital part in the fight to improve the position of women in society. The needs of older women have been almost totally ignored and the unemployment of women underestimated and covered over.

Inside the Labour Party, men must be prepared to give up positions of control and to move over to make way for women. They must learn to accept that women will often have different priorities and different methods of achieving them which may be a great improvement in the way things have 'always been done'.

What will you be doing in Parliament – what policies to the fore?

The immediate battle for all socialists in the Labour Party is to fight for a socialist manifesto for the next election, to do everything we can to ensure that we safeguard the gains of the past and change the balance of power in society for the future. The policies of the party will determine what I shall be doing in the next Parliament. Highest priority should be given to nationalisation of the centres of power under workers' control. We must move fast to take into public ownership the profitable sectors of the economy: there was far too much nationalisation of *losses* in 1945 with a staggering burden of compensation and Tories on the Boards. We must not repeat those mistakes.



John Chapman

Mildred Gordon

Our *minimum* aim is for everyone to have the right to be decently housed, clothed, fed and educated with an efficient health service available for all and freedom of information and expression with access to the media. We must immediately take action to remove nuclear weapons and withdraw from NATO and British troops from Ireland. Racist immigration laws must be abolished.

I shall continue to work against racism and for equality of opportunity in education, for women and children's rights, as I have always done. Becoming a Member of Parliament will give me a platform and increased facilities which I shall do my best to use for the benefit of the labour movement and of the constituents in Bow and Poplar who are in need.

BRIEFING AND LIVINGSTONE IN RETROSPECT



John Chapman

BEHIND the current 'realignment of the Left' stands the fact that since 1979 the labour movement has failed to fight the Tory government successfully.

The major responsibility for this lies with the top leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party.

Yet the local government Left has been part of the failure too.

Nobody had any right to expect anything good from most of the TUC leaders or from the leaders of the Labour Party, who had after all pioneered monetarist cuts themselves when in government. Yet in 1981-2, Labour took control in many local authorities all over Britain, and new left-wing forces took control in key areas like London.

That put the local government left centre-stage. Thatcher must have had waking nightmares that local government would be used as a series of fortresses from which the labour movement up and down the country would resist the Tory onslaught and rally the labour movement to fight back. That is what many on the local government Left had promised and threatened to do.

Yet the local government Left had to make a basic and fundamental choice. Would it orientate towards resistance and confrontation with the government? Or would it decide for Labour local government business as usual — with a few left-wing frills and a bit of 'look-boss-I'm-not-serious' posturing?

Essentially the local government left opted for business as usual, with frills. Hilda Kean, former leader of Hackney council, put it very well in Socialist Organiser of June 12: "While on ideological issues councillors like Ken Livingstone have taken a progressive stand, when it has come to key economic and financial questions there has been a real absence of left strategy.

"If for example you look at the GLC's campaign against abolition, it has not centred on close working with the unions, nor did their campaign against rate-capping. It was centred far more on propaganda aimed at the population of London in general, rather than at the labour movement bodies that are capable of organising people in trade union action.

"You cannot take a socialist stand in relation to issues like women's oppression or racism without at the same time taking on board the economic factors that materially affect people's lives.

"How can the GLC on the one hand make all this propaganda about having a GLC Women's Committee and supposedly taking notice of the interests of women in London, while at the same time it draws back from the fight for adequate resources for such facilities?"

The central choice was made well before 1981, when the local government left opted for a strategy for rate rises as its answer to the Tory cuts. Initially — for example, at the Socialist Organiser local government conference of June 1979 — this was presented as the 'short term' answer that would give us time to prepare a fight back. The councils would fight 'next time'. But 'next time' never came.

Rate rises were in fact alternative cuts — less hateful than direct cuts in services. They were not a preparation for, but an alternative to, a strategy of using Labour-controlled councils as fortresses around which to rally the working class and local communities to resist the government.

The rate-rise strategy was presented by various people — including the editors of London Labour Briefing — as radical left-wing politics. In fact it was the unmistakable signal that it was to be local government business as usual, with more or less attractive frills like grants to good causes.

Lambeth, where the left took control in the late '70s, pioneered the general retreat. Ted Knight opted for cuts within two months of the Tory victory in 1979. The local Labour Party forced him to rescind the cuts; but in April 1980 he pushed through rent and rate rises, and in April 1981, 10 per cent cuts.

Ken Livingstone said in Socialist Organiser before his election to the leadership of the GLC that a left GLC would "wherever there is an industrial dispute in London... go down and support it". Within weeks of coming to power he led the GLC into conflict with the NUR.

Instead of resisting all Tory-imposed cuts in living standards, the local government Left tried to manoeuvre by passing on, or re-directing, the cuts by way of rate rises. It became a war of manoeuvre and evasion. The left could not win. By playing it like that, the Left prepared the ground for the Tories' relatively painless imposition of rate-capping and erosion of local democracy.

Instead of a whole rash of 'Clay Crosses' across the country, we now have a wholesale collapse of resistance — except in Liverpool and Edinburgh. This collapse is only a logical staging-post on the road that the local government Left started down six years ago.

The real 'realignment' is this: a whole layer of support for the next Kinnock-led Labour government has now been created from former leftists, who learned to be 'balanced' and to 'make responsible choices' in the school of local government. They are teaching themselves, and others, to accept the same approach from a Labour government which will — Neil Kinnock says so — not restore Tory cuts, nor even completely undo Tory anti-union legislation.

Many local government leftists would still jib at such conclusions. But that is where they are leading themselves, and others. There is not one single argument used by London Labour Briefing and the local government left to justify the local-government policies of Ken Livingstone or Ted Knight that does not apply just as properly to a Labour government faced with a capitalist world environment and the IMF.

All of this was said by Socialist Organiser (or the majority of SO, before London Labour Briefing and others split away in the course of a dispute about local government) as early as 1979 — when the situation was much more favourable for the local government left to change course and to rally workers against the Tories.

London Labour Briefing needs a more adequate analysis of the experience than Graham Bash and Chris Knight give in the June Briefing.

For example, they make much of Ken Livingstone's alignment with the Euro-'communists' and Kinnockites. But *for years* Ken Livingstone's campaign against GLC abolition has been the clearest realisation in British politics of the cross-class-coalition (popular-front) approach advocated by Marxism Today!

Arguably the experience of the local government Left is as important for the labour movement as the experience of the Labour governments of the '60s and '70s. And perhaps it has been worse. For while those governments pushed masses of people away from reformism and towards seeking a better road, the local government left has taken a lot of people back towards 'choose-the-lesser-evil' reformism.

JOHN BLOXAM & JOHN O'MAHONEY

Socialist Organiser



A special magazine issue of Socialist Organiser is due out in mid-July, reviewing and analysing the whole experience of the 'local government left' since 1979. Available at 70p (including p&p) from SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

LABOUR SOCIAL SECURITY CAMPAIGN

THE FOWLER GREEN PAPER ON SOCIAL SECURITY – A SOCIALIST RESPONSE

It is high time for the Labour Party to give serious consideration to alternative, radical and socialist strategies for social security policy. At last, social security has made it to the top of the political agenda – courtesy of Norman Fowler's reviews and the split in the Cabinet over the proposals in his Green Paper. Norman Fowler has had the political courage to argue for a radical restructuring of the benefit system – and to identify it as a major force for redistribution and socio-economic change. This is not the time for the Labour Party to be left in the contradictory position of criticising Fowler by defending the present system, which is divisive, degrading and inadequate. We must move away from such a system based on regressive national insurance contributions and extensive means testing.

These were the main themes to emerge from the Conference organised by Labour Social Security Campaign at County Hall on 6th July. The Labour Social Security Campaign (LSSC) was formed five years ago to work actively within the Labour movement for a socialist system of social security. We want to ensure that social security will be treated by the next Labour government as an important issue that cannot be separated from economic policies.

The Conference looked briefly at the implications of the reviews but focussed on how to campaign and build a popular base from which to promote radical socialist alternatives to Fowler. Jeremy Corbyn MP and Claer Lloyd Jones addressed the morning session. Jeremy talked about how to campaign and keep social security high on the Party's agenda, nationally. Claer described the sort of local authority good practice and campaigning which is being developed in her borough of Greenwich. Individual members and delegates from CLPs, and claimants' unions took part in the discussions and the afternoon workshops. The workshops looked at tactics and practical methods for campaigning locally.



SHORT AND LONG TERM

In the workshops we had some tough discussions around the methodology of campaigning in the Labour Party. In particular, the relationships between campaigns like LSSC aimed at long term changes in policy; and those like the claimants' unions which are organising against the current system. The Labour Party has to be convinced that progressive policies on social security and redistribution of income and wealth can and will be electorally popular; but claimants will not believe that they will get a better deal from Labour unless they have been actively involved in the formulation of those policies.

RESOLUTION

As a result of the Conference, LSSC has sent a resolution to the NEC of the Labour Party



calling for Michael Meacher's working party papers and proposals on social security to be widely circulated within the Party; and for a national consultative conference on social security reform to be called as soon as possible. LSSC believes that Michael Meacher's proposals offer the right way forward as an alternative to the Fowler plan. They are based on the principles that *must* underlie any reform of social security: benefits paid to individuals; paid as of right to all who are unable to earn a wage; an end to means testing and a commitment to increase the real income of claimants. They need to be debated widely within the Party at all levels.

Lynda Bransbury, Norwood CLP

For further information on Labour Social Security Campaign:
Lynda Bransbury, LSSC, 40a Dulwich Rd, London SE24.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

SERA has put forward the following list of minimum demands as the basis for campaigning during the next five years. These demands, if met, would simply allow us to mark time, to limit damage rather than reverse it.

ACID RAIN

Needed now: **A phased reduction of 75% in the emission of all acid oxides into the atmosphere by 1990.*

LEAD

Needed now: **A considerably increased monitoring and removal programme of lead in flaking paints and water supplies.*

Needed: **A total ban on the manufacture of cars unable to run on unleaded petrol, and the introduction of lead-free petrol within one year with a tax concession to encourage its use.*

WASTES

Needed now: **An immediate end to the indiscriminate dumping of 'low level' nuclear wastes offshore, and the transport of highly radioactive materials through populated areas.*

Needed now: **A ban on the importation of hazardous wastes for dumping, and much stricter controls over the British re-processing and disposal industries.*

Needed: **An agreement by British companies to prohibit the export of toxic products and processes judged unsafe by European standards to the developing countries.*

WATER

Needed now: **An increase of at least £100 million per annum investment in the water industry as a first step in regenerating the collapsing infrastructure of water supply and sewage mains.*

Needed: **A programme of construction of inland treatment works and properly designed long sea outfalls to remove the increasing burden of pollution from our rivers, estuaries and bathing beaches.*

INDUSTRIAL HAZARDS

Needed now: **A greatly increased level of research and surveillance by government bodies, in particular the Health and Safety Executive; a suspension of all suspect compounds, pesticides such as 2,4,5–T and the replacement of asbestos and other hazardous fibres with inert alternatives.*

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Needed now: **An expanded programme of research and monitoring to assess the public health implications of recently discovered contaminants e.g. nitrates in the public water supplies, and phosphates from pesticides and fertilisers.*

WHAT SOCIALISTS CAN DO FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

1) Campaign for the protection of national, public and environmental health services, and the extension of monitoring for environmental health hazards using social and environmental audit analysis.
2) Organise for health and safety in the work environment within your trade union.
3) Support the new initiatives of Labour councils: public health/environmental hazards centres, local health care support networks, anti-pollution monitoring groups, and environmental health education programmes.
4) Join SERA!

Andy Porter (Brighton SERA and SERA National Council)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Two approaches to the South African Revolution

After four years research and study, the Human Science Research Council of South Africa, a semi-government quango, has made the astonishing discovery that the main cause for "racial friction and violence" in South Africa is — wait for it — the "apartheid system". Most white South Africans, who have happily gone along with the system, must have rubbed their eyes in disbelief when they read "that entrenched separation, population registration, a racially-bound legal system, unequal education and economic and job restrictions" all contributed to "mistrust and resentment".

All this, of course, will have come as no surprise to the overwhelming majority of South Africans. The eighty per cent of the population who happened to be born with black skins have been only too aware of the humiliation which apartheid has brought into their lives: the compulsory carrying of passes; the restrictions on where they can live in their own country; the public facilities which carry notices "Whites Only", "Blacks Only"; the butchers' hoardings advertising "Servants Meat on sale here". Those who suffered under the system had no need of an enquiry to know that they mistrusted and resented the system.

Indeed, it has gone beyond "mistrust and resentment". This past year has seen the indignation of the people at their continued humiliations boil over into active, violent resistance. While the Research Council sees "reasons for hope" in the "present reform process", for the masses this is a sign that the ruling class is on the defensive and that resistance in all its forms is the only way to send it toppling.

The report comes to the conclusion that "apartheid has failed", but failure, in the past, has never persuaded a ruling class to give up its privileges and power. There is no indication that the Botha regime is ready to commit hari-kari. The more than 600 dead in the townships since last November; the present and impending "treason" trials; the arrest and harrying of trade union and liberation organisation leaders are the true indicators of the tempo of change and not the spurious reforms with which the apartheid regime is trying to pull the wool over world opinion's eyes. The imposition of a stooge government on Namibia, in defiance of the United Nations, and the continued incursions of South African forces into Angola are further proofs what white rule is determined to hang on until it is finally removed from the scene by the armed might of the people.

What is of particular interest in the report of the Research Council is that it saw the racial divisions in South Africa as parallel to the class divisions. It described the division of the racial groups as a division between "haves" and "have-nots" and saw in this a recipe for "destructive conflict because the divisions between race and class coincide perfectly."

CLASS ANALYSIS

In this the Council would appear to support the class analysis of the South African Society of the National Forum (NF) as against that of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the African National Congress (ANC).

The National Forum sees the struggle against apartheid as "merely a point of departure in the general struggle against racial capitalism". In the words of Neville Alexander, who spent 10 years on Robben Island and is one of the leaders of NF: "*The class struggle against exploitation and the national struggle against racial oppression become one struggle under the general command of the black working class and its organisations. Class, colour and nation converge in the national liberation movement.*"

As against this, the ANC, basing itself on the Freedom Charter, consider *"that most peasant-workers, who form the bulk of the working class under apartheid are not yet class conscious enough or ready for the adoption of a socialist solution"*. ("Our Freedom Charter" by Jack Simons in SECHABA — official organ of ANC — June 1985, p. 8). Simons goes on to emphasise that *"... Congress is not a workers' party with a socialist programme. The liberation struggle is directed against white domination and national oppression..."* Congress sees the present stage of the revolution as one directed against national oppression. *"It is not directed against the owners of domestic capital"* (op. cit.).

BLACK LABOUR MOVEMENT

These two approaches to the South African revolution should be seen against the growing involvement of the newly emergent black labour movement with black political activists. Until comparatively recently, the major unions resisted efforts by black political movements to involve them in their campaigns against apartheid. They felt that their priority task was building their shop-floor strength. But a series of actions by South African security forces against their leaders has changed this attitude. The death of Andries Raditsela, a leader of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) on May 6th was described by FOSATU's president, Chris Dlamini "as a watershed" in the relationship between the liberation movement and organised labour. With the black and independent trade unions moving toward closer union, we can anticipate deeper involvement of the working class, as an organised force, in South Africa's struggle for freedom.

Charlie van Gelderen



John Chapman

Anti-Apartheid rally, Trafalgar Square, 14th April 1985

Book Review

Call Me Woman by Ellen Kuzwayo

The inspiring struggle of black people in South Africa against the repressive regime has reached an all time high. There have been many acts of heroism and many martyrs. Yet the names that spring to mind are overwhelmingly men: Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu. Women who have been banned, imprisoned or killed are either unknown outside South Africa or, like Winnie Mandela and Albertina Sisulu, seen as appendages of their husbands and not leaders in their own rights. Ellen Kuzwayo's autobiography has begun to set the record straight.

Call Me Woman is more than an autobiography. Kuzwayo's life story is an indictment of the apartheid system and her book is a tribute to the many thousands of women who have fought back — and are still fighting — against that regime. A teacher and later a social worker, Ellen Kuzwayo saw her parents' farmland designated for whites only, after 100 years of freehold ownership. This was done under the notorious Group Areas Act which led to the creation of 'shanty towns' such as Soweto where Kuzwayo now lives. Two million people live in Soweto, forced to leave their homes in the country for economic reasons or like the author dispossessed of their homeland. Kuzwayo explains that initially this urban migration was, in the main, men leaving the women to take sole responsibility for the family. They often became the only breadwinners, too, when the men established 'new families' in the cities and no longer sent money home. Gradully more and more women were forced out of their homelands, entering domestic service in the homes of whites. It has always been difficult for black South African women to find employment and many resorted to brewing illicit beer.

Black women in South Africa are truly at the bottom of the heap. In law they are minors. In 1969, Kuzwayo, then a widow, had to obtain her eldest son's permission and signature when applying for a passport. She was his property, since she had no father or husband to 'belong' to. While this degrading practice has been abandoned in recent years, many others still flourish. Ellen Kuzwayo suffered an emotionally and physically brutal first marriage. Desperately ill from a misdiagnosed ectopic pregnancy she finally escaped, spending the night in the veld to avoid discovery. But she was forced to leave her two sons behind and it appears that even after her divorce she has no rights with regard to her young children.

Her sons eventually came to join her in Johannesburg, the younger one illegally. Black people have no automatic right to live wherever they want, unlike the whites, including foreigners. Her second son who had previously been expelled from university for political activity, was finally arrested and banished to a small town near the Botswana border. His 'crime' was involvement in a literacy campaign. Six years later, Ellen herself was imprisoned for five months without being charged because she was a member of the Committee of Ten which had been established following the Soweto unrest.



Ellen Kuzwayo

Kuzwayo's work as a teacher and social worker was very much linked to the Church. She does try to explain what she sees as the contradictory nature of the Church: 'medical practice, through the mission hospitals ... reduced some of the fears related to diseases and conditions which previously were explained as the wrath of the gods and ancestors. Some women were freed from the suffering of child-bearing.' Later she writes: 'Black people have always been critical of a segregated system of education designed for them by colonists ... Then again, it is truly to be regretted that the white missionaries disregarded or belittled many of the customs and traditional practices of the black community..'

What does come across in her account of her work with organisations like YWCA is the solidarity and support black women have for each other in the most appalling and dangerous situations. Education and social work in the way that Kuzwayo describes it are not props to the system, but a vital form of self-help and self-reliance.

Call Me Woman leaves many questions unanswered. Despite Kuzwayo's sympathy and solidarity with the struggles that have taken place in Soweto and elsewhere and her admiration for the leaders of the ANC, she gives no real analysis of the political and economic situation in South Africa today; nor is it entirely clear how she thinks the struggle should proceed. But one thing is clear: her life is an inspiration to all women but especially black women who as she says 'shall never give in to defeat'. Her experience is so obviously the experience of black women the length and breadth of South Africa: 'The commitment of the women of my community is my commitment ... in this long struggle to liberate ourselves and to bring about peace and justice for all in a country we love so deeply.' Whatever her political understanding of what inevitably must happen in South Africa she has helped put the black woman in that country in her rightful place — and with much insight into the position and role of those women. As she says at the end of the book, translating an old Setwana proverb: 'The child's mother grabs the sharp end of the knife'.

Reviewed by Tessa van Gelderen, Brent South CLP

Call Me Woman by Ellen Kuzwayo, The Women's Press, £11.95 & £5.95

UNITED CAMPAIGN AGAINST PLASTIC BULLETS

The aims of the campaign are:
1. A total ban on plastic bullets.
2. Full compensation for injuries caused by plastic bullets, or for the deaths caused by them.
3. Prosecutions to be pursued where deaths or injury have resulted from the clear disregard for the "rules" supposedly applied to firing of plastic bullets.

The campaign, directed by the families of plastic bullet victims, is determined to bring about an end to the use of these lethal weapons, responsible to date for the deaths of 15 people, many of them children.

THE VIDEO

"Plastic Bullets" — the deadly truth! is a video commissioned by the campaign and produced by Independent Irish Television.

The video exposes the hypocrisy of the British Government policy of "Law and Order", when it seeks to drive people off the streets in an attempt to depoliticise them and militarise a "peaceful" solution in Ireland.

Plastic bullets, the deadly truth! tells the stories of families who have lost relatives as a result of this murderous policy. It portrays the strong resistance of these families and also the terrible pain inflicted upon them. It lays bare "the shoot to kill children" policy of the British security forces in their attempt to keep the nationalist areas of the north of Ireland and the dignity and sense of justice of those directly affected by the deadly weapon, the plastic bullet gun.

The video is on VHS format and lasts 45 minutes. It can be purchased from United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets, c/o Claire Reilly, 20 Monagh Crescent, Belfast 11, for £30.00.

THE DIRTY POLITICS OF FOOD AID

A complex game of international politics is currently being played out in the Horn of Africa. The USA, and its European allies, have for years been waiting to win Ethiopia back to the West. Do that, and the 40% of all Middle East oil exports passing through the Red Sea are protected — and the Soviet Union loses its huge naval bases in the Eritrean Dahlak archipelago, and with that loss, the Indian Ocean-Med. Sea link through the Red Sea becomes that much more difficult for the USSR. So we are witnessing a cynical and coldly calculated manipulation of the appaling drought and famine. Tens of thousands have already died as a result. Worst affected are the inhabitants of Eritrea (at war for 24 years with the Ethiopian regime) and Tigreans (10 years at war). The basic problem for imperialism though is that the EPLF, TPLF and other liberation movements inside Ethiopia have been capturing more and more territory. Without massive arms supplies from the USSR, the Ethiopian regime would soon fall. Eritrea would gain independence under an anti-imperialist EPLF, with a strong likelihood that the new Ethiopian regime would be not just anti-Soviet, but anti-imperialist too.



The US is thus playing the famine card as best it can. Paul Vallely of the Times last month reported on the disclosure in Washington of a confidential May 1984 US report showing that the administration recognized a disaster situation in Ethiopia but that aid was deliberately withheld. Not until October did the National Security Council agree that aid should be given direct to Eritrea and Tigre via the Sudan. The intention was to provide some aid which would indirectly help both the EPLF & TPLF, thus pressurising Ethiopia, without supplying enough for the liberation movements to gain all that much. Meanwhile the rest of Ethiopia was still getting the lions' share, making it almost totally dependent on Western food aid (the USSR has only ever supplied military aid, and transport, to Ethiopia). This stick and carrot approach was amended in May this year after large parts of Tigre were recaptured by the Derg (Ethiopian Government) from the TPLF. The US and USSR held a secret meeting in Addis Ababa at which the US agreed to support the setting up of feeding programmes by Catholic Relief Services and World Vision, in areas now controlled by the Derg. This would have a crucial effect on the Derg's attempts to regain the whole of Tigre, which it could then use as a base to launch a major offensive into Eritrea. It demonstrates above anything else that the present weak Ethiopian regime is more preferable to the US than the likely alternative.

DENIED FOOD AID

Over 3 million Tigrean and Eritreans have been denied food aid over the past few months as a result. In February this year, only 4.8% of the emergency short term aid asked for by the Eritrean Relief Association was received. It appears at the time of writing that the TPLF have recaptured most of their former territory, and if so the US will alter its tactics yet again. It is already threatening to start aid distribution from the Sudan in September across the border; but it is inconceivable that they will supply enough emergency aid to cater for needs. But long term development aid is being withheld from Ethiopia as well as Eritrea and Tigre. Timothy Raison, the Tory Overseas Development Minister, stated last November that the British Government had no plans to offer long term development aid to Ethiopia because of the nature of the regime, and that "it is not easy to get involved with projects which the British Government deem ineffective." (He gave as an example the lack of private enterprise in agricultre). Clearly such aid would not reduce the crisis to the level where the West would best benefit. Meanwhile USSR military aid allows the Derg to continue its scorched earth policy against the Eritreans and Tigreans, forcing hundreds of thousands to flee to the Sudan.

If sufficient food aid doesn't reach the large parts of Eritrea and Tigre controlled by the EPLF & TPLF, it will severely hinder the progress of the revolutions there. Already 10,000 have left the EPLF's adult literacy campaign because of displacement by the drought.

AID AGENCIES

What of aid agencies? Most say that if they openly cooperate with the Eritrean Relief Association, linked with the EPLF, and the Relief Society for Tigre, linked with the TPLF, then the Derg may disoolve their aid programmes in the rest of Ethiopia. This leads them to criticise George Galloway, director of War on Want, which does work openly with ERA & REST, for 'rocking the boat' by attacking the Derg for "deliberately starving out whole areas of its country, paying its militia 120 kgs. of Western grain a month, and stepping up its bombing raids against civilians at a cost of £30,000 a sortie." But as George says, "there comes a time when to pretend that the famine relief effort is going well is to render a disservice to those people in Ethiopia who are most in need."

US Secretary of State for Agriculture said recently, "For the next 20 years, food can be the greatest weapon we have". A ruthless use of that weapon, plus the Derg's use of Soviet military weapons, is killing enormous numbers of people. A thoroughgoing reappraisal of the whole foreign aid system is needed by the Labour Party to put an end to the exploitative use of aid in all its forms.

Paul Highfield, Sheffield.

Solidarity with Nicaragua!

On the southern border of Nicaragua in Costa Rica a huge radio station broadcasts daily to the people of Nicaragua that their government, elected by a system similar to Britain's, is made up of dangerous communists who are intent on destroying the Catholic church and their families, and are committed to making war with neighbouring countries in a Soviet inspired conspiracy.

On the northern border of Nicaragua, from bases in Honduras, American planes break the air waves every night to fly in the logistical support to keep a mercenary army of 8000 in the field. This contra army which if officered by Somosa's ex-national guardsmen, and is ranked by a combination of Nicaraguan peasants, Miskito indians, and Central American mercenaries, is paid for by covert C.I.A. funds, and ultra right wing organisations in America. It daily terrorises those peasants, technicians and militia people whose crime has been to be active in the reconstruction of their own country.

This in a country that was barbarically ruled over by a family dictatorship for the benefit of so few people, that even many of Nicaragua's business class supported the mass insurrection of the people in 1979.

I have just come back from Nicaragua. I was part of a British brigade that built a small school. Everybody we met remembered those events because Nicaragua is a small country where the people have suffered enormously and continue to do so. The peasants I lived with described a society so violent that they still lock their doors and won't go out at night, five years later. The same peasants are even poorer now than they were in Somoza's time. This is because the American war against the country has bankrupted the Nicaragaun economy. I fear the Nicaraguan revolution is on a knife edge because the peoples' capacity to work all year in a cotton field and still not be able to afford a pair of shoes is running out!

Nicaragua is an interesting place to visit. There is a combination of a non-dogmatic socialism where most left wing groupings have sunk their differences for a collective leadership which offers a basic socialist programme, a flourishing Catholic church and a toleration for private business which is linked to national reconstruction. There is a great political idealism about many people which has resulted in experiments in workers co-operatives, health and literacy campaigns, and a prison reform programme based on the christian/socialist principle of forgiveness.

In fact what most impressed me about Nicaragua was that the political leaders and the media whilst retaining a principled left wing position in the face of economic bankruptcy and war could do so with a degree of humility, openness and lack of sectarianism that made one feel ashamed of our British tradition of programmatic political purity, contempt for other left wing tendencies and the cynical abuse of power by some Labour leaders.

Openly fund the Contras

The American Senate's decision to openly fund the Contras marks the end of America's involvement in the Contradoras peace negotiations. These negotiations were an embarrassment to America because they openly showed to the world that the last thing America wanted was peace in Nicaragua.

Now, more than ever, the Nicaraguan people need international solidarity. The Nicaraguan solidarity campaign is trying to co-ordinate opposition to these policies in the British trade union movement and the Labour Party, and can be contacted at 20/21 Compton Terrace, London N1, telephone 01-359 8982.

Julian Green

The end of Sinn Fein-Labour Liaison ?

In an otherwise informative article in the *New Statesman* (5/7/85) on the 'seaside bombshell sensation', Ed Moloney asserts that Sir Kenneth Newman and Co. have 'put paid, at least for some time, to any Sinn Fein-Labour Party liaison'. Elsewhere in the article he ascribes the desire for such links solely to Sinn Fein.

Mr Moloney, who is Northern editor of *The Irish Times*, can not have been reading his own paper. Since April it has been covering the debate of the London Labour Party with the NEC over London's wish to implement a composite resolution carried with a clear majority on a card vote at its last conference, which specifically requests such dialogue with Sinn Fein and other Irish organisations. This coverage culminated in an article of 5th June headlined 'SF to get invitation to London'. The opening paragraph reads: 'Sinn Fein are to be invited to a meeting organised by the London Labour Party on September 17th to debate the question "Should Britain Get Out of Ireland?" It will be chaired by Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP for Islington. This was decided by the executive committee of the London Labour Party by 22 votes to 3.'

Nor can Mr Moloney have been reading a sister paper *The Irish Post*. An article in its 6th July edition on a Manchester Labour conference on Ireland informs readers that: 'A spokesperson for the Labour Committee on Ireland has said that, following London's decision for free speech on Ireland and the right to invite all shades of Republican opinion to Britain for public discussion, similar initiatives are expected from elsewhere in Britain'.

And indeed the 1985 annual conference of Labour Women held in June, overwhelmingly supported open discussion on the issue of British withdrawal with Sinn Fein and other Irish feminists. (Mr Moloney can be forgiven perhaps for not being aware of this latter fact – Labour *women* are not considered very newsworthy). Also in June in the House of Commons, Peter Archer, Labour's Ireland spokesperson, vigorously defended talks with Sinn Fein by the NEC Northern Ireland Working Party.

Okay – these examples of *Labour* sought liaison with Sinn Fein preceded Sir Kenneth's defence of 'democracy as we know it' by means of PTA abuse of our Irish community. But are we to believe that what much of Labour's rank and file was campaigning for in June they will suddenly drop in July? Of course, some in Labour's leadership deeply wish that we would and indeed the London EC may be forced by the NEC to seek legal advice as to whether the NEC can constitutionally over-rule a regional EC on who it may invite to public meetings.

Peter Archer ('the essence of democratic politics is to listen to people with whom one disagrees') and the LCI (free speech on Ireland includes Sinn Fein) have democracy on their side. Sir Kenneth and the Labour leadership patently do not. Giving in to anti-Irish witch-hunts will never, ever achieve peace in Ireland. Only listening to Sinn Fein will do that.

Sarah Roelofs

RICHARD STANTON UPDATE

It was reported in the July edition of Labour Briefing that Brighton Labour Councillor Richard Stanton faced a witch-hunt because of his views on the question of Ireland. Richard was quoted in the local paper as saying "I abhor violence. But I personally feel the Republican movement is entitled to use for against the British state, as part of a war we started."

Richard's comments provoked a debate that raged throughout the party in the run-up to a General Committee (GC) meeting called to discuss the subject.

The Witch-hunt

At the special GC there was a resolution calling for Richard's resignation as a councillor. The mover of the resolution argued that those who did not subscribe to his view of what he called "democratic socialism" should seriously consider their position in the Labour Party. This resolution was heavily defeated.

A resolution supporting Richard Stanton and opposing any disciplinary action as a 'witch-hunt of ideas in the Labour Party' fared much better. Well over a third of the delegates supported this resolution and many stated in their speeches that they personally endorsed Richard's views.

Eventually a censure resolution was carried. This was obviously not our ideal outcome but it would be a mistake to view the result as a major defeat. The real defeat was suffered by a small number of soft-left delegates who wanted to use the occasion as an opportunity to isolate the serious left in Brighton Labour Party.

The Council

Richard's ordeal continued at the Borough Council meeting. Tory and Alliance councillors combined to attack Richard. Employing tactics of which Ian Paisley would have been proud they not only censured Richard but removed him from all council committees and barred him from school governorships.

When Richard rose to speak a large number of Tory and Alliance councillors walked out of the chamber. Richard addressed himself to their behaviour:

"I listen to all sides on this subject. But I have no time for the snivelling stooges of a political system that has produced violence."

The question of Ireland is now at the top of the agenda of the Brighton labour movement. Both the Trades Council and the Labour Party are due to debate the subject. Labour Briefing supporters are delighted to have the opportunity to argue our view that the best way to contribute to getting a just peace in the North of Ireland is to get Britain out.

Bryn Griffiths,
Brighton Labour Party

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