LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING 40p
No 55 DECEMBER 1985

BLACK COMMUNITIES DEMAND:

JOIN US AGAINST STATE VIOLENCE!

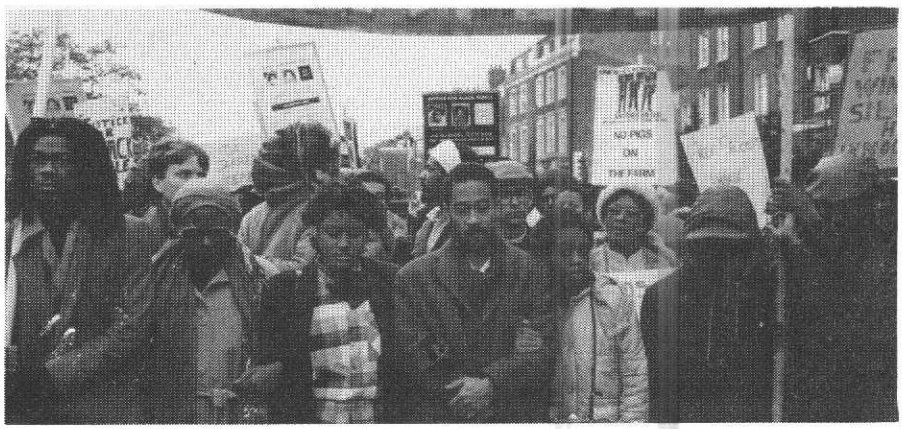
Marc Wadsworth (Vice-chair, Labour Party Black Sections, National Committee)

Black people have placed themselves firmly in the vanguard of Britain's working class struggle and the fight is being led by Black youth. The march by thousands of people protesting against the police maiming of Cherry Groce and death of Cynthia Jarrett – "one law for Black, another law for Blue" – was a watershed in Black politics. Like the emergence of Labour Party Black Sections, it is a clear indication of the potential might of an oppressed group previously without a voice.

Both forces demonstrate the fundamental importance of the pressure for Socialism being mounted inside and outside organised Labour. Fighting Black Sections, prepared to forge links with Black struggle in Britain's inner cities and Azania's townships, will provide important lessons for the Labour Movement. Already we have demonstrated that Afro-Caribbean and Asian Socialists can be galvanised into a national unity. This despite the neo-colonialist "divide and rule" tactics of our oppressors – all of them hell-bent on inventing "inter-racial" strife and on criminalising Black youth who stand and fight state racism.

Our opponents on the Right have attempted to shift attention away from the victories of Black youth by focussing the political debate on "law and order". Will Bernie Grant condemn youth violence? Not, will Thatcher condemn state violence against the working class.

Kenneth Newman is given a blank cheque to hand his troops even more arms and even more unchecked power. He arrogantly puts Londoners "on notice" he will use CS gas, plastic bullets and water cannon on "rioters". Our demands – for the police gunman who shot Cherry Groce to be charged with attempted murder, the officers who trampled over Cynthia Jarrett as she lay dying to be brought to justice, full compensation and a public inquiry – are ignored.



John Chapman

A moment's silence outside the home of Cherry Groce, in Brixton. November 11th.

In the current climate of Labour Left "realignment" (i.e. sell-outs), we are supposed to be grateful for small mercies. If we shout too loudly, we will be ditched like the Miners and Rate-capped councils. But the struggle for Black rights is an unstoppable juggernaut, not a bandwagon that can be abandoned at the whim of the white Left. The labour movement will continue to ignore our demands at their peril. It has not been lost on Black people that trade unions eagerly crush our demand for Labour Party Black Sections, yet are conspicuous by the absence of organised contingents on the Anti-Apartheid protest and Black People's March for Justice. We as Black people have an absolute, non-negotiable right to self-organise as a means of forging collective action against racism.

We are doing this through the creation of Black Sections and trade union caucuses. And Black Socialists up and down the country have shown their support by voting – as the miners did – with their feet. Thirty-five Black Sections in two years. Labour must break with its racist past, stop *telling* Black people what we can and cannot have and support our demands. In a Britain where Black youth are screwed into the ground by crippling unemployment, the sledge hammer is used as a calling card by police raiding Black households and the state killing of a Black mother rates hardly a media mention, Labour is horribly muted. The movement has a choice – remain part of the problem or join us in struggle.

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

SUPPORT THE NEASDEN HOSPITAL OCCUPATION

Hospital workers in Brent have taken the only action left open to them following the local health authority's decision to close their hospital. On October 17 they occupied their hospital and are now "working in".

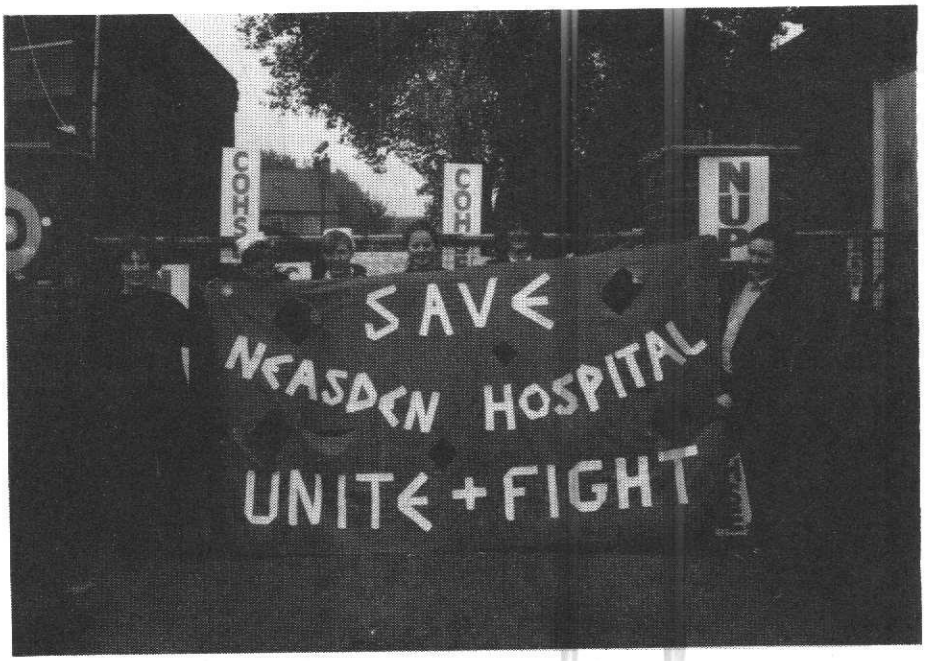
The Health Authority decision to close the hospital was taken on the casting vote of the Chair, businessman Ivor Kingston, after an 8–8 tie. The District General Manager, Lorne Williamson, has now issued a threatening letter to staff calling the occupation "improper", despite the fact that he had already admitted "that adequate patient care is being maintained despite the fact that senior administrative staff are being denied access to the hospital." However, Peter Marshall, Regional Officer for COHSE, which represents many of the staff at Neasden, told *Briefing*:

"I do not consider the occupation to be 'improper'. The act of occupation was carried out in a reasonable, responsible and legal manner. It is the letter from the District General Manager that is irresponsible, and is in complete breach of the normal policies of Brent DHA. This occupation demonstrates the workers' commitment to patient care and to saving their hospital."

Support for the Occupation has come from the Brent Health Emergency campaign, local Labour Parties and health unions both inside and outside the district. Delegations have already come from as far afield as Oxford, St Albans and Hemel Hempstead. Both COHSE and NUPE have made the occupation official.

The Hospital is an 83-bed geriatric hospital, and where comparable hospitals have closed in the past (for example, St Benedicts in Wandsworth), up to a third of the patients have died soon after transfer: this is known as the "relocation effect."

Hospital occupations have been a valuable weapon for health workers since 1922 when the Radcliffe Asylum was occupied. More recently, occupations of Hayes Cottage, Northwood and Pinner, and Rivermead Hospitals have won major victories in keeping hospitals open. Thornton View Hospital in Bradford was kept open by occupation for nearly two years after it was due to close. One major difference between an occupation and a strike in the health service is that the health authority has to continue paying wages and providing supplies to staff for as long as patients remain in the hospital.



Maria McLaughlin

A new pamphlet, Occupy & Win*, published by the NHS Emergency Action Committee, sums up the logic behind hospital occupations:

"... it is not certain that occupying a threatened hospital will keep it open, but it is certain that if you do not occupy, it will close."

If Neasden Hospital can be kept open, it will give confidence and encouragement to both hospital workers and health campaigners not just in Brent but across the whole country. But to succeed, they will need the promise of supporting strike action at least across the Brent Health District, in case management attempt to remove patients and break up the occupation. And they will need support both on the picket line and financial help for publicity, from all those committed to saving the NHS.

Join the picket line: Neasden Hospital, Brentfield Rd, NW10 (Neasden tube).

Send donations and resolutions of support: "Save Neasden Hospital Campaign", c/o Occupation Committee at the above address.

Latest details and speakers from: Occupation Committee, tel. 01-459-2251, bleep 107.

**available from London Health Emergency, 335, Grays Inn Rd, London WC1. Price 75p plus postage.*

NEW CUTS — BY THE BACK DOOR

By John Lister
Publicity Officer, London Health Emergency

- **Closures** of beds, wards and whole hospitals;
- **Cuts** in nurse recruitment, ancillary and other services;
- **Postponement** of overdue repairs, developments and community care schemes;
- A further **raiding** of financial reserves.

These are among the desperate measures being taken by District Health authorities to cope with the extra £130m bill landed on them by the government's refusal to pay more than half of this year's pay awards to doctors and nurses.

London alone faces an effective cut of over £12m across its 30 health districts: the equivalent of cutting £1.77 from the health care of every man, woman and child in Greater London.

This cut comes *on top* of cuts in London's NHS spending each year since 1982, totalling £67m, with another £14m cut next year. And the picture gets worse: most London districts are to lose more money *every year for the next 10 years*, as NHS resources are drained from the capital to the shire counties. Some Districts will lose 20% of their annual budget by 1994.

Already patients and health workers have begun counting the cost of the government decision to use the far-from-generous pay award to nurses as a pretext for more back-door cuts.

- In **Hackney**, 72 beds, one in ten of the District's acute hospital beds, face closure to save a staggering £1.2m by April.
- In **Hounslow**, 100 jobs are to be axed across the district.

Continued on next page

FIGHTING RACISM: WHERE NEXT FOR ILEA?

Soon there will be a flurry of activity as we move toward the selection of our candidates for the new London flagship, the ILEA. For the first time we will select candidates primarily on the grounds of their educational views.

Members of the ILEA panel of candidates should be questioned on Equal Opportunities in the education service. Prospective candidates not positive to the active promotion of equal opportunities should not be selected. The candidates' views should make due recognition of what has been done and should demonstrate how the initiative is taken further and accelerated.

Recent policy initiatives from the current ILEA Labour group on race, sex and class have in many ways given a new focus to educational debate and thinking, but are now running out of steam and struggles to reach the May Election deadline.

These initiatives have received much publicity and in some quarters it is believed that the education service of Inner London is well on the way to eliminating racist and sexist discrimination.

Many people, particularly from within the black communities in London, are beginning to see the evaporation of these initiatives and are calling into question their basis as the course for action. Good intentions by well meaning politicians do not change or even seriously challenge the way institutions reproduce racism.

If we really intend to eliminate racism in education then the focus of the debate must now be relocated. The idea of confronting institutional racism without direct referral to the structures and organisation of the education service is plainly ludicrous.

The argument is both simple and socialist. If we seriously want to create an anti-racist service then structures of education will need dismantling and rebuilding, giving the emphasis and real power to the users and employees of the service; that is the community and the rank and file trade unionists.

Community-based service

How would a community-based service challenge racism? For a start it would invert the present top-down model which begins by requiring institutions to produce anti-racist declarations. Much of the process of producing these anti-racist statements was characterised by the predominantly teacher orientated involvement. In many instances antagonistic teachers, obstructive heads and racist governors further limited the involvement of support staff at any given stage.

What we want to see are employment practices within the ILEA directed towards recuirting significant numbers of black men and women as workers in schools so that the initiative flows from them. The model is then a bottom to top one.

Imagine the potential of the NUPE members, drawn from the school kitchens, cleaning, meal supervision, technician and schoolkeeping staff who demanded action to be taken to stop racist graffiti. How long would the school be the training ground for such "artists"?

Such an impulse would carry more force than that instigated by a well meaning minority of teachers, living in mortgaged suburbia and never having had the experience of racist graffiti directed against themselves.

In this respect the trade union and student union movement are a central focus for the new anti-racist initiative. There is an urgent need to transform them to take a lead, rather than backseat role.

An anti-racist ILEA employment policy put into practice could transform the structure of the membership of some unions. Active black trade unionists could then take initiatives from a point of strength.



The present situation of a few highly paid senior officers acting as the black conscience of their political masters, will never be anything more than a tokenistic measure, unless black people are represented in significant numbers at all levels in the ILEA, and not just peopling the race relations section.

Most policies already produced by ILEA establishments assume existing power relations within the education service. They tend to be clear on pupil to pupil racism, or indeed pupil to staff raicms. But what actually happens when a senior white teacher acts in a racist manner towards a junior black colleague? What actually happens when a black pupil complains of racist behaviour by a white teacher? We know both are prevalent in many schools and colleges because we hear of the countless incidents during discussions with black people.

What kind of transformation would there be if each school and college had its own monitoring group made up of representatives from all sections of the school community and able to make recommendations at any level in the establishment? If we mean business then representatives of these monitoring groups should meet regularly with the newly elected ILEA members.

Racism is not about nasty people doing bad things to nice people. It's about power and control. If effective power in education is given to ordinary people, a genuinely comprehensive and community based service can be created. This will not only release valuable resources for widespread use, but will be the embodiment of the notion of education for all, hinted at by the Swann and Fish Reports.

The days of racist practices in our schools would be numbered if parents, black and white, used the same educational establishments as their children at the same time; if racist teachers had black adult students in their classrooms.

The schools run by communities to suit their needs and giving power to the very people who suffer from the effects of race, sex and class discrimination, would give rise to a real movement towards the eradication of racism in the ILEA.

MIKE PETERS & STEVEN COWAN

•**Croydon** DHA has brought forward the closure of the Queens Hospital, and cancelled a new orthopaedic ward designed to cut the waiting list. Private medical sharks have moved in to set up a new orthodpaedic unit next door!

•In **Bexley**, a 17-bed ward has been "temporarily" closed.

•**Tower Hamlets** must cut another £1m this year.

Next year

Other areas around the country are just as hard hit. But the misery caused by *this* year's back-door cuts could be dwarfed by the even more massive cutbacks that could occur next year.

South West Thames RHA is warning District Treasurers to plan on the basis that there will be *no* extra central government money to cover the first full year of the new pay scales next year — let alone any further pay rise.

If this were the case, then on official figures, London Districts in NE Thames region alone could face a bill of £9.4m: SE Thames Districts would be short by another £6.3m. These amounts could only be cut by wholesale closures, in which patients would be bound to suffer.

Against this background, all eyes will be on the District Health Authorities, which up to now have meekly accepted and implemented every cutback handed down by the government.

Will any of these non-elected bodies take a stand and challenge the rigid cash limits which are strangling our health services?

Or will they again obediently wield the axe for the government — leaving the health unions, community organisations and local Health Emergency campaigns to wage vital rearguard battles in defence of services, jobs and NHS standards?

For more information on cuts, campaigns and the fightback, contact London Health Emergency, 335, Grays Inn Rd, London WCl (01-833-3020).

POLICE OUT OF OUR SCHOOLS!

Richard Rieser,
President, Hackney NUT

The publication of the Hackney Teachers' Association pamphlet 'Police out of Schools'*, and the adoption by the Inner London Teachers' Association (the Inner London Division of the National Union of Teachers) of a similar policy to Hackney teachers has led to a considerable amount of coverage of this issue in the media.

The policy of only letting the police into our schools when they have a legal right to be there has been in force in a number of Hackney schools for some years. The policy is based on the proven institutionalised racism of the police (see the Policy Studies Institute Report on the Police).

The introduction from the pamphlet summarises our arguments.

INTRODUCTION

There is nothing that especially qualifies the police more than any other group in society to teach five a side football, disco-dancing, road safety, law or even not to go with strangers. Althernative non-racist agencies exist in all these areas if schools want outsiders to develop these and other areas of the curriculum. The Police insistence that they be allowed to present to children these parts of the curriculum has an ulterior motive of control and intelligence gathering. Given the proven institutional racism of the Police we should not allow them access to our schools.

Hackney Trades Council, Hackney Council, Hackney Black Peoples' Association and the Colin Roach Support Committee all have a policy of breaking links with the police. We agree we can have no dialogue with the police until they tackle their institutional racism.

Teachers in many Hackney schools have operated our policy for a number of years. It is now time to spread the case for no police in schools and make it part of each school's anti-racist policy. Once the school NUT union group has voted on the policy it should be taken to a full staff meeting, the parents and Governors and, in secondary schools, to the school students for endorsement. In this way whole sections of the community will be sending a clear message to the police that they will not have our consent to come into our schools and that they must become accountable. They must start by tackling racism in the force.

Hackney is an area with a multi-ethnic population, run down, poverty-stricken with very high levels of unemployment especially among black youths.

As teachers trying to overcome these disadvantages and get the best for our pupils and the best from them, it is impossible for us to retain the confidence of black parents and pupils if we are seen to be allowing the police access to our schools and classrooms.

We cannot accept that the police have any legitimate role in our schools. The commitment of the Metropolitan Police to visit every classroom once a year can only be viewed as a cynical PR exercise, while at the same time in the community and on the streets Instant Response squads operate with a heavy hand towards all black people.

As teachers and trade unionists we find ourselves unable to accept the level of racism found throughout the Metropolitan Police. The ILEA and the NUT have made racist discrimination and remarks by any teacher disciplinable, both under the staff code and union rules. Despite Lord Scarman's report, in the wake of the Brixton uprising, recommending that the Metropolitan Police do the same and make racist remarks and behaviour a disciplinable offence the Home Secretary, the Police Federation and Sir Kenneth Newman have rejected this recommendation. Teachers, like all other predominantly white groups in our society, have had to take active steps to combat and outlaw racist behaviour, practices and ideas throughout the curriculum. This process has hardly begun but there is at least a commitment. The Police have shown no such willingness even after the Policy Studies Institute Report clearly documented systematic racist and sexist behaviour and remarks throughout the Metropolitan Police.

Clearly the position Inner London and Hackney Teachers have taken has touched a raw nerve with police and their uncritical supporters both in the government and elsewhere, as in the leadership of the NUT and the SDP. Neil Kinnock has also made some critical references to the policy.

In fact the Police Federation are so worried about salvaging their role in schools that on November 6 they held a conference with teachers' unions and other 'interested parties' about improving their input into the school curriculum.

But the question remains. Why do the police really want to get into every London classroom on a regular basis. The Hackney Teachers' Association would argue that the racist and increasingly paramilitary way that the police operate on the streets mean whole sections of society are alienated from the police.

The police are then left with trying to operate a giant confidence trick on young people in schools. They try and convince them that the reality they and their families experience daily isn't really happening. If teachers and other adults collude in this exercise not only will they lose the confidence of their pupils; but more seriously they will be condoning the erosion of our democratic rights that paramilitary policing and the new Police and Criminal Act and Public Order Legislation are bringing.

HENDON POLICE ESSAYS

Blacks in Britain are a pest. They come over here from some tin-pot banana country, were they lived in huts and worked the fields for cultivating rice and bananas, coconuts & tabacco, and take up residence in our already over-crowded island.

They never realy seem to work at a legal job (except as doctors) but seem to exist off sponging off the welfare state & to which decent taxpaying white-law abideing citizens like myself contribute to by working hard at work 8 hrs/day - 5 days a week.

Quite frankly I don't particularly have any liking what so ever for wogs, nignogs and Pakies. They come into Britain take up our homes

**If you want copies, write to Hackney Teachers' Association, 57 Barrets Grove, London N16.*

EDUCATION — LONDON LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE '86

1986 will be a crucial year for London Education. In May Inner Londoners will elect their education authority directly. The budget of the new ILEA will be severely rate-capped by the government and the incoming members will also be handicapped, as the imaginative accounting used to put off the moment of reckoning with Thatcherism this year turns into a nightmare of spent resources next year.

Last March, the London Labour Party Conference, significant policy gains were made for London education and ILEA staff with composite V, which among other things, rejected budgetary cuts, moves to end sixth forms in secondary schools and the compulsory redeployment of ILEA staffing, all of which placed useful constraints on the ILEA members.

Next March, the London Conference will have an important influence. Hackney North C.L.P. has submitted a bland resolution in support of the policy gains this year but designed for receiving amendments as the developing situation becomes clearer. Amendments must reach Walworth Road by 10th January. Education is still undervalued by the London left. Make it a priority for your organisation and ensure that amendments are submitted to the Hackney North resolution. Here is the text:

"This Annual Meeting deplores the Government's continued attacks on state education in general and the ILEA in particular through its unwillingness to finance or allow realistic spending levels.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM in SCHOOLS

DEFEND THE DANEFORD 12

11 anti-racists were arrested on October 16th when a 200-strong protest outside the Inner London Education Authority offices in Tower Hamlets was attacked by the police. After grabbing the organisers the police then went for the President of Hackney Teachers' Association, Richard Reiser, who is partially disabled. They dragged him along the ground until he passed out. Those who tried to help him were arrested. A teacher from East London had her sari torn, while another had his shirt ripped off.



The protest had been called by the East London NUT and Hackney NUT Campaign Against Racism in Schools because of the appalling indifference from ILEA at the wave of racist attacks in schools in East London. The worst case is Daneford school, in Bethnal Green. Bangladeshi school students have been knifed, slashed and beaten up – parents have been kicked and stoned. This has been going on for months but the school management and ILEA have done nothing.

Despite their claim to have an anti-racist policy ILEA has a long record of dismissing the needs of schools with many students from the black and Asian community. Over 70% of the pupils at Daneford come from Bangladeshi families yet ILEA, and Frances Morrell in particular, have ignored the pleas, over years, from the NUT group and the community for adequate resources. A constant request has been for the appointment of Bangladeshi pastoral teachers and administrative workers but Morrell hasn't even bothered to reply to our letters – just as she is now trying to ignore our demands for action against racist assaults.

Last July, in response to the racism at Daneford and other East London schools, the Campaign Against Racism in Schools was launched. This brought together Bangladeshi parents, school students, teachers and organisations such as Bangladeshis Educational Needs in Tower Hamlets, East London and Hackney branches of the NUT and Tower Hamlets Trades Council. From the outset the Campaign had two key aims: *to fight the cancer of racism in our schools; *to challenge ILEA's paper anti-racist policy – and to demand the adoption and implementation of a genuine anti-racist policy.

Morrell refused to reply

The Campaign called on ILEA to take action against racist violence. Again Morrell refused to reply to our letters. Instead the NUT group in Daneford were informed by the Divisional Education Officer that the racist attacks were just "alleged racial incidents". Outraged by this arrogant dismissal, the Campaign called a public meeting to challenge ILEA's complacency. Morrell was invited (she didn't turn up or even respond to the invitation) together with the ILEA members for Tower Hamlets. Over 300 came along and speaker after speaker condemned ILEA's attitude. Only Peter Aylmer, an ILEA member for Tower Hamlets, tried to defend the Authority. He admitted that ILEA's anti-racist policy "wasn't working" and confessed that he had been "deaf" to the demands of the Bangladeshi community. How many years will it take for people like him to listen?

The meeting went on to agree a seven-point programme of demands and called the picket of th local ILEA offices and an anti-racist rally on the steps of County Hall on the afternoon of October 17th, when Daneford NUT had agreed to strike against ILEA's failure to take action against racist attacks in the school. Teachers and school students from Daneford, supporters from the Campaign, and delegations from many London schools, all came to County Hall. Again Morrell refused to meet us.

Before the rally, she and all the Labour members had been written to. Only Peter Aylmer showed up – and repeated his excuses. The school students marched to the office of Barrie Stead, Chair of the Schools sub-committee, and insisted he come and hear our demands. He tried to fob them off but they refused to leave until he agreed to come. Once in front of us he tried to waffle out of trouble. Typical of his replies was his excuse for the scrapping of Bengali teaching for first to third year Bangladeshi school students at Daneford. The lessons had been stopped because "Bengali was very hard to learn".

Frances Morrell's cronies kept telling us that she wasn't in County Hall. But we eventually spotted her in one of the corridors. Before she could disappear we told her that she wouldn't be allowed to get away with her disgraceful policy of covering up for racism any longer. Then she ran into her office and her "minders" barred the door.

Support those arrested

Of course, an immediate priority for the campaign now is to support those who have been arrested. We have called a picket of Highbury Maginstrates Court from 9.00 a.m. on November 22nd, the first day of the full trial (seven days have been set aside to hear all the cases), and the Inner London Teachers Association (NUT) have agreed to call a half-day strike on that morning. A defence fund has also been set up and donations are urgently needed. Please send what you can to: "Daneford 12 Defence Fund", 59 Bow Road, E3. (It's 12 because another trade unionist was arrested on an earlier anti-racist picket at Daneford).

But most importantly we are determined to build a strong anti-racist campaign in and around schools in East London. We must defeat the racists and force ILEA to take a real stand against racism.

Norma Hundleby,
Co-chairperson, Campaign Against Racism in Schools,
NUT Rep, Daneford School.

We note the ILEA's attempts to maintain resourcing and staffing levels in 1985/6 and reject any further cuts in 1986/7, either from the outgoing authority or from the newly elected one.

We further note the improvement in morale brought about among ILEA staff by the ending of complusory redeployment in 1985/6 and we insist that this policy is continued indefinitely. Any re-organisation of staffing should only take place with the agreement of the staff concerned and of their unions."

Keith Lichman
(Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP)

POLICE REPRESSION ON BROADWATER FARM

Following the "riot" on Sunday October 6, the following police actions have taken place in and around the Estate:

*At least ten raids have been carried out by police squads, some of them armed. Doors have been sledge-hammered open. Personal property, food, clothing, and even children's nappies have been seized.

*Three entire families have been detained following raids on their homes. At least ten children have been placed in local authority care following detention of their parents. One three-year-old was questioned by police regarding her mother's activities. Some families have been unable to find out where their children are behind held.

*In two cases the police clearly entered the wrong houses. One belonged to a school teacher who was away on holiday. The other was the home of an elderly couple who were also away. On their return the man collapsed and died of a heart attack.

*On 17th October the home of Mrs Beverly Scott (58), her husband (72), and their children was raided at 8.30 p.m. by police including members of the elite D11 unit armed with six rifles. Following an intensive search family belongings including groceries were seized. Mrs Scott's two sons, Michael (27) and Stafford (25) were both arested and detained for ten and twenty-four hours respectively. Stafford Scott, a leading representative of the BWF Youth Association, was charged with obstructing the police "while carrying out their duty". He claims that he was punched and assaulted while being driven away in the police van. A third son went to Wood Green police station on Friday October 18th, accompanied by a solicitor. He was detained for 28 hours then released without charge.

*To date 65 arrests have been made, primarily of juvenlies. Those detained have been held without access to solicitors while police carry out interrogation. Parents and social workers have also been denied access. One thirteen year old was held for 54 hours before seeing a lawyer.

*So far 24 charges have been brought in connection with the "riot". Four people have been charged with the murder of PC Blakelock: a 26 year old green grocer and three juveniles. Other charges including burglary, threatening behaviour, and carrying explosives.

*The four people charged with murder are being held in custody and four others are in secure unit accommodation, in one case as far away as Wolverhampton.

*All residents of BWF have been asked to complete a questionnaire delivered to each flat by groups of police. Those interviewed are asked all their personal details and those of their family including occupation, information regarding their neighbours and their ethnic origin and country of birth. The police compel anyone refusing to answer their questions to sign a document to that effect.

*People have been held for over thirty hours without clothes in police cells. A man was stripped, left naked in a prison van and his life endangerd by gassing with carbon monoxide. The excuse of the police was that they were charging a dead battery outside by revving up the engine and letting the fumes into the cell.

Reprinted from Haringey Labour Briefing



Press Association

A Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign has been established to support and organise residents and the Black community against police repression. All Labour Party comrades should become involved in its activites and win support for its aims in their trades unions and community groups.

The Campaign urgently needs funds. Donations will be gratefully received at: Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, c/o Broadwater Farm Youth Association, Tangmere Block, Broadwater Farm, Tottenham, N17. Tel. 808-1667.

RACIAL ATTACKS ON THE INCREASE

For Blacks and Asians physical assaults, harassment and abuses have become almost daily occurences. Yet the police seem strangely reluctant to acept that these crimes are racially motivated, or to investigate them as vigorously as they might. That vicious, murderous attacks go unsolved and unpunished is a disgrace to the whole of civilised society.

Some families experience almost daily harassment. Bricks, bottles and stones are hurled — families live in fear, while their windows are constantly smashed, petrol poured in through their letterboxes, and very little or no protection is given by the police.

These incidents confine children to their homes, keeping them in constant tension and fear. And when children see worried and scared parents at home they lose their last refuge of security. Children can't even play in their own gardens. People pound on their doors at all hours of the night, yell racist abuse — and the police do not help!

Black people view these attacks as racist attacks. But the police will not charge the attackers unless there is a serious assault. The police "turn a blind eye" to racists when dealing with crime against the Blacks and Asians; and therefore, in fact, victims are reluctant to report crime because they do not trust the police response.

The police ought to remove their self-imposed restraints. They should stop trivialising such racial attacks and should systematically investigate racial and fascist groups in the pursuit of those responsible for such attacks.

A hard core of fascists and racists are whipping up hatred against the Black and Asian community.

Recently the pattern of attacks has been alarming. It has spread out from inner city and housing estates outside to more outlying areas.

The rise of and symptom of organised racism and fascism must not be allowed to grow as a result of complacency of police and government. Here, the patience of Black and Asian youth is wearing thin. It is only a matter of time before they will say enough is enough. Racial attacks and harassment has become an epidemic, a cancer on our society.

Man Mohan
Lewisham CLP

HACKNEY PARTIES OPPOSE REDETERMINATION

Hackney Labour Parties recently met to decide the manifesto on which next year's council elections will be fought. In so doing the Party re-affirmed the direction taken by the council last year — before the sellout of a minority of Labour councillors over rate-capping.

The section of the manifesto reaffirming the Party policy of no cuts in jobs and services and no rate rises above inflation was almost non-contentious, being overwhelmingly carried with only 5 votes against, including that of council leader, Tony Millwood.

On rents the conference voted for a rent freeze for a further year, and thereafter for no rise to be higher than inflation. This will ensure that the borough's tenants have the lowest rents in Inner London. The decision was taken against a backdrop of equivocation by the council leadership over a district auditor's report which has encouraged councillors to review the rent levels already agreed for this year. No rent increase took place in 1984, and we continued that policy in the budget we carried this March. Yet when approached by the Party for a clear stand Tony Millwood has refused to say that he will abide by the budget decision.

The conference also carried opposition to the policy of re-determination on rate-capping, in line wth the existing LGC position, and in sharp contrast to the action taken by Labour group and council this October. While there was agreement in Labour group that the central issue was the need for government resources for the borough, the majority of councillors present then diverted attention away from this central demand by agreeing to be involved in talks about expenditure *limits*. This simply means that the council could have the governmental authority to spend more, without the corollary of government money to finance that spending. It also means the Department of the Environment having access to information on council finances which will not just affect its ability to intervene in Hackney's budget making process for 1986-7 but for years after. It will be able to say where our money should be spent and on what and Hackney will have even less control over its own financial processes.

The policies passed at the conference were radical ones designed to improve the day to day existence of working people in our borough. But, most importantly, the conference also realised that the best policies in the world mean little unless they become the basis of campaigning now. The only ward which has Tory councillors, Spingfield, has already selected its candidates for next year's elections and the party has twice canvassed the ward with positive results, not least being a number of recruits to the Party. Other wards are now embarking on the reselection process and there will be continued opposition to those councillors who, having reneged on past commitments to the working class, now want to continue that stance in the future against the Party's policies.

Hilda Kean
West Down ward
Councillor, New River



John Chapman

THATCHER'S FRIENDS IN BARKING AND DAGENHAM

A lot has been written about the fight against rate-capping. However, there has been little focus on councils which do not face rate-capping. Barking and Dagenham Council is one such Labour-controlled local authority, which through its frugal and sparse policy objectives has consistently managed to stay within the government's targets.

If questioned on the matter, the Labour Group can show that this has all been achieved without any redundancies. But this is misleading. When one of the local authority workers leaves or retires, their position is unlikely to be filled. The department heads have to take the job to a committee before advertising the position, which has meant that since 1981 over 300 jobs have not been filled or have been entirely deleted. And the jobs that do remain are predominantly in lower grades. In fact Barking and Dagenham Council can boast that they have the highest proportion of 'low graded' jobs in the Greater London area.

With the Government's recent attempts to rob more money from Labour controlled authorities and to force councils to put their services out to tender, some councils are preparing their fightback. But not Barking and Dagenham!

Their answer is to attempt to drive down their workers' wages and conditions (as they have already done with the DLO workers) by preparing to compete with private firms, with all of their exploitative practices.

Capitalisation

The other policy they are pursuing is capitalisation along with the reorganisation of services. Halls are to be turned over to community organisations with, as yet, no guarantees to the caretakers as to whether their jobs will be safe.

Recently the Labour Group has overstepped itself by acting in a most sly and oppressive manner. There is an ongoing dispute over London Weighting which has become tied to the reorganisation issue.

The unions are negotiating with the council on London Weighting and the movement of staffs to alternative accommodation. As talks were getting nowhere the unions decided to boycott any movement of staff until the council agreed to negotiate fully on the issues. Instead of returning to negotiations with the unions the Leader of the Council, along with the Deputy Leader and the Borough Treasurer decided to sneak in to the computer punch room, with private hired labour, to move the equipment out, late on Friday afternoon. Fortunately some of the punch room women were still there and managed to call a shop steward. As a result the porters refused to hand out the key to the room thereby foiling the move. On the following Monday the workers were so incensed that over 500 of them walked out for a mass meeting which resulted in an apology from the councillors concerned. So here we have the spectre of a so-called Labour council behaving in a repressive and totally un-socialist manner and there is little hope that things will improve while these councillors are in office.

Radicalised workforce

These and other incidents have helped to radicalise the council's workforce and this has to be build upon. It is essential that all of us fully understand what the local authority, as puppets of the government, are doing to both jobs and services. We have to campaign at every depot and workplace to put pressure on the council to stand side by side with the local authority workers in struggle.

Mick McKeever,
(Dagenham CLP in a personal capacity)

SOUTHALL: STRUGGLE FOR BLACK MP

Glebe in Ealing-Southall constituency is the largest branch in the country with a membership of 870. The AGM of 1985 was held on 5th January and 20 delegates to GMC were duly elected. All 20 were supporters of the concept of a black MP for Southall. They were supporters of the Glebe Branch Secretary Madhav Patil who is also chair of Ealing Southall Black Section.

The Constituency's sitting MP Sid Bidwell aged 68, is fighting for his reselection and local black activists led by Madhav Patil want a black MP.

However immediately after the Glebe AGM Bidwell and his supporters made numerous unsubstantiated allegations to the NEC. Eager to preserve the status quo, the NEC instituted an enquiry into the authenticity of the Glebe membership and of the conduct of their AGM.

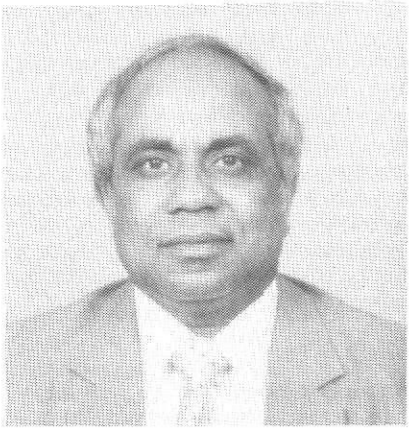
INVESTIGATIONS

After several months of investigations the Glebe membership was totally vindicated but despite that, the NEC ordered a new AGM on August 21st unde the direction of Steve Morgan, Asst. Regional organiser (London Region).

But immediately evidence emerged of ambiguities, irregularities and inaccuracies in the procedure. Despite assurances to the contrary, Patil was not consulted by Morgan about the date and venue of the AGM – and this led to considerable confusion.

The date on the Agenda was wrong. Instead of 21st August it was stated to be 31st August. The venue was wrong. Instead of Featherstone High School, "Montigue Ways" it was stated "Featherston Road". This error led to confusion and about 50 members missed the meeting.

Because only two persons came from Regional office to organise the meeting (one being Steve Morgan himself) there was a slow process of checking membership cards at the entrance of the hall and a queue was built up about 25 to 30 yards outside in unhospitable weather. The actual meeting started one hour and 15 minutes late.



Above: Madhau Patil

In spite of personal assurances to Patil by Morgan that no slate would be circulated and that nominations would be called from the floor, when Patil arrived he found a slate issued by the supporters of Sid Bidwell was being circulated. Also at the same time ballot papers were handed to the members at the entrance of the hall.

Large number of members inside the hall completed their ballot papers with the names from the slate issued to them. Those who were unable to read or write were helped by the supporters of Sid Bidwell. It raised a serious objection and a fundamental election rule was broken that the ballot papers were completed even before the nominations were called.

No independent Punjabi language interpreter was brought from outside. On the contrary, the person who was chosen was none other than the spouse of the Leader of the Bidwell's supporters.

Patil raised points of orders in the meeting without success. He queried the validity of the meeting. In reply, Morgan who was chairing the meeting threatened to have Patil thrown out.

VIOLENCE

Opponents of Patil then began to jostle him. Violence broke out.

Realising the meeting had been stitched-up Patil withdrew with about 150 supporters so as not to validate any decisions made and to avoid any escalation of violence.

Acting on an impartial report by Ealing-Southall's EC observer, the CLP rejected the outcome of the AGM in its meeting held on 20th September. They have demanded a third Glebe AGM be called.

However Morgan is doing his best to get the AGM validated throughout the NEC to avoid being discredited. It is believed that the higher-ups in the party have closed their eyes over the irregularities committed at the recall AGM. On the other hand, Southall CLP is not going to accept anything other than a fresh AGM. A bitter feud between CLP and Regional Office therefore has developed. In the meantime one of the Glebe activists has taken the matter to the Court.

The Struggle for a Black MP continues. .

Naresh Banga
Ealing-Southall Black Section

WOMEN GET LEFT OUT!

Narendra Makanji,
Nadine Finch,
for Target Labour Government

The London Labour Party is likely to enter the next general election campaign with no increase in the number of women candidates. Only seven women candidates have so far been selected to contest London Constituencies. (In the 1983 election, there were 14 white women candidates, only two of whom were elected).

This is despite more women putting themselves forward as candidates, the spectacular successes of local authority women's committees and the political impact of Women Against Pit Closures and the Greenham Women.

Some constituencies (Hornsey and Wood Green and Westminster North) agreed to women only shortlists and thus ensured a woman candidate. Other parties must consider this method as a means of evening the gender imbalance.

The women selected so far are: *Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar), Ann Keen (Brentford and Isleworth), Kate Hoey (Dulwich), Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green), Siobhan McDonnell (Mitcham and Morden), Harriet Harman (Peckham), Jenny Edwards (Westminster North).*

And women are strong challengers in Hackney North, Newisham West, Depotford, Fulham, Acton, Ealing North, Streatham and Feltham and Heston.

'Municipal Stars'

But the overwhelming majority of parties are choosing municipal "stars" such as Phil Turner (leader of Camden Council) in Hampstead and Highgate, where he was selected in preference to either Kate Allen or Julie Fitzgerald (also Camden councillors) and although parties have, at last, prioritised the selection of black candidates, all of the five so far chosen are male.

However, it is noticeable that the women selected are those who have been active campaigners on policy issues in the past. Jennie Edwards has fought for many years for radical changes in policy towards nuclear arms and our involvement in NATO. Mildred Gordon has argued strongly for working class women and a more socialist education system. They have not been fighting mainstream left political battles as "token" women, but leading struggles on policies which have been prioritised by women and their involvement as women has added an extra and powerful dimension to the argument.

Other women contestants are now arguing the case for a United Ireland, for a radical economic strategy and for democratic control of the police force in the wake of the uprisings in Tottenham and Brixton.

Double Value

Women have been prominent in campaigns and policy formulation in the London Labour Party in the last few years and their double value as women and as experienced campaigners needs to be stressed. Otherwise women will be for ever arguing for constitutional equality and no matter how structurally important that is. the struggle also goes on outside of formal meetings as well.

The wider women's movement and the Black Sections campaign have shown what gains can be made by raising the argument without compromise. Labour Women should follow their example.

HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM CAMPAIGN FOR A SOCIALIST COUNCIL

CAMPAIGN STATEMENT

"Thousands of people in Hammersmith & Fulham have to cope with unemployment, homelessness, poor housing and inadequate social services. Labour is committed to start tackling these problems immediately we are elected. We recognise that we will inherit a Tory cuts budget and that we will have no powers to raise additional revenue from rates. We will be faced straight away with the decision: do we work within that budget, or do we increase expenditure in order to respond to the most serious problems in the Borough? For socialists there is only one choice.

Labour resolves:

1. **To introduce our own budget, designed to increase and improve services in the areas of greatest need in place of the Tory cuts budget and to reverse immediately cuts made by the Tories and Liberals in areas of severe need.**
2. **To cancel the rent increase which will be imposed on Council tenants in 1986 by the Tories and Liberals and to freeze rents while we remain in office.**
3. **To refuse to cut services or expenditure in real terms.**
4. **To guarantee that there will be no Council redundancies and no reductions in staffing levels under a Labour Council.**
5. **To use all available powers to stop the sale of Council land and housing, and to seek to extend planing powers to bring land into use for local needs such as homes, jobs and open space.**
6. **To begin to take positive action in our first year of office in favour of working class people, disabled people and people who suffer from racism and sexism, particularly in the areas of housing and employment.**
7. **To adopt a strict policy of contract compliance to ensure that no Council contracts are given to any private companies unless they operate a policy of equal opportunities, towards women, black people, lesbians and gay men, and disabled people, and recognise the rights of Trade Unions to represent their workforce.**
8. **To refuse to increase rates above the rate of inflation while we are in office and to demand that the Government restores to the Borough the millions of pounds of block grant which it has withheld from the Borough in order to enforce cuts in services.**
9. **To increase resources for developing more participatory and accountable local government, by decentralisation and consultation.**
10. **To stick to these policies to defend jobs and services even if the Government or the courts make our actions illegal, because the only alternative is to administer cuts on behalf of the Tories.**

This Party believes that these ten points should be the central theme in our Manifesto and should be included in the introductory section. It instructs delegates to the Local Government Committee to attend its meetings and support these proposals and it urges the L.G.C. to accept them."

The Campaign for a Socialist Council has been set up by comrades in Hammersmith and Fulham Labour Parties who are determined that the incoming Labour council next May will defend jobs and services.

The Council has been run by a particularly vicious Tory administration now for eight years with the help of two right-wing Liberal councillors. Since the last Council elections there have been a number of serious rifts inside the Labour Group which has included the explusion of two Labour councillors from the Party and the withdrawal of the whip from others, some of whom are still outside the official Labour Group.

At the October G.M.C. in Fulham a resolution was passed ruling out any illegal or deficit budget options for the next Council.

In Hammersmith, however, the G.M.C. decided to support the public meeting that the Campaign for a Socialist Council have called on 22nd November, to discuss the strategy that we should adopt to defend the working class from the attacks of the Tory Government that any new administration will inevitably face.

We believe that our Campaign Statement, unanimously agreed at the initial meeting, must be the central theme of the local government manifesto. It lists what are the basic and minimum requirements of any socialist council in defending the jobs and services of the local population.

Any Labour Council that refuses to implement these policies will have sold our supporters down the river once again and ensured the election of another Tory regime in four years time.

Iain Coleman
(Fulham CLP)
Colin Ahearne
(Hammersmith CLP)

Hammersmith and Fulham Campaign for a Socialist Council
Public Meeting
"Creating Jobs, Improving Services"
Friday 22 November 1985 at 7.30
Unemployed Workers Centre, 190 Shepherd's Bush Road, Hammersmith.
Speakers:
Tony Byrne, Chair of Finance, Liverpool City Council
Narendra Makanji, Chair of Finance, Haringey Council
Hazel Smith, Chair of Housing, Lambeth Council
Alex Wood, Leader, Edinburgh City Council

AMEND!

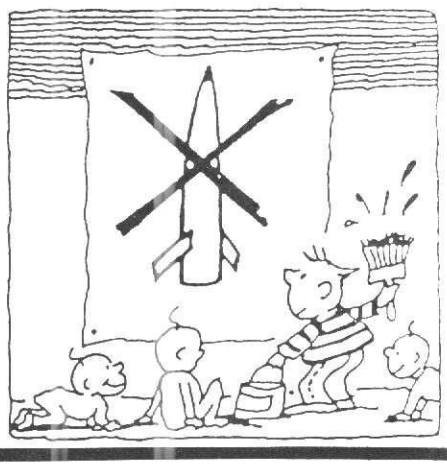
Supporting amendments are urgently required to the resolutions from Streatham and Southall for London Regional Conference.

LEWISHAM LABOUR CLUB

Are you stuck at home with young children during the day? Would you like to meet like-minded people in a friendly atmosphere, while the children play together? The under-5s group meets every Friday morning from 10.30 till 1.00 at the Labour Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham (just off Lewisham High Street). For more details phone Mark on 318-7502.

The Labour Club is open every Evening from 7-11pm (7-10.30 Sundays), and weekend lunchtimes. Live bands every Fridays; socials on Saturdays; Folk Club on Sundays and Women's Night on Wednesdays.

UNDER 5s GROUP



PRIVATISING BROADCASTING: THE COMMUNITY RADIO EXPERIMENT

The rush to apply for one of the 21 community radio licenses is over. A staggering 245 applications were lodged by the October 31st deadline. London's five licences received 163 applicants! A December decision is expected and the lucky ones to be on air by early 1986.

But will the community radio experiment provide socialists and community groups with an alternative to existing stations? Will the new stations, in the words of the Community Radio Association, "reflect the plurality and diversity of views within the community"? The CRA thinks so. They've praised the government's "good sense" for having "seen the light".

Views like these have encouraged Labour Party members and community groups to support bids for community stations. Yet it's now clear that the energy and optimism expended by so many groups has been misplaced. The governemnt is cynically exploiting popular dissatisfaction with existing radio services to win support for an experiment designed to remove public control over, and to privatise, radio.

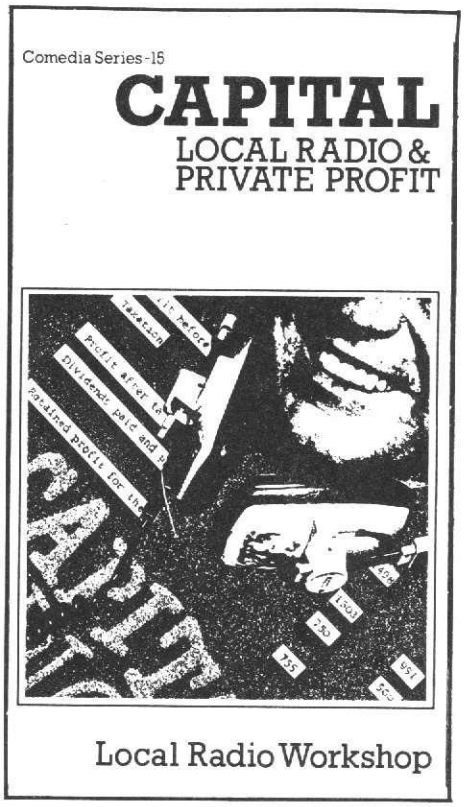
Tory Broadcasting Strategy

The limited regulations (in the 1981 Broadcasting Act and the BBC Charter) which prevent broadcasting organisations behaving in the same way as Fleet Street, are based on the principle that Broadcasting should be accountable to the public, not to the whims of private capital. It is this principle which the Tories want eradicated. Broadcasting should be regulated by market forces. Public accountability must give way to private profit.

The government have already pursued this policy in other areas. In 1982 Cable was introduced with the bare minimum of public controls over ownership, advertising and programming. BBC senior management is busy preparing the Corporation for commercialisation. Managament know that the Peacock Committee, due to report next summer, will recommend the partial break up of the Corporation and the acceptance of advertising. Radios 1 and 2 are tipped for ads, and BBC local radio for privatisation.

Privatising radio

The Adam Smith Institute, advertising agencies, Tory MPs and the commercial radio bosses' organisation, the AIRC, want some deregulation. France and Italy are cited as models, where the removal of public controls has led to greater freedom of choice for listeners. In



fact, in Italy and France the lifting of public controls over radio has led to a rapid concentration of private control and a consequent reduction in real choice for the listener. There are vast profits to be made from deregulation.

The community radio experiment announcement last July is part of the government's plans to privatise radio. The Directors of the AIFC welcomes the experiment as a device to "prove that such degrees of regulation that we've had are not in fact necessary for local radio." The experiment will function without the controls which currently oblige contractors to provide a full and balanced service to the public and is intended to provide the government with the case for dismantling the Broadcasting Act. Knowing this the AIRC are submitting proposals for changes in the Act to the Home Secretary and the government plans a Green Paper on radio at the same time as the Peacock committee reports. The stage is set for legislation, possibly in the 86–87 session.

Unaccountable Radio

Given all this, it's not surprising that there are few restictions on the stations. Newspaper chains and overseas companies many of whom already have stakes in commercial broadcasting can easily expand into community radio. The stations will not have to provide a local news service, deemed too expensive by present contractors, and will be under no obligation to balance their output. There will be no right of reply on community radio.

Unlike Independent Radio or ITV, community radio stations can take unlimited advertising, and will be subject only to the supervision of the Advertising Standards Authority, the body which controls Fleet Street advertising. The competition for advertising revenue will be fierce. The stations cannot be owned by local authorities, nor can they be "political".

Control of the experiment will be with the Home Office. An unelected Community Radio Advisory Panel will sift the applications. Headed by Stephen O'Brien, chief of Business in the Community, the panel's remit is basically to establish a set of small under-regulated businesses. The absence of proper controls will mean that the stations will eventually become owned or dominated by big established media groups.

A Bonanza for Business

Already the profiteers are lining up. Hardened commerical radio veterans, ex-employees and shareholders, from Capital Radio and LBC (London), BRMB (Birmingham) and Invicta (Kent) are involved. *Time Out*, the London Newspaper Group, the Cambridge Evening News, and the North Wales Evening News are amongst the print groups bidding. TV interviewer David Dimbleby, who used Tory anti-union laws against the NUJ, has a bid in. Ex-pirates with strong links with Tory MPs, like Radio Jackie, join Richard Branson's Virgin Vision and the multinational Samuelson group in the race.

Responding to Community Radio

In the end it will be big business who get the most benefits from the community radio experiment. Yet there are positive ways of fighting back.

The development of a network of publicly or trade union funded training and production workshops with proper unionised staff is something groups could get involved in whilst campaigning for *more* public control over *all* radio.

Monitoring the ownership, output and employment practices of the new stations will provide valuable evidence for arguing the case against further privatisation. Between now and the Green Paper next summer, there is time to build up pressure within the movement to demand that public control over all radio stations is increased. Any new stations must be publicly funded, democratically accountable and pay proper trade union rates.

Fighting "privatisation by stealth" is hard. But it's the situation health, local government and mineworkers face. Recognising that that is what community radio stands for is the first, essential, step towards building a campaign to preserve and develop public control of broadcasting.

Tom O'Malley
(Local Radio Workshop)

Local Radio Workshop,
12 Praed Mews,
London W2 1QY
Tel: 402 7651

EDUCATION AND TRAINING — BUILDING FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Tim Kemp (Brent East CLP)

Tim Kemp works for the Greater London Training Board.

October was a worrying month for those who are still trying to convince people that the Tory Government's industry and employment policy is anything but a shambles.

First there was David Waddington committing the Government to a policy of contracts compliance (a la GLC) in order to create more opportunities for black workers Problem was, the rest of the Thatcher administration had long since decided to prevent local authorities from doing just that by introducing legislation that protected employers from the enforcement of equal opportunities law.

Then there was the impressive insensitivity of Jeffrey Archer who seems determined to 'out-Tebbit' the Tory party Chair, and, most recently the grotesque ignorance of the Minister of Employment, who publicly dismissed the reality of unemployment in Hackney.

BACK DOOR TO REPATRIATION

There was even Ministerial support for the charity 'Recall', which is trying to raise £3m in order to set up a training centre to train West Indians [does this include Black people born in Britain? – typesetter] to return to the Caribbean so they can set up their own businesses. Training, in other words, as a 'back door' route to repatriation.

The political abuse of training to further other policy imperatives has, under Thatcher, become commonplace. Repeatedly we see training programmes designed, not for the developmental, skill or employment needs of the trainee, but rather as a means of accommodating the demands of an employer-led industrial relations policy (or a racist immigration policy).

Training is an area where there is not even the comic relief of Tory slapstick to distract us from the very real long term damage that is being done to London's training infrastructure. At work is a policy that is consistently antagonistic to much needed and democratically accountable, local authority investment in quality training. Apart from Abolition, the Government is able to use its powers under the 1984 Interim Provisions Act to hold up the development and continuation of several key training projects around London, as well as force the closure of the Greater London Training Board's innovative youth training centre at Denham Court.

ANTI TRADE UNION POLICIES

Indeed, over the past six years we have witnessed several major examples of the abuse of training as a means of furthering thinly-disguised anti-trade union policies. The present YTS, with its pretence of quality skills training, is invariably little more than a pre-vocational activity designed to lower wage expectations, reproduce social divisions and artificially fudge unemployment statistics.



Charlton TNG centre

The Government's passion to privatise is also expressed through training. The decision to force the Skillcentre Training Agency to pay its own way or face closures, and the proposal to establish a training loans scheme to shift the cost of training onto the individual are only two more examples of the extent to which training is used to impose unilateral political decisions.

THE PEOPLE'S TRAINING CENTRE

It is significant that in the same week that the 'Recall' training scheme was reported, a very different £3m adult training centre was launched in Charlton. The Charlton Training Centre came about as a result of a local and community group initiative to save and improve an MSC training resource that was being closed down by the Government. A consortium of local people worked in co-operation with the GLC's Greater London Training Board and other statutory bodies to translate their vision of a community training resource – complete with childcare provision, outreach workers, full provision for people with disabilities, and an aggressive equal opportunities policy – into a practical reality. In stark contrast to the 'top down' training approach to social engineering so favoured by the Tory Government, the Charlton model demonstrates a truly democratic and locally responsive model of education and training – a model that places its greatest emphasis on the process of consultation, of building from the grass roots up.

For as long as training is seen as something that can be used to further Central Government control at the expense of worker and community participation, then we will be forced to continue to contend with training that nobody wants for jobs that do not exist.

With over 400,000 Londoners out of work and over £2,500m of public money being spent to keep them that way, Londoners have every right to insist that they are involved in the process of determining their own training and employment future. There is no excuse for avoiding or ignoring public concern, commitment and comment

A SLICE OF WORKING CLASS HISTORY

One of the treasures of London's working class history is to be found at 37a Clerkenwell Green, EC1, the building which for the last 52 years has been occupied by the Marx Memorial Library. It is the oldest building in this area, dating from 1737, and practically always associated with the working class.

It started life as a Welsh Charity School at a time when the owners of the means of production were beginning to realise that working people were needed who could do more than just speak the King's English. In its day it was among the first radical working men's clubs, later it housed the Twentieth Century Press — the first Socialist Press in Britain, publisher of all the early socialist material, works by Marx, William Morris, Hyndman, Belfort Bax, Walter Crane, the weekly publication *Justice*, and many others.

William Morris was associated with those early days and the banner he made for the Hammersmith Socialist Society hangs in the lecture hall. Many others involved with the London labour movement were associated with the building.

Lenin worked there from 1902–1903 to edit ISKRA (The Spark) prior to smuggling it into Tsarist Russia.

The present library was founded with two objectives in 1933, as a protest and counter to the burning of books taking place in Nazi Germany and to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Karl Marx's death. The Library does not get any regular grant, although it is recognised as a Charity, and in 1969 a Greater London Council building preservation order was granted to it. Any steps that can help financially to preserve this corner of the labour movement's living history will be appreciated, not only by those who at present use the Library, but also generations to come.

Visitors are always welcomed to the Library which is open Mondays and Fridays 2 to 6pm, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 2 to 9pm, Saturday 11 to 1pm. Groups are welcomed but a date needs to be fixed beforehand — telephone 253 1485.

Max Egelnick
(Secretary) Marx Memorial Library

Having confidence in my Labour Party politics

Sheila Webb,
Secretary, North Hackney CLP
(in a personal capacity)

When I joined the Labour Party I did so with a certain amount of self-consciousness and diffidence. I joined after a period of illness and I had to summon up what little self-confidence I had to go along and talk to the membership secretary about the party. The reasons for my illness have a long history, but it was very much to do with my oppression as a woman.

At one point I couldn't even go out, or if I did because I had to, I would hurry home as quickly as possible to the safety of my room. The constant sexual harassment which women suffer from every day of their lives as they walk, cycle or travel around London was too much for me to take. Every comment, whistle, lewd look was acutely painful and embarrassing. Fortunately these feelings turned to anger and now finally have reached the state of indifference. I suffered from overt or subtle forms of sexism every day at work, but I was 'lucky' – I didn't have a man at home to continue my oppression there.

But my anger at these overt and what are really quite minor expressions of sexism was really just a symptom of the oppression I have fought against most of my life. Being the daughter of a miner and a housewife I was raised like most working class girls to have limited expectations of life. As with almost all of the girls at my primary school, I went to the local secondary modern. We couldn't expect to go to the grammar school and many parents wouldn't even argue for it, because kids like us didn't go there. Even at eleven years of age I was aware of the difference. If you went to secondary modern your fate was sealed as no-one stayed on at school beyond fifteen, and you were expected to work as a shop assistant or at the local paper mill, or perhaps become a clerk or typist.

Dependence on men

What was deeply instilled into us was not only our class position but our dependence on men. It became clear early in my teenage years that in order to have any security in life, in order really to have any role as a woman, I should find myself a nice steady lad with a trade, a good skill, and it didn't matter too much what I did for a job. This kind of socialisation instilled in me a sense that I was really just going to hover in a state of a non-person until I found my man and became complete. Just like the romance novels and comics, my idea of the future ended when I was to marry.

Obviously all the working class lads with whom I grew up had similar values instilled in them – they must become apprentices, learn a trade if they could, and when they had a steady job and sown a few wild oats they could settle down with a nice girl.

The deal was to be much the same as my parents – the man was expected to earn the money and provide security for the woman who was to stay at home at least part of the time and raise the family and look after the man. This is excatly how the bosses like it, and is exactly how the trade unionists played it – arguing as they did for the 'family' wage, never challenging working hours so that men could seriously consider sharing the child care, never taking into consideration women's needs. There have been times in my adult life when I have despaired at the way trade unionists and the Labour Party have colluded with capitalism in the oppression of women and consequently their own oppression.

So I had a lot of unlearning to do as well as learning. I had to learn to deal with sexist men both inside and outside of the Labour Party. My activities with women–only groups helped increase my confidence and make me feel at last that the way I saw things was shared by other women and I wasn't mad at all. I also had to learn to have confidence in my politics within the Labour Party, where although I align with the left I have felt very alienated by left groups within the party who have about the same effect on me as my experiences when I first went to higher education. Here, I felt totally out of my depth and not really meant to be included – after all, it seemed as though I had very little in common with most of the other students. Left groups made me feel equally inadequate, they seemed to be the same aura of middle-class exclusiveness about them – at least that's how I perceived them, and still do.

What I am working towards is a Labour Party where socialist-feminist politics are blended so thoroughly they cannot be separated. Only then will we be anywhere near changing society for and with the oppressed majority of the world, because only then will women be fully a part of the working class struggle.

LONDON WOMEN'S CONFERENCE: WOMEN STAND FORWARD

On Saturday, January 18th, London women will meet at their Annual Conference and discuss a wide range of policy issues. And because of their experience in struggles around rate-capping, the need for the re-unification of Ireland and the recent miners' strike, the policies agreed will be more clearly socialist than many we saw passed at October's Annual Conference.

Women, black and white, with first-hand experience of oppression on grounds of class, sex and often race and sexuality as well, understand that only radical policies will achieve the socialism we say we want.

They also bring with them the wealth of feminist experience that in the last decade has brought a new dimension to the struggle fore re-unification in Ireland by drawing parallels between the imperialist domination of the six counties and the day-to-day oppression of women by male society.

The strip searching of women prisoners in Armagh Prison, the suppression of women's rights to abortion and the expression of their own sexuality is both a symptom of the partition of Ireland and British capitalist culture.

This inter-relationship of oppressions was acknowledged by Sinn Fein members at their recent conference, when they voted for 'a woman's right to choose' after a very powerful speech by a woman delegate challenging other delegates to vote against women's autonomy, while campaigning at the same time for Irish autonomy.

At the women's conference, eight women will be selected to represent London women on the executive of the Greater London Labour Party next year.

It will be a year when London selects new borough councillors and members of the new ILEA. The Party will also have to deal with the chaos caused by the abolition of the GLC by the Tory government. And this chaos will hit women hardest in terms of the loss of services and jobs they have to rely on.

We need to select women representatives who will fight through the GLLP to protect the interests of women through their experience of feminist struggles.

The GLLP will also continue to be involved in the development of policy as part of the national policy. In relation to this, discussion on Ireland, the need for a Radical Economie Policy and for a socialist foreign policy and our commitment to NATO will be crucial.

In selecting our eight representatives we need to look at their commitment, their involvement in relevant campaigns and their politics. To argue that we are electing women just as 'women' is to deny that women are political.

Vote for those who will fight for your rights as Black, Irish, Lesbian and Socialist feminist women.

Nadine Finch, Sarah Roelofs,
Two of the women representatives
on the 1985/6 GLLP EC
(in a personal capacity)

Next London Editorial Board: Monday 6th January at 6.30pm at County Hall.

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LABOUR BRIEFING

NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 23 DECEMBER 1985

STAND BY LIVERPOOL COUNCIL!

Yvonne Nolan
Liverpool NALGO member
(in a personal capacity)

As the uncertainty over the future in Liverpool continues and there appears almost daily new rumours over various deals to resolve the crisis, it seems important to reiterate one simple fact. There is insufficient money to provide a decent level of services for the people of the city, and the fault lies with the Thatcher government.

As expected, the pressure from the Tory press and media has been directed towards the City Council finding its own solution to the present financial crisis, but such tactics are now being employed by large sections of the Labour Movement in Liverpool. Energies, particularly amongst the soft left of the Labour Party, are directed towards an internal resolution of the crisis and the removal of Militant Tendency control, which, by definition, means adopting the line of Kinnock and the right wing. The concept of any outward-looking united campaign against Tory cuts seems to have been lost along the way.

Polarised

Following the Stonefrost Report, the document produced as a result of the General Secretaries' visit to Liverpool, positions have polarised even further. 'Stonefrost' basically lists a series of options for the City: rate rise (around 15%), rent rise, redundancies, vacancies freeze, increased charges or capitalisation. Obviously within each one of these options is the question of degree, but what the report suggests is that a 'package' containing elements of all the options is necessary to restore financial confidence in the City. The report also states that in order to maintain present spending (i.e. £262 m.), if no other measures were taken, a rate rise of 80% would be necessary.

Interpretations of 'Stonefrost' differ widely amongst the various sections of the Labour Movement. The most diametrically opposed being those of the City Council on the one hand and "Liverpool Labour Left", NALGO and the other unions in the 'Forum' (the body of unions now no longer affiliated to the Joint Shop Stewards Committee) on the other. The City Council states that 'Stonefrost' offers no acceptable options and calls for Trade Union support to continue the fight. The alternative view supported by the 'Forum' unions and Liverpool Labour Left is that it is possible to resolve the crisis within the terms of 'Stonefrost' and it supporters a rate rise and 'some degree' of capitalisation.

Witchhunt

Liverpool Labour Left, who held their inaugural meeting under the Tribune banner, claim to be organising a Broad Left within Liverpool Labour Party. If this were the case it would be an important and necessary development. The danger is that it is likely to be controlled by those elements whose primary interest is to conduct a witch hunt against Militant and who would sooner see the Liverpool working class paying the cost of Tory cuts than fighting a united campaign which, if won, would allow the Militant Tendency to claim the victory was theirs.

NALGO has supported the position of an internal resolution of the crisis and has urged the City Council to balance its budget on the recommendations of 'Stonefrost' and opposes the Council allowing the money to run out. It is now in declared opposition to the City Council. The implications of this policy are that if, as seems likely, the City Council decide to 'go for broke' and the City becomes insolvent, branch policy is for strike action. In that eventuality, any strike would be against the Council rather than in their support against Tory cuts.

Balance sheet

There can be little doubt that when the balance sheet is drawn on this struggle, there will be many justified criticisms of the tactics employed by Militant, their inability to work in a united front and the resulting alienation of large sections of the workforce. However, notwithstanding those criticisms, the stand which has been made is undeniably correct and must have the support of the Labour Movement as a whole.

NALGO, the most powerful of the 'Forum' unions, could have taken this course. Lip service is still being paid to support of the Council and condemnation of the government but any active campaigning to back up these words is notably absent. Instead of leading its membership in a united campaign against Thatcher's decimation of Local Government, it begins to look as if the membership is to be led by the nose and sacrificed on the altar of sectarianism within the Labour Party, as the positions taken by Liverpool Labour Left and the 'Forum' unions move closer together. The stark truth is that the cannon fodder in all this are the jobs, services and future of the Liverpool working class.

STEPPING UP LEFT UNITY

Labour Left Co-ordination

Times are hard for the Labour Left. The miners have been defeated, and still suffering further blows to their union. And the Party leadership under Kinnock has firmly reasserted control over the Labour Party and pushed the Left to one side.

Nevertheless the Tories too came out of the miners' strike weakened, and the chances of a Labour government are better than for a long time. The Left therefore has a difficult task: while working for a Labour victory at the next election, it has to warn against the policies and priorities of the Kinnock leadership, and it has to keep a strong and unified Left together for the period after the election. If Labour wins the election its bankrupt foreign and economic policies will scupper any attempts at radical reforms and lead to widespread dissent in the Party. If it loses Kinnock's right turn will be discredited and a bitter internal inquest is inevitable. If it forms a coalition a struggle will ensue over the 'heart and soul' of the Party.

The Labour Left Co-ordination was formed in the wake of the miners' defeat from an initiative by Labour Briefing. It brings together in regular discussion the Campaign Group of MPs, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Labour Briefing, campaigning groups within the Party such as the Labour Committee on Ireland, Black Sections, and LCLGR, along with left tendencies such as Socialist Organiser. At the recent Party conference it was able to produce a conference broadsheet and a joint left fringe meeting at the end of conference to assess the next steps, as well as to facilitate the production of a joint left daily bulletin.

At the first meeting after conference all the components of the Labour Co-ordination seemed enthusiastic about stepping up the level of joint collaboration and projects. It seems that the difficult situation for the Left has forced a certain 'realism' and understanding of the necessity for Left unity on to all the major components of the 'hard left'.

The Labour Left Coordination is therefore planning the following steps. 1) The LLC is working with the Campaign Group and CLPD with a view to organising joint fringe meetings at the regional, women's and youth conferences next year, and also where possible a joint bulletin for the conference.

2) The LLC has agreed to prioritise taking up the issue of the economy and Labour's hopeless policy at these regional conferences and also as an issue up to the next election. We will be sponsoring a conference called by the Socialist Society and the Campaign Group in February next year around an alternative economic policy for Labour, which will discuss Andrew Glyn's and the Campaign Group's pamphlet 'A Million Jobs a Year'.

3) The LLC has sponsored the miners' amnesty campaign, set up at a Campaign Group/Trade Union Briefing fringe meeting at this year's Party conference.

4) The LLC has agreed to start coordinating the collection and distribution of information about the witch-hunt against left wingers going on around the country. In collaboration with the comrades formerly involved in Labour Against the Witchhunt, we have set up a small sub-committee within the LLC to collect and publish the information which is currently not available on the localised witch-hunts.

5) We hope to discuss with local Left caucuses, Briefing groups, Campaign groups and union left caucuses how we can co-operate over the next period. We will be only too happy to come and speak to local left caucuses and to discuss how to strengthen the campaigns and organisation of the Left.

The next meeting of the Labour Left Co-ordination is on Saturday 30th November. If you would like details of this meeting, or more information about the Labour Left Co-ordination, write to the Secretary (Davy Jones), 57 Lofting Road, London N1 1ES or ring him at work on 01-437 0189 or at home on 01-607 9729.

OUTLAW AIDS DISCRIMINATION!

Earlier this year, a young gay waiter at the Hippodrome nightclub in London was sacked when it was discovered that he had been exposed to the AIDS virus. He didn't actually have AIDS, but tests revealed that his blood contained antibodies to the AIDS agent, HTLV-3, and he therefore stood a small chance of possibly developing AIDS sometime over the next few years.

Though the waiter was later reinstated following protests from the lesbian and gay community, his case highlights the growing problem of ill-informed discrimination against people with AIDS and people whose blood is HTLV-3 "antibody positive".

In the United States, this discrimination has already resulted in thousands of people with AIDS and AIDS antibodies being sacked from their jobs, evicted from apartments, disqualified from life insurance and banned from restaurants and dental surgeries.

To ensure that AIDS discrimination never reaches US-style proportions in Britain, it is urgent that the Labour Party acts to prevent prejudice. First, Labour MPs must press the government to bring in legislation making discrimination illegal. Second, failing this, the NEC must commit a future Labour government to ban AIDS discrimination. Third, Labour Councils must amend their "equal opportunity" clauses to declare that they will not discriminate against people with AIDS and AIDS antibodies in employment and the provision of local authority services.

Fourth, Labour Councils must help calm the inaccurate "killer plague" hysteria by displaying AIDS information posters in their public libraries and Town Halls, pointing out that the disease is rare and that it cannot be caught through casual contact.

Fifth, Labour Councils must help limit the spread of the virus by ensuring that their municipal newspapers carry regular health education advertisements advising people on ways of reducing their risk of infection through safe methods of sex (such as the use of condoms).

Peter Tatchell (Southwark & Bermondsey CLP)

Supporters of Labour Briefing are urged to send resolutions to this effect to the NEC, their LGC/DLP, and to the Labour Group on their local Council (it could also be submitted as an amendment to NHS motions for next year's Regional Conferences).

WITCHHUNT

Witchhunt against Black Section supporters in Birmingham

Reactionary forces in Birmingham, Sparkbrook CLP, are engaged in a witch-hunt against Black Section supporters. The party's executive have voted to recommend the expulsion of Kevin Scully, a white comrade, and city councillor Amir Khan. We must gather our strength on the Left to defend these comrades who stand accused of the trumped-up charge of "bringing the party into disrepute". It is the Labour leadership who are debasing the party by their divisive attacks on Socialist individuals and groups in our ranks. End the witch-hunts now!

The next issue of *Briefing* will be out on January 15th.
Deadline for articles: 6th January.
Next Editorial Board: Saturday 18th January at 1pm at County Hall, London.
All articles and correspondence to 162, Millfields Road, London E5.
Tel.: 01-533-2593.

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WAC—At the crossroads

The Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC) is facing a political crossroads. Its AGM on January 11th, will be of major significance in deciding a strategy which will both answer the many criticisms of LWAC and reassert the pre-eminence of its socialist feminism. Women's disatisfaction, unease and outright anger, lead to an impromptu meeting of up to 100 women at Labour Party conference. Women voiced many complaints including lack of support and organisation coupled with a very white, middle class, heterosexual image. Some women felt an alternative to LWAC should be set up.

When WAC was founded, its aim was to campaign for increased power for Labour women. This necessitates the introduction of positive discrimination and the democratisation of Labour's constitution. Women responded strongly to this, the only explicitly feminist campaign in the Labour Party, and support for WAC grew rapidly. LWAC now virtually runs the Labour Party Women's Conference and is pre-eminent in the Labour women's organisation.

—WAC

WOMEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE

As LWAC has not been able to win any of its aims for the past three years, some demoralisation can be expected. LWAC's demands have been passed overwhelmingly at women's conference, but at annual conference the trade union block vote is rolled out to thoroughly defeat them and remind women of their place – under the control of Labour men.

Unfortunately LWAC's reaction to this has been to turn in on itself and indulge in a "protracted session of chest-beating and wailing" to quote one ex-Executive member. There has been little attempt to form any kind of analysis of LWAC's position. The reaction of a section of the LWAC leadership is simply to place the blame for everything on all Labour men, individually and collectively.

While patriarchy's existence and male power and privilege from women's oppression are self-evident truths, so also is the existence of capitalism and class society which also hardly has the women's interests dear to its heart. No LWAC member denies this – the point is what is LWAC to do to effect change for women?

Beyond energetic efforts to make LWAC acceptable and respectable to the Labour leadership (this even took the form one year of an LWAC member being instructed to wear a skirt to speak at Women's Conference), no political strategy to revitalise the most important



women's campaign has been developed.

Recent positive developments in the Labour Party have been the Black Sections campaign and the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Sadly LWAC has not prioritised cooperative work with either of these campaigns – because to do so would mean working with men!

Seemingly LWAC has adopted an analysis that sex is the basic, the most fundamental, oppression which cuts across all else, and which views all other oppressions as being secondary to that of gender.

This is patently not the case – all women do not face the same form of oppression – we do not have an undifferentiated experience. Black women, for example, must fight white women's racism; lesbians experience their oppression as women very differently to that of heterosexual women.

Supremacist ideologies such as racism, heterosexism, able-bodiedism, anti-semitism – cut right across women's experience of their oppression.

LWAC is in danger of isolating itself. Black women, lesbians and working class women are not attracted to an organisation which refuses to recognise their specific experience of oppression as being valid.

Instead LWAC has concentrated on supporting individual women 'stars' in preparation for parliamentary seats or NEC places. This has resulted in the creation of an 'elite' group of women which is very off-putting and intimidating to women outside the clique. LWAC appears to be developing into a Labour Party version of the 300 club!

But faced with the massed ranks of implacably opposed Labour male power-brokers, what is to be done? Are we to rant about the general 'shitiness' of all men while attempting to manoeuvre concessions from Labour's male leadership?

We have two choices. One is to finally declare ourselves to be radical feminist separatists, which is the logical conclusion of some LWAC EC members' arguments. Obviously this means leaving the Labour Party etc – so that's the end of that. Or, in line with our socialist feminism we can seek to build alliances with as many sections of the Labour movement – including men! – as possible provided only that such alliances are predicated on our autonomy as women and aimed at winning our demands.

Practically we would suggest: 1. Building links with sisters in other campaigns and those fighting for their rights against Tory policies – an immediate priority being Women Against Pit Closures. Within the Labour Party we should establish regular liaison involving mutual exchange of information with women in Black Sections, LARC, LWI, LCLGR, etc., and explore ways we can work together on the many issues we do all agree on.

2. Applying our principles to our own campaigns and recognising the right to autonomy of women who face other oppressions, i.e. reserved places on the LWAC EC for black women and lesbians and any other oppressed group.

3. Building LWAC from the bottom up rather than from the top down – the post of National Organiser should be redefined from just writing model resolutions etc., to providing regular support and encouragement to LWAC branches and members round the country – in effect a national organiser!

4. That we should support the election to the incoming EC of explicitly socialist feminist women, several of whom will hopefully be rank and file women rather than 'stars'. We need more black women, lesbians, working class women, young women and older women on the EC so that LWAC comes to more truly represent all women. In particular we think it would be excellent if Diane Abbot was elected LWAC chair.

A crucially important post is that of Trade Union Liaison Officer. We desperately need a woman who has feminist trade union experience and who can really propose, and help us implement, policies to win LWAC's demands in the trade unions.

Labour Briefing Women

WAC AGM

Please register in advance by writing to Judy Sadler, 56 Milton Road, London SE24 0NP. Resolutions to be in by December 6th, nominations for EC in by December 12th. You can nominate yourself! Please send 100 words about yourself/nominee to the above address.

LABOUR WOMEN IN WALES — CONFERENCE REPORT

Stevi Jackson
(Wales Organiser for WAC)

The sixth conference of Labour Women in Wales was held in Swansea on November 9th. For the second year running WAC organised around the conference, producing a bulletin and running a successful fringe meeting. We managed to consolidate the gains made last year and made further progress. We held on to the positions we won last year on the Labour Women's Committee for Wales, ran and had elected almost a full slate for the conference arrangements committee and a WAC supporter was elected to represent South Wales on the National Labour Women's Committee. For the first time the principle of positive action in the selection of parliamentary and local government candidates was endorsed by conference.

The progress made by WAC in Wales may seem painfully slow, but it has to be set against the extent of right-wing dominance in the party in Wales, plus the existence of an alternative to the Labour Party in the shape of Plaid Cymru. For many left feminists, Plaid has seemd the more attractive of the two parties given its avowed commitment to socialism (a word many Labour Party worthies in Wales cannot get their tongues around) and the fact that it takes feminism seriously and that its women's organisation has considerable influence within the party.

RIGHT-WING, BIGOTED, SEXIST

The Labour Party in Wales is ruled by a right-wing, bigoted and extremely sexist gerontocracy. Anyone who attended Party Conference in Bournemouth or watched it on TV might have observed a couple of fine examples of the species. There was one Welsh delegate who began his contribution to the women's debate by saying that he was not anti-women, that he had 'a lovely wife and two lovely daughters' and proceeded to argue that women were fine provided they knew their place. Then there was the Ogmore delegate who spent most of conference trying to refer back standing orders to get his resolution calling for the expulsion of Militant supporters debated. In the lesbian and gay rights debate, he said this was an 'ychafi' subject (which means too revolting to bear thinking about), about 'sick' people. Imagine a party packed with such men and you'll have a clear picture of what the Labour Party in Wales

WALES WAC
WOMEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE

is like.

The women of the gerontocracy, who have dominated the women's organisations for years, are not much better (except that at the women's conference you're at least spared the experience of being continually pawed and generally sexually harassed as happens at Labour Party Wales Conference). These women fell into two categories. They are led by the 'self-made women', the councillors and 'lady mayoresses' who have 'made it on their own' and do not see why other women should have 'special treatment' and want to make sure that they hang onto their privileges as 'one of the lads'. These are often highly skilled political manoeuverers. Their following, their cannon fodder, is supplied by the mass of passive tea-makers who rarely speak in the debates but mutter among themselves and raise their hands to vote when they're told to.

ORGANISED CHALLENGE

Both are now aware that they are facing an organised challenge to their domination of the women's organisation in Wales, but there is a great deal of confusion as to the nature of this challenge. The substance of many of the mutterings overheard at this year's conference was a sustained complaint about these 'Militant' women who were trying to take over. They are quite unaware of the political differences between Militant and Left feminists – even though prominent Militant supporters spoke against the WAC resolutions.

Some, at least, of the self-made women *are* aware of these differences but are not about to enlighten their following. They know that the term 'Militant' has become a convenient stimulus which automatically triggers the right-wing reflexes of the passive majority.

This is why the stepping-up of the witch-hunts in Wales is so dangerous and it makes our task of defending Militant against expulsions, while at the same time fending off their attempts to undermine the progress feminists are making, very tricky. It is difficult to distance ourselves from Militant without implicitly colluding in the witch-hunts.

Against this background, the victories won by WAC over the last two years should not be under-estimated. We are still a minority, but an influential and organised one. We have managed to build on the foundations laid by those feminists who have been working in the party for some years, to bring together the new women's sections and councils which have been formed as a result of the more recent influx of feminists into the party and to win over some of the more flexible members of the old guard. We have gained conference endorsement of most of WAC's constitutional demands and are maintaining a strong presence on the committees elected from our conference.

FAINT PRAISE

It is very galling for us to find the progress we have made damned with faint praise by the London-based WAC leadership. The 'is that all?' attitude of the executive to our representative's report on last year's conference angered many of us in the light of the hard slog and careful organisation that enabled us to make headway against such entrenched opposition. It is not that we feel we need a pat on the back from London women to justify our existence, but a degree of sisterly support for our struggle and some recognition of the particular difficulties that we (and women in other regions) experience would be appreciated.

In fact, WAC is probably the single most influential left grouping within Labour Party Wales as a whole. The particular character of the Labour Party here, the lack of a strong organised Left and the absence of other left pressure groups has led WAC in Wales to broaden its focus.

Since Wales WAC was formally established a year ago, we have never concentrated on positive action and constitutional changes to the exclusion of all else. While fighting for these changes we are also working to strengthen the women's organisation as a campaigning organisation, to build links with women in struggle and

WALES WAC
WOMEN'S ACTION COMMITTEE

to win left women to the Labour Party.

This was reflected in our input to this year's conference. As well as getting constitutional resolutions on the agenda, WAC supporters were responsible for putting forward strong, campaigning resolutions on a variety of issues from the health service to Northern Ireland. Among other things the Labour Women's Committee for Wales is now mandated to build links with women against pit closures, to send a delegation to Armagh and to launch campaigns on the health service, reproductive rights and social security. All these passed without any difficulty and with support from the committee, reflecting the influence of our supporters there. Only two years ago any resolution demanding action from the committee was opposed by them and voted down on the grounds of impracticability.

We promoted two standard WAC resolutions. Having won last year on the demands for women's conferences to elect women's seats on the NEC and the Wales EC and the demand to send five resolutions to LP Wales conference, we concentrated on the one we lost last year – positive action in selection procedures. So winning on this demand represents another small step forward. Our other resolution, suggesting a formula for the election of the National Labour Women's Committee from the National Women's Conference which would preserve some degree of regional representation, was defeated by 65 votes to 41. This, however, is a complex issue which has never been fully debated in Wales and the Right and Militant were able to exploit this, playing on the fears of many women of our regional conference losing ground. We also made mistakes here in not spelling out in the resolution the position of trade union women and this lost us

CLWYD LABOUR GROUP — SOCIALISTS OR SCABS?

For socialists in North Wales, March 1985 saw the end of two long and bitterly fought struggles. The return to work of the miners was marked locally by the proud processions of the 84 men at Point of Ayr and 15 at Bersham who had stayed out to the end; among those present to cheer the Bersham men was a delegation from the striking Clwyd Nursery Nurses whose own long struggle for an improvement in their poverty-line wages had won considerable local sympathy and support. Little did they know that they too would soon be forced to end their 6-month strike — betrayed by their own "Labour" Councillors on Clwyd County Council.

The Clwyd Labour Group, which had sent letters threatening dismissal to the strikers, as well as employing scab labour, thus became the target of much bitterness among Labour Party members. The newly-formed *Briefing* Group called for the expulsion of those councillors involved. What actually happened was that one deselected Labour councillor stood as an independent in the May elections with the public backing of other right wing party officials: these were expelled from the Party, while two new left-wing councillors (David Orbison and Glen McIver) were elected onto the Labour Group. They subsequently fought for implementation of Labour policy regarding hung councils — either take control or go into opposition. The right wingers who had previously shared power and carved up Committee chairs, were incensed; one who refused to co-operate was expelled from the Group.

While the battle continues to force the new opposition Labour Group to stick to socialist policies, the Right in North Wales has been galvanised into action. Many Labour scabs remain on the County Council: one (Doris Griffiths OBE) has recently attacked visiting MP Harriet Harman for daring to criticise the ruling Tories' inadequate local nursery provision. An appeal by those expelled has been upheld — newly readmitted to the party, their witch-hunting activities are expected to extend far and wide. A campaign has been conducted by them through the local Press against socialists in North Wales ("there is no room for Trotskyists in the Labour Party," said one letter) and now, inspired by Wright's antics in South Wales and the witch-hunting resolutions at this year's Welsh Party Conference, the clampdown (including suspension or investigation of YS branches, vetting of new members, etc.) continues.

Ged Lewis
North Wales & Chester Labour Briefing

NORTH WALES & CHESHIRE LABOUR
BRIEFING
June 1985

vital votes.

The right still does have the upper hand, which became clear when a weakening amendment to a resolution on amnesty for the miners was passed. Their position, however, is increasingly precarious.

In the ballots for the various committees WAC did well. Of the twelve women on the Labour Women's Committee for Wales, six are either WAC supporters or sympathetic to us, we have a majority on the Conference Arrangements Committee and for the first time South Wales will be represented on the National Labour Women's Committee by a committed feminist and socialist – Gill Jenkins, who won easily.

Our concern to broaden WAC's political focus and to build links with women in struggle outside the Labour Party was reflected in our fringe meeting on the theme of women's struggle for recognition in the labour movement. We had speakers from women against pit closures and from WAC and nearly 40 women attended (which, from a conference of only just over 100 delegates and about 50 visitors isn't bad). Ann Jones from Hirwaum Women's Support Group talked about the struggle women had had to be accepted as full participants in the miners' strike, how they achieved this through organising as women, how they resisted pressures from men to return to the kitchen sink after the strike. She also discussed their continuing problems with the South Wales NUM executive and the defeat of the move to grant women associate membership of the NUM. This led to a very fruitful discussion on the parallels between women's experiences in the mining communities and in the Labour Party. Ann felt that this provided a base for stronger links between us and that if we appealed to women active in the miners' struggle to join the Labour Party and help us change it we could win support. Women in the South Wales Coalfield are now leading the fight against redundancies. In the absence of a clear lead from the local NUM exec, women have taken the initiative and launched their own campaign to persuade the men not to be bribed or blackmailed into selling out their communities' future.

The message from the fringe meeting and from conference as a whole is that, while we still face a long, hard fight, women are leading the struggle for socialism in Wales. It is the women in the coalfields and in the Labour Party who represent the biggest threat to right-wing party and trade union bureaucrats.

WOMEN'S DAY SCHOOL ON SEXUALITY

The London Labour Women's Committee is organising a day school entitled 'Women, Our Sexuality and Socialism' for Sunday, January 19th (the day after the Regional Women's Conference) in County Hall. The day will include sessions on racism and sexuality, sexual harassment, heterosexism and sexuality, feminism and socialism. There will be videos and bookstalls and part of the day will be devoted to workshop discussion. In many respects this is the first time there has been such an event organised by the Labour Party.

Women participating in Labour party politics and organisation – the precious few – have to identify with the dominant ethos, and more so, in order to achieve even limited access and influence. The dominant ethos is defined by the 'hard' policy areas – national economics, defence, foreign policy, trade unions and such questions as collective freedom and responsibility. What is your position on import controls or nationalisation, nuclear disarmament, Northen Ireland, free collective bargaining, the rights of strikers vs workers, the 'central role of the working class'? There is no room in this definition for personal experience and that exclusion embraces sexuality. This is a double bind of course since, through our socialisation (gentle, supportive, caring), personal experience is deemed to be women's natural domain and the qualities which lead us there and leave us there have no social value or political worth in the current mode within which the mainstream business of running this country operates.

Our sexuality underpins how we relate to other people and we cannot take part in political activity without interpersonal exchange. Therefore our sexuality must also be a major influence on our political experience. Behavioural expectations are based on assumed social roles which in turn are defined by normative values derived from perceived and experienced sexuality. Surely, then, sexuality should be a central topic of socialism – even the socialism to which the Labour Party aspires!

The dominant norm, from which all others are seen as deviations, is heterosexuality. To what extent do our heterosexist assumptions invade our personal relationships? Our social organisation based on the absolute dogma of heterosexuality (with pair-bonding and monogamy) denies alternative/additional forms of relating, such as separating sexual relationships from others (support, domestic, kinship), and a freer expression of feelings of closeness, connection, separation and distance.

Monica Barton (Croydon CLP)
Sarah Roelofs (Hornsey & Wood Green CLP)

DEVON LABOUR BRIEFING: THE HISTORY OF A SOCIALIST VOICE

In the 1960s and 1970s the Labour Party in Exeter remained firmly on the right in the grip of municipal careerists and middle class liberals. Exeter has no socialist tradition based on a large organised industrial working class. There were no active women's or black movements, as one might find in the larger cities. In these circumstances the right wing was unchallenged. A division of labour developed with the middle class liberals running the Party, and the careerists controlling the Labour Group on the City Council. Consequently any socialist move in the Party met with a united opposition.

The origins of *Briefing* lay in 1982 in the branch containing Exeter University. Left wingers began to write articles for the local branch newsletter, until the right wing led by Dr John Shepherd (the current Chair of Exeter CLP) moved a motion preventing any opposition being expressed. The young left wingers were taken by surprise.

In May the Falklands crisis blew up, and with the Exeter Party refusing to demand the recall of the Task Force (in effect supporting the War) the left were convinced that something had to be done.

It was not until the following July that three socialists, Peter Bowing, Geoff Carrol and Jeremy Clarke came together to edit the then *Exeter Labour Briefing*.

First Edition

The editorial in the first edition of *Exeter Labour Briefing* (July 1983) said "There are many forces both inside and outside the Party, which are pressurising us to drop our socialist policies. These notions must be firmly resisted — their acceptance would mark a gross betrayal of our principles and commitments... We require a clear, credible and coherent set of policies which is capable of tackling the fundamental problems of our sick capitalist society. We must become in reality the Party which organises opposition to Tory attacks on the weak and the sick, the young and the old, the Party which is dedicated to eliminating sexism and racism, and to advancing the cause of working people..."

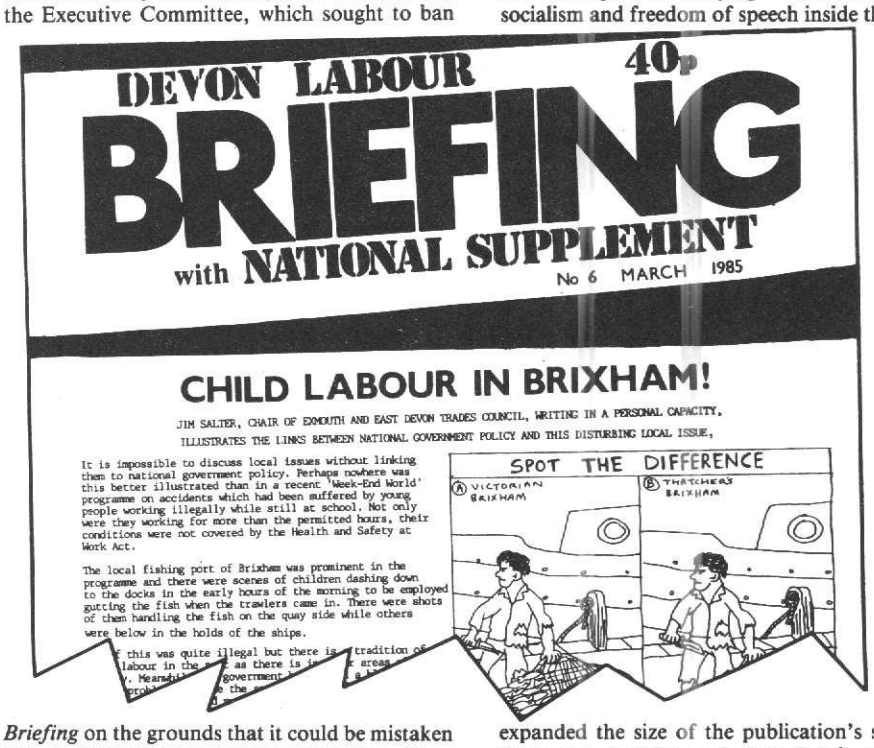
One year later the right wing in Exeter Labour Party sought to expel the people who expressed those sort of views.

Due to financial pressure the next edition did not appear until December. The right wing headed by Shepherd, but operating through the Party secretary Roger Greenough, attacked *Briefing* on the pretext that the title "Exter Labour Briefing" made the publication sound official. This pretext was to be clumsily thrown around by the right wing until it fell to pieces in the expulsion attempt a year later.

Angered by the refusal of *Briefing* to go away and encouraged by the departure from Exeter of Carrol and Clarke, Shepherd decided to summon Bowing, along with a new editor, Michael Hingley, to the Executive Committee. The intimidation attempt failed.

Showdown

By the spring of 1984 the right wing were prepared for a show down. A contradictory, confused and badly worded resolution was moved in the Executive Committee, which sought to ban *Briefing* on the grounds that it could be mistaken for an official Labour Party publication. None of this made much sense as the right wing chorus perpetually claimed that the *Briefing* had no other purpose than to attack the Party!


DEVON LABOUR
40p
BRIEFING
with NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT
No 6 MARCH 1985

CHILD LABOUR IN BRIXHAM!

JIM SALTER, CHAIR OF EXMOUTH AND EAST DEVON TRADES COUNCIL, WRITING IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY, ILLUSTRATES THE LINKS BETWEEN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT POLICY AND THIS DISTURBING LOCAL ISSUE,

It is impossible to discuss local issues without linking them to national government policy. Perhaps nowhere was this better illustrated than in a recent 'Week-End World' programme on accidents which had been suffered by young people working illegally while still at school. Not only were they working for more than the permitted hours, their conditions were not covered by the Health and Safety at Work Act.

The local fishing port of Brixham was prominent in the programme and there were scenes of children dashing down to the docks in the early hours of the morning to be employed gutting the fish when the trawlers came in. There were shots of them handling the fish on the quay side while others were below in the holds of the ships.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

(A) VICTORIAN BRIXHAM

(B) THATCHER'S BRIXHAM

In May and June *Briefings* were published and the Executive Committee recommended the expulsion of the three editors, Bowing, Hingley and Wilkinson. Again there were summons to the Executive Committee, and again the situation was in deadlock.

By this time the left nationally was aware of the Exeter witch-hunt. Support was forthcoming from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, *Socialist Action*, Labour Against the Witch-hunt and various individuals including Tony Benn. What saved the *Briefing* editors from being the victims of a tin-pot tyranny was the growing awareness by the Party Chairperson, Shepherd, that the reasons embodied in the expulsion motion were seriously flawed, and that, as Tony Benn made quite clear, the NEC would be forced to overturn the expulsions. Shepherd also had personal motivations; for him the left was a nuisance, but his personal position rested on being the "acceptable" and articulate voice of the right wing. If the left were defeated totally, the right wing councillors might no longer have any need for a man like him. Furthermore, the formation of a ruling Lib/Lab pact on the City Council strengthened the hand of the councillors. In this situation there was room for a deal.

On the evening of June 15 Peter Kenny, a *Briefing* supporter, was engaged in negotiations with Shepherd. A deal was hammered out. *Exeter Labour Briefing* would become *Devon Labour Briefing* and the expulsion motion would be ruled "out of order" (a practice now often used against *Briefing*-supported motions). The deal worked.

The right wing was furious. Never before had a General Maagement Committee been so well attended by the right wing, who were drawn like flies by the smell of expulsions. The whole affair had an impact on *Briefing* — the struggle for socialism and freedom of speech inside the Party expanded the size of the publication's support. Every aspect of *Devon Labour Briefing* improved, its design, content, style.

In the following year supporters of *Devon Labour Briefing* were at the forefront of progressive campaigns. The paper campaigned for total support to be given to the National Union of Mineworkers in their heroic struggle. *Briefing* demanded that the controlling Labour Group on Exeter City Council attempt to declare the City a Nuclear Free zone. Arguments were put forward for the establishment of a Standing Women's Committee of the Council. Throughout *Briefing* supporters met only systematic hostility from the ruling right wing clique.

One incident illustrates a great deal. In September 1985, the Executive Committee refused to put Paul Giblin on the panel of candidates for the forthcoming City election. The charge against him was that he was "disloyal to the Party"; the justification being that he had written articles in *Devon Labour Briefing*. In Exeter it seems now as if to support and campaign for socialism in and through the Labour Party constitutes disloyalty.

Today, in every respect, *Briefing* is stronger in Exeter because those who support it are motivated by principle, not by careerism. The ideas of its authors and supporters are those of today's real socialism, not the redundant and discredited social democracy of the right wing.

Peter Bowing

MEACHER AND THE ARITHMETIC OF THE BRIEFING SLATE



Meacher and Blunkett together at 1985 Conference

John Chapman

The inclusion of Michael Meacher on the Briefing slate for this year's NEC elections was a serious error. In that respect I agree entirely with the article by Fran Rayner in the November issue of Briefing. However it would be a mistake to assign the error to the decision of the Briefing Editorial Board in September, when, in my view, the real error occurred many months before.

Michael Meacher showed his true politics long before he voted on the NEC to back Kinnock against the NUM. No-one who voted for the inclusion of Meacher on the Briefing slate did so because they supported him politically. The decision was a purely tactical one – a tactic to protect the position of the two women in the Constituency Section of the NEC. Tactics have always, and quite rightly, played a large part in the choice of a Left slate for the NEC. Political considerations are primary but one of these must be Briefing's policy to aim for gender parity and black representation on the NEC. If Meacher is to be removed from the slate, the only justifiable replacement is a black and/or woman candidate Briefing's error was in not prioritising the need to find such a candidate when nominations were being sought at the beginning of the year.

Analysis of the recorded votes for the Constituency Section of the NEC shows that the Left slate does have a significant influence on the way CLPs vote. Over 20% of CLPs supported the complete Briefing slate (including Meacher). Well over 50% of CLPs voted for some variety of Left slate. Indeed 15% made up their own minds on Meacher and did not vote for him whilst supporting the remainder of the Briefing slate. Some of those CLPs only voted for 6 candidates. Others substituted John McDonnell. The large majority of those CLPs substituted Tam Dalyell, who was on the Campaign Group slate. The indications are, then, that dropping Meacher from the Left slate could have further forced down his vote.

However, if there were signs of an anti-Meacher vote amongst Left Constituencies, there were even stronger indications of an anti-women vote on the Left. 10% of all CLPs voting, voted for a Left slate composed of 7 white men and excluded both women candidates. A further 14% excluded one of the women (not always the same one!) and voted for 6 white 'Left' men. In the majority of such cases the substituted candidate was again Tam Dalyell.

The combined effect of the anti-Meacher vote and the anti-women vote was for Tam Dalyell's support to double from 137 votes in 1984 to 268 votes this year – only 49 votes behind Audrey Wise. Meacher's vote fell by 74 – still 180 votes short of removing him from the NEC. It is clear therefore that if Briefing had substituted McDonnell for Meacher on its slate, Meacher's vote would probably have been reduced further. However the inevitable consequence of being successful in that aim would have been to replace Audrey Wise with Tam Dalyell on the NEC. It is arguable whether that would have achieved any marginal improvement in the political composition of the NEC. What is beyond doubt is that it would have caused immeasurable damage to the struggle of black people and women for fair representation in the Labour Party.

A concerted attempt to remove Michael Meacher from the NEC next year must take place, and the campaign must be begun as soon as possible. However there are no political gains to be made by promoting yet another white man. Through co-operation with the Black Sections Organisation and Labour Women's Action Committee, we must find a replacement candidate and seek agreement with all sections of the Left for a single joint slate. In addition, we need to combat the sexist and racist voting tendencies of CLPs by campaigning more strongly than ever around the issue of positive action and fair representation for women and black people.

Jane Stockton

Analysis of the recorded votes for the Trade Union and Women's Sections of the NEC indicates another area around which we need to campaign. The key vote in both cases is that of the TGWU with their massive vote of 1,250,000. The change in the composition of the Women's Section this year, can almost entirely be attributed to the switching of the TGWU vote from Ann Clwyd to Margaret Beckett. The high vote for Alec Kitson each year in the T.U. Section is no reflection of his popular support (!), but is indicative of the extent of vote swapping and dealing amongst the T.U.s, and of what Left unions will do to try and get the TGWU vote for their candidate. The deals quite clearly work against the Left, and against women. Vote recording has exposed the dealers. Union members must fight to get their votes cast democratically.

Jane Stockton

Dear Briefing,

Oh dear, oh dear, so poor old Briefing got it all wrong again. I refer, of course, to your unfortunate slate for the constituency section of the NEC, which included such well-known careerists as Blunkett and Meacher, but omitted John McDonnell, one of the few members of the GLC Labour Group to emerge with any credit from the recent rate-capping fiasco.

This mistake is the latest in a long series. First, you misconceived the role of left controlled councils. Creating islands of socialism in a sea of capitalism was always nonsense; the only purpose of the left in local government is to provide a focus for working class struggle and to aid the educational process of that struggle by showing that the aspirations of the workers can never be achieved under capitalism. The choice is between socialism or the market; there is nothing else.

Having got the policy wrong, *Briefing* got the people wrong too. For years you supported, and gave a platform to, Ken Livingstone and his Mickey Mouse show at County Hall. Why was there never a *Briefing* representative in the gallery as promise after promise was broken, commitment after commitment abandoned?

When the local government left collapsed in London under the pressure of ratecapping, *Briefing* offered no analysis of the failure nor indeed any apology for having misled its readers for years. Even on Women, Blacks and Gays the issues were too often presented in isolation from the class struggle.

Briefing will only play a useful role if its editors admit their mistakes and accept that their judgement has been poor. After all, they are not alone in that — an inability to distinguish between posturing fakes and sincere socialists has long been a feature of the Labour Party (and judging by the WRP farce, of much of the outside left as well). But until error is admitted, improvement is impossible. So, first we need the humble pie, to be followed by campaigns round the most important issues — at the moment that must mean the comon ownership of the banks and financial institutions, since without control of capital, all other plans are so much waste paper.

Next, try to find out what is really happening, analyse it within the context of class politics and pass it on to your readers. After that, the people — expose the fakes, the posturers and the careerists. Wherever the Michael Meachers, the Ken Livingstones, the Valerie Wises, the Frances Morrells and the Michael Wards raise their heads, publish their records. Knowledge is power. And whenever you are faced with an actual or aspiring politician always keep in the forefront of your mind the simple question: "Why is the bastard lying to me?"

Finally, let us all try to end the sectarianism which so disfigures the left. Most differences can be settled by rational argument and unity is, after all, supposed to be strength. The left has been failing spectacularly since 1660, some success is more than a little overdue.

Paula Watson
(Westminster South CLP)

Yes, Paula, we were wrong in supporting Meacher for the NEC. The left must get its act together in time to ensure that we get it right next year.

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

NAMIBIA — SOUTH AFRICA'S FORGOTTEN COLONY

1985 has seen another year of revolt in South Africa, with the apartheid regime imposing a State of Emergency, hoping to crush growing resistance. Less well known are the repressive measures which the South African regime has imposed this year in neighbouring Namibia, the country it illegally occupies.

Here in Namibia, the equivalent of a state of emergency has prevailed for over a decade. Eighty percent of Namibia's 1¼ million people are living under martial law. Over 100,000 South African controlled troops, including the notorious Koevoet terror squad, are attempting to wipe out Namibia's century old resistance to foreign colonial rule. Today, the Namibian liberation movement, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), formed in 1960, is leading resistance to apartheid domination.

SWAPO organises on several levels from mobilising civilian protest against South African occupation and its effects; by waging guerrilla warfare through its army, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), to international diplomacy. Popular support for SWAPO is so overwhelming that South Africa is unwilling to risk free and fair elections and the implementation of an internationally agreed formula for Namibian independence, United Unations (UN) Security Council Resolution 435 of 1978.

Botha and his colleagues know that genuine elections in terms of this UN plan would bring SWAPO to power, would boost the struggle of the black masses in South Africa itself, and split the white South African electorate, threatening to increase polarisation in South Africa and make the region even less governable. For this reason, Pretoria, supported by its allies in the western 'contact group' (US, Britain, France, Canada and West Germany) has engineered delays to the implementation of the independence plan. They have tried to make Namibian independence conditional upon the separate issue of withdrawal of Cuban troops from neighbouring Angola.

This year, these western powers have allowed South Africa to impose yet another puppet government in Namibia, in defiance of the UN and against the will of the Namibian people. This new puppet government is misleadingly called the Transnational Government of National Unity (TGNU). The name itself is farcical as this new client government is designed not to facilitate 'transition' to self-determination, but to sabotage the Namibian struggle for independence. It is neither 'National', being composed of small, unpopular South African-backed parties, nor unified. This year, Namibians have bravely protested against the TGNU. Their resistance has been met with renewed brutality on the part of the racist regime.

Apartheid terror

War is the dominant reality of Namibians' lives. Arrests, torture, disappearances and murder meted out by Pretoria's armed forces are the order of the day. The suffering the war has brought comes on top of poverty, racial exploitation and the injustices of apartheid. Among recent victims of South Africa's rule of terror is Esther Ilimene. She was reportedly detained in July this year, when she was eight months pregnant, together with her husband Frans Ilimene, a teacher in northern Namibia. No evidence has been revealed of their whereabouts or the circumstances of their arrest, despite appeals to the administration – a cause for alarm in the context of numerous 'disappearances' and deaths in detention.

Rape

Among the atrocities perpetrated by the South African controlled armed forces in Namibia, rape is one of the most prevalent, accounting in 1983 for 42% of cases in the Supreme Court. The cases brought to court represent only the tip of the iceberg. Many victims have no access to legal representation, and more fear recrimination. One soldier said that boredom and frustration with army life had prompted him to rape a woman who was three months pregnant. When she resisted he threatened to shoot her. Namibian refugees who have managed to come to Britain report numerous instances of child rape by soldiers. This October Naomi Vatileni has bravely made public her experience of rape by four armed soldiers, who threatened to kill her and her two-year old child in September.

Namibian women fight back

The majority of Namibian women are denied paid employment and forbidden access to the main urban areas. The hugely discriminatory school system has meant that until recently, black women were the worst off in terms of access to formal education, resulting in 99% illiteracy for women over 30. These factors, coupled with sexism, meant that until about three decades ago women's role in the struggle was largely one of supporting their men, particularly in providing food and shelter for SWAPO freedom fighters. Despite all the factors militating against their taking a lead in political resistance, women have become increasingly evident in SWAPO's struggle, playing key roles in the 1959 resistance to forced removals and the 1971/2 general strike. Since the formation of the SWAPO Women's Council (SWC) in 1969/70, Namibian women have come to see the overthrow of apartheid as an integral part of their liberation not only as black people, but as women.

In May this year, Koevoet savagely beat people up at a protest meeting against the setting up of the Transitional Government of National Unity. The hospital was full of women that night who had been severely injured.

Among the many people under house arrest is Gertrude Kandanga, Deputy Secretary of SWC, and internationally famous for her role in Namibian resistance. Another well-known opponent of Pretoria's policies is Ida Jimmy, who has spent the last five years in prison for addressing a SWAPO rally. Due to international campaigns for her release, her sentence was reduced and she was released in October.

Rosalind Namises is one of 52 people who were arrested on Namibia Day in August for demonstrating opposition to the TGNU. This is her third arrest in two years. This constant harassment for normal political activity is typical of the costs Namibian women pay every day of their lives. Ida Hoffman has also been arrested numerous times on similar grounds and lost her job as a result of an arrest in 1984. She was severely beaten (on the body, so that it wouldn't show) when she was arrested in the summer for announcing the opposition meeting in Katatura on the day of the instalment of the TGNU. The policeman engaged in beating her up pleaded with his superior 'please let me kill her'.

Britain is apartheid's key collaborator in

Central America Labour Group launched

"Nicaragua is rehabilitating the very idea of socialism". So said one well-known Marxist writer, Michael Lowy, on returning from last year's Nicaraguan elections. The Sandinistas had just been confirmed in power with a share of the possible vote almost twice as great as that which the same month returned Ronald Reagan for a second round in the White House. It is true that for millions of activists around the world the Nicaraguan revolution has held out an example of something new: an ability to combine its extraordinary early achievements in social welfare with real elements of participatory democracy in the neighbourhoods and workplaces and a range of formal political freedoms which would be the envy of most bourgeois democracies.

That is one reason why the elementary duty of socialists to lend solidarity has taken on such importance. The Labour Party, at all levels, has a great responsibility, and considerable potential influence, in this task. So far international solidarity has not checked the relentless US pressure against Nicaragua and those others struggling in El Salvador, Guatemala, etc. The havoc wreaked on Nicaragua's economy, and on daily lives throughout Central America, is indescribable. That is why the Sandinistas have now been forced to interrupt the revolution's social programmes and suspend a number constitutional guarantees. (So far the new powers haven't been used, but if the remaining rich and the Church hierarchy continue to try and cause further disruption, they will certainly have to be).

That is also why in spite of continuing death squad activities we have seen a new rise of trade union struggles in El Salvador, and even in post-holocaust Guatemala.

The new Central America Labour Group (CALG), supported by the Nicaragua and the El Salvador Solidarity Campaigns and the Guatemala Working Group, aims to bring the Labour Party into the heart of this solidarity movement which now is needed more than ever, to tap the sympathy which exists throughout the party, coordinate it, and turn the policy statements into effective action.

Make sure you or your party are at the launch meeting and if you can't be, write for details of what can be done.

Iain Bruce,
(Norwood CLP)

Central American Labour Group (CALG) Founding Conference

Saturday December 14, 10 am to 5 pm.
County Hall, London

Registration fee: £2 waged; £1 unwaged

Contact: Jan Royal, 2 Queen Anne's Gate, SW1

Speakers: Audrey Wise, George Foulkes, Alf Dubbs, Jeremy Corbyn, Jenny Pearce

Creche facilities available



SWAPO

■ **SWAPO demonstration**

Namibia. Nine British firms control over 80% of the Namibian economy. British multinationals provide the fuel (BP and Shell), finance (Barclays and Standard Banks), and military hardware (Plessey and Marconi) for South Africa's war in Namibia, as well as reaping enormous profits from the vast uranium and diamond mining operations. Labour Party activists in Britain can support women in Namibia by joining in campaigns for sanctions against South Africa (such as the Campaign Against the Namibian Uranium Contracts – CANUC – which works with unions and the peace movement for a workers' blockade and an end to the use of Namibian uranium in Britain's nuclear weapons programme), as well as contributing material aid for SWAPO. In addition, through public campaigns against repression and by taking up the cases of Namibian political prisoners, we can make it more difficult for Pretoria to suppress Namibian resistance.

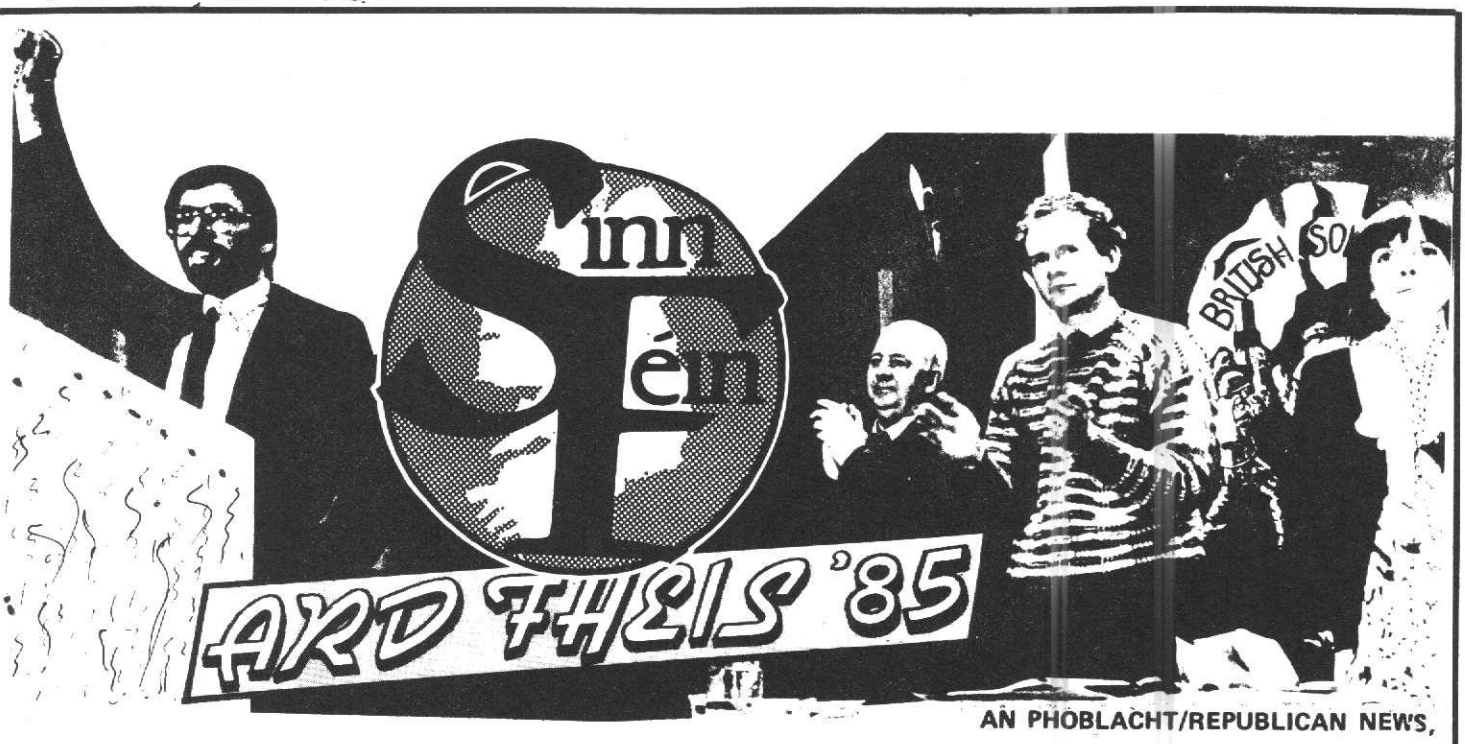
The South African government is sensitive to bad publicity and such campaigns are often reported in the Namibian press. Campaigns in Britain have led to several releases and the commuting of various sentences and are known to boost the morale of the Namibians in their struggle.

This month a South African public relations expert, seconded from the Foreign Ministry, arrived in London to set up a new liaison office for the South African puppet government in Namibia (conveniently situated near Westminster at 10 Storey's Gate, SW1), which no doubt will produce glossy propaganda covering up the brutality of the occupation. Look out also for anti-SWAPO propaganda coming from this office.

And while the government is conveniently turning a blind eye to the arrival of South African public relations specialists, SWAPO's Chief Representative in this country, Comrade Shapua Kaukungua, was recently unlawfully detained at Heathrow under the pretext of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. It is urgent that activists in the Labour Party campaign for support for SWAPO as part of the overall support for the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa and against racism here.

SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign,
PO Box 16, London NW5
Tel: 01-267 1941/2

Celebrate Namibian Women's Day with SWAPO on Saturday 7 December, 4.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m., Finsbury Library, St John's Street, London EC1. Exhibitions, stalls, Namibian music, poems, songs and play. Speakers invited from ANC, New Jewel Movement. Evening disco by Sista Culcha. Admistion 50p unwaged/£1.50 waged. Disabled access, Food and drink available from Turkish Solidarity. Organised by SWAPO Women's Council and SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign.



AN PHOBLACHT/REPUBLICAN NEWS,

SINN FEIN AND THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

Stephani Grant and Piers Mostyn

The Anglo-Irish talks dominated this year's Sinn Fein Ard Fheis (annual conference) in Dublin. Speculation on the outcome of the talks is rife. But Sinn Fein are clear that the only tangible result will be increased repression against themselves. After all, the process was initiated to block the rise of militant republicanism, further developed this year by a dramatic vote in support of women's right to choose abortion.

In his presidential address, Gerry Adams said, 'The dangers of the present talks lie not in the conclusions that they may or may not reach on these issues but in their intention of putting a diplomatic veneer on British rule and injecting a credibility to constitutional nationalism so that British rule and its interests can be stabilised in the long run'.

CONTINUAL REASSESSMENT

The need to be able to confront and out-manoeuvre British strategy has led Sinn Fein to a continual, and somewhat painful, re-assessment of their own strategy. The marginalisation of Sinn Fein in the south, the possibility of far more open repression north and south, but also the strides forward made through mass action and electoral victories, all combined in this discussion.

As many speakers pointed out, there's little point in being 'correct' and being the true inheritors of the struggle for a 32-county socialist republic, if you can't win that struggle.

The key theme from the leadership was the need for Sinn Fein to 'break out of isolation' and participate in the political process in order to have a greater impact on Irish workers. Hence Adams' stinging attack on the Irish Labour Party and his challenge to Fianna Fail leader, Charles Haughey, to a debate.

The focus for these issues was abstentionism – the view that the Dublin, Stormont and London Parliaments are creatures of imperialism and entering them implies legitimising British rule.

Despite the open debate and the obvious desire of some of the leadership to remove what they see as a self-imposed restriction in the struggle, the resolution defining abstentionism as a tactic, but not a principle, was defeated. However, the vote was narrow and a motion committing the party to investigate and discuss the implications of registering as a political party, was passed. At times progress may be slow and neither side has won the argument, but it is definitely moving forward.

One aspect of this progress is the organisational transformation of Sinn Fein from a general support movement for the armed struggle to a political party in solidarity with that struggle. Consequently there were many 'mundane' resolutions tightening up party structures and developing effective methods of organisation – all of which go hand in hand with the move toward more *political intervention.*

WOMEN

However, the one and a half hour debate on women was in many ways the most significant. In it – almost entirely ignored by the media – a resolution was narrowly passed changing the party's policy on abortion to support for a woman's right to choose.

The close vote is unimportant in relation to the character of the debate and women's jubilation and celebration following it.

This is an historic victory not just for feminists in Sinn Fein and Ireland, but for Sinn Fein itself and the Irish working class. No other significant Irish party has ever defended women's interests in this way. Given the strangehold of the church, north and south, it represents a radical challenge to all elements of the establishment and confirms that republican militancy is not just confined to the national question.

Motivating the resolution, Daisy Mules from Derry referred to republicans as 'revolutionary socialists committed to ending the oppression of women by men'. Several women added that no-one – not the church, nor the state, nor the Ard Comhairle (National Executive) of Sinn Fein – has the right to decide for women what they should do.

There is opposition of the Ard Comhairle, but this division clearly hasn't damaged the party – and open debate and further policy development will continue. The discussion also reflected a recurring theme that certain principles come before organisational loyalty – in particular the self-determination of the oppressed, in this case of women.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Ard Fheis passed policy on many social and economic issues, including Irish culture, housing and unemployment. A motion was passed on AIDS – opposing discrimination against AIDS victims, denying that it is simply a 'gay' disease, and calling for a public education programme. There was considerable interest in and support for the black struggle in Southern Africa, with two standing ovations for four Dunnes strikers who have been out on the picket lines for 16 months, refusing to handle South African goods.

There was also an interesting debate on trade unions, about what attitude to take to instructions from a union leadership during an unofficial dispute. The resolution passed reflected a certain confusion among many delegates and no doubt the issue will resurface.

British socialists campaigning for peace and unity in Ireland will find it difficult to ignore the voice of Irish republicanism and have a special duty to defend it in the year ahead.

THE ANGLO-IRISH TALKS



Press Association

As expected, Labour's leadership have welcomed the outcome of the Anglo-Irish Talks. The Agreement represents nothing more nor less than a face-lift for partition – and all its inherent injustices – coupled with an expectation of US finance. Part of the intention is to introduce a revamped bipartisanship between Labour and Tory. Below, Sean Redmond from Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence, and two members of Trade Unionists Against Strip Searching, give their views.

NO RECOGNITION TO THE UNIONIST VETO

Our greatest fear is that the Irish government will give formal recognition to the position of the unionists. Dick Spring (deputy Taoiseach) made a speech recently in which he said that the aspirations of the unionists are as legitimate as his own aspirations. For me this is nonsense.

I recognise that the unionists in the north, who number a million, want to remain a part of the UK. But recognising that as a fact doesn't confer any moral right to it.

Trades Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence has never accepted 'unity by consent' which is the position of the Irish government. We don't accept that the unionists, who are as far as we are concerned represent a minority, have any right to frustrate the wishes of the majority – and that's what the 'unity by consent' concept is based on.

When Garret Fitzgerald talks about the people of the six counties being 'alienated' from the system, they *are* alienated. But they're alienated because they don't want to be in the bloody place, they don't want to be part of the UK.

Really what he's saying to them is that 'you'll stay in the United Kingdom, and we'll try and make your lot a bit easier for you'. There have been serious abuses in the way that nationalists have been treated over the years – the lack of civil liberties, the discrimination suffered. But these are really only an expression of the *real* political problem, which is that they don't want to be in the UK in the first place. The root cause is partition. In the long term, after the dust has settled and the euphoria has evaporated, we'll still be left with the same basic problem.

If the outcome of the talks is as I've predicted, TUIUI will oppose it very vigorously and will organise a campaign. We will oppose any agreement which gives any sort of recognition to the unionist veto. I hope that the labour movement in Britain will not be fooled by any agreement.

The demands made by TUIUI and the Labour Committee on Ireland are still the demands that must be central. The 1981 policy statement of the British Labour Party was a step forward, in that the party did express support for the unity of Ireland, but it was unity by consent of the unionists. We would hope that the party moves beyond that to dropping this concept and we call for the next Labour government to declare its intention to withdraw from Ireland and break with the veto.

Sean Redmond

"ONLY THE ENDING OF PARTITION CAN LAY THE BASIS FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION"

Sarah Roelofs for *Labour Briefing*, discussed the effects of the Talks with two feminist trade unionists from the group *Trade Unionists Against Strip-Searching*. Sally Shovelin is a member of the Dublin City Centre Branch of the Local Government and Public Services Union and Helen Mahony is Vice-Chair of the Dublin City Branch of the Teachers Union of Ireland. Helen is also Chair of TUI's Women's Council.

Neither Sally nor Helen felt the outcome of the Anglo-Irish Talks would represent anything positive. Aside from increased cross border co-operation between the Republic and Britain, the only tangible result would probably be increased repression against Republicans and antiimperialists. Sally compared this to the mass internment of the early '70's – "Such repression would be aimed directly at ending Sinn Fein's political victories. It will be very important for all antiimperialists to speak out against any such repression."

Helen felt that apart from the increased co-operation on security, the rest of any agreement would be 'cover' for government inactivity on other issues. "The Talks will be used by the Coalition Government to divert attention from unemployment and the worsening economic situation. And they want also to be seen to be delivering on the North. But they can't even do it on the issue of strip-searching! The issue of security has had such a high profile in the lead up to the Talks which must surely mean that strip-searching has been part of the discussions. Yet, Peter Barry, our Foreign Affairs Minister, who has condemned strip-searching, has refused to publically raise strip-searching with the British.

Sally agreed – "The Coalition Government, Fine Gael and the Labour Party, can't even stand up to the British on something as basic as strip-searching. Its just like during the hunger strikes, when they couldn't pressurize the British government then either. This is the reality of the politics of partition. It won't affect our campaigning, though it may make our work a bit harder.

"One thing we can be absolutely certain of . . .", Helen continued, "The Talks will not represent anything positive for women, or any change for the better whatsoever. How could they – the Coalition government is pursuing similar policies to that of your Tory government. One example of so very many is the way the government's public service pay policies are affecting women and then there is the complete hypocracy of the Kerry Babies Tribunal. Irish women are impaired; legally, economically and socially, by partition which has allowed the dominance of the churches for example. Only the ending of partition can lay the basis for women's liberation."

WE MUST LEARN FROM THE MITTERRAND EXPERIENCE

In May 1986 the French Socialist Party will go down to a humiliating defeat in the legislative elections. The scale of that defeat is all the more impressive when one remembers the victory the Socialists won, together with their Communist allies, in the 1981 elections. A party that once declared that it sought to break capitalism rather than managing it, now agrees that the mixed economy is its objective and only squabbles about whether to become a centre party or to retain some reference to the working class.

The party that emerged from this year's conference in Toulouse is indeed a depressing sight. True, the Socialists emerged from the Congress with a common statement of perspectives, but they failed to solve any of the outstanding questions facing themselves or the country. The probability is that a Kinnock government would merely repeat the Mitterrand experience. If Labour Party activists look at the French experience, however, they may not be so keen to follow Hattersley up the yellow brick road to a National Investment Bank.

No longer fight for socialism

The Toulouse congress agreed on who to blame for the disaster. While the right wing current grouped around Michel Rocard wanted to condemn even the cautious reflationary measures taken by the left after 1981 (a position that the then Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy cannot swallow), there is a consensus that the electorate had too many illusions in the first place and failed to appreciate the economic constraints faced by the government! The task of the party is no longer to fight for socialism, but rather to justify the policies of government and President.

The new Socialist-Communist administration of 1981 launched a wave of social security reform, Keynesian reflation, nationalisation and employment law reform. It promised to cut the working week to thirty-five hours (although it only delivered thirty-nine). However, the Keynesian reflation presupposed a favourable international climate, whereas 1982 was a year of worldwide recession. The increase in domestic demand simply boosted imports and mounting balance of payments pressure forced successive devaluations in October 1981, June 1982 and March 1983. Ever since, the government has put the brakes on demand, with the result that in 1983 real disposable household income fell by 0.3%. In more straightforward language, the working class suffered a decline in its standard of living.

Like the first Wilson government

Rather like the first Wilson government, the Mitterrand administration was obsessed with defending the value of its currency; devaluation, when it did come, was a last minute panic reaction to pressure and not part of a conscious plan to make the economy more competitive. Moreover, the Socialist government combined a defence of the franc through high interest rates with a basic commitment to the capitalist nature of the economy. When investment dried up, the Socialists were powerless to act. At a time when Reagan was running one of the biggest budget deficits in history, Mitterrand opted for policies that would satisfy the most staid of fiscal conservatives. The 1985 budget, drafted at a time when unemployment was already over nine per cent, was described by Economy Minister Beregovoy as 'neither reflationary nor deflationary'.



Labour Party Photo Library

Francois Mitterrand

The Socialist record in foreign policy has been no better. Mitterrand has been a loyal ally of Reagan up to a point. But the limits of the French President's slavish atlanticism are not dictated by some grudging respect for socialist internationalism, but rather by the historic interests of the French imperialist state.

Independent nuclear deterrent

France's independent nuclear deterrent – the force de frappe – is an unquestioned cornerstone of national policy that is accepted even by the Communist Party. France's role in Africa and the South Pacific is seen as a 'civilising mission' and 'Europe' is seen as a project for French hegemony over a state system financed by German capital.

Within such a framework, the grim realities of the Socialist record come as no surprise. The 'Greenpeace affair' is to the fore of everyone's perception of the French government, but war in Africa costs more lives. Mitterrand opposes 'Star Wars' but floats the phoney 'Eureka' project as an 'alternative' and rejects out of hand Gorbachev's offer of arms negotiations.

Immigration

Perhaps the single most shameful area of government policy has been on immigration. A government that was pledged to defend the rights of immigrant workers has done just the opposite. Unemployed immigrant workers are 'encouraged' to return to their country of origin, police controls are intensified and the worst practices of the immigration authorities are tacitly condoned. I myself was shocked to see, in 1984, an improvised cardboard and felt-tip sign at the passport control at Hendaye on the Spanish border which read: 'Arabs and Blacks: This way'.

These measures represent a mad scramble to accommodate to right wing forces in society. The most visible form of a rightist resurgence is, of course, the National Front. Every racist utterance by a government spokesperson, made no doubt in the hope of wooing the racist voter, gives more encouragement to the extreme right.

The acceptance by the government of many right wing themes emerges clearly in a television confrontation between Prime Minister Fabius and Gaullist leader Chirac at the end of October. Fabius was mainly concerned to convince viewers that he could be just as hard on immigration, the economy and foreign policy as the right. Le Monde commented: 'The fact that a radical change in society is no longer on the agenda illustrates both the mutation of a society, the cultural revolution within the left, and the shift to the right, or, if you prefer, 'recentring' of the ideological debate. This fact fundamentally changes the political game and leaves open the possibility of "cohabitation".'

'Cohabitation' in this context means Mitterrand continuing his presidency after the legislative elections and collaborating with a right wing government.

Few rays of hope

There are few rays of hope on the left. The intellectual climate is poisoned by a virulent anti-Sovietism propagated by a corrupt intelligentsia that covered up for Stalin when there were millions in Siberia and now discovers the gulag while Reagan commits genocide in Central America. The Communist Party, once the dominant party of the left, has been reduced to less than 10% of the popular vote. Within the Socialist Party, the CERES, the only current that explicitly rejects slogans that proclaim 'The Socialist Party is the party of all French people' in favour of class-based politics, is nevertheless both bureaucratic and technocratic in outlook. Its principal figure, Chevenement, was deeply implicated in Mitterrand's first austerity measures. Tragically, the most dynamic forces of the French left have cut themselves off from the militants at the base of the mass parties by concentrating their efforts on fruitless electoral alliances of the far left. Nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that the experience of government and defeat will provoke intense debate among Socialist Party militants. While the terms of that debate are at present monopolised by the competing right wing schemas of a variety of leadership personalities, the disappointment of those who campaigned for a break with the old order in 1981 will find expression in a revival of thinking on the left.

Chris Bertram, (Hackney North and Stoke Newington CLP)

THE POLITICS OF THE MILITANT

Chris Knight, (Lewisham East CLP)

The recent spotlighting of the Militant tendency provides an opportunity for Briefing supporters to clarify our position in relation to this grouping. It should go without saying that we repudiate all anti-Militant blocs or umbrellas, no matter what they call themselves. We have differences with the Militant's supporters, but these do not prevent us from relating to them as comrades and solidarising with them against all witch-hunting attempts.

Militant established itself as a newspaper in 1964. Its central planks were (a) a political programme based on the implementation of Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution; and (b) intransigent opposition to all "left" attempts to field candidates against the Labour Party or build "revolutionary" movements outside the framework of the mass organisations of the working class. From the mid-'60s onwards, a significant number of radical activists – inspired by theories of "student power", university "red bases" and so on – began leading an exodus from the Labour Party. This gathered pace at the height of the Vietnam war, when many left-wingers tore up their Party cards in disgust at the Wilson government's open support for US imperialism. It was in this period that the Socialist Labour League, the International Socialists, the International Marxist Group and other sects established themsevles as would-be "revolutionary leaderships" outside the Labour Party. The Militant were almost alone in "fighting against the stream", understanding correctly that any abandonment of the struggle within the Labour Party would mean marching into the political wilderness. In the sixties, this was a difficult position to defend, but it has been amply vindicated by events.

Militant grew into a sizeable force in the seventies. This was not surprising since most of the revolutionary left had abandoned the Labour Party altogether.

Sectarianism

Militant could have made itself immeasurably stronger, however, had it intervened constructively in the emergence of "Bennism" after the 1979 General Election, and had it understood that revolutionary "party-building" must of necessity go hand-in-hand with the struggle for a united front. The Militant have learned from bitter experience that most so-called Broad Left leaderships are destined to end up on the right and that most "revolutionary" tendencies are incorrigibly ultra-left and/or sectarian. But they are wrong to draw the conclusion that the only people they can ever work with are themselves (and/or the "contacts" whom they can individually hope to recruit). The Militant's preoccupation with themselves – and their apparent inability to throw their resources into the struggles of the wider movement – has always isolated them from the very forces which might otherwise have proved their most valuable allies against the right. They played little role in the rise of Bennism after 1979, and little role in the constitutional victories achieved, only reluctantly joining the Rank and File Mobilising Committee which encompassed the whole of the left at that time.

Programme

Militant's strongest point is its economic programme, with which Briefing in essence agrees. Unless a future Labour government



John Chapman

Ted Grant, political editor of Militant

nationalises under workers' control the top 200 or so monopolies which dominate the economy, all real power will remain in capitalist hands, and even the best-intentioned administration will be forced into attacking the working class. Militant's support for public ownership is a resource which the left as a whole should learn to draw upon. Instead of harping on the obvious weaknesses in Militant's mode of presentation, we would do better to contribute the necessary improvements ourselves, in the course of campaigning for the adoption and implementation of this basic precondition of any socialist programme. In this context, the crucial question is the question of power. For a Labour government to make inroads into profitable sections of the private sector, it would have to be prepared to break the resistance which would be mounted by the ruling class and its apparatus of state. The leadership in such a struggle would be obliged to transform the organs of the labour movement into an alternative state machine, deepening and extending radically the constitutional gains already made and ensuring that all sections of the working class and the oppressed were enabled to participate in determining and implementing the government's anti-capitalist measures. The condition of success of this would be a united front reaching far beyond the scope of the constituency to which Militant appeals or could ever hope to appeal. Without that, a Labour government consisting of "Marxist MPs" could pass as many Enabling Acts as it liked to no avail.

Unity

If we are to achieve the socialist transformation of society, we must strive towards a united working class. At present the class is divided in many ways, some of the deepest divisions being perpetrated through institutionalised racism and sexism. We cannot hope to overcome such divisions merely by appealing for unity, or by minimising the internal conflicts which exist. Each level of oppression within the working class must be openly acknowledged, and those doubly or trebly oppressed must be vigorously defended in their attempts to organise autonomously. Along that road alone can genuine class unity be forged. Militant's traditional opposition to women's self-organisation, gay self-organisation, and to Black Sections is conducted in the name of "class unity", but in practice helps only to perpetuate mistrust and divisions within the class.

The Militant comrades are right to practice their own form of "positive discrimination" towards manual workers, and they are right to give due political validation to aspects of the language and traditional culture of the British working class.

This would have been more widely appreciated within the movement however had working class Black culture, working class Irish culture, working class women's culture and working class internationalism generally been given equal emphasis. Without that, the Militant's cultural politics come dangerously close at times to collusion with some of the worst chauvinistic sexist and racist prejudices current within much of the male, white, British sections of the working class.

Internationalism

On international questions, Militant's cultural positions are taken to their logical conclusion, and become at times simply right wing and imperialist. To call for "class unity" in Ireland is correct in principle, but only those opposed to the British state's armed presence in Ireland can in practice fight for such unity. Yet the Militant comrades vigorously oppose the most consistent anti-imperialist force in Ireland (Sinn Fein), and issue their appeals for "class unity" from an essentially pro-British standpoint which accepts the violently-imposed partition and Union.

Similarly, during the Malvinas war, Militant were opposed to calls for the withdrawal of the British fleet. A touchstone for internationalists everywhere is their ability courageously to confront their own imperialist bourgeoisie; by this standard, Militant are too often found to be seriously wanting.

Conclusion

Militant are a part of the genuine left in the Labour Party. They are a working class tendency with immense dedication and seriousness, and should be seen as potentially an integral component of a united anti-capitalist alliance committed to capturing the Labour Party for socialism. In Liverpool they have made serious mistakes, yet their record in local government nonetheless towers far above that of the vast majority of their detractors. In recent years they have also made significant gains in the trade union movement. The way to help the Militant comrades overcome their sectarianism is not by any form of collusion with anti-Militant blocs. The road forward is to help build a powerful, working class, anti-sexist, anti-racist and anti-capitalist alliance within which sectarianism of any kind will be exposed before all as an anachronism unable to survive.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR CND?

No-one can doubt that CND is a popular and successful campaign. Membership continues to rise with peaks of growth around national demonstrations or successful media stories which highlight the work of CND activists. If you read the Annual Report of CND to the 1985 Conference, "continual success" and "sustained growth" are the key words. It is a fact that CND has retained a high profile for far longer than many people thought possible. This is due to many factors. The organisation in the regions has close links with the local groups. The membership is loyal and keeps coming out for national demonstrations to show the strength and broad base of the movement. International crises between the super-powers keeps the issue of nuclear disarmament high on the political agenda. Tory blunders like Heseltine's antics at Molesworth have been an unexpected bonus. Yet despite this there are many questions that have yet to be answered. How much longer can the campaign continue? And how can CND achieve its object? How can a campaign with a political demand operate in such an a-political manner? How many more October 26 demonstrations will we see?

Present CND policy goes along the lines of making the campaign both respected and respectable. Being respectable in this case means lobbying parliament, getting television personalities and "opinion formers" to speak for the campaign, building support by membership campaigns in the quality papers and, most important of all, getting rid of the image of the trendy left or any links with radical alternative life styles. Respectability means making concessions with your political programme in order that it may gain wider support. Respectability means accepting the established order and showing that your policies can be accommodated within it. Ultimately the question for respectability conflicts with the need to be respected and when that happens the campaign will have lost its direction and be a spent force.

Challenge Direction

This direction for CND has to be challenged. Those of us who are still active in CND as socialists need to remind the movement of the fundamental importance of the Labour Party's commitment to disarmament. Given the political situation in this country, the only chance of achieving unilateral nuclear disarmament will be if a Labour government is elected. Even then, the chances of getting rid of Cruise, Trident, the nuclear bases and US control are remote if the Labour Party leaders feel that they can get away with less. If they think that CND has weakened its programme of demands, then nothing will be left of the policies of abandoning all nuclear weapons and bases. This relationship with the Labour Party is not clearly understood by many members of CND. There is a healthy distrust for party politics but at the same time, many members think that we will achieve disarmament if we can win over the "middle ground". This magical area is sometimes the SDP/Liberal in a hung parliament or it is those people who cannot accept total unilateral nuclear disarmament but who are sympathetic to getting rid of Trident or even Cruise. In other words they really think that we won't win our full programme and they are ready to give in without a fight.



CND Rally, October 26th. John Chapman

The only way we can win is by massive presence on the streets, on the doorsteps and on every public platform. We have to put a clear demand to the people and relate our campaign to the needs and concerns of ordinary people. Simple uncompromising demands such as Jobs Not Bombs, Mines Not Missiles, Healthcare Not Warfare.

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

LABOUR CAMPAIGN FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

In the scramble to win the 'green' vote all the major political parties have made separate statements claiming that they are the real green party. However, recent events within the Labour Party have undermined our rightful claim to be the green party by Gwyneth Dunwoody's recent appointment as Parliamentary Consultant to the British Fur Trade Association and Neil Kinnock's failure to oppose the Government's proposals to introduce a Bill on animal experiments – the only item from a repressive Queen's speech which Neil Kinnock failed to attack.

The present law permitting animal experiments is the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act, and having waited over 109 years for new legislation the Government now proposes to introduce a new law which will not even ban cosmetic experiments, warfare research, the Draize eye irritancy test, the LD50 poisoning test, behavioural and psychology experiments and tobacco and alcohol experiments. Instead, the Government will re-write legislation so that instead of using the word 'experiment' it will now be 'procedures' and that in order to do every experiment which has been permitted before, the scientist will be given two Certificates instead of one. In a recent interview a spokesperson from the Research Defence Society stated: 'I cannot think of a single experiment allowed now that will not be allowed in future'. The Research Defence Society is one of a number of provivisection groups financially backed by the rich and powerful drug and cosmetic multi-nationals who have in the past made substantial donations to the Conservative Party.

SOCIALIST ARGUMENTS

In order to comprehend the socialist arguments against animal experimentation we must understand how our health has improved over the last 150 years through improved social conditions (housing, water supply, sanitation, work environments, etc.), how the two biggest killer diseases of today – cancer and heart disease – could be largely prevented and that a capitalist society which thrives on the profit motive generates many unnecessary and potentially dangerous products – which have been tested on animals – ranging from me-too drugs

GILLICK, POWELL ... WARNOCK?

The Law Lords' decision to overturn the "Gillick ruling" whilst being a temporary victory for the defence of young women's rights, in no way marks an end to the current offensive against a woman's right to choose.

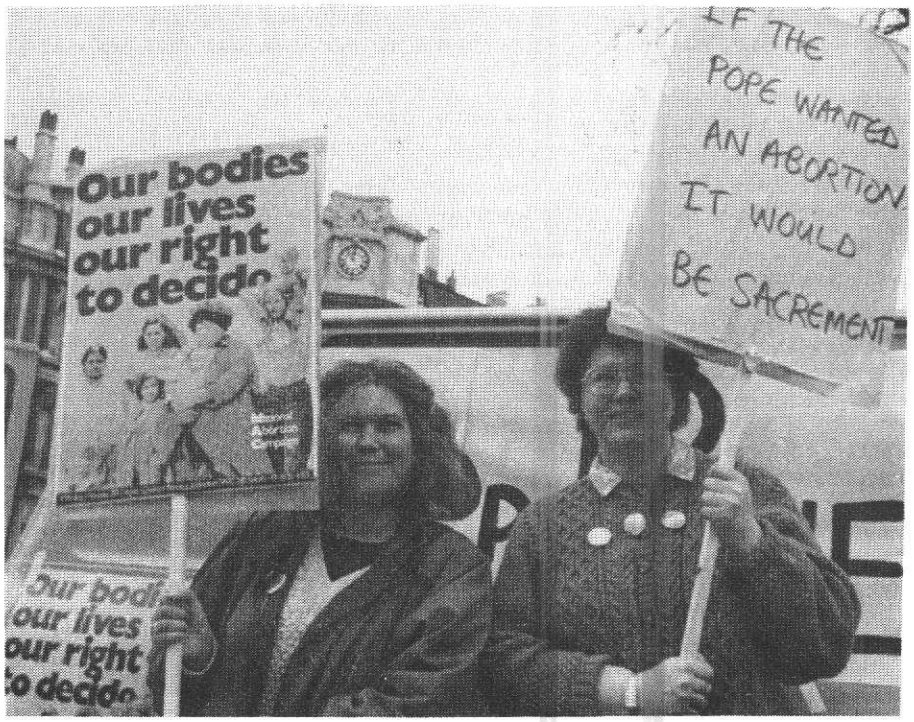
Young women under sixteen still don't have the right to contraception free from parental interference and the disastrous effects on the lives of many young women won't just disappear. How many unwanted pregnancies have resulted over the last few months? How long before young women are confident enough to seek contraceptive advice again?

Reassert the Family

The Powell Bill and the Gillick ruling can't just be seen as cries in the wilderness of the extreme right. They are part of a continuing offensive against all the hard-won gains of the last twenty years. They are part of a backlash led not by the "Moral Majorty" but by the ruling class to reassert the family and women's role within it. This offensive aims to make women in the family provide more and more of the services which have been cut. To push women out of the workforce and into the home means creating a climate where the family is not just considered normal, but good and holy.

The Government's apparent distancing from both Powell and Gillick doesn't indicate their opposition. On the contrary, they have been stalling for time to draw up their own comprehensive legislation based around the Warnock Report.

The Warnock Report has been portrayed as the sane, respectable, even liberal alternative to Powell and Gillick. At its heart though is a firm belief in a two parent male/female couple family, who are the only ones to whom infertility services should be provided. Their recommendations of what legal and medical restrictions are required follow very closely on the model of abortion legislation and provision. That is, because of "moral considerations", there should be strict licensing conditions, doctors have the right to decide who gets treatment, and any provision outside license terms should be a criminal offence.



John Chapman

Lesbians would be denied access

The Report covers not only in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) but also artificial insemination by donor (AID) and surrogacy. If their recommendations were legislated on lesbians would be denied access to AID, any surrogacy agreements (even where no money is involved) would be illegal contracts, and it seems unlikely that many Women's Centres which facilitate AID would be licensed.

The Report also proposes that handling or using in research embryos after 14 days from fertilisations would be a criminal offense. As Patrick Steptoe, the IVF pioneer, has already pointed out, the development of 'test tube baby" technology would have been impossible under these conditions.

Whilst many people are concerned about the possible abuse of this technology, the proposed restrictions would halt possible breakthroughs in tackling both infertility and genetic diseases. The Report asserts the primacy of the medical profession in making decisions over women's lives and has no proposals for accountability or community control over the provision of services.

Perhaps most dangerously, the Report proposes that human embryos should be protected in law, which opens the possibility of further atacks on the '67 Act and the introduction of rigid time limits.

Labour Movement Response

The response to Powell and Gillick from the labour movement was minimal. The demonstrations were able to mobilise thousands of young women, many for the first time, but within the labour movement the battle to see a woman's right to choose as a political, not a moral issue has a long way to go. However, the recent victory at Labour Party conference over the conscience vote will make it easier for pro-choice campaigners to at least make it harder for Labour MPs to scab on women's rights.

Even on the left, though, paper support for a woman's right to choose and the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) has to be turned into action. The LPYS sponsored the Gillick demo but completely failed to mobilise for it. There was one LPYS banner there, and about as many Socialist Youth sellers. We have to start now to develop a pro-woman, socialist response to Warnock and the ruling class offensive. NAC is leading the way in this, producing literature from the USA on the debates in the left and planning a Trade Union conference on abortion.

Eighteen years after the '67 Act, a woman's right to choose is more than ever under attack. Get your CLP, LPYS, trade union branch to affiliate to NAC and invite speakers. Be prepared to mobilise against further attacks.

NAC can be contacted at: Wesley House, Wilde Street, London WC2. 01-405 4801.

Jane Connor
(Hornsey & Wood Green LPYS)

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through an infinite variety of soaps.

The Animal Rights Movement maintains that the suffering of humans cannot be separated from that of animals. We therefore believe that we should fundamentally question our attitude towards health and the prevention of disease. The Animal Rights Movement challenges the effectiveness of a vivisection based curative medical system. We argue that our health has improved not because of animal research but despite it.

Since 1979 the Government have claimed that the National Health Service was safe in their hands but during this time the NHS has come under the proverbial Conservative axe. Now the Government will ensure that the profits of the drug companies will be protected by passing legislation which will guarantee that they will be able to continue to experiment on animals without fundamentally attacking the causes of disease, thereby ensuring the present anomalies continue unabated.

From the early pronouncements of Neil Kinnock it once again seems that the Leader of the Labour Party has failed to understand the socialist implications of animal experimentation and their link with the continuation of human suffering.

Instead of welcoming the Bill Neil Kinnock should attack and proclaim the Bill for what it is – a tool that will allow the drug industry to continue carrying out repetitive experiments resulting in the mass slaughter of millions of innocent, sentient creatures purely for profit.

Is Neil Kinnock using this proposed Bill as an easy way out so that a future Labour Government does not have to combat the wrath of the Animal Rights Movement? Surely compassionate policies must be given priority over political expediency.

We urge all comrades to contact the Labour Campaign for Animal Rights, 97, Park Avenue, Barking, Essex, for a campaigns package on this and other Animal Rights issues.

Lesley Garbutt
Secretary, Labour Campaign for Animal Rights

THE POLITICS OF MADNESS OR BRITAIN'S SECRET POLICE FORCE

There exist , in capitalist Britain, two types of law. Each has its own set of labels and punishments, and a personnel of paid enforcers. The political function of one is increasingly obvious. The Political function of the other remains well disguised. When an angry miner is locked up as a "criminal", we feel angry too. When an angry black person is locked up as a "rioter", we feel angry too. When someone is locked up as a "psycho", "nutter" or "mental case", however, our reaction is either indifference or pity. We swallow the propaganda that this is a medical event, for the good of the recipient. We fail to understand that the mental health system operates as a second police force, enforcing capitalist rules not covered by the legal system. This, we convince ourselves, only happens in the U.S.S.R.

Dr David Hill
(Ealing North CLP)
Clinical Psychologist, author of "The Politics of Schizophrenia".



As with the legal system, the first step is to brand us with discrediting labels. Terms like "psychotic" and "mentally ill" are extremely damaging. Capitalists try to convince us that only certain types of thoughts, feelings and actions are "natural". Psychiatric labels are designed to persuade us that anyone not conforming to this official version of reality is deserving of pity and needs help to "adjust". They conceal the fact that it is the alienation of a capitalist system that causes so many of us to feel depressed, scared or confused. Every time you hear, or use, terms like "mental" or "insane" you are missing the point. The point is a political one, and a point which many socialists are only just beginning to grasp. We must no longer allow those sisters and brothers who are either in extreme distress or who simply choose to be different, to be dismissed as "sick" and punished with incarceration, poisonous chemicals and electrocutions. We must no longer believe the lie that there is some mysterious biochemical process (which would be discovered if only psychiatrists were given more money) that explains why thousands refuse to conform to capitalist social norms.

"Schizophrenia"

When the "illness" of "schizophrenia" was invented, at the turn of the century, literally hundreds of behaviours considered unacceptable to those in power were lumped together, and called "symptoms" of some unseen, genetically transmitted, biochemical abnormality. These included being very artisitc, very religious, very political, very kind, very cruel, very talkative, very quiet, very angry, very sad, very unemotional, very much like the opposite sex and slightly homosexual.

The value of this myth was well understood by the ruling class of rich white males. The first grants ever made by the Rockerfeller Foundation to "research" in Europe were to the German psychiatrists who invented "schizophrenia". Eugenic sterilizations were soon followed by the murder of over a quarter of a million "psychiatric patients", who were given the medical diagnosis "Life Devoid of Value". These murders *preceded*, and served as a model for, the attempted genocide of the Jews.

In the 1980s, psychiatry still singles out particular groups for "treatment". The poorest sections of society are about eight times as likely as the wealthiest to be diagnosed "schizophrenic". Ethnic minorities tend to be admitted to hospitals at higher rates than the general population. Lesbians and gays are still offered various forms of "therapy" to help them "adjust" to "normal" sexuality — including being administered electric shocks while looking at pictures of the same sex.

Women

Women are labelled "mentally ill" more frequently than men. The average rates of admissions to British psychiatric hospitals per 100,000 of the population (1977–1982) were 318 men and 442 women. Women are labelled "neurotic" and "manic-depressive" at more than twice the frequency of men. Women receive particularly severe diagnoses if they are assertive, "unattractive" or hold feminist or socialist principles. My particular favourite research study is the one which demonstrates that feminist and socialist women who have plans to act on their beliefs tend to be diagnosed more severely than those who do not.

The total figures are frightening. Every year there are nearly 200,000 admissions to British psychiatric hospitals (increasing, as always, with the unemployment rate — disguising depression as sickness), and over a million and a half visits to outpatient clinics. In 1983, there were 28¼ million prescriptions of the powerfully addictive minor tranquillizers (valium, librium, etc.) predominantly to women.

Tranquillisers

Three major tranquillizers (modecate, depixol, haldol, etc.) routinely injected into so-called "schizophrenics" cause uncontrollable shaking ("tardive dyskinesia") in about a quarter of cases. This is usually a *permanent* form of brain damage. One of the largest drug pushers, Hoffman LaRoche, proudly claim that about 150 million people world-wide currently receive these drugs and admit that "five to ten million people may have tardive dyskinesia".

In 1982, on 139,307 separate occasions, people in Britain had their brains electrocuted, with enough voltage to cause convulsions. The devastating effects of so-called "Electro-Convulsive Therapy", most easily seen in the form of permanent memory loss, are best summed up by a leading U.S. neurologist: "I'd rather have a small lobotomy. I know what the brain looks like after a series of shock — it's not very pleasant to look at."

Alienating Society

We are slowly learning, from feminists, that solutions to problems must take place at both the personal and political levels. We must talk to one another more about how depressed and confused we all sometimes feel as a result of living in a totally alienating society We must take care of one another better and not hand over our friends, lovers and relatives to this second police force, armed with pills, needles and electricity. We must stop using terms like "nutter" and "mental" which are just as valuable to capitalists as terms like "queer" and "nigger".

We must demand that Party policy include a planned but *rapid* closure of psychiatric hospitals.

There are, however, four dangers in current plans for community care. The first is inadequate funding. The second is the tendency to expect the "family" — i.e. unpaid female labour — to pick up the pieces. The third is outlined in the platform of the Network for Alternatives to Psychiatry (British Branch): "Community psychiatry can result in a simple shift of the site of psychiatric ideology and practice from the hospital to the community. This is not inevitable,

Members of the Network for Alternatives to Psychiatry and Campaign Against Psychiatric Oppression, including David Hill, will be speaking at the MIND Conference — "From Patients to People" — Kensington Town Hall, 28th & 29th November.
For more information about the Network or the MIND Conference:
David Hill, 58, Bowmans Close, Ealing W13 9YT.
For a CAPO manifesto, send 50p and a large S.A.E. to:
Eric Erwin, 18, Seymour Buildings, Seymour Place, London W1H 5TQ.

CHALLENGING THE MYTH OF NORMALITY

Bob Findlay
(Birmingham Labour Briefing)

As a person with a disability I believe the issue of attitudes and behaviour to be of crucial importance because it is the cornerstone in the struggle against oppression and the basis upon which liberationist politics can be built. I regard people with disabilities as an oppressed minority — not in the sense of numbers nor in the sense that we all share common experiences — but by the fact that societal assumptions and perceptions about disability tend to deny us basic rights and needs.

Disability is a **political** issue. Disability is not about the existence of this or that particular condition. Disability is about how given societies evaluate and relate to people with particular physical and mental differences. The dominant view of disability within British culture and politics has its roots in the creation of the notion of **normality**. The notion of normality arose during the 19th Century as a political and ideological response to the crisis which was developing during the social transformation of early capitalist society.

The need to change the existing modes of production and distribution had thrown the structures of society into chaos. The old family and community structures were blown apart and the growth of cities and towns produced a "moral panic" amongst the new middle classes. During the 1870s begging, for example, had reached a new peak. Engels, in his "**The Conditions of the English Working Class**", gives us a vivid picture of what was taking place. Many people were being physically and mentally broken through industrialisation. Mayhew and other social commentators argued that those who were begging were "incapable of looking after themselves" and needed to be placed in institutions. A detailed analysis of the Poor Laws offers us an opportunity to understand the origins of the divisions between those classed as able-bodied and those seen as sick, infirm or impotent. Society saw the poor able-bodied as a greater "social problem" than people with disabilities. The shift in the Poor Laws and the moralism of the late 19th Century changed that situation.

By the Edwardian era the idea of "The Disabled" as helpless cripples had been established alongside many caring institutions, such as John Grooms ad Dr B's. This simple perception of disability may have remained untouched for a longer period if the First World War had not resulted in thousands of fit young men returning home disabled.

Many disabled soldiers rejected any suggestion that they could be compared with the civilian "helpless cripples" and, therefore, the notion of disability as some personal tragedy came into being. Rehabilitation programmes encouraged the idea that the "war" was no longer against the Hun but rather the personal war to regain normality or as near normality as possible.

PERSONAL TRAGEDY

Modern perceptions of disability operate through this idea of a personal tragedy. It is this approach which underlies the existence of social oppression faced by people with disabilities. Let me expand upon this further.

Peter Leonard explains in "**Personality and Ideology**":

"As part of the dominant ideology about disability propagated primarily by 'experts' within the state apparatus, is a perspective which can be described as 'the tragedy theory of disability'. Within this perspective able-bodied experts — doctors, teachers, social workers — may feel free to concentrate on explanations of the feelings and aspirations of handicapped people in terms of their supposed psychopathology, 'reactions to personal tragedy' to be understood wtihin a specialised 'psychology of disabilty'. One result of this powerful external definition of their situation is that it tends to suggest that people with disabilities cannot live worthwhile, active lives and that their capabilities can only be defined through medical and social expertise, for their own definitions are bound to be 'subjective'."

By seeing disablement as a tragedy the person with a disabilty is made to feel that their life has been reduced in some way. It is evaluated as a "loss of wholeness" which means we, as people with disabilities, are regarded as inferior to those individuals judged as able-bodied or "normal".

The medical and social justification for this approach to disability is carried through by evaluating "disability" in terms of functional ability. The **less** we are judged to behave like able-bodied people, the **more** we are seen as severely disabled. Needs, lifestyles and capabilities are determined by how others judge our functioning ability. What this leads to is a situation where assumptions are continually made about what we can do, who we are and what opportunities should be made available to us.

When society discriminates against us, therefore, it is not as some suppose because they do not take us into account but because the opposite is true: it is how society takes us into account which creates the difficulties. If we are regarded as a small helpless group of people who hardly work, cannot socialise in the ways that able-bodied people do or live with partners in open accommodation, then why provide the services and facilitate us with ramps, adapted public buildings, etc.

Struggle against the images

Our immediate task, therefore, as people with disabilities is to challenge the myth of **normality** and to struggle against the images associated with the term "**THE DISABLED**". We must assert our right to be treated as people and not to be forever addressed through our medial conditions. To change attitudes and behaviour requires education and I believe we can all agree upon that. We must be able to provide information about disability and our needs as determined by ourselves. Education, however, is not enough.

The existing view of disabilty is incorporated within the dominant ideology of our society and, as a consequence, helps to maintain the existing **status quo** in relation to both its social structure and ultimately the force that has the power in this country. We must start to organise a **political** challenge to this **status quo** and this means people with disablities rejecting a passive stance on issues which concern them. We must articulate demands for social change and have these demands recognised within the existing power structures of society, namely, the law. Attitudes and behaviour relate to each other — they are not, however, the same thing because they can influence each other. To make it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities will require a fight, but in the course of that fight, the attitudes and behaviour of both people with disabilities and those seen as able-bodied will change.

Too often the debate about attitudes and behaviour has suggested that it is a clear cut issue of people with disabilities on one side and ignorant able-bodied on the other. I believe this to be false and a hopeless way of going forward. We have people who are physically different to us who, nevertheless, understand the situations many of us face. There are also people with disabilities who, for whatever reason, accept that they are at the bottom of the pile and quite happily play the "disabled role". There is no simple way to change attitudes or behaviour — but we can start by considering our own attitudes and behaviour towards people we regard as **different** to us!

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provided a reorientation of the entire system can be brought about." And we must insist that this reorientation exclude ineffective and harmful medical procedures, and include the meeting of basic human needs: housing, income and a fair share of understanding and love.

"Professionalism"

The fourth problem is that of professionalism. Communities, not professionals, must decide what services they need. Be warned that the development of community mental health in the U.S. has led to the existence of more mental health professionals than police officers!

Finally, a quote from the manifesto of a London based group, Campaign Against Psychiatric Oppression:

"The heavy weapon of psychiatry is held at the heads of the working class in order to control them. The suffering inflicted on the working class, and particularly on women, through extreme material poverty, social repression, home and work frustration, etc., obviously has a tendency to result in anxiety, depression and sometimes 'delusions' as a form of escapism — though it should be recognised that what a psychiatrist calls 'delusions' are often accurate perceptions of the worker's oppressed reality."

TRADE UNION BRIEFING

NATIONAL MINERS AMNESTY CAMPAIGN

Report-back from the first steering committee

For some supporters of the NUM, amnesty is not the key issue. The union's main problems are the establishment of the scab UDM, with all its implications, and the running battle with the courts to regain control of NUM funds. And anyway, by the time an amnesty campaign has aqcuired any real political influence, most miners will be out of jail and nothing more can be achieved for the Rhymney Two.

True, the NUM is on the defensive. In this it expresses the situation of the fighting left as a whole. Nobody could expect the NUM to go back into industrial struggle in its present condition, with the current line of the TUC and Labour Party leaderships and of the Communist Party. For this reason the National Amnesty Campaign was set up specifically with a united front basis to include the maximum support and forces, to force the organised labour movement to come to the aid of the NUM.

The MAC steering committee met on October 27, and brought together representatives from groups of sacked miners, WAPC, the NUM National Executive, Trade Union Briefing, the Campaign Group, trade union delegates, and miners' support groups. We agreed, among other things, to seek maximum sponsorship and affiliation; to hold an extended steering committee in late January; to organise interventions and fringe meetings at regional Labour Party conferences and to build for similar actions through the year at national union conferences and TUC and Labour Party conferences; to set up a panel of speakers (sacked miners, WAPC and support groups, Campaign Group MPs); to produce a pamphlet for the campaign; to organise a major benefit in late January, featuring the artistes from the 'Heroes' album; and to hold a national conference next March. The aim of the campaign is thus to organise the wide support that still exists for the miners' struggle, within the NUM itself but particularly in other unions and in the Labour Party. We want a two-thirds majority at the next Labour Party conference, and we want it on a position of full amnesty and rebuilding the coal industry.

Ed Fredenburgh,
(NMAC Secretary)



Kevin Flack

Members of Lewisham Miners' Support Group demonstrate outside Tooley St Magistrates Court. Twelve members of the support group have been charged for illegal street collections which occurred nearly a year ago. On this occasion, four members of the Labour Party including East Lewisham's Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, Russell Profitt, were found guilty but given conditional discharges.

ONE STEP FORWARD

The successful appeal of Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland was a great victory for the Rhymney Miners Amnesty Campaign Group. The Group was formed when Thatcher's corrupt judicial system brutally convicted our two Rhymney miners of murder. Our Group picketed the Crown Court during the disgracegul murder trial. Immediately after the trial we called the two largest demonstrations Wales has ever seen – one in the village of Rhymney and one in Cardiff.

On the day the appeal was heard we held a small but highly successful picket outside the court in London, despite police harassment. We handed in a petition with 20,000 signatures to the Home Secretary, and organised a lobby of Parliament.

During the campaign the Welsh call for an amnesty became so strong that Kinnock, always careful to get no blood on his hands, had his Party and trade union henchmen try to sabotage the campaign. A disgraceful and unremitting pressure was kept up on the lads' parents, to drive a wedge between them and the campaign, and to force them to sign a letter distancing themselves from the support movement in favour of the bureaucrats' line of 'keeping heads down'.

The reason for Kinnock's intervention into the campaign is that he wants the miners' strike and his infamous scabbing on the NUM, to slip into the background. A successful two-thirds majority for an amnesty at next year's Labour Party conference would spell an end to his sagging political status.

We salute all those support groups who stood with us outside the Appeal Court, and who helped us with the campaign; and we ask them to remember that the winning of a reduction in the sentences was only one small step in our campaign to win a complete amnesty for all jailed and sacked miners, and we call on all comrades to support and build the newly founded National Miners Amnesty Campaign.

We must not turn our backs on the hundreds of miners who were criminalised, jailed or sacked during the most historic struggle this century. We need to unite in a broad-based campaign to maximise our political strength: support the National Miners Amnesty Campaign.

Ray Davies, ISTC,
Rhymney Valley Amnesty Campaign

NEXT MEETING OF
TRADE UNION BRIEFING
January 22nd at 6.30 p.m.
Please ring for details of venue
619 5519 or 607 4173

TRADE UNION ACTION TO END APARTHEID!

The accompanying article from Portsmouth Area NUPE should be the first of many on the growing campaign for a trade union boycott of South Africa. For trade unionists, the boycott falls into three categories which tend to require different responses. There is an arms embargo which is 'mandatory'; here the role of workers has been to expose breaches by arms dealers. Two successful instances: the Seamen's Union of Denmark exposed shipments in 1983, and last summer TGWU dockers at Southampton prevented arms manufacturing equipment from being shipped out.

The oil embargo is voluntary, but despite all major oil exporting countries complying with the embargo, private companies like Shell are still able to continue supplying oil to the apartheid regime. The international Conference of Maritime Trade Unions was called at the end of October to address this situation; a six-page declaration was adopted, condemning South Africa's home and foreign policies, calling on all governments to implement UN sanctions on apartheid and to lift any legislation restricting international trade union solidarity with black South Africans, and urging trade unionists to take direct action against the apartheid regime, with the slogan 'stop oil supplies to South Africa'. The regime imports 90% of its oil, at 1½ times the world market price, and the police and military are the largest consumers. Oil is vital to the regime, and the oil can be cut off.

Thirdly, imports from South Africa can be boycotted. Direct consumer boycotts – refusing to buy South African food in the supermarket – as carried on over recent years, were always bound to be ineffective and individualist. But when trade unionists at the point of distribution have taken up the issue, the situation has changed dramatically. The first strike in support of the black people of South Africa outside the African continent, began in July '84 at a Dublin city chain in Ireland, to force the Dunnes management to reverse their policy of buying in South African goods. In the San Francisco Bay area ports, trade unionists have linked with the anti-apartheid movement in a growing campaign to ban all trade with South Africa; dockers and longshore workers have campaign with hotel staff, transport drivers and even minicab drivers, and the campaign includes a demand for disinvestment from South Africa. In Wales the NUPE divisional office has demanded that all public authorities – councils, health and water authorities, universities and colleges – should boycott all South African goods .

In the present political climate, and with the Tory government determined both to support apartheid and crush the power of trade unions, workers are vulnerable when they take action. Some of the problems are raised in the article from Portsmouth NUPE.

Next March a conference will be held by Trade Union Anti Apartheid; it will be aimed, says AA's Trade Union Organiser Simon Sapper, at TU branch level, with NECs invited to attend. This conference should be built by activists and used to resolve some of these problems. Others are typified by the new docks development in Liverpool, intended for the importing of cheap coal from South Africa as part of the McGregor plan; in the face of crushing unemployment, and the defeat of the miners' strike, the offer of a few jobs has bought off union opposition.

The Tories are isolated and politically vulnerable over their support for the South African regime. It's not that they are inept; it's because their paymasters are the giant British companies who have more investment in South Africa than those of any other country, who pay half of the Tory Party's total donations, and who have 34 Tory MPs representing their interests in the House of Commons.

The political stakes in the South African struggle for liberation are very high, and the British labour movement needs to play a significant role.

Ed Fredenburgh

NUPE AREA OFFICER, RICHARD JEWISON, EXAMINES THE STEPS BEING TAKEN BY HEALTH WORKERS IN PORTSMOUTH TO IMPLEMENT THE UNION'S POLICY

The NUPE South Western Division Conference this year had a major debate on South Africa and the need for sanctions. The Statement and Resolution that were enthusiastically supported, addressed the key issues facing the movement – the need to win the British Government to a policy of sanctions, the challenge of removing Pension Fund money from South Africa, and the direct action that Trade Unionists can take by refusing to buy or handle goods from the racist state.

One part of the Statement is really important. Calling for positive action to achieve a boycott, it says 'Resolutions in themselves will not achieve this objective, we must prepare practical steps which involve the total Membership'. This highlights the problem we face of putting our policies into practice. How is this done?

The actions of the Portsmouth Health Service Shop Stewards may provide an example. The Stores in Portsmouth, servicing the whole of South East Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, carry around £4 million worth of goods, a third of them food for hospital kitchens. Many of the food products, particularly tinned fruit, come from South Africa. The Shop Stewards wrote to the Stores Management seeking a meeting to demand an end to the purchase of these goods. All Stewards are now putting the issues to the Members in Catering Departments, the Stores themselves, and to the drivers who transport these goods to the various outlets.

No ballot or formal vote has yet been held as the soundings made so far have found a mixed response amongst the people most involved. This is in part caused by the traditional view, constantly reinforced by the media, that such issues are 'political' and 'none of our business'. But it is also due to a fear of what Management might do by way of reprisals, such as stopping bonus payments, removing individuals from their work, or taking disciplinary action.

Many Trade Unionists would give up at this stage, but it is absolutely vital that they persist in their efforts. In Portsmouth we shall now consider a number of 'next steps' such as:

* Trying to get a Joint Union Policy agreed, so that a Joint Approach can be made to the employers.
* Getting a Resolution onto the District Health Authority.
* Building an effective leaflet campaign, directed at the important groups, and aimed at getting a major discussion going about the need for a boycott.
* Inviting SACTU or ANC speakers to meetings of staff involved in the handling of Apartheid products.
* Finding one group of people who are willing to take a stand, then building a major publicity campaign, starting with the threat to take action, time limits for the employer to respond, and building mass support for that group of Members.
* Extending the formal consultation, at the appropriate time, to include all staff coming into contact with these goods.
* Preparing the ground by seeking a firm statement from the Executive Council that there would be full backing, including, if necessary victimisation benefit (which can amount to full pay) in the event of disciplinary action being taken.

If every Shop Stewards' Committee were to discuss the campaign in this organised and systematic way we would start to see some action. What we really need is the key groups of workers such as dockers, oil industry employees and Trade Unionists involved in transport generally to take a stand. But they have a legitimate complaint, particularly dockers, that they are always the ones being called on to take action on other peoples' behalf. They should not be asked to take action by themselves, but if there are enough groups taking action, then the conditions would be created for the Movement to justify such an appeal. The Trade Union Movement is now poised to bring a new dimension to the already magnificent campaign that is developing worldwide, and which will eventually put an end to the vicious Apartheid regime. Let's get organised.

SILENTNIGHT STRIKE — "MR WONDERFUL" TAKES ON FTAT

Janet Seymour,
(FTAT shop steward)

How is it that 535 workers at the Barnoldswick (Lancs) factory of the Silentnight Company have been on strike since June 10 and hardly anyone in the labour and trade union movement seems to have heard about it? Until the TUC Conference (where an Emergency Resolution on the Strike was unanimously adopted) the silence has been deafening.

Tom Clarke started up in business on his demob pay making mattresses in his own front room. He built up to quite a large factory in Barnoldswick, Lancs., and over the years expanded by buying up other factories and businesses.

He is a self-made millionaire whom Margaret Thatcher christened "Mr Wonderful" after she made a visit to the Silentnight showrooms about fourteen months ago.

About three years ago Clarke made a statement to the local press to the effect that he had the best workforce in Britain. This was in the middle of an article reporting yet another record breaking profit year by Silentnight. *That same workforce has now been sacked.*

Historically the annual pay rise at the Silentnight factory has, since 1978, been accompanied by a change in job values which virtually cancels out any pay rise. After just such a rate cutting exercise in February '84 the workforce decided, as a body, that for once they were not going to take a cut and they walked out of the factory. On the morning of the walkout we had about 20 union members of FTAT (Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union) and by the end of the same day we had 600 members. We have been unionised since that day.

Early this year at the time for implementation of the negotiated pay rise, we were told by management, "We cannot afford your pay rise now, however, if you will postpone your rise for three to four months we will guarantee jobs and ensure no further redundancies." The workforce agreed. Eight weeks later that same management posted up notices of further redundancies and 52 jobs were lost.

The membership demanded the return of the pay rise (a rise of £5.25 per week) and the company refused. After many discussions we were offered the rise on basic rates only.

By applying the rise to basic rates only it means that most workers receive 51 pence per week and other workers receive no pay rise at all.

The bedding factory has a disputes procedure drawn up between FTAT and the Bedding Federation (the largest member of the Bedding Federation being Silentnight). Silentnight refused to use this disputes procedure.

ACAS were approached and in turn they contacted the company who refused their offer of help. At the end of all this a secret ballot was held on the question of industrial action and the result was a vote in favour of action taking place. A work to rule was started. After 1½ hours on the first day of the work to rule our members were being individually suspended for refusing to work "normally". The remainder of the workforce walked out in support. That was on June 10 and we have been on strike ever since. We were sacked on July 22.

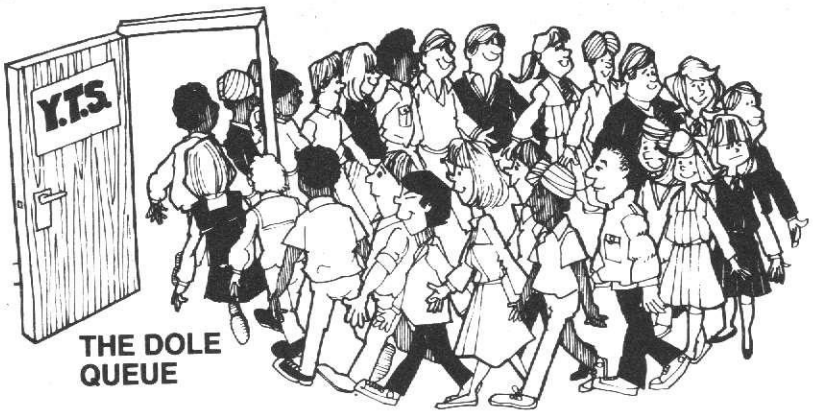
We received a real boost at the end of October after contact with the Co-op brought in the promise of blacking of Silentnight beds in the Co-op. We have also had success at a number of docks in that fellow unionists have refused to handle goods coming into the country destined for the Silentnight factory or indeed to handle beds from the factory for export.

Our dispute is now beginning to really bite but after a few months on strike we are seriously in need of further support. Anyone who can supply "contact" names please call Terry Bennett on 0282 603055.

Donations of cash, food and clothes should be sent to Cravendale Branch 92 Strike Fund, c/o Ann King, 10 Rainhill Crescent, Barnoldswick, Colne, Lancs.

YOUTH BRIEFING

"YOUTH LISTEN TO KINNOCK"



THE DOLE QUEUE

"No future for youth under Thatcher – but what will a Labour government offer?"

John Hird, Chair of the LPYS to Neil Kinnock, Leader of the Labour Party, after the latter had answered a question by launching an (only slightly veield) attack on the LPYS and its policies: "That was intended to be a fraternal question, Neil". Neil Kinnock: "That's the closest you're going to get to a fraternal answer, John" (two-thirds of the audience applauds, the remainder boos and hisses).

This episode sums up the Labour Party conference "Labour Listens to Youth", held in London on November 9.

Also very indicative was the slip of the tongue made by Phil Woolas, President of the National Union of Students, when he asked "How are we going to make youth anti-Labour?" He doesn't have to look far for ideas – the Conference wasn't a bad start! Intended to launch the Party's Youth Charter with a bang, it never managed more than a whimper (except for the heckling of the platform during the introductory 'Questions and Answers' session). No-one on it was under 35, and Neil Kinnock especially seemed to think the main problem facing young people in Britain today is the leadership of the Labour Party Young Socialists!

Despite all their efforts the Labour Party couldn't manage more than 250 people, a large number of which seemed to be members of Labour Students (and most of these seemed to be ageing, white, middle class men in suits!). Combined with some youth from local parties, and some trade union delegates, they managed a few standing ovations for comrade Kinnock and some rather boring workshops. LPYS delegates asked a few awkward questions and got our leader quite rattled. When asked about guaranteed jobs for all school leavers he made an emotional speech, asking us to be reasonable and be satisfied with what we're given:

"Don't give impossible promises. We should speak of realities, of socialism, we must mobilise the optimism and confidence of youth, rather than exploiting their depression and misery – that's a sour and cynical course and one not fitting for socialists".

The conference must have been a pretty big disappointment for Kinnock and Co – but no doubt they will continue to try to organise a youth campaign that bypasses the LPYS, leaning on the trade unions and Labour Students. So we must continue to defend the LPYS, its budget and its paper – while at the same time fighting for a political alternative to both the 'non-policies' of the Labour Party youth charter (not one definite commitment in the whole thing!) and also to the Militant leadership.

A Labour government such as the one Kinnock plans can't afford to listen to youth. Only a Labour government committed to a mass expansion of jobs, services and education has anything to offer youth today.

Tracy Doyle, Delegate, Brighton LPYS

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