LONDON LABOUR 40p
BRIEFING
No 56 FEBRUARY 1986

Lambeth still defiant; help us make 1986

FIGHTBACK YEAR!

Des Atkinson, Lambeth Councillor, Stockwell Ward.

On Tuesday 14th January, 30 Lambeth Labour Councillors and 2 ex-councillors were in the High Court fighting against a surcharge certificate for £127,000. We are ready for this struggle, and we are pledged to continue to fight on behalf of working class people in Lambeth. We cannot know the outcome of the court case, but whatever happens we are proud to have stood up against an unjust law.

It would have been all too easy for us as councillors to have stood aside in the spring of 1985 and to have tamely imposed the cuts the Government was seeking. But that would have left working people in Lambeth exposed and betrayed by their own councillors. So we knew we had to challenge ratecapping, even if it meant severe personal risk.

Timetable

The likely timetable for the court case is 2 or 3 weeks. Whichever side loses will then have the right of appeal against the High Court's judgement. This appeal would have to be on a point of law and could therefore be heard quickly in the Court of Appeal. It is possible therefore that if we were to lose in the Court of Appeal and not be allowed to appeal to the House of Lords, then we could be surcharged and disqualified from office before the end of March. This is exactly what the Government would like to see — a quick kill to bring any local authority thinking of challenging ratecapping cuts into line.

Comrades must be ready to fight this tactic and to stop panic ruling budget-making in 1986. The principle remains the same this year as in previous years. Labour councillors must defend jobs and services in their communities and fight ratecapping cuts.



John Chapman

Lambeth Councillors display surcharge notices, 9th September 1985

However comrades should take heart, for all is not yet lost! The Government knows that we have the support of Lambeth's people. Labour has thrashed its enemies in a whole series of by-elections, culminating in a magnificent victory for Kingsley Smith in Tulse Hill ward. Thatcher and Baker also know that we have

(CONTINUED OVER)

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

WHO'S LEFT NOW?

Eddie McParland
(London Labour Party Executive)

The stampede of the national Labour leadership to the Right has been echoed by some erstwhile left wingers on the London Labour Party Executive. At the December meeting of the Executive, addressed by Tony Byrne, Housing Chair of Liverpool City Council, a resolution was moved calling on the NEC to withdraw the enquiry and concentrate instead on attacking the Tories. The subsequent vote should be of interest to all *Briefing* readers as some of those opposing or abstaining on the vote have in the past appeared on *Briefing* slates. In particular Valerie Wise voted against the resolution and Frances Morrell, leader of ILEA and Ann Pettifor, Women's Section, scandalously abstained.

NUPE members in London should be particularly outraged as Chris Humphries, their London Divisional Officer, ignored the recent decision of NUPE London Division Conference against any witch-hunts in the Party by opposing the resolution.

The apparent collapse of such 'lefts' into Kinnock's embrace is part of a continuing process on the Executive that has also seen the fracture of the Women's Caucus and began with the collapse of the GLC and ILEA over ratecapping, the defeat of the battle to save the GLC (remember the billboards and the appeals to the House of Lords!) and the retreat of council after council before the onslaught of Tory laws.

Such 'lefts', by sitting with their arms folded offer a figleaf of respectability to the purge of Militant supporters, under the guise of the 'enquiry' that is planned by Kinnock and the right wing. A purge, moreover, that is designed to disguise the jettisoning of party policy as electorally inconvenient by the party leadership.

At the Executive, Ken Livingstone at least voted against such a purge, but unlike 1981/2 when he was President of the Labour Steering Committee against witch-hunts, this time round his public opposition to the enquiry has been very muted, perhaps for fear of undermining his new found acceptability to the Labour leadership!

As Militant has warned repeatedly, once such a purge commences it would rapidly extend to others on the left, besides Militant, who oppose the leadership, a point reinforced by the expulsion in Birmingham and elsewhere of Black Sections supporters. Last year *Briefing* supporters were quick to remove Bob Labi, Militant supporter and veteran Executive member, from their slate for the Executive, allegedly because of his position on Ireland and women. Can we therefore expect this year a similar swift fate to befall these ex-lefts, who when tried on the issue of the purge, have been found wanting?

With 5 million unemployed, British industry a dim folk memory, a renewed attack on local councils and a threadbare welfare state, it is a political obscenity that the leadership of our party should be attacking good socialists who stood by party policy in defence of jobs and services.

Those on the soft left, who for career reasons or whatever, look the other way as Liverpool is in the firing line, should not be too surprised to find that the rank and file will not forgive their behaviour.

Now that Blunkett is having second thoughts it is still possible to deflect the majority on the NEC from the path of fratricidal strife by flooding the NEC with protest resolutions from CLPs, party and trade union branches, especially as they have postponed the conclusion of their Kangaroo Court until after the High Court case against Lambeth and Liverpool Councillors.

HOW THEY VOTED

'Having listened to speakers from Liverpool we wish, pursuant to the agenda item, to move that the General Secretary be instructed to inform the NEC that this REC condemns the witch-hunt against comrades in Liverpool who have upheld Labour Party policies and to withdraw the enquiry and use their energies to attack Tories rather than Socialists, particularly with the May elections in view and the run-up to the next General Election.'

FOR:
Anand, Balfe, Corbyn, Douglas, Finch, Harris, Knight, Latham, Livingstone, Love, McDonnell, McParland, Moore, Richards, Roelofs, Thornton, Twelves, Williamson, Wiseman.

AGAINST:
Black, Bonner, Cherrill, Gilbey, Goldbourne, Honeyball, Humphries, Jackson, Nicholson, Saville, Ward, Wheatley, Wise.

ABSTAINED:
Pettifor, Christian, Morrell.

Labour Left Co-ordination **Campaign Group of MPs**
Greater London Region Labour Party

Rally Against the Witch-hunt

Tuesday, 21 January, 7.45 pm **County Hall, London**

Speakers include:
Joan Maynard, MP
Diane Abbott
Speaker from London Region Labour Party
Ken Livingstone

Victims of the Witch-hunt:
Steve Reicher, Exeter Briefing
Amir Khan, Birmingham, Black Sections
Kevin Scally, L.C.I. member, Birmingham

The Witch-hunt is gathering speed: up and down the country activists are facing disciplinary action for their political beliefs. Come and hear the facts — and start the opposition! For further information about the witch hunt contact Labour Left Co-ordination, 57, Lofting Road, London N1 1ES; and please send us any information you have.

A small admission charge will be made

STAND BY LAMBETH! (CONTINUED)

the support of the Town Hall unions. 1986 represents a watershed year with the Borough elections in May under the shadow of the GLC's abolition. Several key boroughs are set to fall to Labour. Thatcher needs to realise that the grotesque injustice of Labour councillors being surcharged will bring an added flood of Labour votes. She won't be too popular if Bromley or Barnet are lost!

Appeal for Funds

We have been tremendously heartened by the generous response of comrades to our appeal for money to meet legal costs. This money has been essential as legal fees are stunningly high (perhaps our barrister comrades in the party could recycle some of their fees back to working people). Unhappily we still do not have enough cash to see us through our High Court case, never mind any further appeal. *We therefore urgently need further funds*. Please get your CLPs, Trade Unions, etc., to send all they can to the Lambeth Fighting Fund, c/o Cllr Stephen Bubb, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2.

We know that Kinnock, Cunningham, Straw and the rest want to see us crushed, despite the overwhelming support we received at annual conference. However, Kinnock is not known for letting inconvenient conference decisions get in his way.

Finally let me repeat the warning about budget-making for 1986. For Labour councils to decide on Tory cuts would be criminal, as well as electorally disastrous in May. We cannot sell out and offer working people the fantasy of Kinnock in shining armour coming to their rescue after the next election. The fight is here and now, and unless we fight like socialists then we will never win a general election. 1986 is to be the year not of defeat, but of the fightback!

The 32 Lambeth comrades facing surcharge are:

Sharon Atkin, Des Atkinson, Dorothy Ayres, Janet Boateng, Bill Bowring, Mike Bright, Stephen Bubb, Kath Connolly, Irma Critchlow, Helen Crossfield, Len Hammond, Noel Hannon, Elsie Horstead, Amelda Inyang, Ted Knight, Lloyd Leon, Vince Leon, Gordon Ley, Christine McGrory, Kevin Moore, Patrick Newman, Graham Norwood, John O'Malley, Ken Phipp, Frank Quenault, Jock Quinn, Tom Rich, Jo Sinclair, Hazel Smith, Joan Walley, Matthew Warburton and Pat Williams.

HOW THE LONDON LEFT CRUMBLED

Just before Christmas, the Guardian's political editor, Ian Aitken, wrote as nasty little piece supporting Kinnock's witch-hunt against the left, in which he dubbed the 'non-Militant hard Left' as 'the Patchwork Quilt Tendency'. According to Ian Aitken, even if Militant is disposed of, "the Patchwork Quilt Tendency will still be in charge in many localities, and *especially in the party's electorally-crucial London region*". Ignoring the rest of Aitken's article, on the surface this statement would appear to be accurate. But is it?

The major issues which have confronted Labour in London during the past year has been the struggle against rate-capping and the abolition of the GLC. The Regional EC should have played a major leadership, unifying and propaganda role. That is what the AGM asked it to do when it resolved to stand firm against government attacks, to open up the regional office as a campaigning centre, and to organise special conferences to discuss tactics – to provide a forum not just for council leaders but also for party members and trade unionists supporting the struggles.

Unfortunately, this is precisely what it has not done. The rot began to set in at its first meeting on 11th March, the day after the GLC made a rate and just a week after the AGM. By a vote of 13 to 25, a resolution condemning the GLC's scandalous decision to break ranks and set a rate was watered down to remove any reference to the GLC, although continued support for the boroughs was retained.

'Left majority exposed

Just as it was the GLC which led the backdown on rate-capping, so it has been the fate of the GLC which has exposed what was the "left" majority on the Regional EC. With the abolition legislation passed, the EC had to decide how to proceed. Capitulation was speedy. The regional AGM had been at a time when it was already clear that the legislation would get through but nevertheless, with the support of the EC, it had passed a resolution calling on councillors to refuse to participate in bodies established to facilitate abolition. By July, the Policy Committee was recommending participation. A resolution which reaffirmed the policy of the AGM (only four months previous) was defeated by 10 votes to 20.

For: *T. Connolly, L. Douglas, M. Gordon, E. McParland, D. Richards, S. Roelofs, C. Shawcroft, J. Twelves, G. Williamson, V. Wiseman.*

Against: *A. Black, A. Bonner, L. Christian, F. Dobson, R. Goulborn, D. Harris, C. Humphreys, D. Jackson, R. Lever, K. Livingstone, A. Love, P. Moore, B. Nicholson, A. Pettifor, A. Pollack, S. Staden, G. Thornton, M. Ward, G. Wheatley, V. Wise.*

Abstention: *T. Knight (because of ALA mandate).*

The introduction of recorded voting at the Regional EC shows how fast comrades switched sides, as you can see. This voting pattern became a common event.

Having given up on the GLC, the energies of the new majority were put into changing



John Chapman

Vidya Anand addresses London Labour Party Conference 1985

policy so that they would not have to continually vote down resolutions which 'reaffirmed' AGM decisions. So the special AGM in October was used to defeat the majority of the CLPs who were not prepared to capitulate to government policies. A statement full of platitudes and no action was prepared by NUPE's Chris Humphries and presented to the conference. Amendments which 'reaffirmed' existing policy were opposed, and voted down by the block votes of NUPE, the T&G and RACS. The only amendment with any bite the Regional EC supported was on refusing to comply with privatisation – and this was only supported when it was pointed out that this was the same as NUPE had themselves just put to Annual Conference.

The AGM had passed a major composite calling on the regional staff to become campaigners and less involved in policing the constituencies, and for the Campaign Committee to be opened up to non-exuective activists. We have called for nominations for co-options, we are attempting to produce a newssheet for door-to-door distribution and have held discussions with regional staff about turning Herbert Morrison House into a resource centre. However, whenever we have attempted to implement the policies of the AGM, whether on rate-capping, effective campaigning, or on Ireland, we have been blocked – either by the NEC, by the Regional EC changing the policy, by someone finding a reason for putting off the discussion to the next meeting or by someone deriding it as impractical.

Composite O

The prime example of AGM resolutions being blocked is on Composite O, which called for open debate throughout the labour movement on withdrawal from Ireland and for the Regional EC to organise a public meeting involving representatives from the majority of republican opinion. The implementation of Composite O has brought the Regional EC into conflict with the NEC. Regional staff have been instructed by Larry Whitty not to take any action to convene a meeting to which Sinn Fein are invited. Meetings with Larry Whitty have centred on the tendencious argument that parties not affiliated to the Socialist International cannot appear on Labour Party platforms. Despite this, the EC has agreed to proceed with organising a tribunal on how we implement Labour's policy of withdrawal – to be held at County Hall on 23 February. But Composite O is only being implemented by a small group of us under the umbrella of the Campaign Committee – the majority on the EC have not seen it as a priority, and their willingness to come into conflict with the national party on this has to be compared with their positions on conflict with the Tory government on matters closer to home.

Lambeth

Lip service is always paid to Lambeth's struggle. 'Guilt-trip' resolutions and statements in support of Lambeth can safely be passed as long as it doesn't mean that anyone else has to put their political career on the line. The GLLP has contributed more than £1000 to Lambeth's Fighting Fund. But, despite having earlier agreed to recommend to ward branches that councillors who voted against Party policy should not be reselected, the Regional EC has been quite happy to use its policing and disciplinary role to force LGCs and CLPs to put those likely to break ranks on candidates' panels. When this happened to Lambeth, it showed the real depth of comrades' solidarity.

Having sold out on rate-capping and the GLC, the new soft left majority flexed its new alignments at the December meeting of the Regional EC. An emergency motion was proposed condemning the NEC inquiry into Liverpool DLP and the expulsion of Black Section supporters in Sparkbrook. At the instigation of Ann Pettifor, who argued that she'd had to vote on too many resolutions on Militant that week and therefore it couldn't be an emergency, the EC voted not to take it. We were treated to the unedifying sight of GLC members walking into the meeting and sticking up their hands without knowing what they were voting on because Mike Ward was voting that way. It took considerable manoeuvring to reinstate a resolution opposing the witch-hunt, which was then passed because some of those who had opposed it as an emergency suddenly remembered that they were representatives of organisations which opposed witch-hunts and therefore had to vote for the resolution. In just six months, the rot had set in to such an extent that to win a resolution which a year ago would have been passed with only one or two votes against suddenly became a major victory for the left.

During the past year, as the prospect of struggle has made people back away from confrontation and as a result switch their political allegiences, what was elected as a 'left' EC has switched to being dominated by Kinnockite cuddlies, predominantly organised through the Labour Co-ordinating Committee.

Continued on next page

FOR AN INNER LONDON DISTRICT PARTY

90% or more of the Inner London Labour Parties agree that the Regional Executive have made a hash of everything to do with preparations for the direct elections to the ILEA.

The wishes of over 90% of the delegates at a manifesto conference for a more socialist document were block-voted out by a handful of union officials who had caucused with some of the current ILEA leadership beforehand.

The Manifesto document that was thus block-voted through is an unuseable irrelevance because it was written before rate-capping, before GLC abolition and makes no reference to the profound political consequences of the teachers' struggle.

Because of the redundancy of this 'officially' endorsed manifesto another briefer, more "popular" version will now have to be drafted. No doubt this watered down document will suit those in the next Labour Group who would prefer a less socialist commitment over their next term of office.

The reason why the planning for the Manifesto, the selection of candidates and the preparation of campaigns has been so lamentable is because there is no proper structure, no appropriate tier of organisation, to cope with the radically altered circumstances in London.

Apart from being hindered by having to operate within prehistoric conditions from an administrative and organisational point of view, our regional officials are overstretched in the fulfillment of their primary task, which is policing the party.

Cannot cope

They cannot cope with the added workload of ILEA selections, policy consultations, conferences, campaigns and elections. Neither can this be passed on to the members of the regional executive who are generally very busy people active in defending their union members' interests, campaigning in their locality for the coming borough council elections or travelling the country in search of parliamentary nominations.

The ILEA Liaison Sub-committee is a sedentary and ineffectual body. It is merely a sop to consultation with very little indeed being relayed back to the CLPs.

Many CLPs are shortlisting and nominating potential ILEA candidates without even having seen and heard them. Thus the corrupt old practices of word-of-mouth recommendation seem to have returned.

One response to this mess is the creation of an Inner London District Labour Party which could deal with matters relevant to and arising from the existence of a new and major single purpose authority.

District structures are not uncommon elsewhere in Britain. There will be differences concerning the structure and composition of the Inner London District Labour Party especially in the aftermath of the witch-hunting inquiry against the Liverpool DLP.

But differences over these things do not detract from the obvious need to establish such a body in response to the altered shape of London's local government and the significant place the new ILEA will have within the changed circumstances.

To place this onto the agenda of the March conference of the Greater London Labour Party comrades must lobby members of the Regional EC with a view to the EC presenting a recommendation to conference that establishing an Inner London District Labour Party is a matter of some urgency.

This might help to distract certain regional EC members from their efforts to replace Arthur Latham with a right winger as chairperson.

Work of the DLP

The work of the Inner London DLP would include:

*All aspects of writing the Manifesto and supervising the implementation of policy.

*Leading and co-ordinating of campaigns in support of socialist policies and workers in dispute.

*Development of political links with community groups, black groups, education service unions such as NALGO, the teacher unions and the NUS, all of which have no formal input into decision-making within the Party.

*Links with other London borough CLPs and Labour Groups to discuss policy and resources matters as well as campaigns.

*The supervision of elections and by-elections involving a candidates' panel, nomination and selection, Labour Group business, co-optees to committees and appointments to institutions.

*Convening of an Annual Conference of the District Labour Party at which the Leader and Deputy Leader would be elected.

*The holding of regular monthly meetings of an executive and delegate character.

Most importantly of all, in consultation with all Inner London CLPs, unions, societies, and Labour Groups the DLP would be the focus for a joint budget strategy.

Comrades wishing to develop this discussion about the creation of an Inner London District Labour Party please contact Steven Cowan on 740 5483, 90 Thorpebank Road, W12.

Steve Cowan,
(Hammersmith Labour Party)

Vauxhall Labour Party
LOCAL DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL
Public meeting in support of Lambeth Labour Councillors
Monday 20 January 1986
7.30 p.m. Surrey Hall
Binfield Road, SW4
(Stockwell tube. Oppos. bus garage)
Speakers include
TONY BENN MP; TED KNIGHT; AMELDA INYANG – surcharged Labour Councillor
JOHN DUNN – Clay Cross councillor

SLATE FOR THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE

Briefing will be deciding its slate for the Regional Executive at our next editorial meeting at County Hall at 6.30 p.m. on Monday January 27. The meeting is open to all Briefing supporters, and voting is by supporters' cards only.

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As the left has polarised during the last few months, so the women on the Regional EC have not been excluded from this process. Although there has continued to be a women's caucus before meetings, and women have intervened collectively on issues of concern to them as women, when it has come to more general issues the political differences have emerged. Despite the radical policies of the London Women's Conference, and the enthusiasm which a year ago greeted the eight women being elected by and accountable to that conference, ironically it has been precisely those who fought hardest for this change who have been the most likely to ignore the policies of women's conference!

And what of Aitken's Patchwork Quilt Tendency – is the London Labour Party the threat to Kinnock he assumes? For the past four years, the left has allowed its control of the GLC to be a substitute for organising the Regional EC as an effective policy-leading and campaigning body. With abolition things have to change. Debate has centred on the outside, organisational changes required to comply with abolition and the relationship of the Regional EC to the new ILEA. No debate has taken place either within the left or within the Regional EC as a whole on what the EC's role will be in the future. Will it be just a talking shop, or can it be transformed into the campaigning body essential for promoting socialist policies and maintaining the left's dominance in London politics?

This year's AGM has a duty to call the Regional EC to account for having ignored the policies agreed last year, look at what went wrong and discuss its role in the future. After the past year, the left cannot afford to be complacent and assume that we'll get it right without being much better organised.

Joan Twelves,
(Vauxhall CLP and Vice-chair, Regional Campaigns Committee [in personal capacity])

Women's Conference

The London Labour Women's Conference on 18th January will be electing eight women to the Regional Executive. We hope that supporters of *Briefing* will vote for the following:

Jacqueline Abbott (Hammersmith WS)
Linda Bellos (Vauxhall WS)
Helen Crossfield (Norwood WS)
Nadine Finch (Hackney N & Stoke Newington WS)
Sally Powell (Fulham WS)
Sarah Roelofs (Hornsey & Wood Green WS)
Lesley Seary (Greenwich WS)
Vanessa Wiseman (Lambeth WC)

Nadine Finch/Joan Twelves

NEITHER ADVANCE NOR RETREAT IN CAMDEN

The Camden Labour Parties have now agreed the manifesto for the Borough Elections in May 1986. Candidates have now been selected in all those wards where Labour will win. After months of often bitter activity over the content of the manifesto and the selection of candidates, we have to conclude that the Left in Camden have neither lost ground nor significantly gained the initiative.

The manifesto itself makes those undertakings which were made at the last borough elections — to defend services and jobs and to improve service delivery through decentralisation. This is neither an advance nor a retreat. Likewise, the composition of the Labour Group after the elections will not drastically alter. A right wing group will be opposed by the hard left leaving the soft left with the balance of power. The new Council will commence in a position of stalemate with neither the left nor the right being able to take a decisive political advantage.

In this context the left in Camden will have to mobilise outside the Council Chamber. There can be little doubt that confrontation with the Government is inevitable in the future if the Council maintains a commitment to defend and expand services. It is through contact and work with local working class organisations that we can ensure not only a victory in this struggle but can also ensure that it is the left that gains power in Camden after the Borough Elections.

CAMDEN BRIEFING

Next meeting Tuesday 4th February, 8pm
Camden Town Hall

For further details of Camden Briefing, contact:
Fred Leplat (Holborn and St Pancras CLP) on 387 1361
or Richard Barbrook (Hampstead & Highgate CLP) on 431 0357.

Review: a People's History of South London

South London Record No. 1, *published by the Southwark & Lambeth History Workshop, £1.75.*

This pamphlet, the first in a series, documents six fragments of South London popular history:

First, a Women's History Walk through North Southwark which spotlights the life of famous local women such as the housing reformer Octavia Hill and the theatre pioneer Lillian Baylis.

Second, a report on the Battle of Plumstead Common in 1876 when a vast crowd led by an exiled Irish republican, John De Morgan of the Commons Protection League, invaded newly privatised sections of the Common, tearing down fences.

Third, an account of the 1932 riot by 10,000 unemployed demonstrators who, while chanting "We Want Bread", stoned police and looted shops in Waterloo.

Fourth, details of the Woolwich Labour Party's campaign for "Votes for Women" and its alliance with the suffragettes of the WPSU.

Fifth, a biography of Helen Taylor — the first woman to stand for parliament. She was nominated by the Camberwell Radical Club in 1885 and campaigned on a platform of a six-hour working day, universal suffrage for men and women, Irish Home Rule, and the nationalisation of land. Just a few days before the poll, however, the Returning Officer declared her ineligible to stand on the grounds that she was a woman!

In reminding us of radical struggles from the past, this pamphlet serves as an inspiration for the future.

Peter Tatchell
(Southwark & Bermondsey CLP)

FIGHTING BACK IN WANDSWORTH

Wandsworth Local Government Committee Conference met over the weekend November 30th/December 1st to decide on its manifesto for the May '86 elections.

Wandsworth's Thatcherite Tory Council has, since 1978, been in the vanguard of local authority cuts and privatisation through which over 2,500 jobs have been lost. Pay and conditions by contractors such as Pritchards and Exclusive are rock bottom while in terms of service delivery, most contracts should have been torn up many times over under the Tories' own penalty clause.

Rents Increased By Nearly 400%

Rents are the second highest in the country, having been increased by nearly 400%. While the artificially held down housing waiting list stands at 8,500, there have been no public housing starts in eight years and no empty council accommodation is available for let — only for sale to all comers, in this rapidly "gentrifying" borough.

Wandsworth NUPE and GMBATU have fought a long rearguard battle against cuts and 13 separate privatisations, including a 6 week long strike by the "dust" in the middle of the 1982 Council elections. They have received little more than token support from the local Labour Parties and from the Labour Group.

Avoid Pledges

It might be thought that the Group and LGC majorities would be keen to restore Council services and jobs to at least the levels of 1978 prior to the Tory onslaught. This is what the manual unions joint shop stewards committee (JSSC), *Briefing* and *Militant* supporters campaigned for, to be financed by a deficit budget. Not a bit of it. The right wing/soft "left" is increasingly dominated by the ex NOLS/NUS Executive rising stars of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. Their aim was simply to avoid any concrete pledges potentially involving illegality.

After a lively debate, amendments calling for deficit budget were defeated by a 2-1 margin, a creditable result in the Wandsworth context. After this the left fully expected to be defeated on all major items, but to our surprise amendments were carried pledging (mostly against the opposition of the LCC "lefts"):

- a 2 year rent freeze
- restoration of direct council caretaking services
- a 35 hour week and £110 minimum wage for council manual workes
- maintenance of the OAP free bus pass
- reduction of social services charges.

Only the allegedly "cheap" issues of equal opportunities got the new right's backing. However, a measure of the real commitment to equal opportunities in the local party is that of 25 "safe" Labour seats only 8 women candidates and 2 black candidates (both in Tooting) have been selected. Battersea has thus reconfirmed its racist problem revealed by the Russell Proffit affair in 1983.

Organised

The left organised hard for the LGC conference. The JSSC produced a document entitled "A Socialist Strategy for Wandsworth". NUPE organised a lobby of ex Council workers sacked because of privatisation and NUPE branch secretary Dave Benlow addressed the conference calling for deprivatisation and a deficit budget. *Briefing* supporters produced a bulletin prior to the conference and two daily bulletins.

A "priorities" conference will be held in February where the left will be having to defend the limited policy pledges made at this one from being "deprioritised". Otherwise Labour will offer nothing to the Wandsworth working class beyond vague and hypocritical statements of good intent.

Pete Cooper

Facing up to

GLC LABOUR GROUP WITHDRAWS FROM POLITICAL SCENE

Fred Leplat
(GLC/ILEA NALGO steward)

The attempt to save the GLC was lost when the Abolition Bill became an Act in July 1985. The issue that faces the GLC/ILEA unions since then has been to save jobs and services.

Despite many important services being transferred to new successor authorities (the new ILEA, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, the Central Technical Unit, the South Bank Board, etc...), there are still many sections of the GLC which at present have no future (Industry and Employment Branch, Research and Intelligence, the Council Committee support Units, etc...). There are also the sections that will be transferred to the London Residuary Body but only for a short period of 2 to 3 years.



Furthermore, the successor authorities — including the ILEA — are not taking on all the staff that are currently providing the service from the GLC. These authorities will therefore be making cuts, and some — like the LFCDA — will be using private consultants and services. The result of the abolition of the GLC will mean that the 8,000 lost jobs anticipated by the unions and the council will materialise, the majority of them being obtained through compulsory redundancies.

The management and the council are currently maintaining a very high rate of vacant posts, and are hoping that the early retirements and voluntary redundancies will ensure that there will be no compulsory redundancies. They are using these arguments to raise the morale of the staff to ensure that work continues smoothly. But they do not say that it will not be possible to match the skills of all the staff who wish to remain with the posts that are being transferred, and that many sections will disappear completely. Compulsory redundancies are therefore unavoidable. The fact that in any case thousands of jobs will be lost is not given a high profile by the Labour Group majority, who still mainly talk about the loss of democracy and accountability.

Smooth handover

The Labour Group majority at the GLC is now relying on a strategy of ensuring that there are no compulsory redundancies and that there is a smooth handover of services to the successor authorities. They are carrying out this strategy by giving a free hand to management, and by withdrawing from the political scene. Management now disregard many of the established industrial relations procedures, and are negotiating the future of each of their own little corners without any check. Meanwhile councillors are co-operating with successor authorities that are not transferring all staff with the service. Neither have they taken any serious initiatives towards the Labour boroughs to help them set up joint committees that would take on the GLC services.

The Labour Group has also introduced measures to ensure that services are not disrupted by abolition: these include the lifting of all restrictions on working overtime, and a "flexibility" allowance assessed for each individual by local management. These divisive measures are of the same sort that Murdoch and Maxwell are introducing. Livingstone's expectations that the chaos produced by abolition would clearly be seen to be the Tories' responsibility and would help Labour in the May Council elections, will now possibly not take place because of his own efforts. Furthermore, the anticipated propaganda campaign for a sympathetic government to re-establish a London-wide elected authority has yet to materialise.

Realignment by Livingstone

There has clearly been a political realignment by Livingstone and the majority of the Labour Group. This started to take place last March when Livingstone was in favour of setting a rate, thus dealing a big blow to the campaign against the Rates Act, and it was confirmed at the Labour Party Conference when he gave a standing ovation to Kinnock for his famous speech. The desire to help the Tory Government maintain services through abolition is a clear attempt at respectability — the "dented shield" approach.

Despite the unfavourable situation since the defeat of the miners' strike, the lack of support from Livingstone and the Labour Group, and a weak union organisation, a fight for jobs is still being continued essentially by NUPE and NALGO with individuals from the other unions.

However, the Greater London Staff Association who control the staff side seem to be more concerned with ensuring good pension and redundancy terms rather than fighting for jobs. But NUPE and NALGO are refusing to co-operate with successor authorities who are not transferring all staff with their service. Although small victories have been gained, and nobody has been victimised for supporting union policy, we will need the support of the unions and Labour Parties in the Labour boroughs in forcing their Labour Groups to take on staff and services or form joint committees with other Labour boroughs. Time is short, but if the London Labour Party and the Labour Councils stand by their commitment to ensure that despite abolition, services are maintained on a Londonwide basis through the establishment of joint committees, then jobs and services will be saved. However, it is up to every single *Briefing* supporter, with other socialists, to fight in their union and party for the Labour Groups and London Labour Party to stand by their commitment.

abolition

GLC ABOLITION: WOMEN AND BLACK WORKERS MUST NOT PAY!

Nadine Finch
(Member of the Greater London Labour Party Executive)

On 31st March 1986 some 6,000 GLC workers will become redundant. The majority of these workers will be female or Black. They will be the most vulnerable of workers in a market with up to 5 million unemployed. And, ironically, they will be the ones to pay for the admirable stand made by the GLC and other Labour councils against an increasingly authoritarian Central Government.

It is also ironical that many Labour councillors and Party members have fallen for the *Daily Mail* line of highly paid political appointees. GLC workers like most other workers toil for long hours and have in reality little control over the direction of their work. It is also worth stressing that 50% of the 10,000 odd white collar workers in fact earn less than £6,000 a year. No limousines for them.

It also needs to be stressed that the GLC does in fact now employ some 19% Black staff. A percentage comparable to the population make up of London as a whole. How many boroughs can in fact boast this kind of record?

One of the most depressing results of the abolition of the GLC has been the retreat of most Labour Groups, with the notable exception of ILEA, on trade union issues. These Groups have been happy enough to accept the spoils of the GLC in terms of Stress Borough or Inner City aid. These groups have been happy enough to use the research and expertise of the GLC for their own political advance. But on whose labour have they progressed?

And what aid and oportunity are they now offering to the workers within the GLC? Many GLC workers have reported that they have faced what amounts to "political" scrutiny when they have applied for jobs in even the most "right on" boroughs.

The Greater London Labour Party is clear. Jobs must be transferred with services. The resources available on the dissolution of the GLC are not a timely method of avoiding confrontation with the government. Neither should borough workers be used to cover new work and thus deprive a comrade of a possible job.

If political points are to be made by exposing the chaos that will follow Abolition, let us ensure that it is not the low paid female and Black workers that finance this chaos.

If boroughs think the ex GLC services to women, the ethnic minority communities and to provide employment and training are important, let them preserve them and the employment they represent.

The ALA will meet in mid January to decide the fate of many of these workers. Let them be aware of the redundancy notes *they* will be issuing. The primary cause of abolition will undoubtedly be Thatcher's government, but in the wake of the destruction, what role will the Labour boroughs play? Will they accept GLC money to enhance their status with local groups and to increase their manoeuvrability at rate making time? Or will they stick by the workers?

LESBIAN AND GAY UNIT IN HARINGEY

In terms of sexual politics, Haringey will be worth keeping an eye on for the next year at least. This month sees the setting up of an unprecedented Lesbian and Gay Unit. This will have a team of six workers, making it the largest of its sort in *Europe* — with starting salaries of £11,500 and central offices in Wood Green. It will, in addition, be serviced by a Unit Administrator and a clerical officer.

This is the culmination of two years' consultation and debate within the lesbian and gay community in Haringey. There will be a balance between the sexes, reserved places for disabled and black and other ethnic minorities, so that the team reflects the needs and make up of the area. Care will be taken to avoid a take-over by trendy, middle-class aspirants and young, street-wise affluent *Guardian* readers. The selection panel itself includes black, disabled, lesbian and gay people.

Following hard on their appointments, one of the tasks of the Unit will be to work with the new Lesbian and Gay Subcommittee of Haringey Council. This will be an authoritative body, including all the Chairs of the major Council Committees but with a built-in bias to a women's majority. It will receive submissions from six subgroups comprising lesbians and/or gay men with particular interests or (dis)abilities.

Not surprisingly there was much local opposition. The spearhead seemed to come from the die-hard white would-be Rambos of the area. They were, however, 'headed off at the pass', so to speak, by good organisation and an excellent communications system among local activists. As a result of the long campaign, an ad hoc 'street' Lesbian and Gay Group emerged with its own telephone tree and news sheets. On average fifteen people would, therefore, make themselves felt at the Committee and Council meetings that dealt with the matter. Ten of them had informal meetings with two local NUPE branches that had registered their opposition and both with them and the Councillors well-prepared and organised tactics were justified.

When the Unit starts work in a few weeks, two of its members will be re-training Council staff away from heterosexism. Another pair will be responsible for new policies, while the others' brief will be outreach into the community. It looks as if 1986 will be critical for Haringey's lesbians and gays. Interest is certainly there. Hundreds of enquiries were made about the posts. Watch this space!

David Poolman

Contact 'Lesbians & Gays in Haringey', c/o Community Affairs, Annexe B, Tottenham Town Hall, High Road, London N15 4RX.

Dear Briefing,

I thought selective quotation and the failure to put comments into their proper context was a failure only of the Tory press. Alas it is not. Norma Hundleby's report on the Daneford 12 quotes me as saying that I was "deaf" to the demands of the Bangladeshi community. I didn't. I did say that no white person can know what it is like to be on the receiving end of racial harassment; and that no white person can have a perfect anti-racist consciousness, we can only strive towards it. To pursue Norma's "disablist" language, white people may not be deaf, but we are *all* only partially hearing.

Yours in comradeship,

Peter Aylmer

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Council leader replies to Briefing

FIGHTING THATCHER IN BARKING AND DAGENHAM

**Councillor Joe Butler,
Leader, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.**

A powerful campaign to combat Government cutbacks and privatisation proposals has been launched by Barking and Dagenham's Labour-controlled Council. The campaign is the latest in a series of protests about Government policies and puts paid to ridiculous allegations in last month's *Briefing* by Dagenham CLP member Mick McKeever. His unfair and inaccurate article ludicrously alleged that the Council were "Thatcher's Friends in Barking and Dagenham". It accused the authority of planning to "give in" to privatisation and force down wages and conditions and even suggested that we had "consistently managed" to stay within Government targets. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We have kept our rents at the *lowest* level in London; gradually increased our workforce with 81 extra posts this year; and, unlike many Labour authorities, supported the fight for local government by working within the Association of London Authorities and the Local Government Information Unit.

Last year the Council overstepped the Government's spending target by 0.7 per cent and incurred fines totalling more than £½ million. Currently we are spending millions — despite Government restriction — to expand our nursery education programme; invest in our DLO; build a new sports centre and swimming pool; open a new home for the elderly; redevelop our Town Centre, and open up Docklands for new industry.

The Council are also reorganising many departments to bring operations up-to-date; decentralise many vital services and improve working conditions for hundreds of staff.

We have continued to ensure that our Building Works DLO is one of the most successful in the Country, thereby protecting hundreds of jobs. And we are now developing the DLO by manufacturing our own Upvc plastic windows and double glazing units. An extra 50 craftsmen have been taken on this year.

Of course we aim to ensure that our other DLOs become similarly effective after the imposition of Government privatisation proposals. The alternatives are to either hand the work over to private profiteers or to have outside contractors imposed upon the Borough by the Government. (Both would result in massive job losses and shoddy workmanship).

Socialist controlled, publicly acountable

The Unions accept this position and we are working with them to ensure that the Borough continues to be serviced by Socialist-controlled, publicly-accountable DLOs — and not by private profiteers.

In the meantime there has been a dispute over London Weighting. As an *Outer* London Borough we pay *Outer* London Weighting, not the *Inner* London rate requested by staff unions. London Weighting is negotiated nationally and we are unable and unwilling to break that national agreement. The cost of doing so could be up to £4 million.

When moving computer equipment during the period of this "dispute" we have used the specialist contractors normaly used to move delicate IBM computer machinery — at a time and date arranged several months previously, despite Mr McKeever's allegations.

The equipment was moved to temporary accommodation during refurbishments aimed at *improving* working conditions for staff in the Computer section. Staff are now working happily and normally in this office.

We urge Mr McKeever to spend less time stabbing his Comrades in the back and more time supporting and campaigning for the Labour Party in Barking and Dagenham by helping us to promote the good work and achievements of the Borough's caring Council and to explain the dire effects of Tory policy.

Haringey: selections and manifesto

Haringey Briefing

The selection process in Haringey has been characterised by the extremely low number of people who appear interested in standing for the Council. Of the existing Labour Group of 36, 13 have decided not to stand again and 2 have been deselected. Of the 13 the majority are right wing Councillors though not exclusively so. We have also had a large number of people dropping off the Panel at a late stage. This left the Panel, already very low, below the necessary number and it had to be re-opened. There are a number of worrying features from this round of selections which the Party must seriously deal with:

- As mentioned there is a great difficulty in getting people to stand for the Council. The pressure of work has put off a large number of people and leads to a totally unnatural existence
- There are very few women who came forward for the Panel and have been subsequently selected. Out of 36 candidates selected so far only 10 are women. We seem to be going backward not forward in the number of women we put up for Council (and Parliament for that matter). The extremely "macho-workaholic" style of the Council (the only true Councillor is one who attends meetings every night from 5.00pm to midnight) and the enormous childcare problems caused by being on the Council are major parts of the problem and must be addressed by the Party.
- It is becoming very worrying how easy it is to predict what your typical Labour Councillor is going to "look like". This is by no means a new problem but one that seems to be getting worse. Haringey Labour Group next year will be dominated by accountants and local government officers. One can get obsessed with 'workerism", but it should be of great concern if Labour public representatives get too divorced in their make-up from the "working class" they are supposed to represent.
- There are also very few Black and minority ethnic people selected as candidates. Eight Black candidates and two Cypriot candidates have so far been selected. Haringey has a third of its population Black but this is not represented in the Labour Party or the candidates selected for the Council.

The Manifesto

The major lesson to be learnt from this exercise is that we should concentrate more on a rolling policy programme which will be effectively monitored by the party and forget the obsession with the manifestoitis, i.e. that the Party spends a year drawing up an incredibly detailed document and then sits back and watches the Labour Group trying (hopefully) to implement it. More people should be involved in this process. We get far too closeted in drawing up policy. There has been very little input from the Trade Unions or community groups in the Borough. We also need to have some clear themes and not concentrate on "shopping lists". We must also be clearer in thinking about promoting the policies and not just drawing them up or passing motions in GCs and then wonder why people do not understand.

There must be more co-ordination across London. Walworth Road and Morison House were of very little use. The attempts to get co-ordination and circulate drafts seemed to be token efforts and totally ineffective.

DAYSCHOOL

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LABOUR BRIEFING

NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 24 FEBRUARY 1986

Defend Black Sections: STOP THEM EXPELLING US!

Paul Sharma (Midlands Organiser, Labour Party Black Section)

Sparkbrook Constituency Labour Party has picked up the baton after Conference 85. Failing to beat Black Sections by argument they have expelled 3 prominent and loyal members of the constituency. Amir Khan, a Birmingham city councillor and Secretary of the Constituency Black Section — expelled for democratising the constituency by forming a Black Section. Kevin Scally, a leading member of the Labour Committee on Ireland — expelled for supporting the formation of a Black Section. Muhammed Rafique, a West Midlands Metropolitan County Councillor — expelled for his outspoken support for Black Sections.

Mr Hattersley, replying on the behalf of some members of the NEC to the debate on Black Sections at Conference 85 boasted that in his constituency there was a Black Councillor in each of the 3 wards. 40% of the electorate in Sparkbrook are Black, 500 of the 700 party members are Black. It's true that of the 12 councillors representing the constituency 3 are Black. But I would have admitted this shameful failing of representation with great regret. Now 2 of the 3 Councillors Mr Hattersley used to bolster the credentials of his constituency stand expelled from the party.

Ramboyo style politics after Kinnock's speech at Conference is now the order of the day. Labour's hit-men (and they are mainly men) have been despatched to Liverpool. If the argument is lost, fear not — expel them. On Black Sections the vote at Conference was lost because the Big Boss trade union leaders consulted Neil Kinnock instead of their members and then voted against (incidentally those unions who consulted their members voted for).



Kevin Scally on left holding the Sparkhill banner, Amir Khan in the middle.

Continued on next page

EXPULSIONS— WE ARE

Three members of Devon Labour Briefing now face the threat of expulsion from Exeter CLP. The nature of the expulsion threat, detailed in the accompanying articles, shows clearly that the current purge will not be limited to Militant. Rather the entire left is under threat, as are the democratic gains of the early '80s. For the Labour Party is fast approaching a situation in which membership depends upon obedience to the leadership.



The significance of what is happening in Exeter lies in the fact that no attempt is being made to claim that *Briefing* supporters form a separate organisation. The 'charges' do not relate to clause 3 of the constitution, but rather to clause 4 (2a) of the constituency rules. This is the part which requires that members adhere to the 'constitution, principles and policy' of the Labour Party. On this basis individuals who have done no more than question Kinnock's strategy, and argued that the credibility of Labour depends upon a strengthening rather than a dilution of our commitments, are up for expulsion.

In Exeter, then, the constitution is being interpreted to mean that continued membership of the Party depends upon absolute acceptance of all Party policy and of all that the leadership does. If such a use of the constitution became generalised (and the events in Sparkbrook show that Exeter is not a unique case) the consequences would be catastrophic.

In the first place it would effectively end all political debate and change of policy. All attempts to initiate a process leading to change at the Party conference could be represented as an attack on existing policy and therefore unacceptable. Indeed one of the 'crimes' of Devon Labour Briefing is to call for Britain out of NATO and to attack Kinnock for supporting Reagan's Atlanticism. However, it would not merely be that one would have to accept Party policy as interpreted and prioritised by the leadership. If one protested at the commitment to full employment disappearing from the Party agenda, at the commitment to re-nationalisation being pushing to oblivion, one would be accused of the unpardonable sin of attacking our leaders.

AUTHORITARIAN PARTY

What is beginning to happen in Exeter and elsewhere is the first step towards an authoritarian party in which the membership is subservient to the leadership and left-wing ideas are outlawed. However it is important to realise that what is happening locally is not directly determined from the centre. Indeed in one sense the crudity of CLPs like Exeter is actually against Neil Kinnock's interests.

Kinnock realised that the failure of previous witch-hunts lay in their casting the net too wide too soon. From the start they confused Militant, the organisation, with militancy in general. As a consequence the opposition was too wide to be swept aside. This time round Kinnock has been very careful to start off by isolating the Militant Tendency. By building upon a dislike of Militant within certain sections of the left and giving paper assurances that the Tendency was his only target he sought, and succeeded, in splitting the opposition and winning crucial sections of the NEC to his side. Thus erstwhile left-wingers like Blunkett supported the suspension of the Liverpool Party and set the purge in motion.

ILLUSIONS SHATTERED

While those on the left who voted with Kinnock may have hoped thereby to gain some influence over him, their illusions were quickly shattered. Blunkett, for instance, apparently sought assurance from Kinnock that Paul Green – a widely respected member of Sheffield Council who is associated with Militant – would not be expelled. Yet when it came to the NEC the vote was for expulsion. Blunkett's anger has been plain to see; in an article in *Tribune* he has castigated Kinnock, though less for the attack on the left than for the betrayal of those in the middle (i.e. himself). Blunkett's dilemma is this; he seeks to build bridges to Kinnock while retaining his support on the left, yet the further Kinnock moves to the right the more impossible this project becomes. Blunkett's bridge is about to fall into a political void.

For his part, Kinnock may regret the timing of the Green decision. It is obviously in his interests to keep the Blunketts with him as long as possible. It would have been preferable to finish with Liverpool before moving on other Militant supporters; to finish with Militant before moving on the rest of the left. However the witch-hunt mentality which he has established has led many local constituencies to leap ahead of this timetable. They use Kinnock's lead to attack anyone on the left and thereby reveal the real nature of the purge in a way that may be embarrassing to the leadership. This is precisely what is happening in Exeter. Yet even if they might disapprove of the haste, when it

BIRMINGHAM BLACK SECTIONS

Continued)

Plebiscites from up above never work. Fixed democracy at the Labour Party Conference may ensure a vote against Black Sections but it cannot crush the groundswell of support for Black Sections at the grassroots. Recognising this the standard bearers of democracy are now using expulsions to settle the argument.

The Labour Party Black Section calls on the whole of the Left to join us in the defence of Black Sections. To expel our members is an assault on the very fabric of Black Sections and it will not be tolerated.

We recognise that some White liberals are getting a little bored with Black Sections and are waiting for fashions to change. Some of you are suffering from support fatigue. To you we say the Black community will never forgive you for deserting the battlefield when you were needed most. Nothing less than your wholehearted unconditional support is demanded.

The first step in the fightback is to ensure that constituencies, wards, trade union branches and so on send resolutions condemning the expulsions to the NEC (we have prepared a model resolution on which you may wish to base your resolution). Please notify the Labour Party Black Section of resolutions sent to the NEC.

Model Resolution: Sparkbrook Expulsions

This ..... is appalled by the decision of Sparkbrook CLP to expel from membership Cllr Amir Khan and Kevin Scally, both long-standing and respected members of the Labour Party. Cllr Amir Khan is a founder member of the Sparkbrook Labour Party Black Section and Kevin Scally is a leading member of the Labour Committee on Ireland.

Such actions are likely to cause considerable damage to the Party's chances of victory at the next General Election and at the District Council Elections in May 1986.

This ..... therefore calls upon the Sparkbrook constituency to reverse this decision.

The Labour Party Black Sections,
39 Chippenham Road,
London W9.

For further information ring:
Cllr Amir Khan on 021 449 8530
or Paul Sharma (Midlands Organiser) on 021 523 2229 (home) or 01 278 2813 (work).

ALL UNDER THREAT

comes to the NEC, Kinnock and the right are most likely to support local expulsions.

The reason for this is that a purge is a necessary component of Kinnock's political strategy. That strategy is to defuse the threat that the Labour Party poses to bourgeois interests in the hope that the power of capital will not be mobilised to prevent his access to No. 10. This means, on the one hand, weakening Party policy. Don't alarm the City by talking of renationalising British Telecom, British Airways, British Gas; assure them that the billions they have taken from the public purse will remain in their pockets. On the other hand it means attacking those who refuse this backsliding and who persist in challenging the bourgeoisie and its State. Thus Kinnock distances himself from the struggle of the miners, of black people, and attacks the radical elements in his own party. But these attacks are more than ideological debate. The leadership can only persuade a bourgeoisie and a bourgeois media that Labour is 'fit to govern' when the left is given no chance even of participating in that debate.

Democracy comes at too great a price for Kinnock's strategy. The left must be silenced and that is why bureaucratic attempts to avoid political debate and expulsions are becoming the order of the day in the Labour Party. Yet, not only is this strategy disastrous for socialism, it is even in contradiction to Kinnock's bid for electoral success.

MASS INVOLVEMENT

Unlike the Tory Party, whose power lies in the support of capital and the power of the media, the Labour Party depends upon active mass involvement. Whereas the Tory Party has no need for democracy – as its conference shows – democracy is a precondition for the success of Labour. How can we hope to involve people unless their involvement can influence the Party? How can we draw in those denied voice and power by Thatcherism if they are similarly excluded within the Labour Party? To make the Party more authoritarian has two major consequences. Firstly it excludes participation. Secondly it plays into the hands of the Tory Party and the Tory media by reinforcing notions of a 'red threat', of the need for 'law and order', in justifying autocratic control and so on. It reinforces the entire Tory political agenda. Neil Kinnock has already discovered, much to his discomfort, the ability of Norman Tebbit to exploit the witch-hunt for his own ends! Thus purges inevitably weaken the ability of the Labour Party to provide a real alternative to Thatcherism and to mobilise for power.

The threat that faces us is therefore clear. The present purges may at present be focussed on Militant but the eventual target is the entire left. Those who hope to persude Kinnock to desist by staying in a middle position perform an impossible task – Kinnock will not be deflected, he must be opposed. The witch-hunt may be more subtle than under Callaghan or Foot, but it is only he more dangerous for that. At stake is the future of the left, of democracy, of socialism in the Labour Party. Our central task in the present must be to mobilise on the widest possible scale to defend our Party.

Steve Reicher, Exeter CLP
Russell Spears, Exeter CLP



Press Association Photos

Kinnock's witch-hunt: Blunkett's dilemma

EXETER WITCH-HUNT CHRONOLOGY

Sept. 6th:
GMC rejects branch motion requesting removal of sexist and pornographic material from the Labour Club bar. (Motion taken as an emergency to prevent other branches discussing it.)

Sept. 20th:
EC refuses to place Paul Giblin on the panel of candidates for the forthcoming City Council elections, despite his nomination by his local branch.

Sept. 27th:
GMC upholds EC decision.

Sexism issue discussed in October and November ***Devon Labour Briefings****. Taken up by local* ***Express and Echo*** *and* ***The Sun****.*

Nov. 23rd:
Devon Labour Briefing *promotes an open socialist day school in Exeter. Steve Reicher in key note speech rejects Kinnockism.*

December ***DLB*** *article by Peter Bowing criticises EC treatment of Paul Giblin.*

Dec. 2nd:
Constituency officers dispatch circular letter warning of a supposed take-over by 'a small but vociferous group' (see letter).

Dec. 6th:
EC convened to discuss 'breaches of confidentiality' by LPYS delegate, Neil Todd, on the grounds that he made EC reports to LPYS. GMC upholds EC recommendation that Todd be excluded from EC.

Pinhoe/Whipton emergency motion, passed by GMC, instructs EC to mount an investigation 'to identify the party members responsible for recent attacks on the Labour Party and for disclosures of confidential Party business such as those in ***Devon Labour Briefing****, to interview the people concerned, and if necessary bring forward recommendations to the GMC for appropriate disciplinary action'.*

Dec. 11th:
Branch AGM; Peter Bowing elected to GMC for forthcoming year.

Dec. 13th:
EC meets to discuss Pinhoe/Whipton resolution. Peter Bowing, Paul Giblin, Steve Reicher, Jo Shaw and Neil Todd receive 'summonses' to attend EC on Dec. 20 to answer charge that they are 'in violation of Paragraph (a) Clause IV (Conditions of membership) of CLPs'. This passage reads 'each individual member must (a) accept and conform to the constitution, principles programme and policy of the Labour Party and of this party'.

All unable to attend and reply demanding evidence for such charges.

Dec. 18th:
LPYS replaces EC delegate Neil Todd with Tony Parry.

Dec. 20th:
EC meets. Informs the five that another meeting is scheduled for Jan. 9th. The charge relates to 'alleged active involvement in the organisation responsible for publishing, for sale to the public a paper ***Devon Labour Briefing*** *which brings the Labour Party into disrepute'.*

Jan. 9th: EC meets and hears from those under threat of expulsion. Labour Party officers fraudulently obtain details of Devon Briefing bank account in order to suggest that it is an organisation. The EC instructs the Party membership secretary to suspend what is now 'the six' from membership without endorsement of GMC. EC adjourns till 12th January.

Jan. 10th. GMC meets. Neil Todd not allowed to renew membership. Tony Parry, DLB supporter, elected as LPYS delegate to EC.

Jan. 12th. Adjourned EC meets. Neil Todd, Paul Giblin and Peter Bowing expelled.

Feb. 7th. Extra-ordinary GMC will meet to discuss EC disciplinary proposals.

Defend the Exeter Three!

EXPELLING 'IDEAS' FROM THE PARTY

Just over a year ago, a delegation from Sheffield District Labour Party spent five days in Belfast, Derry and Crossmaglen. There was nothing unusual, or even controversial, about the delegation — just 15 people keen to find out more about the six counties, to understand what is happening there and to share what knowledge they gain with their comrades in Sheffield. Many members of the delegation stayed with families in Andersonstown, Turf Lodge or Twinbrook. They did the usual round of meetings with political parties and trade union organisations and they spent a lot of time with Sinn Fein supporters, either formally or informally. So when they returned to Sheffield the delegation suggested that there should be more contact between the Sheffield labour movement and people in the 6 counties and in particular more discussion should be developed with representatives of Sinn Fein.

A year later, just before Christmas, the local Sheffield evening newspaper caried an article headlined "IRA LINK OUTBURST". The article was based on an accusation made by Roy Mason, the former, and renowned, Northern Ireland Secretary and MP for Barnsley, that Sheena Clarke, a Sheffield City Councillor, and spokesperson for the delegation, was "courting the allies of terrorism". It followed the publication of the delegation's full report of their visit in 1984.

So what is behind such attacks? As the 'victim' I want to suggest a couple of possible explanations, though some of you may have other ideas.

The first explanation lies in the threat posed by the 'dialogue' between Sinn Fein members and left-wing Labour Party activists. Developing such understanding could be dangerous for the forces that wish to see British presence maintained in Ireland and therefore has to be undermined. Some methods are relatively crude, like using the P.T.A.; others, like getting readers of local rags to harass you, are slightly more spohisticated.

The other, more sinister, explanation lies in the witchhunting of ideas. The recent acceleration in the number of expulsions from the Labour Party is nothing to do with individuals; the aim is to expel 'ideas' from the party. Certain views are not acceptable to the leadership and cannot be allowed. In particular, any suggestion that there might be an alternative solution to Ireland, rather than following the bipartisan line of the Dublin/London accord, is definitely out of the question.

So, what is to be done? I'm afraid my solutions aren't very exciting. We have to persevere and continue to argue our position — hopefully with a little support from our friends when we get into the public limelight. And if we get expelled or incarcerated under the PTA — what then?

Sheena Clarke

LWAC LOOKS INWARDS

Saturday 11th January was a sad day for the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC). At the AGM, women standing for office who supported building links with trade union women, Black Sections Women, Lesbians in the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and Women Against Pit Closures, were defeated. In particular, a lesbian standing for the position of Chair was defeated by a heterosexual woman. The current trend in LWAC towards an elitist club promoting 'stars' is set to continue for another year.

The AGM also supported holding a postal ballot to decide upon the LWAC slate for the shadow elections for the Women's NEC seats to be held at National Women's Conference. This runs counter to one of the most important principles of the Labour Movement.

However, all is not lost. There is still scope for women working in their regional LWAC organisations to press that the LWAC Executive is accountable to, and representative of, grass roots women active in the Labour Party.

The task facing socialist feminists in LWAC is to build for next year and to ensure that at the next AGM we elect as officers, women who are committed to fighting on behalf of all women who are currently oppressed and discriminated against in the Labour Party. We still have everything left to fight for.

Jane Prust
(ex WAC Executive,
Deptford CLP)

End the Divisive Witch-hunt!

Dear Comrades,

I wish to appeal through the pages of your paper for the support of every Labour Party member in ending the divisive witch-hunt taking place in the Birmingham, Sparkbrook constituency, and for the reinstatement of Councillor Amir Khan and Kevin Scally, a long-standing Labour Party activist, who have been expelled. As Membership Secretary of the constituency's Sparkhill branch and the wife of Amir Khan I have first-hand experience of the events of the last few months. What has happened has come close to destroying my faith in Labour Party democracy and, in my opinion, should concern every member of the Labour Party.

Amir Khan and Kevin Scally have been expelled for trying to challenge a long established system of patronage and corruption within the constituency of which Asian members have been the victims. Despite serious allegations of bogus recruitment, etc., it has proved impossible to secure any real investigation within the Party. Consequently the facts were made public in a Channel 4 TV programme and Asian members, no longer prepared to tolerate these abuses, sought to establish a Black Section to discuss these matters and air their grievances. The response of the established powers within the constituency was to expel the individuals involved. Other members of the constituency who have protested at these acts have been threatened with similar action.

In Sparkbrook thousands of Asian voters are watching these events with alarm. Where is the democracy in democratic socialism when hard working and loyal members of the Labour Party are thrown out for challenging such practices? I appeal to comrades in the Labour Party to raise this matter in their wards and CLPs and to send resolutions or messages of support to the NEC of the Labour Party. Copies should be sent to Councillor Amir Khan at the above address. Both Amir Khan and Kevin Scally are prepared to speak about their case at any Labour Party meeting.

Yours sincerely,
Gul Zarina Khan

Hackney North Fights Back!

Hackney North and Stoke Newington CLP have taken the initiative in calling for a Conference against the witch-hunt.

At its December GC it opposed the suspension of Liverpool District Labour Party and the attacks on supporters of the Militant. And it resolved to approach the Campaign Group, the Militant and Labour Left Co-ordination to jointly organise a Conference as soon as possible.

Lesbian and Gay Employment Rights

LAGER is hoping to contact any gay men who have been sacked, from any job, over the last six months.

We are hoping to contact (*totally in confidence*) as many gay men as possible, it does not matter whether the sacking was overtly gay related or not.

We would like people to contact Matt on 587 1643, or write to us at Room 205, Southbank House, Black Prince Road, London SE1 7SJ.

We are trying to contact people in connection with some research we are doing at the present.

BECOME A BRIEFING SUPPORTER!

Briefing "Supporters Cards 1986" are now available. The cost is £10 for waged comrades, £3 for unwaged. Please rush your money to 162 Millfields Road, London E.5



LABOUR HERALD'S 'MINOR HICCUP'

By the former Labour Herald majority staff
Steve Masterson
Lara Skahabi
George Binette

Articles have appeared in *The Guardian*, the lastest on December 31st, 1985, purporting to explain what has happened to *Labour Herald*, which has now ceased to appear, but which we are told is being relaunched as *Campaign Herald*.

Regular sellers of *Herald*, and readers, will by now be quite confused, as the reports, including statements by *Herald* editors, in the press, differ from what they know to have happened.

Put the Record Straight

Accordingly, it has now become necessary to put the record straight. Six out of eight of the *Herald's* "staff" (volunteer, full and part-time) were in dispute with the editors/management since November 21st, and could get no resolution of their grievances. Printworkers at Astmoor Litho, who had continued printing the *Herald* since the split in the WRP, took solidarity action and boycotted work on the paper until the dispute was settled.

Nine days after it began, the "staff" in the dispute found bundles of a scab paper calling itself the *Labour Herald*, at the offices. It had been produced elsewhere, and then scab printed, while they were actually in dispute, without these comrades knowing anything about it. This prompted our occupation.

We are particularly angry that disinformation and downright untruths have been allowed to circulate by the editors of the *Herald*. From the dispute being a "minor hiccup" (John McDonnell, *The Guardian*, 12.12.85), we now learn that the "sit-in was seen on the left as a clear challenge to the authority of Mr Ted Knight as the spokesperson for Labour's non-realigned far left" (*The Guardian*, 31.12.85).

Our central demand to meet all the editors to resolve the grievances was never met. During the week-long occupation the phones were cut off, mail stopped and yet another scab edition was produced outside the offices.

Absence of Internal Democracy

At a readers' meeting to discuss the dispute we explained the reasons why we had been driven out of *Herald* and our very difficult decision to dissociate ourselves from the paper. The reasons include the *complete* absence of internal democracy, the intolerable behaviour, including physical and verbal abuse, of co-ordinating editor Steven Miller, and evidence of political censorship of written contributions. The final failure of editors to satisfactorily resolve any of these grievances convinced us there was no other option.

We are actively supporting the regroupment of the hard left in the Party — no one questions the need for this — to challenge the rightward sprint of the Party leadership and its policies. But the lack of internal democracy at *Herald* convinces us that a *Campaign Herald* could neither be a "vehicle" nor an "umbrella" for the hard left, *Briefing*, Labour Left Co-ordination and the Campaign Group of MPs.

Finally, in answer to slurs that we are supporting Kinnock, we make it absolutely clear that we categorically support the campaign of Ted Knight and Lambeth Council in their battle to maintain council services without making cuts and bowing down to Thatcher's demands.

Labour
HERALD

LABOUR LEFT CO-ORDINATION

The Labour Left Co-ordination is spearheading the campaign against the Kinnock-led witch hunt. It has organised a rally against expulsions for January 21st with Diane Abbott, Denis Skinner, Ken Livingstone and other speakers to show the breadth of opposition within the Party to the wave of expulsions and disciplinary actions being taken against socialists and supporters of pressure groups within the Party. The LLC has also produced in conjunction with the Campaign Group of MPs and CLPD the first issue of a regular dossier of information entitled *Witch Hunt News* for use by Party activists in their campaigning against the witch hunt. It is hoped that this will become a regular monthly newsletter. All information about the witch hunt around the country is to be sent to the LLC address at 57 Lofting Road, London N1 1ES.

The Labour Left Co-ordination at its January meeting also took a major discussion around the Andrew Glyn/Campaign Group pamphlet, *A Million Jobs A Year*. There was broad agreement that the pamphlet represented a major step forward in the Left's attempt to redefine the terms of the debate within the Party on economic policy, despite the pamphlet's obvious weakness on women and Black people. In mid-February (21st/22nd) there will be a major national conference held at London's County Hall around a socialist economic policy, organised by the Socialist Society together with LLC, *Briefing* and the Campaign Group. The idea is to launch a national discussion within the Party on the economy and the need for a radical alternative to the Kinnock/Hattersley economic strategy. The LLC also hopes to co-ordinate a national campaign of resolutions to the national party conference in October around economic strategy.

Over the next few months there are all the regional party conferences, together with the national women's and youth conferences. At each of these there is planned to be a joint fringe meeting organised by the LLC with the Campaign Group of MPs and CLPD. The agreed themes for the meetings are: a socialist economic strategy, the justice for the miners' campaign, opposition to the witch hunt, and positive discrimination for women and Black people.

The next meeting of the LLC on 1st February at 2pm in County Hall, London is to discuss two vital issues: Ireland and the latest Anglo-Irish Accord, and the NEC elections at the next Party conference. On both these issues there is the need for the broadest unity of the hard left against the backsliding of the 'soft/cuddly left'.

In its 8 months of existence since *Briefing*'s original call for left unity, the LLC has already proved to be an extremely effective body for co-ordinating the Labour 'hard left'. Its meetings now also make a point of taking a report from a trade union campaign or left current. So far the Socialist Teachers Alliance and the National Justice for the Miners Campaign have reported to the meetings. If you want to find out more about the LLC or to invite it to send a speaker to your left caucus or campaign, then write to the Secretary, Davy Jones, at 57 Lofting Road, London N1 1ES.

Davy Jones

Next national editorial board is on Sunday February 23 at 1.00 p.m. at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham.

Next issue is out on 19th February. Deadline for articles: Monday 10th February. All articles to 162 Millfields Rd., London E5.

CND: KINNOCK'S DILEMMA

The items, or rather the absence of certain items, on the agenda for the 1985 CND Conference raises some very serious questions about the directions in which CND is now heading.

In the international section of the Interim Agenda, as laid out in *Campaign*, Sept. 1985, there were ten composite motions, four of which were concerned with NATO. However, of the three selected for the Final Agenda, none were concerned with NATO. In other words, although 40% of the International Composite were concerned with NATO, the National Council of CND deemed NATO not to be an important issue.

CONTRADICTORY DEFENCE POLICY

CND activists and genuine socialists in the Labour Party must ask themselves why this discrepancy exists between the wishes of the rank and file, as expressed in terms of the number of motions submitted on NATO and the wishes of the National Council. The answer lies, of course, in the relationship between CND, the Labour Party and the Labour Party's contradictory defence policy.

The Labour Party's defence policy is based on the notion that somehow by staying in NATO it can transform NATO policy. It is argued that 'Labour will work within NATO to return the Alliance to the goal set out in its Treaty and to allow NATO to fulfil its objectives by political and military means rather than nuclear means' (NEC Statement, 1984).

Even a cursory glance at the history of NATO shows that those 'lofty' statements about 'freedom and democracy' were merely a facade to disguise its real aims which were to provide a platform for the USA to oppose socialism worldwide and maintain US hegemony in Europe, just as its other 'defence' pacts do.

Although the Labour Party is committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament and the removal of 'nuclear' bases, it also believes: 'a large proportion of US bases and facilities in Britain have an important role in the conventional defence of Europe and the reinforcement and supply of the Central Front' (NEC Statement, 1984).

Even if the US promised not to deploy nuclear weapons in Britain they would in practice defy any regulations which forbade this. The 'Joint Logistic Plan' secretly drawn up by Thatcher and Reagan, which gives US military requirements priority in times of crisis exposes the meaninglessness of such agreements.

IMPERIALIST CONSPIRACY

We can at best view Labour's 'defence' policy as naive and at worst an imperialist conspiracy. This attempt to sweep the NATO issue under the carpet at the 1985 CND Conference is a symptom of this conspiracy on the part of the Labour leadership, and certain leading members of CND. Their aim is to bring CND into line with the Labour Party's support of NATO. Their motivation for doing this is that they view CND's policy of withdrawal from NATO as an electoral liability because they are too afraid to challenge the Tory agenda. They are afraid to challenge the power of the British ruling class. They are afraid to take the steps necessary to counter any attempt by the USA to subvert and destabilise a Britain engaged in nuclear disarmament.

The genuine left of the Labour Party have a message. It is one of hope for the rank and file CND activists and it is a warning to the pro-NATO lobby. The left in the Labour Party have won the argument for unilateral disarmament. In the same way, by returning year after year to the Labour Conference, we will win the argument for British withdrawal from NATO, as a first step towards the destruction of world imperialism.

Neil Todd (Exeter CLP)



"They are afraid to challenge the power of the British ruling class. They are afraid to take the steps necessary to counter any attempt by the USA to subvert and destabilise a Britain engaged in nuclear disarmament."

Disarmament: what kind of campaign is this?

Joy Hurcombe
Chair Labour CND

If you listened to the Labour Party plans for campaigning for the coming year, you would think that everything was very cosy and election success was just round the corner. With issues like the Welfare State (leave out the word "welfare" and possibly the word "state") and civil liberties and the soft northern accent of Dr Cunningham, what more do we need?

Later in the year, if Thatcher allows, there will be a campaign *for CLP members only* with the meaningful title *A Modern Britain in a Modern World* which sounds as if Britain will once more lead the world by taking up the challenge of modern technology. Pictures of the latest weapons and modern day soldiers would fit very nicely into such a campaign. Certainly the title is a very long way away from the demands of the Labour Party conference. The Composite on campaigning for disarmament stated that we should have a *public campaign* to explain our disarmament policies and our commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament. The object of this campaign would be to prevent the messy performance of the last General Election. A clear campaign using party political broadcasts, good videos, public meetings and well written leaflets would mean that the Tories attacks would be pre-empted by good basic election material.

The NEC's response to the conference commitment is just not good enough. The Labour Party cannot be allowed to fudge the issue of disarmament once again. For one thing, it doesn't work. We will be atacked for our policies by the Tories. What we have to do is to show that we believe in them and that we will carry them out to achieve a more peaceful world. Labour Party members should write to the NEC Campaign Committee, with a copy to Neil Kinnock and Larry Whitty and demand that the conference resolution, *Composite 21* on disarmament is carried out at once before Thatcher calls the next election. And this time, the NEC should stick to conference policies, not make up new ones which they mistakenly think are more attractive to the voters. We don't want a nationalist campaign with a modern army, we want a commitment to peace and disarmament and international understanding.

Copies of any letters to Labour CND, 22-24 Underwood Street, London N1.



Photo: Melanie Friend

THURSDAY FEB 6 RESIST CRUISE

☮ CND NATIONAL ACTION

SIT-DOWN BLOCKADE MOLESWORTH

There will be a sit down blockade of the Molesworth base on February 6th by CND groups to demonstrate opposition to construction work which is now taking place. February 6th is the anniversary of the military invasion of the Molesworth site when Heseltine, in flap jacket, and 1,500 soldiers and police put up a barbed wire fence and evicted 150 members of the Peace Convoy. That was last year. This year CND will be ready for any pre-emptive strike. The sit down has been organised to take place from 6am until 3pm. Groups will stay for 3 hours or more with protestors from distant areas taking later turns. Each of the 4 main gates will be blockaded. The object is to get construction halted and to turn back any lorries. Please note that the Molesworth Gate is for women only. If you can help please contact *Feb 6th Working Group, 180 Mansfield Road, Nottingham* for mobilisation pack (40p) and legal briefing.

We must stop the construction of *Cruise Missiles Sites* to show our continued rejection of nuclear war preparations.

Joy Hurcombe

Alternatives to NATO:

ISOLATIONISM OR INTERNATIONALISM?

Whilst the Left is absolutely right in campaigning to get Britain out of the NATO nuclear alliance, we face a major political problem: over 70 per cent of the electorate are opposed to withdrawal and the vote at Labour's 1985 Annual Conference went 5 to 1 against anti-NATO resolutions. Much of this opposition to pulling out of the Atlantic Alliance stems from the fear that Britain outside NATO would be isolated and vulnerable to attack. To allay such anxieties and win more people to support withdrawal, it is therefore vital that the Left offers a credible non-nuclear alternative to the North Atlantic Treaty.

An alternative self-defensive alliance of European nations would certainly be more consistent with internationalist principles. It would avoid the danger of a retreat into an isolationist and nationalistic "Fortress Britain". Since most of the Left agree that Britain should support Nicaragua in the event of a US invasion, shouldn't we also be prepared to extend that same solidarity and comradeship to the peoples of other European nations if they faced attack?

The Left ought to therefore be campaigning *both* for withdrawal from NATO *and* co-operation with our continental socialist allies in the establishment of an alternative European self-defence pact. As a *non-bellicose* rival to NATO, open to all European nations and independent of both superpowers, this alternative alliance could be based on the following principles: (1) the renunciation of nuclear weapons and the use of force in international relations with the priority aim of establishing a European nuclear-free zone; (2) the commitment to *non-provocative* methods of defence; (3) the abrogation of all other military treaties and alliances; (4) the removal of all foreign troops and bases; (5) the recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination; and (6) the pledge of mutual support and solidarity in the event of any member state being subjected to unprovoked aggression.

More Dramatic

The establishment of a European defensive pact of this nature could potentially make a far more dramatic contribution to disarmament than Britain's withdrawal from NATO into its own isolationist shell. It could help fracture the two giant military blocks which divide Europe by giving a whole host of countries with strong anti-nuclear movements the confidence to reject nuclear weapons and superpower alliances — Britain, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxemburg, Iceland, Greece, Spain, and the Netherlands (half the membership of NATO!).

The creation of a non-belligerent alliance might also have favourable repercussions within the rest of the Eastern bloc. Since the Russians use the threat from the "NATO imperialists" as an excuse to justify their iron grip on the Warsaw Pact countries, the *non-threatening* character of an alternative alliance could pressure the Soviets to relax their hold and encourage the East Europeans to assert greater independence from Moscow. By lessening the spectre of Western intervention, a European self-defence pact is thus likely to encourage democratic movements and liberalising reforms in the Soviet bloc and greater East-West contact; thereby creating a basis for the longer term goal of a more united democratic and peaceful Europe.

Peter Tatchell

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

South Africa: trade unions stride forward

The formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) on 30th November represents a firm stride forward in the struggle to destroy Apartheid. With nearly 500,000 members in 35 unions, COSATU is the largest trade union grouping yet seen in South Africa.

Because the new federation brings together unions formerly divided between one large and several smaller federations, as well as a number of large, formerly independent unions, it will take many months for the different elements in the organisation to sort out remaining differences — the unity talks leading to COSATU took 4 years — and give substance to the militant speeches which marked the inaugural rally on December 1st.

First Task

The first task of the new federation will therefore be its own reorganisation so that a plethora of little unions merge into clearly demarcated and broadly-based industrial unions, on the basis of "One union per industry". Central to this process will be the firmly-grounded large unions in mining (NUM: 100,000 members), commerce (CCAWUSA: 50,000), metal/engineering (MAWU: 36,000), motors (NAAWU: 20,000), food (FCWU. 25,000 and SFAWU: 20,000), chemical (CWIU: 21,000), and textile (NUTW: 23,000). With these 8 unions representing over 60% of COSATU's membership, it is clear that the organisation is in a strong position to rationalise rapidly and, providing this is successful, move on to 1,000,000 members by the end of 1986.

The COSATU inaugural congress, attended by 850 delegates, approved strong resolutions condemning the backbone of apartheid, i.e. migrant labour and the bantustans (tribal "homelands"). But already this has drawn from Chief Buthelezi (leader of the tribally-based, fascist-style "Inkatha" movement) the allegation that COSATU is merely "a front for the ANC". With opponents such as this lining up against COSATU alongside the state and capital, it will be imperative for COSATU to continue with the basic organising at factory and local level which will give it the power to act in pursuit of its declared long-term policy objectives: worker control in a non-racial, unitary South Africa, where there is not only political liberation, but freedom also from economic exploitation.

It is clear from such policy objectives that COSATU sees itself in the forefront of the liberation struggle, broadly defined. Obviously, the formation of COSATU has shifted the relative weight of the different forces in that broad struggle in the direction of organised labour. With increased weight will come a greater challenge to offer leadership in the endemic South African crisis. The quasi-insurrectionary situation in many of the black townships has persisted for well over a year now, and in this political climate, with inflation around 20%, even rampaging unemployment over 20% has not been able to stop the strikes: more work hours have been lost in 1985 than in any previous year.

The major task confronting COSATU, once it has reorganised internally, is to act as a focus for unifying the energies which, in their present divided and semi-organised form, the regime is well able to control by military means: the spontaneously striking workers, the angry youth in the townships need direction towards winnable demands as the basis for campaign action aimed at systematically dismantling apartheid at its roots. While the liberal (and not-so-liberal) media continues to convey the impression that platform politics is the motor for change in South Africa, the intensive grassroots organising which makes real change possible must proceed.

Mike Murphy (FOSATU)

DEFEND THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION

In view of the expressed positions of Reagan and Thatcher that "publicity is oxygen to the terrorist", the dramatic headline-catching overreactions to the lastest string of Middle East "terrorist attacks" would seem, at first sight, somewhat surprising.

First came the Israeli bombing raid on Tunis last October: in an operation that the US certainly knew of — and may well have played part in — Israeli bombers flew 5,000 miles to bomb the Tunisian capital, leaving 50 dead — all in response to the killing of 3 Mossad agents in Cyprus by PLO sympathisers, all of whom had been captured and were awaiting trial.

A week later saw the Rambo-style US "skyjacking" of the 4 hijackers of the Achille Lauro — a stunt whose drama and desperation served only to lend weight to an otherwise lacklustre hijacking attempt which had fizzled out in negotiations after two days and had been widely presented in the media as a bungled and incompetent operation.

Overreaction

The latest attacks in Rome and Vienna airports have been met by no less a seemingly out of place overreaction from the imperialist powers, with the US mobilising its 6th fleet along the coast of Libya, putting that country's forces on full alert.

The explanation for this apparent contradiction between the US "starve them of publicity" policy towards terrorists and the wild reactions it has in practice adopted over the last months can be explained, at least in part, by the fact that the US and Israel are far less interested in actually combatting the groups responsible for the operations than they are in using the incidents to embarrass Yasser Arafat and force yet further concessions from him.

Amman Agreement

Having chosen the path of negotiations, Arafat and the PLO right wing are now discovering that no concessions are sufficient to fulfil imperialism's preconditions for even *opening* the negotiations, short of renouncing openly and clearly every last vestige of the aspirations of the Palestinian revolution. This he has more or less done in signing the Amman agreement with King Hussein last February in which he signed away both the right of the Palestinian people to be represented solely by their own political organisation, the PLO, and their right to self determination in an independent state. The agreement, which the PLO executive subsequently put its name to, basically endorsed imperialism's definition of the nature of the "Middle East problem" as a problem of borders (chiefly concerning Israel and Jordan) in which the Palestinians only feature as a refugee problem.

Though the Amman agreement catered for almost all of the demands of the imperialist powers, the US and Israel have continued to be concerned over the subsequent verbal ambiguities, funding and contradictions that Arafat has resorted to in a desperate attempt to keep the following that he still retains within a now deeply split PLO. It is for this reason that they have been trying to use the latest attacks connected with Palestinian groups to put Arafat on the spot and force him into openly condemning the Palestinian struggle. Arafat has more than obliged. He has, in fact, gone much further than condemning the Palestinian groups responsible, he actually offered to put the hijackers of the Achille Lauro on trial, and when the US skyjack prevented him from carrying this out (thus depriving him of achieving an important public relations victory in the West) it was Arafat who returned to Cairo to help Mubarak defuse the pro-Palestinian demonstrations that were erupting on the streets in protest at Egypt's complicity in the skyjacking operation.

"Compromise" settlement

A negotiated "compromise" settlement was something the right wing of the PLO has always aspired towards. However, it was not until the military defeat suffered by the PLO in 1982 that the political conditions for abandoning the struggle were created. This done, it has taken Arafat

ANTI-APARTHEID AGM.

The Annual General Meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Movement held on 1st December should have been an auspicious occasion, assembling about 1,000 members and coinciding with the biggest wave of mass unrest in South Africa in the Movement's history. As the AGM was meeting, news from South Africa was coming through about the formation of a new unified federation of the non-racial trade unions, COSATU, a significant watershed for the struggle of black workers.

The oportunities for building a vigorous solidarity movement in Britain have never seemed greater, with South Africa at centre stage internationally and with a large influx of new membership to the AAM. The time is ripe to build new campaigning initiatives and win widespread support for the liberation struggle in South Africa.

Given this context, the AGM was a particularly disappointing event. Discussion was dominated by infighting between the Movement's Executive and the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group, which had been disaffiliated by the Executive earlier this year. The vote in support of the disaffiliation was roughly two thirds in favour and a third against, which represents soemthing less than a decisive resolution of this problem (which concerns questions of democratic principle as much as it concerns the tactics of a particular group). Temperatures mounted during the day, until finally there was an ugly scuffle in which a couple of Revolutionary Communist Group supporters were manhandled by stewards and pandemonium ruled for several minutes. At the end of the day, the vote of thanks to the stewards — whose behaviour was seen as intimidatory by many who had no sympathy with the RCG — was booed as loudly as it was cheered. "Remember South Africa!" someone shrieked hysterically during the worst uproar, but it was not apparent from that which side (if any) she was supporting.



John Chapman

Little credit

Little credit attaches to either side of this divide in the AAM for the way the dispute has been conducted. The main thing to be said in favour of the City Group — whose politics are dominated by the RCG — is that its campaign for the release of the imprisoned trade unionist, David Kitson, attracted militant support and widespread publicity, and on balance seems to have achieved results. The support won for the direct action against the South African embassy shows that there is a milieu that the AAM's more conventional, lobbying tactics have failed to inspire.

Otherwise, this apparent left/right divide in the AAM seems to have avoided the main issues — in particular, how to win new layers of support in the labour movement and the black community in Britain; and how to support the organisations in struggle inside South Africa, especially the resurgent trade union movement. A resolution from the Socialist Workers' Party calling for support for workers' struggles in South Africa, which might have provoked a more useful debate, was guillotined; in the end, there was no discussion on the unions.

Absence of Labour Party Intervention

Notable by its absence was any intervention by the left in the Labour Party or the trade unions. Indeed, judging by the muddled debate and vote on South Africa at Labour Party conference this year, there is no organised position on how to build solidarity with the struggle against apartheid, apart from generalised arugments in favour of sanctions and support for the ANC, on the one hand, and a more left wing but narrow platform put forward by the Militant. In the debate, the party leadership attacked the Militant resolution for "sectarianism" in supporting workers' struggles, since the struggle in South Africa is for "democracy" not "socialism".

Socialists in the labour movement cannot sit by in these debates, or in face of the need to build an active solidarity movement. We must inform ourselves, participate, and organise. A good place to start might be to set up a Labour Against Apartheid group, to draw together some initiatives for action, and take these into the Labour Party at all levels, the AAM, and the trade unions. One of our first tasks should be to build support for, and direct links with, the new trade union movement in South Africa.

Erica Flegg

just three years to reach a point of almost total capitulation to the imperialist plan for the region. This has, however, by no means been mirrored by the Palestinians in the occupied territories. On the contrary, in fact, a recent hunger strike involving 1,500 Palestinian political prisoners scattered in jails throughout Israel and the occupied territories indicates a continuing high level of political militancy and organisation.

It is now vital that the substantial political opposition to Arafat that exists within the PLO — above all, the PFLP — manage to break out of its current isolation by linking up with the Palestinian masses and succeeds in organising this militancy into an effective challenge to Arafat and to defeat the US plans for the liquidation of the Palestinian revolution.

Anna Wagstaffe
Secretary, Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine

PLASTIC BULLETS VIDEO
Show this excellent account of the use of plastic bullets in the North of Ireland
Available for hire at £5.00 (incl. p&p)
from D. Parkin, 40 Union Street, Oxford

OPPOSE THE ANGLO-

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL IS ONLY SOLUTION

Brian MacDonald, (National Director of Publicity, Sinn Fein)

Two months ago the London-Dublin agreement was sold to the world in a wave of carefully orchestrated media hype as an advance towards peace and reconciliation in Ireland. Events since then have however shown that Sinn Fein was correct from the beginning in describing the agreement as a carrot and stick strategy aimed not at contributing towards peace but at defeating Irish republicanism.

Cosmetic changes in the North's judiciary, including the recent appointment of a Catholic to the bench, and the mass arrest of Sinn Fein activists are two sides of the same coin – the joint accord signed by Margaret Thatcher and Garret Fitzgerald on November 15th. Thatcher negotiated and signed that accord as a means of stabilising British rule in the North of Ireland, whilst Fitzgerald felt the need to protect the interests of the Nationalist establishment – and the SDLP in particular – from the electoral challenge posed by Sinn Fein.

In London and Dublin, therefore, Republicanism was identified as *the* problem which had to be confronted and the agreement signed at Hillsborough was the formula which they believed would accomplish this.

Part of this strategy is based on this false premise that support for Sinn Fein is merely a protest against social deprivation and the more blatant institutional injustices of the Northern state. By introducing cosmetic reforms, Fitzgerald believes that they can undermine support for Sinn Fein.

Nothing new

There is nothing new in this strategy of 'buying the consent of Catholics to be governed', as Peter Prenderghast, the senior government spokesperson in Dublin described it. Similar thinking led to the building of leisure centres, new housing and the De Lorean project in West Belfast. However the failure of this strategy in the past as evidenced by the steady increase in the Sinn Fein vote, shows that support for republicanism is not threatened by concessions. The primary realisation for this is the realisation amongst Northern nationalists that any reforms which do come are a direct result of the Republican campaign of resistance. Were it not for the challenge presented by Sinn Fein and the IRA, Margaret Thatcher would not have felt any need to make any concessions to Irish nationalism in the first place.

On the issue of reforms in the British security forces – particularly the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary – and the North's – judicial system, there is little sign that anything has changed for the better. Indeed since the signing of the Hillsborough accord these sectarian institutions have increased their repression against the nationalist community. And here we come to the other side of the strategy, the side which is designed to counter those nationalists who cannot be bought off as well as reassuring unionists that the success of the Hillsborough accord is in their interests. An increase in security co-operation along the border is already underway, as is the increase in the number being raided and people arrested.

Judges are still prepared to commit dozens of people on the word of a single, paid perjurer and, in recent weeks, there has been a concerted effort to disrupt the work of Sinn Fein through the arrest and seven-day detention of many leading activists and elected representatives.

Such repression undoubtedly causes problems for Sinn Fein, as it would for any party which had to suffer regular detention of its organisers, election workers and elected representatives. Anti-republican repression will, on the other hand, make it increasingly difficult for the SDLP to continue supporting the Hillsborough accord (especially when unionists still refuse to accept even cosmetic reforms).

Despite any temporary setbacks which may be suffered, Irish Republicanism will retain its support base amongst the Nationalist community and will emerge stronger than ever when this accord fails to achieve its stated objective of peace and reconciliation or its real objective, the defeat of Republicanism. The accord will fail because Republicanism cannot be bought off and because the greater the attempt to crush it through repressive measures, the more that nationalists in general will realise that the accord means more, not less, hardship for their communities.

In the forthcoming by-elections there are already clear indications that, despite the best efforts of the London and Dublin governments, and despite the pro-accord hysteria in the media, Sinn Fein will maintain its percentage share of the Nationalist vote – even if the overall vote may decline given the likelihood of a lower than usual poll.

Such a result will prove a major embarrassment to the British government and their allies in the Irish Nationalist establishment. Beyond this embarrassment it will hasten the day when the Hillsborough accord is finally discarded and will contribute towards the realisation that only in the context of a British withdrawal and self-determination for the Irish people can peace be achieved in Ireland.

A HOLLOW SHAM

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed on 15th November 1985 amidst misrepresentation of its purpose and content and semi-hysteria by 'politicians' throughout Britain and Ireland.

It is interesting to note that no dissent, other than Unionist, was reported in British or Irish newspapers. Sinn Fein obviously didn't get any opportunity to respond. The Unionist bureaucracy screamed 'sell out' and were widely reported, the British Parliamentary Labour Party retreated into bi-partisanship, the Tories maintained the 'Iron Resolve' position and the Dublin government used every Public Relations method at its disposal to put across the idea of achievement and success.

Against this background it was very difficult to find any objective analysis of the document. But what was it all about?

Well the Tories obviously entered into these negotiations with a number of items on their agenda. They wanted to negate international criticism of British actions by spreading the responsibility to include the Irish government. They wanted a substantial strategic/military advantage over the IRA by deepening the involvement of Dublin in security. They wanted to stifle Sinn Fein's political gains and at the same time strengthen their 'criminalisation' policy. And they wanted to defer indefinitely the unpalatable but inevitable solution to the problem (i.e. the total withdrawal of Britain from Ireland) and therefore secure the British colonial position in Ireland.

The Irish Tory Coalition government also entered the negotiations with a shopping list. They too wanted to stifle Sinn Fein's political gains and boost the SDLP. They needed military advantages won over the IRA. They needed a substantial political boost to halt their growing unpopularity in the country and to prevent Fianna Fail from gaining precedence. They needed stability in the Six Counties to halt the political and economic overspill of the 'troubles' into the Twenty-Six Counties. And they needed to be seen to have some input into 'Northern Ireland' Administration. The interests of the Nationalist communities or the furtherance of aspirations for a United Ireland were not high on their agenda.

-IRISH AGREEMENT!



STRIP SEARCHING ESCALATED

Matina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer, remanded in Brixton Prison, London on conspiracy charges, are being harassed and victimised with random cell searches and changes, and extremely frequent body (up to 115 a month) and strip (up to 50 a month) searches. On November 18th 1985 the two women were warned that in future their 'body folds' would be liable to be searched. All of this, coupled with strip searches before visits, represents an escalation of the situation of that in Armagh prison where women have been enduring strip searching since November 1982.

The GLC has published a report on the Brixton women saying, *"It would appear that these women are subjected to his treatment because they are Irish, therefore they are victims of anti-Irish racism."* The five men arrested and held under similar charges, are strip and body searched only occasionally. Strip-searching is undoubtedly a tactic used especially against women, and as such constitutes sexual harassment.

Peter Archer, Labour's senior spokesperson on Ireland, has predicated Labour support for the Anglo-Irish Accord on "discussions on the ending of strip searches . . . producing results in six months to a year". It is not clear *how* Labour's leadership will be ensuring that the new Conference does take discussions on strip searching, but there are a number of problems.

1. With its recent dramatic extension to Brixton prison, strip searching has been escalated rather than otherwise.

2. The Xmas/New Year arrests of elected Sinn Fein representatives hardly augurs well for a *lifting* of repression against Irish republican women in Armagh.

3. The Anglo-Irish Accord is largely about increased co-operation on security in order to make said security more efficacious. The NIO has consistently justified strip searching on security grounds. Can it follow that a political argreement to increase security will also reduce it?

4. The nationalist community is supposed to benefit from now having Dublin's government interceding on their behalf. Dublin's Foreign minister has refused to raise the strip searching issue with the British despite repeated requests to do so by individuals and organisations in the Republic.

Partition

5. The root cause of strip searching is *partition* and consequent British involvement. The Accord legally reinforces partition with international backing. Most significantly it implicates the Dublin government in recognising partition for the first time ever.

6. Partition's previous legal backing – the Unionist *veto* – still stands, despite any current 'standing up' to the Unionists that has led Labour representatives to believe otherwise. It is the *'harmonisation'* policy ('reunification without anyone noticing' as Clare Short has described it in Marxism Today) which constituted Labour's evidence to the New Ireland Forum, and laid the basis for so many Labour left MPs not voting against the Accord. There is no evidence whatsoever that either the seeming 'standing up' to the Unionists, or Labour's stealthy reunification plans will provide for any let up of the racist sexual harassment of Irish women prisoners.

Please urgently raise the Brixton situation with your MP, MEP, Councillors, Labour Party, Trade Union, Women's Section, and LPYS. Write to Clive Soley (Labour's Prisons Spokesperson) requesting action. Write also to the Home Office. There is a support campaign – please contact it for more information – Lambeth IBRG, 245a Coldharbour Lane, London SW9 8RR. Tel: 01-274 7700 x 36.

Sarah Roelofs

Given the similarities in objectives between the two governments it is hardly surprising that the 'agreement' is so ambiguous and so damaging to long-term peace in Ireland.

So what is this historic agreement?

It can be summed up as follows. Dublin gets the right to put forward 'views and proposals' on political, security, cross-border or legal matters (assuming they are not the responsibility of a devolved body). These 'views and proposals' may or may not be accepted by Britain who retains total control over the Six Counties. The Nationalist communities get the normal civil and cultural rights which are a minimum expectation in any country. If there is no devolved administration Dublin gets the right to speak on behalf of the Nationalists – without reference to any elected representatives (or, to be more precise, without reference to Sinn Fein elected representatives as opposed to SDLP elected representatives). At a stroke therefore the argument of the British and Irish governments which theoretically encourages political activity rather than military activity is wiped out.

Secret Forum

In return Britain gets a secret forum whose initial meetings will contentrate on security and whose first meeting will discuss enhancing the criminalisation policy adopted by Britain and convincing the Nationalists of RUC and British Army impartiality. It gets Dublin agreement to joint security activity in both parts of Ireland, Dublin involvement in regular reviews of the on-going security situation and Dublin discussing ways of making the security forces more readily acceptable to the Nationalist peoples (the 'Agreement' even refers to community relations training for the RUC!). It also gets Dublin directly involved in a joint judicial system, in 'extradition' and closer cross-border security co-operation. So who gains? Certainly not the Nationalist working class!

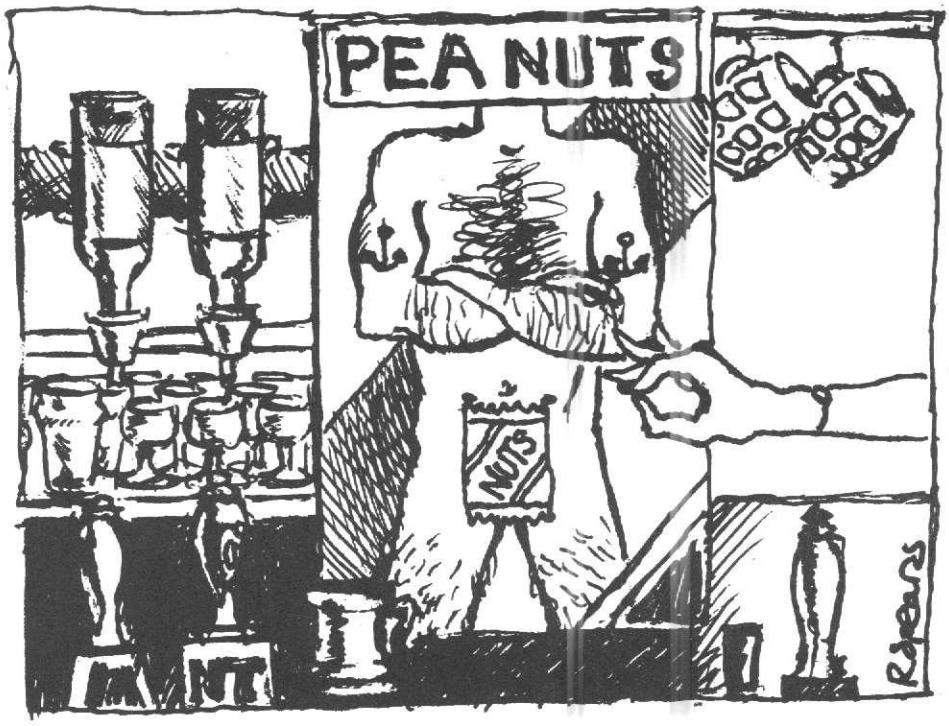
This Agreement is therefore nothing more than a vehicle for the containment of the conflict and is not intended to find a solution. It ignores the problems of harassment under the PTA, the humiliation of strip-searching, the injustice of Diplock courts and of supergrasses and the dreadful hardships suffered by the Nationalist peoples since 1922. It will draw public attention away from the real situation and toward controlled but false media type breakthroughs and solutions. It ignores the fact that the central issue in 'Northern Ireland' is political and not criminal.

It is nothing more than a stumbling bock to Irish u g peace and time will surely show it for ... nam that it is!

Gearoid MacGearailt,
Secretary, Lambeth Irish in Britain Representation Group,
National Vice Chair, IBRG

PEANUT PORNOGRAPHY

In the bar of the Exeter Labour Club there has until recently hung a pornographic calendar. There remain still those degrading displays of peanuts which gradually reveal a woman's body as each packet is removed.



Not surprisingly, such sexist advertising material, in blatant contradiction to the stated Labour Party policy on women, has aroused total revulsion across a broad spectrum of Exeter CLP. In early summer 1985 a number of women requested the removal of the material, but these requests were refused and they were told to use the 'proper channels'. Accordingly, a motion was sent from a branch to the GMC requesting the Bar to secure the removal of the peanut displays.

In September the GMC was blackmailed into discussing the resolution as an emergency by bar staff who threatened to resign if the resolution was passed. This was despite all assurances that this was not a motion of no confidence in the bar committee, and offers to remove the offending material. The resolution fell.

Letters were subsequently sent to the Club Committee and to the Constituency Officers stressing the good work of the Club but deploring the sad state of attitudes in the CLP which this failure to give public expression to Labour policy on sexism reflects. A petition was mounted which was signed by the Vice-Chair of the CLP and several Councillors. Articles criticising the failure to remove this degrading material were carried in both the October and November issues of *Devon Labour Briefing*.

LOCAL PRESS

The story was then taken up by the local press, Exeter's *Express and Echo*, carrying an article on November 6th with statements from Neil Todd, as a supporter of *Devon Labour Briefing*, the Secretary of the Labour Club and one of the Councillors who had signed the petition. Neil stressed that this was an internal dispute within the Labour Party but went on to say that the 'Labour Party at a national and local level is opposed to sexism in all its forms. We oppose any acts or images which degrade or exploit women. Obviously, such policy, if it is to be meaningful, must be translated into action at all levels within the Party as well as outside. This matter is still being discussed inside the Party and we are sure it can be resolved amicably without giving offence either to members of the Club or women in the Party.' In contrast, the Club Secretary thought all objections to the sexist material were 'absolutely ridiculous', and suggested that the only people objecting were a 'handful of idealistic youngsters' who had no other contribution to make.

This was followed by an article on Page Three of the *Sun* (Nov. 8) vilifying 'loony Labour lefties' for going 'nuts over a peanut firm's saucy display pack'. Labour Party 'stalwarts' were in contrast supported for their sexist stand and for taking the 'peanut problem with a pinch of salt'.

HETEROSEXISM

The response of Club members to these press reports was to compound their sexism by heterosexism by suggesting that those involved in the campaign were 'bent' and probably had AIDS. A number of supporters of *DLB* were banned from using the bar and one person received an intimidatory phone call.

Following the resignation of a member of the Club Committee, and despite the continuing failure of the Party to put its own house in order, the Constituency Officers felt justified in claiming that *DLB* had 'provided the gutter press with a perfect opportunity to trivialise the issue of sexism and pour ridicule on the campaign for sexual equality'. So long as the hypocrisy of allowing the continuing humiliation of women's bodies on the public premises of a party pledged to fight sexism wherever it appears is not erased, the question will remain: what campaign?

Neil Todd, Exeter CLP
Jo Shaw, Exeter CLP

A CHRISTMAS STORY

On Christmas day, in the evening I received a phone call from a very distraught Bengali family. They had been expecting a friend to arrive from Bangladesh for a few weeks holiday. The young man had never been outside Bangladesh before and his first dealing with foreigners was at Heathrow Airport.

On stepping from the plane he was interviewed at great length by the Immigration Officials and told that it was surprising that a non-Christian should want to visit Britain at Christmas, and even more surprising that he could not name any of the sights of Britain that he wanted to see so desperately. In short he was told that he was a fraud and could not enter Britain and should return to Bangladesh.

I did what I usually do; placed a 'stop' on his removal from Britain and then argued for his release on temporary admission pending a detailed examination of his case. This time, the Christmas spirit did not extend to the Immigration Service and he was detained for day after day whilst his increasingly frantic friends tried to get him released. Eventually they, and he, gave up and he returned to Bangladesh with nothing to show for his £500 return ticket other than ten days in remand centres.

This man was just one of many stopped over Christmas, just another statistic in the grim tale of racist questioning and statements made by the Immigration Service about arrivals. The tragedy is that none of this was news, that none of it is ever news.

Imagine the reverse. A white English male buys a return ticket to India for a one month holiday to see the railways and the Taj Mahal. On his arrival he is questioned as to why he wants to visit India. Will he go back at the end of his stay? Why does he want to see a Hindu festival when he is a Christian etc, etc?

At the end of questioning the Official pronounces himself dissatisfied and imprisons the man. After great difficulty our hero contacts an Indian Member of Parliament and is still not released and eventually goes home with his ticket a complete waste.

This issue would be taken up by the British press, Ministers would make statements and even the *Daily Mail* would get excited.

Racism means that visitors to Britain are treated in the most disgraceful way and nothing happens.

Jeremy Corbyn, MP
for Islington North

"WE HAVE COME TOO FAR TO TURN BACK NOW"

Diane Abbott

In December 1985 Hackney North & Stoke Newington Labour Party selected a 32-year-old Councillor and Trade Union Official to fight the next general election instead of their current MP. Not in itself a remarkable or necessarily unreasonable thing to do.

But the press has been astounded. Because, of course, the person selected was a black woman. It is as if the notion of a black woman as an MP is in itself bizarre. In fact, what is bizarre is the current composition of the House of Commons – 100% white and 96% male. And, treating me as a phenomenon, reveals what low expectations the media has of black people in general and black women in particular.

DOLLY KIFFIN

There are many, many capable and intelligent black women around in all walks of life but this society refuses to recognise it. Someone like Tottenham's Dolly Kiffin, a remarkable and dynamic woman who I was in a black women's group with years ago, is assumed by the media to be manipulated by white 'extremists' because a mere black woman could not have had the intelligence and guts to achieve what she has done in setting up a very successful community organisation against all the odds.

And I am constantly asked what will be my priority, women or black people? I have never heard a white male politician asked whether his priority will be white people or men. It is just assumed that white middle-class men can naturally represent everyone. But my selection shouldn't be allowed to obscure certain things. Firstly, it is still far harder for a woman to get selected as a parliamentary candidate than a man. There are too many gifted and committed women who should have been selected this time and weren't while mediocre male careerists continue to be snapped up by CLPs, despite all the talk on the left about selecting more women. In general to succeed a woman would-be PPC needs more tenacity, more ability and, above all, more capacity to absorb personal attacks – than a man.

UNACKNOWLEDGED SEXISM AND RACISM

Secondly there is still a high level of unacknowledged sexism and racism on the left which has surfaced in an ugly way in this round of selections.

Thirdly, Black MPs in themselves don't necessarily alter anything and getting black people into Parliament was never the end-all and be-all of the black sections campaign. What is crucial is black self-organisation and the involvement of black people at every level of the political process. And strong independent black political and cultural organisations are vital too.



John Chapman

A strong black presence in mainstream politics depends on strong black institutions outside and vice-versa. Black people have begun the long march through the institutions, but we need to know there are black battalions outside as well.

NOT A PAIN-FREE PROCESS

Finally, white people have to face the fact that empowering black people will not be a pain-free process. It means white people giving up power and, in some cases, stepping aside.

When I was waiting to go in Hackney Town Hall to speak to the Hackney North selection conference I was suddenly swept with gloom and thought 'They'll never select me. What on earth am I doing here?'

But when I asked myself why I was there the answer came back. I was there for: my Auntie May, a bus conductress who worked herself to death in her early fifties supporting five sons in Jamaica; my Auntie Norma who came in one day from her job as a hospital cleaner and died of a heart attack in her forties; my cousin Michael who died as a teenager in Jamaica because no-one had the money to pay for the heart operation he needed; my own father who only come here to earn enough money to go 'home' (as he always called Jamaica) and live in comfort but died in his fifties in England never to see Jamaica again . . . and when I started to reel them off I was surprised to realise how many of my own immediate family had not just led cruelly hard lives but died before their time.

So I was there for them and a whole generation of black immigrants because all that work and all that struggle demanded repayment. And the thing that has given me the greatest pleasure about my selection has been the number of ordinary black people who have told me that when they heard of my selection they felt it was a personal victory for them. And that is the important thing about the Hackney North selection. As Jesse Jackson said at the Anti-Apartheid Rally last year: 'We have come too far to turn back now'.

ERNIE ROBERTS — CLASS FIGHTER

Last December, Ernie Roberts, MP for Haackney North and Stoke Newington since 1979, was deselected by his Party. By common consent (on the left), Ernie is one of a handful of MPs on the principled left of the Parliamentary Labour Party. Disliked by the Thatcherite media and despised by the majority of his Parliamentary colleagues, Ernie has instinctively and unerringly remained one of the lonely band of flagbearers for the left in parliament. When he retires from parliament at the next general election, he will leave a gap that will be very hard to fill.

When Ernie was first selected by Hackney North, the event was viewed cynically by many people. The CLP had begun moving to the left and had brought sufficient pressure on the then incumbent, David Weitzman, to persuade him to stand down quietly. Ernie's selection was ironic because the official reason for Weitzman's standing down was his mature age — he was in his seventies. Ernie himself was in his mid-sixties and was inevitably looked on as a caretaker.

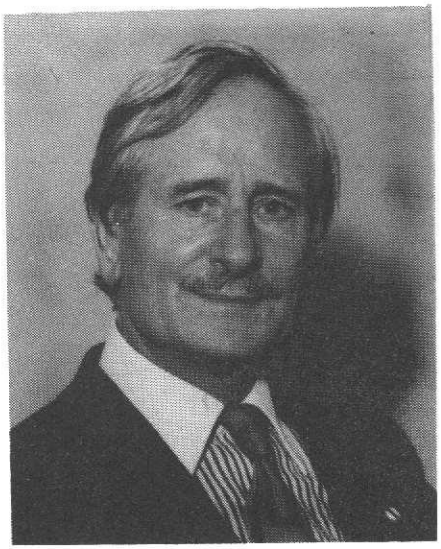
Strictly Accountable

In the event, Ernie turned out to be an outstanding representative of Hackney North's radical politics and a tireless Constituency worker. *Above all, he was strictly accountable to the Constituency Party*. Such a relationship was only possible because of the close political agreement that existed between Ernie and Hackney North; a consensus view could always be reached by discussion. Had this not been so, Ernie would have resigned.

By a nearly unanimous decision, he was reselected for a second term. In the 1983 Election, when the senescent Michael Foot led an apologetic Labour Party, hamstrung by the witch hunt, to disaster, Ernie Roberts led Hackney North to one of its most memorable victories, scoring one of the few swings to Labour in the whole country.

That Ernie should have turned out to be such a good MP ought not to have surprised anyone. His political record was an open book for all to judge. As a socialist prospective parliamentary candidate prevented from fighting the 1945 Election by Attlee's witch hunting Labour Party, as a Coventry councillor, as an engineer, eventually Assistant General Secretary of the A.U.E.W., as a founder member of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and as an active supporter of many other socialist causes, too numerous to mention, Ernie had already shown himself to be principled and sound. Hackney North could scarcely have made a better choice.

His election to Parliament altered nothing for Ernie except his influence, which he continued to use in the interests of socialism. He saved numerous victims of the immigration laws from deportation and helped safeguard the health and freedom of countless victims of the "Prevention of Terrorism Act". He helped found the Anti-Nazi League, which did so much to fight racism in the seventies. When the SDP rot set in in the Labour Party, Ernie co-founded the Campign Group of Labour MPs for those who would not be compromised by the hypocrisy of the Tribune Group; as the first chairperson of Labour Against the Witch Hunt, Ernie gave unreservedly of his time and energy to combat the opponents of socialism within the Party who paved the way for its electoral defeat. Through his unstinting



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work in the Constituency he became a truly popular MP, loved and respected by every ethnic group and every section of the working class.

Courage

What I want to remember most of all about Ernie, as MP, is his courage. When Bobby Sands, the democratically elected MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, died on hunger strike in a British gaol, the Tory Government and the Leaders of the Labour Opposition united once more to try to deprive the Irish people of their rights. In an attempt to stem Sinn Fein's growing popularity in the Six Counties, the by-election was to be held up indefinitely, that is until the Government and its "Loyal Opposition" could be sure that the republicans would be defeated. Hackney North discussed the situation with Ernie and agreed that it was intolerable. Together with Dafyd Ellis Tomas of Plaid Cwmry, and in spite of veiled threats made against the lives and families of both MPs by leading members of the British establishment, Ernie moved the writ in Parliament for the Fermanagh and South Tyrone by-election. In the election that followed, Owen Carron was returned for Sinn Fein.

Ernie will continue as Hackney North's MP until the General Election. During that time I am sure he will continue to show the courage and principles that we have learned to expect of him. I am also sure he will give every support to his democratically chosen successor, Diane Abbott. I for one am proud to have worked with him and am sad to see him go.

Keith Lichman
(Hackney North and Stoke Newington CLP)

STAR WARS

We want it really, the war
in the cold stars –
That great Bear! Vega. Arcturus. Mars.

Pitched from plain Earth, moon-orbiting
Russians make disposable Aliens,
Immaculate targets for home-loving
Americans, our virtues shaped like guns.

How come such talk of nuclear winter,
doom?
Star wars, I guess, will not be fought
at home.

Denis Knight
Brighton Kemptown CLP

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Letters

The Militant and Trotskyism

Dear Comrade,

Chris knight's article, "The Politics of Militant" in the December issue of Briefing unintentionally underlined the contradictions in their philosophy and organisation and only half-stated what they are all about.

The most serious omission was the failure anywhere in the article to mention that Militant are a Trotskyist faction and unless that is taken into consideration it is impossible to understand the aims of Militant. The chief problem with Trotskyism and Militant is that it only recognises two political philosophies; itself which is the infallible, unquestionable truth and Stalinism which it deems the evil enemy of class politics. Whilst I'd agree with Militant's view of the latter, I've noticed too many similarities between the two to be taken in.

As Militant won't recognise that any other left faction could possibly be politically acceptable we witness on our GC Militant voting against a motion deploring the NEC's intervention in Lewisham East (ironically) and then try to get us to oppose NEC intervention in Liverpool, and later to abstain on a motion to donate £100 to the Lambeth Fighting Fund but to collect for Liverpool.

For these reasons too we see Militant voting with the right of the Labour Party on Ireland, Black Sections and other issues. We also see them having Black Sections within Militant. On top of that they oppose positive action for women and black people but not for "workers" i.e. themselves, which nine times out of ten will be a white man who has had de-elocution lessons.

Chris Knight calls upon Militant and the rest of the left to unite to rid the movement of sectarianism but it is Militant's own sectarianism which prevents this simply because of their

SQUATTERS RESIST DUTCH POLICE!

Two hours later 300 special riot police attacked the 40 squatters occupying the flat; using teargas, dogs and riot batons. 26 squatters were arrested in the fierce struggle and taken to police cells. The police used unprecedented violence in the attack . . . No-one in the area was spared. Pensioners, children and activists were all subject to teargas and beatings.

On Friday afternoon the news broke that Hans Kok had died in a police cell.

POLITICAL RIOTS

On Saturday October 26, 1,500 squatters and sympathisers demonstrated through the centre of Amsterdam, fighting riot police and smashing the windows of banks and Council offices. Several demonstrators were arrested.

Hit and run actions followed on the nights of Saturday and Sunday throughout Holland. These included the burning of Council offices and attacks on police stations and police cars. In Amsterdam alone £2 million worth of damage was done. Solidarity actions took place in Germany, Denmark, Zurich and London, where on November 5 the Embassy was picketed and the Ambassador's car daubed with paint.

All the actions were around *political* demands for an independent inquiry into the squatters' death, the mother and child to be given their home back, and an end to evictions Squatters and supporters rioted in many Dutch towns for about two weeks after October 25 when a squatter – Hans Kok – was beaten to death in police custody. This police killing follows hard on the heels of similar strong state moves in Britain and reflects a growing paramilitarisation of police forces all over Europe.

Hans Kok had been arrested alongside others, who were also beaten up, for helping a single mother and child resist eviction from housing owned by the City Council of Amsterdam.

THE EVICTION STRUGGLE

The eviction struggle came shortly after the squatters' organisation had blown the cover, on Wednesday October 23, of secret police plans to destabilise the squatters' influence in the Staatsliedenbuurt working-class area of Amsterdam by undermining their massive support and imposing a continuous police presence in the area.

On Thursday October 24 police forcefully evicted the mother and child and then the local squatters' organisation dislodged the police occupying the flat and re-squatted it. In the struggle the police shot one of the squatter activists in the shoulder.

and police state tactics.

STATE COVER-UP EXPOSED

The authorities did not allow an independent inquiry so squatters and others organised their own. Photographic evidence proves Hans Kok was alive and well when arrested and was heard screaming in the police cells.

Now Dutch Amnesty International have asked the British Amnesty International Group to take up the matter of police brutality in Holland and the family of Hans Kok are taking the Minister of Justice to the European Court of Justice in Geneva.

This is as embarrassing for the 'liberal' Dutch politicians as the millions of pounds of riot damage is for Dutch capitalists. They all must be wondering is it worth it?

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP

For information on Dutch squatters' solidarity please phone 01-701 5691.

Trotskyism. Not only is their organisation self-defeating – leaving them self-isolated to be picked off – but whenever political events don't fit into their rigid dogma they either have to ignore these events or distort them. Therefore they concentrate on Chile but ignore Nicaragua because the latter revolution wasn't Trotskyist and then they argue that the average Protestant in the north of Ireland is just as badly off as the average Catholic or they invent a mythical white working class in South Africa. On top of this therefore the only struggle is the class struggle. Chris Knight asks us to take this bullshit seriously?

Until Militant is prepared to retreat from Trotskyism it will never be prepared to unite with the rest of the left nor should it be accepted uncritically. It is impossible not to sympathise with them, only with reservations. Of course we should support their stand in Liverpool, but the lay-offs, the conflict with the black caucus and their reluctance to support other sections of the left make them too politically questionable. The idea of an alliance with them at the moment seems as naive as the idea of the unquestioning alliance with Kinnock. Like the latter they take the support but give nothing back. The left would be better off waiting for Militant to move towards it by developing its politics beyond simply Trotskyism.

Yours fraternally,
John Wray,
(Leyton CLP)

AUDREY WISE OR JOHN McDONNELL?

Dear *Briefing*,

I must take issue with Jane Stockton's assertion in her article in the December issue on the *Briefing* slate for the NEC, that there is no political advantage for the left in the election of another white male to the National Executive. Surely our aim must be to secure the choice of as many sincere and committed socialists as possible? Obviously it would be better if such socialists could be women or blacks, but white male socialists are a good deal



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Audrey Wise

better than unprincipled careerists of any colour or either sex. Presumably Jane cannot seriously maintain that the substitution of John McDonnell for Audrey Wise, particularly in view of her recent support for Kinnock over the suspension of the Liverpool District Labour Party, would have been anything but an improvement? Even Tam Dalyell has at least integrity.

Paula Watson

JIM CONNELL AND THE RED FLAG

Pat O'Donovan's sketch of Jim Connell in the eighth pamphlet in the Hyde Park Series is a belated reminder of our indebtedness to the author of the Labour Party's socialist anthem 'The Red Flag'. The series, initiated and promoted by Councillor Leslie Jones, the veteran socialist and William Morris fan, has succeeded in capturing the spirit of Hyde Park over many decades. In this pamphlet, Pat O'Donovan tells us of the life of Jim Connell, the land leaguer, Fenian and Socialist who, hailing from Ireland, had a firm commitment to the Irish Republican movement. He came to London in the late eighties and was active in the London dock strike, but it was not until 1912 that he composed his immortal 'Red Flag', which has become for the British Labour movement what the Marseillaise was to the French Revolution. The anthem was first published in the Social Democratic Federation's journal *Justice*.

It is unfortunate that his many other writings, his songs, books and poems, failed to gain him the recognition that he was to secure with his 'Red Flga'.

O'Donovan has included a 1920 article written by Jim Connell himself entitled 'How I Wrote the Red Flag', together with the rarely performed full version of the song.

We can only speculate what Jim Connell, Irish Republican Socialist, would have made of the Anglo-Irish accord, but about his socialist vision for Ireland, as well as Britain, there can be no doubt. He fought, not for a united capitalist Ireland, a mockery of all that he and the Fenians stood for, but for a united socialist Ireland. We look forward to Pat O'Donovan completing his study plan for a definitive biography of Jim Connell, the man who put into words and song what the Labour Party is all about – or should be.

Ellis Hillman

SE Branch Socialist Disability Group

"Discussion of current disability issues including Labour Party proposed Bill of Rights" With Robert Wareing MP

Members' meeting: Wednesday 12 February

6.45 p.m. in the House of Commons Committee Room 8

Correspondence to: Michael Silver
64 Wentworth Road, London NW11 0RL
Tel: 01-455 9621 (evenings)

Easy entrance and lifts via the main gates in Parliament Square

TRADE UNION BRIEFING

NATIONAL JUSTICE FOR MINEWORKERS CAMPAIGN

The National Miners Amnesty Campaign, which has taken up most of Trade Union Briefing's resources since it was launched three months ago, exists no longer. The steering committee met for the second time on 14th December, and unanimously adopted a proposal from the Campaign Group of MPs which has major implications for the campaign. This proposal comes out of discussions with the NUM and other trade union leaderships involved, and with Women Against Pit Closures; it represents a clear signal and has major implications for building a serious campaign in defence of the members and policies of the NUM.

The proposal, in three parts, was as follows:

(i) that the National Miners Amnesty Campaign re-name itself the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign;

(ii) that the campaign endorse the new Justice for Mineworkers Bill, which Tony Benn and others are drafting;

(iii) that the campaign adopt a national structure, thus:

President: Billy Etherington (sec. NUM Durham Mechanics and Area delegate to the NEC)

Honorary vice-presidents (non-voting): Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield, Ken Cameron (FBU), B Rubner (FTAT), Jim Slater (NUS), Alan Sapper (ACTT), Ray Buckton (ASLEF), Jimmy Knapp (NUR), Ken Gill (AUEW/TASS), Ron Todd (TGWU), Walter Greendale (TGWU President), Tony Benn MP, Dennis Skinner MP

Secretary: Ed Fredenburgh (TU Briefing)

Treasurer: one of Durham Mechanics' sacked miners.

These would be the officers of a council divided into three sections of ten people, each representing an area; the sections being NUM nominees, WAPC, and the miners support groups. The fourth section was proposed as five members of the Campaign Group, and five "others".

It won't be clear till later this month exactly what level of agreement has been reached with the union leaders, and what that implies for union support for the campaign's aims. But the proposal and its adoption was welcomed as a potentially major step forward.

However, *Briefing* members together with some miners, particularly from the Cokemen's Area, were concerned that the new structure would exclude the growing number of local activists, who would be reduced to one per area for each section of the council. The campaign needs to attract as many activists as possible. It is not just a question of drawing together active miners, WAPC, and support groups. It is equally important to extend the campaign's base across the trade unions and the CLPs. These are the essential source of support for the NUM in its fight against continuing sabotage by the right wing of the Labour Party and TUC leaderships.

There was no opposition to this line, and it was agreed that council meetings would be open to any supporter. The meeting also adopted a *Briefing* amendment to enlarge the fourth section by five places, to allow some representation to TU Briefing, Labour Left Co-ordination, and trade union delegates. The Campaign Group also agreed to vacate two of its places in this section; this leaves twelve places that would allow some representation to, for instance, regional TUC or Labour Party delegates, who might affiliate, or to delegates from NUM areas, some of whom already have.

Much of the campaign work will, of course, be organised in the regions; some areas are preparing for their regional Labour Party conferences. Nationally, our first event will take place on March 2nd; it will include a rally (at which we will launch the Campaign Group's amnesty pamphlet, and publicise the Justice for Mineworkers Bill), a demonstration to commemorate the anniversary of the beginning/end of the strike, and an evening benefit concert at the Albert Hall, with the artistes from the "Heroes" album — Billy Bragg, Flying Pickets, et al.

Details will be sent out as soon as they are confirmed. *Briefing* has some responsibility for this demonstration, as for the campaign: start building now!

Ed Fredenburgh

NOTTINGHAM WOMEN

Shifting Horizons is a book about the lives of two Nottinghamshire women. Doreen Humber and Pauline Radford who were major participants in the miners' strike of 1984/85.

The women separately describe their lives from childhood, their worklives, their courting, their marriages; and then what they felt and did during the Strike.

The jacket of the book says that *Shifting Horizons* is by Lynn Beaton, and in the Afterword Doreen and Pauline thank Lynn for writing the book. However, in her introduction Lynn describes the production of the book. Lynn met Notts miners at the Trades Union Congress in Brighton in 1984. She went to their village of Blidworth and met, amongst others, Pauline Radford and Doreen Humber. Lynn suggested to these women that a book should be written about their experiences. So, for six months, Lynn taped conversations with Pauline and Doreen.

Lynn says: *'Months after the interviews I was still unsure about the best way to present them in writing. I wanted a book that would be accessible to all but I also wanted to maintain as much of the personalities of the two women as possible. It is after all their story and as much as possible I wanted it told in their words.'*

The main part of the book is Doreen and Pauline describing their involvements during the Strike. How, at the beginning they and other women started to talk about the need to organise some way of feeding everybody.

Pauline tells us: *'It seemed so exciting. The idea of holding a meeting to really get things organised and the responsibility of being involved in that was thrilling. I'd never been involved in anything like that before. It seemed the sort of thing that other people did, people who were somehow different from me, people who had a lot of education. I'm not sure what it was I thought they had but it had never seemed to me that I was that sort of person, I felt awakened.'*

Pauline tells us how they all knew that they would never be the same again. And *'already there were other issues which we knew we wanted to get involved in ... The situation of black*

ACTT VOTES 'YES'

On December 13th ACTT, the film and television technicians' union became the 25th union to win a "Yes" vote for its political fund. With visible relief Alan Sapper, our general secretary, announced that in a remarkable high turn-out of 50% (exclusively by postal ballot) the membership had voted by 7,149 to 5,043 to retain its political fund. It may be interesting to comrades to have a look at the background to this victory and to see how close we were to becoming the first union to say "No".

In August 1983 *Labour Weekly* looking at the prospect of such votes said "It would be remarkable if Unions like the miners and the railwaymen and the postal workers did not vote to keep their political funds. But prospects might be bleaker among unions with a highly skilled, better paid membership such as the printworkers and the media technicians union ACTT". This feeling was shared by most of the press and unanimously within ACTT itself. In fact many in ACTT were ready to give up without a fight, talking of setting up "Friends of Labour" groups as alternatives to affiliation. This really wasn't surprising given the history of ACTT and the Labour Party and the total lack of involvement of the membership in the political management.

ACTT's political fund had been set up in 1943 by a vote of 320 to 262. For the next forty years it was neglected and for all practical purposes inacessible to the members. By the time the ballot appeared on the horizon payment into the fund was about the lowest of any affiliated union at 7%. "Opting in" was almost impossible with no effective system of collecting the subs and the pittance that was collected barely covering affiliation to the Labour Party

Unspoken Deal

Added to this there was a vocal group within the union calling for an end to all links with the Labour Party. This was hardly surprising in a union whose members have an average income of around £12,000 per annumn and can produce Tory MPs like Roger Gale. However, there was an unspoken deal that as long as the "left wing" leadership produced good pay awards every year the membership (through resounding apathy) would let them play politics. Hence ACTT became a bona fide left wing union, tiny but vocal.

In 1983 this cosy deal began to break down under attack from both sides. From the right came discontent with the politics of the union (crystalised by the Union's support for the miners) and from the left (newly strengthened by a massive reorganisation of the union) came a discontent with the unaccountability of the Union's secretariat.

For the first time in forty years a vote was forced at the Union's conference on affiliation to the Labour Party and despite desperate predictions we won by a massive majority. The Levy was increased to £5.20 a year (a small amount relative to wages bur the means to a usefully large fund). A broad left emerged from the grass roots to give ordinary members a voice in the political decision-making of the union, and after a great deal of arguing a committee was elected from the levy payers to take control of the political fund and its decisions.

Paying Off

To the surprise of many union bureaucrats consultation with the members was paying off. Despite being "highly skilled and better paid" members could think, organise and be radical on their own behalf. They could set up Miners' Support Groups, formulate their own motions for Labour Party Conference and choose who to nominate. The struggle to replace the back of the envelope motions from our General Secretary with genuine participation was proving successful.

However even the most optimistic wondered whether we could win a ballot of the whole membership even given that levy paying had been boosted to 16%, shops were affiliating to constituencies and the Levy committee was working efficiently.

That we did win was due largely to a well funded and thought out campaign of explanation and information and the efforts of the lay leadership and certain general officers like the Deputy General Secretary Roy Lockett who went out to the shops and explained our case, but was also due to the democratisation of the political voice of the union.

Without the organisation and lobbying of a new caucus of radical union activists the political fund would easily have been dismissed as the private fief of the General Secretary.

The danger now is that given the "Yes" vote political activity will sink to nothing, levy paying will again be forgotten and democratic imput will disappear.

As far as I know only ACTT and one of the print unions have a separately elected committee to deal with the political fund. As the fund takes on greater significance it is important that more follow our example.

Jon Davies,
Secretary ACTT Political Committee, (personal capacity)

HAVE THEIR VOICE HEARD



John Chapman

Shifting Horizons, Canary Press, £5.65.

people in Britain and the situation in Northern Ireland both worried us now because we knew what was causing those situations and we knew that the only way they could be solved was by everybody standing up and fighting. Just as we knew we could only win our strike if everybody stood up and fought.'

Reading this book is like sitting in their back kitchens or being in the Strike Centre, listening to them tell their stories. Their joys and despairs come alive and I felt that I could hear these women's voices as they described their excitements and their triumphs, within their homes or on the picket line; their horrors at the police activity and the court's injustices. And their despair as the strike ended.

But the main thing I felt as I read this compelling book was their strength and determination as women: *'Through the struggle which has been written about in this book we have found a confidence which we never knew we had. We have proved to ourselves and our men that we are as strong as they are. Before the Strike we used to think that we couldn't voice our opinion. Now we know we have a voice and we will make it heard.'*

Lisa Hunt

BRIEFING debate section: Feminism and class politics in perspective

In 1974 women activists came together to develop the Working Women's Charter'. The demands included equal pay for equal work, adequate maternity care and better working conditions. It was important in bringing together women fighting in very diverse areas and in using their experiences to make some general points out of very different campaigns. Valuable information was exchanged and practical proposals put forward. The labour movement got extremely hot under the collar, spluttered in disbelief at its 'radicalness' and 'unworkableness' and eventually brought about its destruction because of its 'dangerous' demand for a minimum wage at a time of wage controls.



Photo: Garth Frankland

A really revolutionary document you might think? Designed like some sort of Pac-(wo)man to gobble up the capitalist class? Nothing of the sort. Looking back on it from today it seems remarkably limited. Not too far off present Liberal Party policy in fact. The special demands of lesbian or black women are left out completely. There wasn't even a call for free abortion on demand. Most important of all, as it was a working women's charter, those women who were not in paid employment simply didn't exist. This ignored the crucial connection between the home and workplace and their interrelation.

10 years later

Just over ten years later, a national minimum wage has just been made Labour Party policy and the women workers at Fords have finally won their demand for equal pay. Campaigns are being fought in Women Against Pit Closures, lesbian women are winning important victories. Women are challenging racism both locally and nationally, while WAC is fighting selection sexism. A greater number of women are working in a greater number of spheres. The left should update its demands accordingly. This would involve action in two main spheres. First of all, as more women are brought into paid work as cheaper labour, the less likely they are to want to leave it. This will put pressure on home and family life as a certain amount of tasks usually done for free in the home will have to be socialised. Grudging capitalists will try to do this as cheaply as possibl, while doing their best not to destroy the family unit.

The labour movement should give full support to struggles which exploit this tension. This means fighting for creche provision, workplace nurseries, abortion and contraceptive rights. These are direct political issues which allow women to take a full part in union and work activities. They go some way towards providing collective responses to what are still seen as private and personal issues. We should take a look at France where Mitterrand reneged on yet another election pledge by insisting that creche provision was 'too expensive'. Jacque Chirac, the Gaullist Mayor of Paris, banned the children of immigrant and unemployed parents from the Parisian creches. And Communist and Socialist Deputies allied witht he right to coordinate and excuse major attacks on abortion rights.

Secondly, though closely connected, is the changing role of women within the workplace. It is totally inadequate to treat all women as belonging to some mystical sisterhood when capitalism is increasingly differentiating amongst women and it must be said, providing solutions for some. These women have totally different experiences of their jobs.

Abandonment of class politics

The LCC and Euro-Communists have used the greater number of women workers to mask their abandonment of class politics. Our position should be to emphasise the absolute centrality of class politics to show just how few women will benefit from this 'social democracy in trendier clothes' farce. Again with reference to France, women workers were one of the first groups to be attacked not just as women but as workers. Unfortunately, many were unprepared for the latter having ignored the former. When Mitterrand launched attacks on the stability of women working in part-time jobs, this was but a prelude to concerted attacks on all sections of the working class in his attempt to reduce all workers to part-time status.

Women have constantly widened their arena of struggle and made links between their campaigns. Examples include WAPC and CND or Labour Women and Ireland. This recognition of the co-ordination of struggle should have been reflected in left debate: why not WAPC putting their views on economic strategy? Yet more often than not, the left is still arguing over a 'Marxist theory which includes women'! Its '80s variant is 'list politics' with women squeezed somewhere in between the working class and black people. Any debate on sexual politics must make a continual reference to struggle as it is lived, not how it might be. Such a debate must be an educational one, relaying information on different tactics and different ways of organising for example. It must also remain at all stages a practical debate which proposes specific forms of action. It would be absurd to attack current preoccupations and then propose more of the same.

Updated Women's Charter

I would propose that such a debate become the basis of an updated 'Women's Charter' which would draw together campaigns and take them out into the labour movement. Briefing is in a good position for this because it is activists who write about what they are doing rather than a group of journalists writing about what the activists should be doing. A debate in the manner outlined above challenges radical feminism which has gained from its preoccupation with the everyday, because the action is collective and involves a much larger amount of women. Yet it also challenges the social democrats in their attempts to 'hijack' women because it shows that women will not allow themselves to be used and are fighting for themselves.

Fran Rayner,
(Hampstead and Highgate CLP)

CHALLENGING OLD ORTHODOXIES

Socialism as political practice and theory arises out of the class divisions of capitalist society. Thus it is strange how political economy is ignored by the Left. The analyses of the gurus and patriarchs of this 'dismal science' are taken on trust. This is why Andrew Glyn's pamphlet, *A Million Jobs a Year*, is to be welcomed. It has created a debate within the Left over its economic strategy. Glyn clearly identifies the cause of the crisis facing British society: that the multinational corporations and international banks have allowed a drastic run-down in British manufacturing industry, rather than see a reduction in their short-term profits. Mass unemployment, the housing shortage and the cutbacks in social services are a consequence of these policies. Glyn also identifies a cure: a determined Labour government imposing public ownership and regulation over the economy to force growth to occur. This will lead to rising employment and social services.

Glyn's pamphlet has created such debate within the Labour Party because of its contrast with the timid pronouncements of the leadership. Kinnock castigates as 'impossibilists' those who think a Labour government should eliminate mass unemployment. Instead he offers a small increase in public spending and a National Investment Bank. The true 'impossibilists' are those who believe that a re-run of the Wilson/Callaghan years will end in anything other than defeat (as in 1970 and 1979). We are living in the middle of a global debt crisis that threatens the disruption of world finance and trade. Glyn's vision of Britain run as a siege economy may be more prescient than that of the city experts beloved by Hattersley. While the Shadow Chancellor denounces bank nationalisation as unrealistic, Thatcher is taking over Johnson Matthey bankers! In the event of a major debt default, the Tories will have to nationalise Lloyds, Midland and other banks. Public ownership may yet have to be embraced by the Party's leadership.

Glyn's strategy is not new, it is the old Alternative Economic Strategy adapted for the 1980s. Planning agreements and import controls are proposed. But some of the AES's erstwhile supporters are now bitterly denouncing Glyn's pamphlet. The LCC, through Hodgson in the December *Chartist*, see Glyn's strategy as totalitarian! Hodgson repeats the fiction that democracy is only possible with the existence of markets. The LCC's realignment rightwards leads to them not only cuddling Kinnock, but also the SDP's 'social market' theorists. The new face of consensus politics?

COMFORTABLE OLD ORTHODOXY OF THE LEFT

Why has Glyn's pamphlet aroused such hysterical hatred? This is because, to many, Glyn's ideas are *Militant*'s 'socialist policies' dressed up in more academic language. Glyn thinks that only by nationalising the biggest banks and manufacturing companies will a Labour government be able to expand the economy. Otherwise it will be faced by investment strikes or flight of capital overseas. But a call to 'nationalise the top 200 monopolies' has an appeal beyond the confines of *Militant*. The state-planned economy is the comfortable, old orthodoxy for many on the Left. Throughout the 1970s, many groups inside and outside the Labour Party shared this vision of socialism. The Labour leadership even endorsed a watered down version of the AES. Moreover, state planning has done the 'impossible', the elimination of mass unemployment, *twice* in this century. From 1938 to 1940, workers were transferred from the factories and the dole to the armed services. From 1947 to 1949, the servicemen and women were directed into civilian reconstruction or the home. But was or is this Socialism?

The Nazis had carried out a similar economic miracle in the 1930s. Unemployment of over 40% was eliminated over three years through vigorous state intervention. Since the Second World War, many countries have used a mixture of state ownership and planning to encourage industrial growth, from Sweden to Brazil. This country is exceptional internationally in its lack of planned state intervention. The internationalisation of British capital,

Debate section

especially its financial institutions, has provided a powerful lobby against any National Plan. The Tories have refined this into an ideological dogma of hatred for public ownership or welfare. This has given a socialist gloss to even the mildest form of state involvement in the economy. The contrast with France cannot be clearer. There state planning has played a dominant role since the 1940s. What in France are Gaullist policies become 'left-wing extremism' as soon as you cross the Channel!

It is a tribute to the ideological conservatism of the British Left that it accepts this state socialism as the real thing.

It does not question how far it is just supporting the state wing of the mixed economy. In the year after the Miners' Strike, are we demanding the creation of 200 National Coal Boards to run Britain? In a similar period of mass unemployment, the 1930s, there arose a curious mixture of Fabianism and Bolshevism, a sort of 'Stalinism-with-parliamentary-democracy'. While retaining elements of political democracy, industry and social life were to be directed by the state's industrial and financial institutions. Glyn is a direct descendant of writers such as G.D.H. Cole, who praised Stalin's Five Year Plans, and the Webbs, who lauded '30s Russia as a 'new civilisation'. They all argue for state planning because of its efficiency and rationality. They all see the state as carrying out the accumulation of capital in a more rapid and intense manner than is possible under private ownership.

PRE-FEMINIST

But has not the world changed rapidly since the 1930s? How far do the old solutions still have validity? Since the 1960s, there has been a growing crisis within the Labour movement. Many of the idological and organisational certainties have been disrupted by the continuing development of capitalism and the emergence of new demands within the working class. The central role of the white, male, heterosexual, skilled worker, loyal to the union and Labour Party has come under challenge from both Left and Right. Currents within the Labour Party, such as *Briefing*, have worked to unify the working class without suppressing the diversity of its needs and demands. Yet Glyn, like *Militant*, does not reflect these changes. His text has been described as pre-feminist. The growing integration of women into the working class is not mentioned, let alone basic problems such as childcare.

But his pamphlet also ignores many other questions. How far is state planning possible in a world dominated by multinationals, the EEC, the IMF and US Imperialism? How far does a national plan fit into the needs of regions of the country to free themselves from control by London? Are the ecological costs of continuous growth justified? Is it sustainable in the long run? How far can Britain isolate itself from an economic crisis that is global, especially when the Third World faces famine and debt crises? How do even the ethnic communities combat the effects of British racism in this country? Chris Knight, in December *Briefing*, states that we disagree with *Militant*'s politics while agreeing with their economics. But these two are linked – as every Marxist should know! For example, if you argue for the family wage, it is not surprising that gay rights achieve a low priority in your programme. Therefore, while welcoming Glyn's opening of the debate, we must not uncritically tail his supporters. It is necessary to show how *Briefing*'s stance on positive discrimination, for example, is integrally linked with our view of how Socialism would operate in practice. We need to show how Glyn is not only pre-'68, but also pre-Marxist.

For Glyn's state-controlled economy owes more to Ricardo than to Marx. Glyn's vision is of a restructured and reorganised capitalism, under state ownership, providing the fruits of industrial society for the working class. The system of production is essentially sound, it is just badly administered and its results badly distributed. A radical Labour government would be able to correct all this. But, as Marxists, we must contrast our opposition to the organisation of capitalist production as such. The unifying feature of all the '60s 'new social movements', in contrast to the old Labour movement, was its insistence on autonomy, self-determination and accountability of leaderships.

When these ideas were taken into the Labour Party, they began a process of radicalisation through the battle for inner-party democracy. It is now necessary to apply the same lessons to our approach to the economy. Any Labour government will take over state and capital as it exists now. It is not possible, Pol Pot-like, to immediately decree its abolition. Any Labour government will seem more Gaullist than its Tory predecessors. But its aim must be to increase the power of working people, not its own state machine. Economically, it must intervene to encourage and help co-operatives, self-managed enterprises, popular planning and any other community initiatives. Control of the social laws of capitalism can only be attempted through mass involvement in the process. A political economy that recognises the working class in its diversity, with specific needs created by sex, sexuality, disability or ethnic origin can only be constructed by a commitment to direct participation by the proletariat in the running of social production.

This is why the founders of Marxism saw the 'withering away of the state', not as a pious longterm hope, but as the immediate demand of the revolutionary workers. This is what must be the difference that separates us from Glyn and *Militant*.

Richard Barbrook
(Hampstead and Highgate CLP)

STREETLIFE SUPPLEMENT BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Personal politics ON THE AGENDA

This article fills what is intended to be a regular space in *National Briefing* for the discussion of personal politics. In future we hope that readers and contributors will feel that the paper isn't purely about struggles taking place in council chambers, parliament, trade unions and the Labour Party (vital though these are), but has also another dimension adequate to reflect the other, more human, social and personal sides of our lives.

Why is this relevant? I think we can answer that if we look at how *Briefing* began. The paper took shape when a number of Labour Party activists realised that what we lacked most of all was information about ourselves – information concerning what we ourselves were actually doing in various local parties. Once this information was provided in small ways through the pages of the paper, we became more aware of ourselves and of what we were able to do. And to be aware of strength is no small part of our own actual strength.

The problem is: how to enable *Briefing* to perform this function in ways which embrace and include those of our supporters who do not necessarily instantly see the relevance of what goes on in endless meetings to their concerns and their lives? How can these people use the machinery of the labour movement to gain information about what they themselves can do to strengthen themselves in their daily lives? There are no easy answers to the problems felt by the millions of unemployed and by those living on bad council estates who believe that 'all politicians are the same'. One thing is clear though. The great 'socialist transformation' to which we all look forward will remain an irrelevant mental abstraction until we in the labour movement can show people that there *are* ways of organising which actually *work*. It is not that people don't agree with us on many of the vital issues – unemployment, health services, transport – for they usually do. It's that we ourselves fail to connect in a strengthening way – on a house-by-house, street-by-street level – with the immediate concerns felt by the families and people on whose political support we depend. 'Politics' seems to people to be 'up there' somewhere, rather than in and around their own neighbourhoods, streets and homes. By giving over space in *Briefing* to the discussion of personal politics we hope to begin to bridge that separation between politics and life. We have got to get over to people that we are not interested in doing things *for* them. It's about us ourselves organising *as* workers, *as* the unemployed, *as* women, *as* black people, *as* the oppressed to gain power and solidarity *for ourselves*.

For those of you familiar with *London Labour Briefing*, the inclusion of personal polits in *Briefing* is of course nothing new. A section on personal politics called the *Streetlife Supplement* first appeared there in 1982. Indeed we envisage this simply as an extension of the London *Streetlife Supplement* into the National Supplement. As in the London supplement we will aim to cover a specific issue each month. We will particularly be encouraging contributions written by people about their own social, sexual and family relationships and experiences. Often people feel excluded from Left publications because they lack the confidence to write about their political *ideas*, or don't feel they are 'expert' enough on an issue. Yet political arguments are often most powerfully expressed when they are put in terms of an actual personal experience rather than second-hand by a narrator or a political academic.

Organisation of the new *Streetlife Supplement* will be done through the *Briefing* National Steering Committee, by a 'Streetlife Commission', in much the same way as international and trade union coverage is organised in *Briefing* at present. The 'commission' will be open to anyone interested and will meet monthly.

Jane Stockton

STREETLIFE MEETINGS

These will usually be held on the FIRST MONDAY of every month. For details of time, venue and any other information, contact **Jane Stockton or Ann Flowers, 01-802 4604.**

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue we will begin to explore the issue of child abuse. In recent months, our increasing awareness of the extent of suffering endured by some children in our present society, particularly within the family, has raised a number of political issues about the rights of children and adults, the role of the family, and the responsibility and role of outside agencies and individuals in such cases. For the next issue we will focus on incest, and particularly welcome contributions from people who can write from personal experience.

For reasons of space we would like articles to be no more than 800 words, and preferably typed. They should be sent to: **Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Road, London N16 5HZ** by **February 10th.**

We also welcome letters and comments (preferably brief) and any suitable graphics or illustrations. And how about a *Briefing* version of the *Guardian*'s Naked Ape column? Have you ever heard sexist comments in Labour Party meetings?? Or read them in Left publications? Well, share them with us. Witty suggestions about what we could call such a column also gratefully received!

A Million Jobs A Year

Friday, February 21st 8pm

Lest We Forget

This session will examine the lessons from Europe and the last Labour Government — suggesting the positive new directions which can avoid a repeat of the mistakes of the past.

Speakers will include: TONY BENN
MIKE COOLEY
AUDREY WISE
BERNIE GRANT

A Socialist Society Conference

Sponsored by The Campaign Group of MPs, Labour Briefing, Target Labour Government, Labour Left Co-ordination.

County Hall, London

Saturday February 22nd

10.30am to 11.45am Starting Points

Speakers: Andrew Glyn, Robin Murray, Jo Richardson and Gail Lewis.

11.45am to 1pm WORKSHOPS

2pm to 3pm Strategies for areas and sectors

3pm to 4pm WORKSHOPS

4pm to 5pm What kind of a campaign for a socialist economic strategy?

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