LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING 40p
No 58 APRIL 1986

CLASS LAW!

Graham Norwood (Deputy Leader, Lambeth Council)



John Chapman

Lambeth Councillors outside the High Court

CLASS LAW! That is the only interpretation which can be put on the £400,000 surcharges and costs levied on 80 elected Labour councillors representing Lambeth and Liverpool. The vicious court judgement means not only the use of barbaric penalties against individuals but also the declaration that much of Labour Party policy could be illegal in the eyes of the judiciary.

It also clears the way for attacks on other councillors who put up resistance to ratecapping in 1985 — and up to 300 other Labour members, mostly in London, could be next in the firing line.

And finally the judgement issues a challenge — so far rejected in a brutally harsh manner — on the Labour Party leadership to stick by Conference policy on retrospective legislation, endorse the removal of surcharges and bans from office, and support those comrades in the front line against Thatcher's attacks.

There is no doubt that the decision puts Labour policy on trial. For one judge

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

CLASS WAR (continued)

the position was clear: "Members must not treat themselves as irrevocably bound to carry out pre-announced policies contained in election manifestos." For another the actions of the Lambeth councillors — agreed by the London Labour Party and in tune with national conference decisions — reached a "pinnacle of political perversity".

This marks the final chapter in a book of legal restrictions set down virtually to eliminate the democratic and hitherto sacrosanct powers resting with local government.

Since 1981 we have seen the outlawing of the Fares Fair GLC cheap transport policy; the challenges to the right of a local council to redistribute wealth within its geographical area by giving money to so-called "stress boroughs"; the abolition of local authorities; and now the removal from office of elected councillors who dared to implement the policies on which they were elected.

And what a method by which it is done! Using draconian powers vested in the unelected and unaccountable position of the district auditor, the Government is quite deliberately orchestrating the legal system to its own ends. For many years — as listed below — Government ministers have flouted the law, losing millions of pounds, yet have rarely been challenged in court. And if they have been so challenged and went on to lose... well, they changed the law retrospectively to cover themselves!

Look at the chronicle of Government hypocrisy and law breaking:

- 1980, the then Social Services Secretary Patrick Jenkin was judged to have acted illegally by appointing commissioners in the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham health authority.
- 1983, then Health Minister Kenneth Clarke spends £1 million more than necessary on Tadworth hospital because of ministerial miscalculations.
- 1984, Clarke admits acting illegally in reclaiming £10 million from chemists in a dispute over drugs purchased from wholesalers.
- 1985, Transport Secretary Nicholas Ridley was judged to have acted illegally in demanding £281 milion fom the GLC towards the costs of running the capital's public transport.

What penalties fell on those Tory miscreants? None.

In contrast, Lambeth and Liverpool Labour councillors have been turned into criminals for fighting to provide services to communities which, by the Government's own statistics, are deprived.

Other councils now face an immediate threat of similar action by the District Auditor. The Labour-controlled Association of London Authorities has calculated that Greenwich, Islington, Camden, Southwark and Sheffield are now at great risk, based on the legal criteria set out in the Lambeth judgement.

Attacks by the District Auditor on them could see numerous leading socialists remved from office, including at least five Parliamentary candidates and National Executive Committee member David Blunkett. The court actions could be going on through the period of the May local elections and, on the basis of the Lambeth decision, could involve other sets of councillors in massive litigation fees.

Kinnock and Cunningham

So it is that blatant Conservative attack on Labour authorities which forms the backdrop to the next crucial decisions of the party's leadership: will Neil Kinnock and John Cunningham support us, or not?

Conference is quite clear; having agreed the policy of resisting cuts in services which led us to the need to defer setting rates at the conventional moment in the municipal year in order to win more resources, conference then supported any councillors who were penalised. The 1985 Bournemouth delegates voted unanimously to remove penalties retrospectively — a public commitment.

Messrs Kinnock and Cunningham have already said they feel no sympathy for that sentiment — but what if up to 300 other councillors fall into the District Auditor's clutches? And what will the NEC do to help the present surcharges and legal costs which add up to £400,000 — all at present resting on the 80 victimised councillors. That figure could rise massively if the District Auditor "comes back for more" as allowed by the Lambeth judgement; in the case of that council, theoretically another £800,000 could be demanded at the end of the financial year, from just 31 Labour members!

The Labour Party leadership surely cannot join forces with the Government in backing such huge personal fines, levied it appears for no other reason than because we sought to oppose Thatcher's efforts to crush local council services and jobs. It is now firmly in the shadow Cabinet's court to ensure (when it becomes the Government) that it legislates to benefit its people, as Thatcher and the Tories have legislation to benefit theirs. Likewise the NEC must lead the whole movement in a fast and socialist response to the fines now facing individuals.

In political terms, that response must be assisting unions who — like those in Lambeth — say they will not co-operate with unelected rump Tory administrations which may come into power as a result of disqualification of Labour members. In the May 8th elections, local democracy and the need to protect jobs and services must be the campaigning focus.

In financial terms, the response must be to ensure that individuals — many from the poorest and most disadvantaged groups — must not be forced into poverty and possible homelessness because they implemented Party policy.

Lambeth's surcharged councillors include pensioners, single-parent families, the retired, unemployed and at least one person with a disability. Should they have to pay a debt incurred because they defied the expectations of many and stuck firmly with agreed policy?

Whatever the fate of the surcharged councillors, their pride — as shown the day of the court judgement — remains strong. In a period when the Labour Party is moving fast to the right, when our expectations of what a future Labour government may do in office are falling very low, it is a source of pride to be part of a committed and socialist administration.

Unlike so many councils and past governments, Lambeth and Liverpool can hold their heads up high.

Louise Christian and Liverpool

Dear Comrade,

I am writing about an article by Eddie MacParland in your February issue which stated that I abstained in a vote on the Regional EC on the witch hunt against Liverpool DLP. This is not true, as the minutes of that meeeting record. What happened was that I declared an interest because I am acting as solicitor for the Liverpool councillors and did not vote at the meeting. Since then I have also been instructed by officers of the Liverpool DLP to advise in relation to the NEC Enquiry.

Before deciding not to vote I discussed my position with the comrades from Liverpool and both they and I thought that it would stop any allegations being made if I did not vote. Anyone who knows my political record will know that if I had voted, I would have supported the Regional Party's opposition to all witch hunts.

Yours for socialism.

Louise Christian

Editor's note: Sorry, Louise!

Lambeth Fighting Fund Appeal

All Labour movement organisations and individuals must donate all they can to cover appeal costs. Please send donations to:
Lambeth Fighting Fund,
Lambeth Town Hall,
Brixton Hill,
London SW2.

Hammersmith and Fulham Briefing

The next meeting of Hammersmith and Fulham Briefing will be on Sunday 13th April at the Labour Party Rooms, 446, Uxbridge Road, W12. For details of the work of the Briefing group contact the convenor Steve Cowan on 740 5483. At our last meeting we resolved to actively support two socialist comrades standing in Avonmore Ward in Fulham. With plenty of hard work the sizeable Tory majority can be turned round. For details of the Avonmore Ward Campaign contact 603 0371.

LONDON LABOUR PARTY AGM '86

Keith Lichman Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP
London Labour Party EC (1986)

The 1986 London Labour Party Conference was the most depressing I have been to for years. It wasn't just the unrelenting discomfort of the GLC Brixton Conference Centre, that memorial to good intentions married to inept management. It wasn't just the psychological disorientation produced by the disembodied electronic voices, howls and whines that continually assailed the hapless delegates over the public address system. It was the sheer irrelevance of socialism to the proceedings in the face of the wave upon wave of masturbatory realism heaped on us by the power brokers in the Party.

The mood of defeat could have been discerned from the final Conference Agenda by anyone with half an eye for entrails. Of the fifty odd seats on the London Labour Party Executive, barely ten were contested in the annual elections. With the demise of the GLC and the London Party's near complete indifference to the educational needs of the Capital, there could scarcely be a clearer statement of the marginalisation of the London Executive.

Arthur Latham

To oversee the last rites of this moribund organisation and ensure that no spark of socialism might accidentally rekindle the dying embers, the LCC right removed Arthur Latham as chair of the Party. Latham was not exactly a radical firebrand but he did have a sentimental commitment to socialism which might have proved troublesome. Not so Glenys Thornton his successor. Ms Thornton and her LCC colleagues managed to tidy up enough trade union (GMBTU, NGA, NUR, NUPE, TSSA, FTAT) and Co-op votes before the meeting to give Latham the shove (376,000 to 334,000).

One of the ironies of the Conference was that the NEC was so unsure of its support that it was unable to find a speaker to bring its fraternal greetings to the meeting. Every Regional Labour Party AGM gets an NEC speaker to beat the drum and wave the flag. It's part of the time honoured ritual of paternalism on which the Labour Party thrives. With the London Conference date set a year in advance, it is difficult to see how not one of the wise ones was able to keep a free half hour for their obedient servants in London.

Instead, each delegate was greeted by a four page leaflet from J. Larry Whitty explaining why it was important to wreck the Liverpool Labour Parties because of suggestions, the accuracy of which the NEC Investigation Team were "not in a position to judge". The leaflet concluded with the statement that the NEC would "take further proceedings against members, and these proceedings will be dealt with according to ... the principles of natural justice." In Kinnock's Labour Party, that appears to mean deciding on the verdict and sentence first and then hearing the appropriate evidence. The London Party gave its tacit support to this position when the Trade Union block votes smashed a motion opposing the witch hunt in Liverpool by 432,000 to 175,000. Perhaps next year, the NEC will send two speakers.

Lambeth

The other Council under immediate attack for resisting Tory policy was Lambeth. Conference gave is support to the Council after one of the livelier debates in which one of the Lambeth Councillors, who had eventually voted with the Tories to set a rate, was heard with little interruption. Her viewpoint that the bottom line was not to take actions which would result in a Labour Council being suspended by the courts and replacd by Tories was rejected perhaps because Tory policy is Tory policy whichever Party carries it out. No doubt this is uncharitable but I did notice that she was literally foaming at the mouth by the time she had finished her contribution.



Glenys Thornton

Rather than looking at the vote, however, a better indication of the mood of Conference was given by the collection taken for the Lambeth Fighting Fund for the councillors to be surcharged by the Courts on the following Wednesday. From a Conference of more than 500 delegates, only £130 was collected. There could be no more eloquent statement of the bankruptcy of London's socialism.

A feature of the Conference was the earnest stream of trade union delegates calling for support against the privatisation of their various industries and against Gvernment cuts and attacks. Equally earnest were the printers calling for help in their Wapping disaster. Naturally Conference gave them the support they demanded. And rightly so. But what was it worth? In the limited areas where the London Party actually has teeth the story was different.

A motion calling for local government decisions to be made "on the basis of principle and not [to] be constrained by a prior commitment to the concept of legality (or tacit agreement to recently introduced Tory legislation)" was rejected by the unions (533,000 to 113,000). A motion calling for the sale of council houses was carried (349,000 to 343,000).

It is precisely this elevation of legality as the highest principle of the labour movement by the Trade Union and Labour Party leaderships that has brought the print unions to their knees, that starved the miners into submission, that buried what existed of local government democracy. Tebbit put the writing on the wall with his Trade union law but the Labour and Trade Union leaderships looked submissively at their feet. At this Conference, it was pathetic to see the current victims pleading for help while those next in line wrung their hands in horror at the throught of their fate. *The movement is only as strong as its solidarity and the decisions on the witch-hunt and on local government and the rejection of black sections (massively by the block votes) showed that it has none.*

Education

In the Education debate, the London party voted itself into oblivion. A motion from the SEA and Dulwich formalised the London Party's indifference to education when it passed responsibility for education over to an entirely new and yet to be elected committee separate from the London Labour Party Executive. With the demise of the GLC, the ILEA is the only remaining cross-London elected authority, which, due to the absurdities of the GLC closure, will also have powers beyond education. The London Party, by its overwhelming vote, wants nothing to do with it. The Party's attitude was neatly summed up by the NUPE member who launched the ritual attack on "the middle class academics" (that means teachers) who usually speak in the education debate, before he eulogised ILEA's leader Frances Morrell, who presumably is not middle class and academic.

An apparent victory for the education workforce, namely the abolition of the compulsory movement of staff. was shown up in its real light later in the week when the ILEA's leader and deputy leader (Frances Morrell and

Continued on next page

The Strange Case of NUPE

This year's London Labour Party conference was scheduled to discuss once again the whole issue of black sections and what should be done about the unreasonable attitude of the Party's national leadership.

Just before conference, Islington North was 'summonsed' to regional office, along with five other CLPs, to discuss our attitude to the ILEA selections and black section participation. Along with the other CLPs, we had given the regional officials a fairly dusty answer. Islington North is unique (we believe) in that we also have a Turkish Section, which meets monthly and holds its meeting in Turkish. They also have two GMC delegates – so if everyone else was 'out of order', we must be doubly so! To date Larry Whitty has not taken up our invitation to come down and explain in Turkish the rules to these comrades.

Consequently, our constituency was looking to conference for a bit of support in this ongoing argument. One real area for backing was obviously NUPE, as the only large trades union committed to black sections both nationally and locally. Few CLPs have such a close relationship with NUPE. Our MP, Jeremy Corbyn, is sponsored by them and was a former NUPE full-time officer. Our Chair, Eddie Niles, was until recently branch secretary of Islington NUPE and the party agent, Keith Veness, is secretary of the Hackney Officers branch. We also have four other NUPE branches affiliated to the GMC.

CHRIS HUMPHREYS

Imagine our surprise therefore when we heard that the NUPE delegation intended to vote against the composite on black sections that was due to appear on the conference agenda. On challenging various members of the delegation, it appeared that the Regional Officer, Chris Humphreys, had advised against support on the grounds that one part of the composite may involve breaking the rules. This was certainly not our reading of the issue and we lobbied fairly strongly to get the delegation to reverse its stand. Pressure was also applied by various delegates involved in the Black Sections Steering Committee and eventually this paid off when we got the delegation to reconvene on Sunday and meet both of us along with Sharon Atkins, who is a member of NUPE besides being on the steering group and a leading activist in the fight for black sections. The mealy-mouthed compromise finally agreed with us was that NUPE would vote for the Streatham resolution that Sharon Atkins had come to conference with if it could be 'un-composited' from the rest – this at 3.00pm on the last day of conference!

This entailed a frantic dash to Conference Arrangements Committee, which was just happily packing up its papers and shutting-up shop. Despite the support of the Chair, Reg Taylor, we did not succeed in getting this onto the floor and the subsequent debate was once again a moral victory and a political defeat, with NUPE voting against both its national and regional policies and mouthing a few platitudes from the platform about supporting in principle but . . . !

However, certain things have clearly emerged:

1) Those CLPs that have found black sections as serious and necessary parts of our campaigning work are winning the argument. Sooner or later the Labour Party will agree with this and we urge the party nationally to recognise this and help rather than hinder the process.

2) NUPE members should see that delegations carry out policies agreed by the union. In many ways NUPE, being largely a shop-stewards based union, is the most democratic of all the large unions. We have more black members than any other union and have a campaigning record second to none. It is vital that this record is translated into votes by delegations representing the union.

3) Next year *all* socialists in London, and not just the Black Sections comrades, should see that every delegation is lobbied before conference to get agreement for this important issue.

Keith Veness & Eddie Niles (Islington North CLP)

Keith is a NUPE branch secretary and Eddie Niles has recently given up being a NUPE Branch Secretary.

Re-emergence of machine politics

It would be easy to put what happened at Conference down to the fact that the vision of the next General Election is beginning to cloud comrades' political perspectives. And it would be even easier to explain away the move to the right (not so much a drift, more the start of an avalanche in some quarters) as the usual cry for 'unity' (i.e. the left toeing the line) at the expense of policy which precedes every General Election.

But what happened at Regional Conference this year represents much more than that. The sad fact is that 1986 witnessed the re-emergence in a big way of 'machine politics' at GLLP Conference.

During Conference many friends on TU delegations complained that they themselves were finding it harder and harder to reconcile their union policies with their delegation voting.

Selling Council houses (what, no flats?) and using the receipts to build new rented stock (one new home for every three traded in?) – a policy which does not even aim to prevent Tory Councils such as Ealing from operating their appalling move-to-buy scheme and keeping Council housing empty – was carried. Meanwhile the campaigning motion was defeated simply because Islington North accepted the amendments calling for no expulsions of socialists from the Party! Needless to say the emergency motion opposing the inquiry into Liverpool DLP was a no-hoper from the start (going down by a 2½ to one margin).

Along with the variations to voting patterns came the subtle alterations here and there in the style of the conduct of business. 'That woman at the back', called during the Local Government debate just happens to be Janet Boston – 'unsurcharged Lambeth councillor' and proud of it! And a quick word with the Chair managed to get the right speaker called from the right TU delegation at the right time.

Still, it all fits in with the new 5-year plan: 1 year on, 5 years backwards. . . .

Kevin Veness
Association of London LGCs and London Regional Executive member

London AGM (CONTINUED)

Ruth Gee) mounted a frontal attack on the teachers in dispute over pay and conditions.

In a meeting of the ILEA Schools Subcommittee, which took place the week after the Conference, (and which, to the surprise of some Subcommittee members, began half an hour earlier than scheduled!) Morrell and Gee lined the ILEA up with the most strident of the Tory authorities attacking the teachers by rushing through a resolution declaring that covering for absent colleagues was a contractual duty and that in schools where teachers have been taking 20 minute guerilla strikes and headteachers have sent pupils home for whole sessions, teachers' pay would be deducted for the entire period of schooling lost, even though teachers were available for work.

Some Subcommittee members arrived 15 minutes before the originally scheduled start of the meeting to learn that the motion, of which they had been given no notice, had already been passed. The Labour group, which had taken the decision the day before, had been called at less than 24 hours notice and had been inquorate. There could scarcely be a decision more calculated to bring disruption and chaos into schools in the run up to the May ILEA elections. In summary, the London Labour Party's commitment to socialism is confined to far away places and areas over which it has no influence. Each section of the movement is to be allowed to fight and lose its battles alone and our sympathy may just be extended to the passing of a resolution provided the press aren't listening and that it contains a healthy dose of realism. In the coldest winter in living memory, realism for hundreds of the old and needy, Labour's natural supporters, meant death from hypothermia. It was not, as the Party Leadership argues, bad management; it was bloody murder.

ILEA: NEW LABOUR GROUP

Steven Cowan

There will be many new members of the ILEA Labour Group after May 8th Briefing will be taking a close interest in the formation of the new ILEA Labour Group as well as its work. It will after all be the largest unit of local government in the country and will continue to have a significant effect upon and within the national education debate.

As a beginning we are focussing upon some of the new faces who will be leading the campaign for a Labour ILEA.

JUNE WARD



She has been selected to fight the Hackney South Constituency which, like Tower Hamlets now has a major threat to Labour in the form of a rising Liberal base. 'As the only directly elected London-wide body the ILEA has a crucial role in lobbying for the rights of local government.' On general policy matters June holds forthright opinions. 'A Labour ILEA must become a major force within the Labour Party itself to ensure the inclusion in the next manifesto of a truly Socialist programme.'

SCRAPE NTSHONA

Scrape is an exiled South African whose personal struggle for freedom of black South Africans has profoundly affected the course of his life. He is standing for the Lewisham West Constituency which is another seat Labour must win from the Tories. He is a retired teacher. 'I hope to become involved in Staff and Policy matters because those are the two key areas where one can combat inequality due to class, sex and ethnic origin.'

VANESSA COOPER

Vanessa has been selected by Putney which is one of the Tory held parliamentary constituencies which Labour have to win in order to form a majority on the ILEA. Vanessa is a part time teacher and NUT member with particular interests in Special Education and Anti-Sexism.

STEPHEN BENN

Stephen has been selected to fight Hackney North, one of Labour's strongholds. For the past five years he has been a co-opted member of the ILEA Labour Group and has played a central role in the campaigns to save the GLC and ILEA. During this period Stephen has been one of a minority who have always and consistently voted for regional policy. His election on May 8th will undoubtedly strengthen the Socialist presence within the Labour Group.

PETE WILLSMAN

Pete is a leading member of the Campaign For Labour Party Democracy. He has been selected to fight the Woolwich Constituency which is currently held at Parliamentary level by defector John Cartwright. When interviewed by BRIEFING Pete said, 'I want to see greater accountability of the Labour Group to the Party, in particular there should be a properly constituted District Labour Party that directly relates to the ILEA. This should be made up of delegates from CLP's, Trade Unions and other affiliates.'

IRMA CRITCHLOW



Irma is one of the Labour Group on Lambeth council who have suffered the attentions of political judges. In the past two years Irma has also been a co-opted Member onto several important ILEA Sub Committees. Her stand on maintaining appropriate levels of funding to meet perceived needs within the community is exemplary and all BRIEFING readers will salute the political and personal courage she has shown. Irma has been selected for Vauxhall Constituency.

HOLDING ILEA TO ACCOUNT

By Mike Peters
London SEA

Resolution passed at GLLP AGM:

"This Annual Meeting deplores the way in whch the ILEA manifesto was drafted without the participation of Constituency Labour Parties, Trade Unions, affiliated organisations and other interest groups. All future manifesto documents should go through a previously laid down procedure of drafting and consultation to ensure maximum democratic participation and support. That procedure should be organised by a newly constituted commitee made up of delegates from all inner London CLPs, trade unions and other affiliates. This committee would also monitor the implementation of the manifesto and would be responsible for relations between Labour Parties, Trade Unions, affiliates and the Labour Group."

Socialist Educational Association/Dulwich CLP

With the demise of the GLC, its orphan now moves centre stage, and the London Labour Party must move with it. The resolution passed at the AGM seeks to widen the debate in the London Labour movement, and to do so in such a way so as to make sure that the fiasco of the November conference is never repeated.

The Regional Executive concedes that a new structure is needed for ILEA, but sought to remit this resolution so that they can make sure that a centralised ILEA evolved after the consultative process was complete. The Regional Executive are now bound by the AGM decision to produce a structure which guarantees maximum participation.

There is no easy answer to this, although the two leading contenders are the formation of an Inner London Local Government Committee and an Inner London District Labour Party.

LGC or DLP?

The outcome of an LGC structure would be a group, meeting monthly , dominated by the ILEA Labour Group, and other representatives on the LGC becoming enmeshed in the new ILEA 'club' — accountability would in effect approach zero.

The crucial difference between the DLP and LGC would be the annual conference. The conference should elect the leader and deputy leader of the Labour Group along with its Executive Committee to conduct monthly business. Another vital feature would be the open discussion of policy rather than decision making behind closed doors, mason style.

If you want a mechanism that gives the Left a voice in what will be a right dominated Labour Group then your support for a conference based ILEA DLP is essential.

Impressions

Although I argue for a conference based model for the ILEA, the 19th AGM was not a good advertisement for it. For all intents and purposes the AGM was a disaster for mind and ears. During the stampede rightwards in the rhetoric of realism I witnessed fundamental principles of socialism cast aside.

When I took a head count on Saturday afternoon there were six black delegates in the hall. That was probably the smallest concentration of black people anywhere in Brixton that day. As expected the largely white meeting refused to support the basic right of black comrades to organise and be recognised if we so wish.

Adherence to rhetoric and abandonment of positive practice must not be tolerated.

Even though severl disastrous decisions were taken the fact that they were taken in public means that those comrades can be held to account. This is the essence of democratic socialism.

BRIEFING interviews Merle Amory

Merle Amory was elected leader of Brent Labour Group on February 10th. Helga Gladbaum, a Labour candidate for Brent in the May elections, interviewed her for Briefing.

HG: Merle, you have recently been elected unopposed to be leader of the Brent Labour Group. How do you explain this unanimous election of yourself as leader?

Merle: Well, I think I have to be realistic and say that to some people it may have seemed the only course of action because I've been Deputy Leader and there was no other candidate who immediately presented himself, but I would like to think that there was also a feeling within the party that it was time to have a leader that reflected a different image, a more representative image of the way the party was leading, i.e. towards encouraging greater representation of women and black people.

HG: I know that you are aware of a fairly strong commitment amongst a certain group of the Labour Party for a joint leadership. How do you feel about that?

Merle: I think the principle of a collective leadership is a good one. What needs to be clarified is what exactly is meant by collective leadership. The way I would hope it would work is to try to have regular meetings and to make sure discussions take place on all the major issues and to feed back that information to the party. It's been a difficult time since the change of leadership because the major issue has been the budget and that's been one of the most difficult issues because of the lack of clear information and guidance as far as the amounts of money available to the council is concerned. It was felt that there was no point and that it would not be to the Labour Party's advantage to put forward a budget package, but all these discussions have taken place within the Labour Group and there hasn't been very much discussion within the party. I don't envisage that that would be the way we would operate in future if I were to be leader after May and we have already agreed that we would have regular leadership reports not just to Labour Group members but also to the party. So I think the collective leadership is important, it offers both protection for the individual, support for the individual and proper accountability as far as the Group and the party is concerned.

HG: Casting our minds into the future then, the composition of the Labour Group after the May election will be radically altered. We have 16 women candidates in safe and marginal Labour seats and 24 black candidates, some of whom are also women. How do you think this new composition is going to affect Group policy?

Merle: I hope that it will lead to a more realistic approach to policies which affect women and black people in the community. I think in the past it has very much been black men with good intentions who determined policies that they felt would help the black community and that hasn't always been effective and the policies haven't always reflected the needs and the wishes and the best interests of the black community and of women in the community. So I hope that having more people with experience of the difficulties and the disadvantages faced by women and black people will enable us to formulate more meaningful policies which would make more effective use of resources and the more rapid improvement of the quality of life for women and black people in the community. I hope also that we will maintain the relationship that exists, or rather that those people coming onto the group would continue to work both within the party and within the party's structure like the women's sections, the women's council, the black section and form that kind of bridge between the Party and the Labour Group. We must make it more accountable and accessible.



Merle Amory

HG: Both of us are, of course, quite confident that Labour is going to win in May. What we shall inherit from the Tory/Liberal administration is their set rate and the budget. We also have the abolition of the GLC and the subsequent cuts in grants. How do you think the new Labour administration is going to protect the needs of the community within those given restraints?

Merle: At this stage the position is even more difficult, because we still don't know to what extent the assumptions made in determining the budget that were set by the Tories and Liberals are accurate and how much money there will be next year and whether there will be a shortfall. It's quite possible that they have assumed that too much money would be returned to Brent after the abolition of the GLC and we would have a shortfall. I think that's going to be a very difficult problem and I don't think the Group is going to accept any suggestions that we are going to make cuts and we will have to find a way of using the resources that exist to ensure that our priorities are retained. I think one thing we've got to do is to have full discussions within the party because what we do in this coming year's budget will influence what will happen in subsequent years' budgets, and so we can't afford to get it wrong this time. I think we will probably be able to get through by redistributing resources within the council and I don't mean getting rid of jobs in any sector but when we are working to someone else's budget we've got to accept that their priorities were not our priorities and the needs of the community must come first. As far as the voluntary organisations are concerned, there is money in the budget in theory for all of those organisations for the next year. The plan of the Tories and Liberals is to fund them for six months and then to determine which ones would continue to receive funding and which ones' grants would be cut, so if we get in we will ensure that all the organisations will be secure for the rest of the year and hopefully we will be able to continue in subsequent years, but I am under no illusions that there is a very difficult task ahead of us. We could end up with a deficit budget and then the party has got to decide, because it's a major policy issue, how we deal with that.

HG: I'm sure we are going to take certain lessons from the events in Lambeth and Liverpool as far as budgeting and rate-setting is concerned. I'd like to ask you, Merle, what you think of the purge of members of Militant from the Labour Party?

Merle: I think 'foolish' is not a strong enough word. I think one thing

we can't afford to do in the Labour Party is to allow outside forces to determine our actions. Once they've started on this course of action, then demands will be made that they challenge Militant elsewhere and once Militant in Liverpool has been dealt with there are other left groupings within the party which will come under scrutiny. I think that if you walk onto the streets and talk to people about the Labour Party and what they consider to be the main problem in the Labour Party, they won't say 'Militant Tendency', they'll say that the Labour Party hasn't delivered. So that's what we've got to tackle first.

I would challenge Militant on their disgraceful record in terms of the failure to employ black people and use them in their council structure as officers, but that kind of argument can take place within the Labour Party and I see no justification for moving to expel Militant or anyone else, because I think it goes against the whole principle of the Labour Party being a broad church.

HG: There is, of course, a rift between the left and the right in the Labour Party, both locally and nationally. If we compare the broad church to a spectrum of political opinions and views, where on that spectrum would you put yourself?

Merle: Well, I would put myself firmly on the left, but I'm not sure where other people would put me. I don't think my views have changed since I've been in the Council. Perhaps people had a tendency not to listen to my views in the past, but I still feel that I project an image which is in keeping with the general principles of the left. You see what I think is dangerous is if we are going to have political disagreements on individual issues and that spills over and colours the judgement about a person's political perspective in total. I think we have to recognise that within the left, between left and right and within the right there are going to be differences on various political issues. I would hope that we are going to get back to a situation when those differences could be treated as differences and not be used to condemn one another.

HG: Merle, although we are very confident that we are going to have a majority on the Council this coming May, we've had, over the last two and a half years, a Tory/Liberal coalition. I would call it a liaison of opportunism. Can you ever envisage a situation where you would recommend to the Labour Group to enter into such a coalition?

Merle: No, under no circumstances. I was quite clear in 1983 when we were on the verge of losing control and preliminary discussions took place with the Liberals, that under no circumstances should we contemplate that and the actions of the Liberals over the last two and a half years have only served to reinforce my view that we cannot trust any other political party. We cannot allow ourselves to be dependent on any other political party to implement our policies. We can't compromise our principles to secure power because what that does is to weaken us. Your strength is considerably weakened if you have to rely on someone else whose relationship with you is purely opportunistic. There is no common bond of commitment between the Labour Party and the Liberals. We don't have the same aims and objectives and I don't see that we can work together to our satisfaction. I think it would be disastrous to contemplate it.

HG: Merle, your election to the leadership as a black woman conveys to the community strong symbolic messages, both to the black community and to women in general. Do you ever experience a conflict within yourself between these two identities, on the one hand being black and on the other being a woman? And if you do experience a conflict how do you resolve it?

Merle: I'm not sure that I experience conflict because I think there are times when the fact that I am black is more relevant and important than the fact that I am a woman. And similarly there are times when my being a woman is more relevant than the fact that I am black. It depends very much on the pressure that I am under, the circumstances that I am faced with and I feel that I have been able to cope with it. I am not so sure that other people feel that I have been able to cope with it and I have come into criticism that I am putting the Labour Party before the black community or responding more to women's issues rather than to black issues, and I don't accept any of that. I do face a problem, I think, all black women councillors will face a similar problem. Whilst racism exists, both within the Labour Party and in the wider community we have a responsibility to support our black brothers and challenging that racism, but on the other hand we also have to recognise that as black women we face additional oppression to which our black brothers sometimes contribute and there is no hard and fast way of dealing with that.

HG: Merle, I watched you last night giving your leadership speech in the council chamber. There was an awful lot of barracking you got from the Tory side. It obviously put tremendous pressure on you. Do you think that women are equally well equipped as men or maybe better equippped than men to cope with pressures like that?

Merle: I think women's experience of life is far more pressurised in some instances than men's, because of the fact that women quite often have to cope with the internal pressures of the home as well as struggling to survive outside, to build a career and simply survive in the work place and so I think we are able to take pressures. I think our difficulties are that we haven't been exposed to certain positions with certain kinds of pressure and I think what happened at the Council Meeting was an attempt to break my spirit. I've had it before, on my very first council meeting I got an enormous amount of barracking. I think it is an example of the way people feel threatened, not by me personally but by what I represent, which is the changing nature of local government, the fact that more women, more black women, more people like me actually say 'I have a contribution to make. I'm not you, I want to make that contribution myself. I want to tell you what the views and the needs of the community are, as I perceive them, either as a woman or as a black person'. And, of course, if you look at yesterday's meeting, with the exception of a couple of racist and hostile women, it was mainly the men who were barracking and heckling me. And what that serves to do, just like the negative press coverage, it serves to give me more strength, because every time I come across barracking or hostile publicity, I get letters and phone calls from people who offer me support and that enables me to go on.

HG: Merle, a final question then. You have been a councillor since the age of 23. You've had quite a meteoric rise to the leadership of Brent Labour Group and quite probably leader of Brent Council, the obvious question is where will Merle Amory go from here?

Merle: I think Merle Amory will be quite happy to stay in Brent and perhaps become Leader of Brent Council. I am not looking any further than this at the moment because there is so much that needs to be done in Brent and given the complexion of the next group it will be an exciting time and I am quite looking forward to being able to put into action some of the policies that we have been talking about for the past three or four years.

Equal opportunities and the Labour Party

The Labour Party has recently made utterances about being committed to equal opportunities, but nowhere is the absence of equal opportunities more noticeable than in the area of the selection of candidates for parliament.

I speak from recent personal experience, and also as someone who is involved in so-called 'equal opportunities' at the GLC, and vice-chair of the Labour Party Black Sections. I have now attended three selection procedures, two in London and one in Nottingham. On no occasion did there appear to be any coherent approach to selection. What struck me on each occasion, was the expressed desire by each of the CLPs to ensure that an adequate number of black candidates, and women candidates are shortlisted, but no apparent thought to what qualities these candidates should possess, other then being black and/or female. As a black woman I do not think this is good enough, and can only encourage and reinforce a tokenistic approach to selection.

I therefore propose the following, but would preface it with the rider that each CLP should be entirely free to draw up its own criteria of who they want to represent them in parliament, or indeed in the Local Council.

1. The Ward should draw a person specification, of 6 or 7 qualities and attributes candidates should possess, such as demonstrated commitment to the working class.
2. The specification could then be sent out to all available candidates, women and men, black and white, and only those who reply and meet the agreed criteria should be interviewed.
3. Each ward/branch number should complete a form recording candidates' answers to each of the agreed questions, and every candidate should be asked questions that cover the same ground.

In this way it should be possible to assess candidates on objective criteria, as opposed to the current practice of whim. No-one who has undergone the existing selection procedures can pretend that equal opportunities for women and black people are really enhanced by measuring candidates against ideals more suitable for white middle class men.

There appears to be quite a lot of double standards being operated wherein candidates are judged on performance and presentation, rather than policies and commitment. Many black people, and working class white people, will not perform well against these criteria.

The sooner there is a rational approach to selection more in line with job interviews, the better as far as I'm concerned.

Linda Bellos
Vice Chair
Black Sections of the Labour Party

MONITORING THE POLICE

The GLC is going and its Police Committee, and its funding for monitoring, is going with it. The incidence of the casual beating up of members of the public is increasing and is likely to continue increasing. The cases of Mrs Lorna Lucas and the boys in Holloway Road are the thin slice of a worryingly large cake.

Criminologist John Young recently surveyed 2,000 Islington residents and found mistrust and fear of the police endemic. Over 200 had personally had bad experiences with the police. Senior management in the Metropolitan Police have now begun to recognise that something is going to have to be done about this. They've been trying to work out a strategy but they haven't come up with an answer to it. Part of the problem is the accountability question. Question: If power respects nothing but power then who do the Met have to respect? Not the community, not the individual citizens, nor local Police Committees. The Home Secretary (whose constituency is in Oxfordshire) represents the interests of seven million people with regard to the Met. Douglas Hurd has, in effect, admitted that he neither has, nor desires, effective control of the force. In a letter to Labour MP Chris Smith (Islington South/ Finsbury) Hurd's reaction to the attack is full of "shocking incident", "utterly condemn", "deplorable disgrace". The crucial part of his letter however is: "I am forced to conclude that no further enquiry or investigation could lead anywhere". He admits without qualification that the present police self-detection system does not work.

The police in Britain's other major cities are also effectively independent, as Margaret Symey, Head of Liverpool's Police Committee avers: "The police are out of democratic control. They have this old code of values that says it's right to be honest, it's right to work, it's wrong to be unemployed. These unemployed are by definition criminal, morally if not legally, and therefore you approach them as criminals."

There is an argument which says that if one attacks the police they close ranks, crawl under the tortoise shell, and admonish people for daring the criticise them. Criticism is regarded as an overt attack, as the Police Federation's chairman, Leslie Curtis exemplified in his reply to a Guardian editorial:

"To suggest that we condone criminal behaviour by police officers is an outrageous allegation, unsupported by a shred of evidence. From now on, no police officer who shares your concern about the very real problems of police complaints and relations with the public need delude himself that you are motivated by anything but a burning hatred of the British police. Well done!"

Those who believe that all parts of our society should be democratically accountable ask what can effectively be done in the short term, i.e. before the next general election? It is likely that cases of random police violence will almost certainly increase, despite the genuine goodwill and good conscience of many individual police officers. Police attitudes and behaviour are institutional, not personal. For the time being monitoring is the best response. The informal influence of monitoring is considerable. Monitoring provides alternative accounts of events, important as local papers tend to present police viewpoints as 'official facts'. Monitoring should not be seen as an alternative to reform but as a springboard for future reform and an effective way of keeping the police under any real kind of scrutiny.

Bill McCoid

Tenants' victory

A hundred short-life tenants scored a spectacular victory against Camden Council on March 3 in the High Court.

The council failed to get an eviction order to remove occupants of Grays Inn Buildings, Holborn, who have been living there up to 7 years. Residents are pleased with the news, as renovation plans for the flats can only now go ahead with the tenants' agreement to move to alternative accommodation.

Up to this point, Camden has refused to accept any obligation to rehouse the residents, members of Short Life Community Housing, an organisation with over 1000 members living in non-secure, often substandard accommodation, usually managed on behalf of the Council.

Paul George, speaking as a resident of Grays Inn Buildings who first moved there in 1978, as one of the squatters rehoused from the famous Huntley Street squat, said "We will be going to the Council to begin discussions on the future of the Buildings, and the homelessness crisis in the borough. We want to show Camden they DO have a role to play in ensuring that no-one loses their homes through redevelopment plans and that we are prepared to help in the fight for more Government resources to tackle the housing crisis. Evictions can never solve the crisis and only cause homelessness".

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP

LONDON LETTER

BLOODY LIES

Dear Comrade,

Someone once said that there were 'lies' and 'damn lies'. I add a further epithet, 'bloody lies'. I refer to the article (your issue of March 1986) with the headline, 'Dagenham CLP Tries to Stifle Criticism', written by an unnamed person.

The facts are very different. One of our members, Mike McKeever, wrote a scurrilous article in *Briefing* (December issue), with the headline, 'Mrs Thatcher's Friends in Barking & Dagenham'. A Dagenham member complained, stating that the article contained a series of untruths. The matter was raised at a General Committee meeting, and it was unanimously agreed to refer the complaint to the Executive Committee. I gave a general invitation to all delegates to attend the EC.

At the following Executive meeting, we received a telephone message from Comrade McKeever, stating that he was unable to attend, we therefore postponed discussion until the next EC meeting.

At that meeting, on 6th February 1986, I invited Mike to answer the accusation that his article had brought the Dagenham CLP in disrepute. At the start, I made it clear that there would not be any time limit to speeches and that Mike could intervene whenever he felt necessary, and he took full advantage, by intervening on a number of occasions. Almost Mike's first words contained an apology for writing the article in *Briefing*, rather than first bringing the matter to the General Committee, of which he is a delegate. The general discussion took about two hours and at the end Mike McKeever wound up. He again repeated his apology. Several members wanted a resolution moved and, bearing in mind how the discussion had gone, the views of members as well as the statements made by Mike, I moved that we accept Mike's apology, that he agreed that matters concerning the local Party should be, in the first instance, raised within the Party itself. I am glad to say that he accepted the terms of the resolution without any reservation. On a vote, only three were against. One because she did not feel Mike had done anything wrong, and the other two because they wanted a move towards expulsion. Whilst strongly opposing any move toward expulsion, I did point out that if Mike broke his word, there would certainly be moves in that direction.

I have been an active member of the Dagenham CLP for about 36 years and I cannot recall a single expulsion from the Dagenham Party, nor can I recall a request for an expulsion and I do not think that we are likely to start now.

One thing that I do not understand, is the statement in the March *Briefing* article, that Mike McKeever is seeking advice on his constitutional position, considering that he not only volunteered his apology, but accepted the resolution without any reservation. It is most puzzling.

Yours fraternally,

Harry Kay
Chair, Dagenham CLP

Next London Editorial: Monday 21st April at 6.30pm at County Hall.

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NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 26 APRIL 1986

DEFIANT LIVERPOOL!



John Chapman

Lobby of the NEC on 26th February

Some 400 party members met in Liverpool on 6th March to respond to the fines and disqualifications imposed on our 48 councillors. In the face of the courts carrying out their class tasks in the predictably ruthless way the Party rank and file will stand firm in defence of our representatives.

The fighting defiance of the party members is in sharp contrast to the role of the NEC who have concentrated on their kangaroo courts and witch-hunting while Liverpool's Labour councillors have been fighting for their political lives.

We know the real crime we have been found guilty of by Kinnock and co is trying to take on the Tories. It is our actions in acting independently from the bureaucrats in both the party and the trade union leaderships which terrifies the NEC.

The only political vision which they can offer is a crushed and beaten labour movement waiting cowering for the return of a Labour government.

The NEC might hope that by selling Liverpool down the river their dreams of electoral success for their "new realism" will be fulfilled.

They will have to reassess. The Liverpool labour movement has not been crushed by the hammer blows of recession. We will not be stopped by the flea-bites of short-sighted, opportunistic and reactionary politicians.

Kevin Feintuck,
(Delegate to Liverpool DLP)

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

AUDREY WISE—WHERE I STAND ON LIVERPOOL

Graham Bash for *Briefing* interviewed Audrey Wise, co-author with Margaret Beckett of the Minority Report on the Investigation into Liverpool District Labour Party.

Briefing: *Please explain the main points in the Minority Report.*
Audrey Wise: The remit of the Inquiry was to look into the "procedures and practices of Liverpool Distict Labour Party". In our report, we have shown that it was possible to carry out our remit to find instances where rules have been breached, and to make suggestions for improvements, without at any stage the question of expulsions of any members being necessary or even relevant.

B: There was lots of talk about intimidation. What evidence was produced?
AW: Some people interviewed said they felt intimidated. Others said they didn't and that there were no signs of it. This is a subjective question. After all, some people felt the experience of the Inquiry itself intimidating. We felt that the format of meetings in Liverpool could lead to accusations of intimidation. After September 5th, delegate meetings were abandoned and replaced by aggregate meetings. The problem was that some people knew of the aggregate meetings, and others didn't. I'm not saying this was intentional but the result was detrimental.

But there has been an attempt to give the impression that everyone in the Liverpool DLP was living in fear. This allegation is *not* well founded.

B: There were also attempts to imply that the Left increased its power on the DLP by over-affiliating union votes. What evidence was there for this? And how does Liverpool compare with other DLPs, such as Coventry for example, where the right is renowned for packing meetings with union delegates?
AW: Firstly, I welcome a large trade union representation, and am pleased when trade union delegates attend Labour Party meetings. It is true that in several areas, there are questionable practices. The worst is where trade unions appoint as delegates people with no connection with the relevant trade. *It must be emphasised there were no instances of this in Liverpool.* By the way, the NEC has said that it is for the unions to say whether the delegate is properly qualified.

Liverpool in this respect is superior to other DLPs. But in Liverpool, the two largest unions affiliated via the region in a block and it may have led to over-affiliation. But this does happen in other areas and was not the fault of the DLP.

B: What specific conclusions did you come to on expulsions?
AW: Expulsions cannot be justified from the conduct of the DLP. It is ludicrous to jump to expulsions from the sort of faults we found. If you judge the faults even severely, none of them justified expulsions. At worst, in some instances the Liverpool Party should be told they have misinterpreted rules.

There were two grounds for expulsion in the majority report:
a) to see which breaches of rules justified action;
b) to find which of the listed individuals should have action taken against them, because of "membership" of Militant.

The alleged breaches of rule are ludicrous. One is that Liverpool DLP allowed affiliations from workplace branches. It is a fact that workplace branches are not entitled in the Constitution to affiliate to DLP. But this omission is an oversight. In Liverpool, only two workplace branches affiliated to the District Party, and we got no complaints about this from any members in Liverpool.

Another breach of rule is that there were two vice-chairs whereas only one is provided for in the constitution. This is farcical. Lots of parties have more vice-chairs than they're really entitled to. What's happening is that the allegations are so weak, they're having to try to disguise this by increasing the number of allegations.



Labour Party Photograph Library

There are by the way five officers of the DLP, yet only three have been held responsible for the alleged breaches of rule. What links the three is that they are supporters of Militant, whereas the other two – Eddie Loyden (vice-chair) and John Hamilton (treasurer) – are not.

B: *There's a lot of criticism of you that you supported the inquiry into Liverpool when it was absolutely obvious, given the balance of forces on the NEC, that the inquiry would lead to expulsions. How do you answer these criticisms?*

AW: At the November NEC which set up the inquiry, emergency resolutions and documents were placed on the table without notice. The issue was not even due to be raised on the agenda. The first version of the resolution from David Blunkett asked for the General Secretary to make an assessment and to report further. Then Tom Sawyer moved an amendment calling for an examination by the General Secretary and six members of the NEC. Blunkett accepted the amendment. Eric Heffer moved a further amendment to delete all references to an examination. I voted for Eric's amendment. But I said I was sufficiently worried by the complaints to feel we ought to look into the situation I would have supported Blunkett's original unamended resolution.

Eric Heffer's amendment, to oppose any examination, was defeated. I was then faced with either the Blunkett resolution as amended by Sawyer, or with nothing at all. So I voted for it because of the reference to "the procedures and practices of Liverpool District Labour Party".

BRIEFING

THE 'CRIMES' OF MILITANT

Massive corruption, abuse of power, illegality and fraud – these were the kinds of findings which Neil Kinnock and the media had led us to expect from the NEC's inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party. In the event, not one charge of substance has been upheld. And so to justify all the furore, the expulsions and the wholesale closing down of the District Party, the NEC in its inquiry report was reduced to seizing upon matters of an entirely different nature: minor procedural shortcomings of a kind which a thorough enough search could unearth from time to time in almost any Labour Party body in the country.

Now the District Party in Liverpool – a body which organises in a similar way to other parties, particularly in the North of England – has been closed down. The involvement of trade unions in any future party organisation in Liverpool is in doubt. Yet in relation to Dudley East, where we have real evidence of the packing of the General Committee, no outcry is to be heard. There, there has been a 500% increase in trade union delegations to the GC! But this the NEC will no doubt consider quite constitutional, since it has all been organised in a desperate attempt to save the sitting MP.

Ever since Labour Party conference 1985, Kinnock, Hattersley and their like have been targetting Derek Hatton, Tony Mulhearn and other leading – and effective – supporters of Militant. Bankrupt in terms of ideas, our leaders are reduced to the crudest organisational measures in their attempts to root out socialists from the party. Five Liverpool councillors – some of whom are up for re-election in May – are facing expulsion. Clearly the NEC is prepared to hand over control of Liverpool Council to the Liberal/Tory Alliance on a plate. The sixteen party members facing expulsion haven't even been allowed to see the evidence against them!

We urge all readers, supporters and party organisations – whatever our differences with Militant supporters on numerous issues - to unite in solidarity with them and work to undo the damage being inflicted upon the Labour Party in Liverpool and far beyond.

HELP US TRANSFORM BRIEFING

Briefing will be undergoing some major changes over the next few months. These reflect developments which have occurred in a number of socialist papers and tendencies in the period of crisis and realignment resulting from the end of the miners' strike. The result, hopefully, should be a substantial augmentation of *Briefing*'s organisational and political strength, putting us in a very strong position from which to launch a fightback against the recent rightward lurch of the party leadership.

The changes will affect not only the style, content and (possibly) frequency of publication of *Briefing*. They should also affect the structure of the organisation which makes possible the publication and distribution of the paper. Hopefully, the result will be a structure of editorial control and an organisational network even more open, pluralist, democratic and accountable than that which has served us in the past. Readers should rest assured, however, that *Briefing* will remain *Briefing*. No incoming group or tendency is going to "take us over". Our traditional profile, identity and methods of working within the movement will continue to provide the foundations on which improvements are made. A working conference is being held on May 10th in London to decide upon the changes; a fairly wide spectrum of groupings and individuals from single issue campaigns, the trade unions and from the genuine left of the Labour Party will be participating.

Labour Briefing Supporters
Annual Conference
Saturday May 10
London

All supporters invited to AGM discussion: the fight back against the Tories; organising the left in the labour movement; the fight for women's, black people's, lesbian and gay liberation; the way forward for Briefing.
Details will be sent to all paid up 1986 Briefing supporters: contact 162, Millfields Rd, London E5.

B: But wasn't it obvious that the right wing were out to get the Militant? Weren't you helping them?

AW: I know that if I was a delegate to the DLP, and I wasn't advised of a crucial meeting — and this was one allegation — I would want it looked into. At the NEC, there were three patterns of voting:

(1) those who voted against Eric Heffer all the way — and these included Margaret Beckett, and would have included Eric Clarke had he not had to leave the NEC;

(2) those like myself and Jo Richardson who wanted Eric Heffer's amendment followed by a more cautious look into Liverpool. Like me, Jo voted for the Blunkett/Sawyer resolution and she voted the same way as me for the same reasons;

(3) the five who voted for Heffer and against the substantive resolution: Benn, Heffer, Maynard, Skinner and Curran.

Then there came the question of who should be on the enquiry. Six names were proposed without anybody from the CLP section, and containing only people who opposed Eric Heffer's amendment. There was a long wrangle. Attempts were made to put Heffer on, unsuccessfully. Eventually I got on, and the number on the enquiry was increased to 8.

I was determined to ensure that the remit was carried out, and to show that it was possible to carry out the resolution in a proper way. *We voted for the words on paper, not for a witch hunt.*

I understand the criticisms. I understand why people voted against the Blunkett/Sawyer resolution. I want people to understand why I voted the way I did. I acted with integrity, and *my vote does not herald any change in my political position.*

B: Following your vote, it looked as if you were being associated with the "soft left" group around Sawyer and Blunkett. What is your attitude to these people?

AW: There is no soft left grouping. My complaint is that the Left is fragmented. I'm not willing to say Blunkett is not on the Left, but I find his vote at the last NEC incomprehensible especially since before the vote on the Majority Report, he moved an amendment deleting reference to the Militant, to the list of names and to expulsions. That was defeated 18 to 11. Then he voted for the Report. He also told me he would have voted for the Minority Report, if it had been taken first.

B: Finally, since the NEC, the legal appeals of Lambeth and Liverpool Councils were defeated and Cunningham immediately promised there would be no retrospective reimbursement of Councillors. What is your reaction?

AW: Deplorable. The Court decision stands everything on its head. Here are people trying to defend their citizens. In the Minority Report, we refered to Liverpool Council's genuine endeavours to stick to their manifesto commitments. Cunningham exceeded his remit. It's for the Party to decide its policy, not Cunningham. And it did at Conference last year. If he thinks it gains us support, he's wrong. People admire loyalty. To see Cunningham attack Councillors in struggle is not a pretty sight.

WITCH-HUNTING IN WALES

Three Militant supporters recently expelled from Cardiff South CLP have now been reinstated. While this certainly represents a victory for the campaign against expulsions, it is not the result of a change of heart on the part of the right wing majority in Cardiff South. The three, Diane Mitchell, Dave Bartlett and Andy Price, have been reinstated because serious questions were raised regarding the unconstitutional manner in which they were expelled. There is much speculation in South Wales that the constituency might begin the expulsion process again, this time ensuring that 'proper procedures' are followed.

The Executive of Labour Party Wales is going ahead with its enquiry into the LPYS and continues to witch-hunt two of its members: Chris Peace and Tony Wedlake. The executive had tried to exclude them from its meetings following their election at last years L.P. Wales conference, and had then suspended themselves rather than meet with Chris and Tony present. Having been told repeatedly and firmly by national party officials that their actions were unconstitutional, they then decided to try to get the NEC to expel Chris and Tony directly irrespective of the wishes of their constituencies. The two CLPs concerned, Cardiff Central and Cardiff West, have never been consulted.

DOSSIER OF 'EVIDENCE'

A special witch-hunting sub-committee of the Wales executive has compiled a dossier of 'evidence' against Chris and Tony which includes such damning facts as Chris having been seen selling Militant outside Labour Party meetings (they've even gone to the trouble of taking photographs to prove it!). On the basis of this 'evidence' the Appeals and Mediation sub-committee of the NEC has recommended that these two comrades be expelled – without giving them the chance to defend themselves (which they had been assured they would have).

At the meeting at which it decided to expel Militant supporters in Liverpool, the NEC also found the time to decide to hold a disciplinary hearing with a view to expelling Chris and Tony. They will then be allowed to put their own case and have now been supplied with the 'evidence' against them. But there are fears that these hearings will merely rubber-stamp the recommendation of the Appeals and Mediation sub-committee. If this happens it will be very bad news for the left in general, especially in Wales.

In the first place it would represent a stepping-up of the witch-hunt by the party leadership. While expulsions are now widespread, they are mostly being carried out by CLPs. True, the NEC expelled members of the Militant editorial board and now Liverpool Militant supporters, but the case against Chris and Tony is of a different order. They are ordinary rank and file militant supporters, neither part of the national leadership of Militant nor involved in a struggle (such as that in Liverpool) which has become a national political event.

The nature of the so-called 'evidence' against them is also disturbing since it could be used against anyone identified with a left paper within the party. It also means that anyone on the left who is elected to the executive of a right-wing Labour Party region could become a target for expulsion. No longer will those on the left be able to feel secure as long as they have the backing of their constituencies.

The right in Wales will receive a tremendous boost if Chris and Tony are expelled and will be inspired to escalate their witch-hunt. It is well known here that they intend to take on the rest of the left once they have 'dealt with Militant' (as they put it). The left in Wales, especially in the two constituencies directly concerned, is united in the fight against the witch-hunts, which it needs to be to stand any chance of defeating the entrenched right wing within the Party in Wales.

Stevi Jackson
(Cardiff Central CLP.)

BIRMINGHAM LABOUR GROUP GOIN

Birmingham will remain Labour after the May elections. It may even have an increased majority. But neither result will be due to the ruling right wing Labour group.

The Labour victory will be due to the rising tide of anti-Thatcherism in the city and the political make-up of the seats coming up for election. In particular the decision to sell off parts of British Leyland has killed dead any chance of a Tory victory. It has enraged many who traditionally have supported Thatcher and her policies,including the local media. Hence we had the curious spectacle of ex-Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson speaking on a platform surrounded by *Birmingham Evening Mail* posters demanding "Keep BL British!"

Moreover of the 39 seats up for grabs only 17 are Labour seats. A large slice of those seats are also marginal Tory wards which were won in the aftermath of the Falklands fiasco. Given these circumstances Labour need hardly mount a camapign to keep control of the city — exactly what the Labour Group seem intent on doing.

Instead the two main planks of Labour's election platform are a promise to build a £116 million Convention Centre and to stage the Olympics. Of course for the thousands living below the poverty line in Birmingham such policies may seem a little out of keeping with the real needs of the city. However we are assured that both schemes will pave the way for the economic regeneration of the city.

Not one Council House built

In fact they are almost certain to cripple the city financially, the consequences of which will be that those areas in desperate need of extra funding will have to do without. So far not one council house has been built by the Labour group since it took control two years ago and with the money wasted on both these prestige projects it is unlikely any will be built in the future.

Already certain departments have been singled out for cuts this year. Significantly the two committees facing the biggest financial axe are the women's committee and the race relations committee. Both have had 27% of their already miserly budget (£264,000 and £320,000) cut. It surely is an appalling indictment of any labour group that in the wake of the fury that exploded at Handsworth they should see fit to cut the race relations budget.

However there is a conscious political strategy behind such cuts. Both committees were seen to be challenging the established policies and status quo within the group. They ruffled the elderly bigots of the party machine.

Expulsions

It was for precisely the same reason that Hattersley's constituency embarked on a policy of expulsions. Those expelled were all perceived to be challenging the political complexion within the constituency: Amir Khan for organising a Black Section and Kevin Scally for organising the left.

All of which reveals the true priority of the Labour group in Brimingham, namely simply to keep control of the power within the council house and the City party. Sadly, the only way they seem capable of doing this is by doing nothing. Labour in Birmingham has not the courage to face up to the real issues in the city. The poverty, the vast slums, the appalling racism, the industrial decay and the sense of hopelessness that grips increasingly large sections of the community.

Instead Labour has set its heart on two prestige projects: a five star Convention centre — and the Olympics.

No doubt those living in some of the city's

A COLD WIND IN EXETER

Three Labour Briefing supporters, Peter Bowing, Paul Giblin and Neil Todd, are under threat of unjustified expulsion from Exeter Labour Party. Only a High Court injunction obtained in early February prevents those expulsions from taking place. This article explores the corrosive effects of the witch-hunt in the local Party.

On a freezing night in February the AGM of our Party is taking place. The Chair thanks the comrades for coming, and tells them that the Party has been gagged; that an organisation called "Witch Hunt News" wants to prevent the GC from meeting; that delegates must not believe what they read or hear. The Secretary speaks in glowing terms of the achievements of the ruling Liberal/Labour pact on the City Council; the only problem remaining is Labour Briefing; the Party must dissociate itself from that organisation. Neil Todd has had enough: he rises and attempts to question the Secretary's report: "Is this a question?" the Chair demands. "No, I wish to challenge the factual inaccuracies," Neil responds. "I am entitled to do that". "Next business" is shouted from the back of the hall; the motion is passed.

Intolerance, backed up by unfair rulings from the Chair, is the weapon of those who cannot justify their ideas and actions. Our Party has slipped into a total abandonment of class politics and a blanket endorsement of Kinnockism in every aspect. There has been no discussion of this shift at the GC; it has been imposed by the Party bosses. We rejected it and became the victims of a witch-hunt.



Injustice

Outside the meetings the right wing perpetuate a myth: "Had you not gone to the bourgeois courts, you would have had a fair hearing; the GC would probably not have expelled you. Now everybody is against you." Last December the GC majority knew it was voting for a witch-hunt and expulsions. Delegates had been poisoned by two circular letters sent by Party officers, urging members to vote against anyone suspected of being a supporter of Labour Briefing in the elections at Branch AGMs. The LPYS delegate to the EC was removed just before the 'investigation' into Labour Briefing began. At our EC hearing in January we had no right to cross-examine the evidence against us, no clear indication of the charges, and those who prosecuted us then sat in judgement. I asked for the minutes of that meeting in order to prepare my case at the GC; my request was denied. Three other comrades were summoned to that EC to answer unspecified charges; they were kept waiting until 11.30 pm; they were found not guilty. When they asked to address the GC in order to request the reasons for their humiliation, their request was denied.

Exeter Labour Party claims it stands for social justice; it purports to give Thatcherite Britain a human face, but there is no justice for the left. Every rule of natural justice was violated by the EC when it "tried" us.

Lies

We made it clear throughout that we had no desire to take the Labour Party to court; all we wanted was justice. Yet it is claimed that we want to prevent Party meetings from taking place. The injunction only prevents disciplinary action being taken against us in these circumstances; if that stops meetings, it is because the only item on the agenda is expulsions. The Chair claims that the matter is out of his hands and is being looked after by the national Labour Party. Nothing could be further from the truth; the Exeter Labour Party has the power to halt the legal proceedings, but this is unknown to the GC. Whatever we say is branded by the Chair as "scurrilous lies", yet what is untrue is never stated. The Chair's message is obviously that we are neither to be believed nor to be trusted; that we are disloyal.

The meaning

These examples of intolerance, injustice and misrepresentation are not accidents of the situation, they are the direct products of a witch-hunt. The left must be clear: a witch-hunt is the artificial creation of a "folk devil" within a community and proceeds by the supposed identification of devils, the construction and invention of "charges", the discovery of "evidence" and the holding of kangaroo courts. Those who promote witch-hunts attempt two things: first, to rid the movement of their socialist opponents by claiming them to be the "enemy within": by branding them as people not interested in the Labour Party winning power and the like. Secondly, they wish to create a unity not around their policy and strategy, which they realise are inadequate, but against the socialist left in the Party. The left are not to be heard because they are outside the remit of Labourism. Socialists are to be excluded and pathologised. Thus we are placed in the position where we must fight through the intolerance, hysteria and lies in order to reach the minds of the many honest comrades who have been corrupted by the witch-hunt.

We know that witch-hunts have a rational basis. The present one in the Labour Party is a response to the failure of Labour in the past decade and the consequent rightward march of the Kinnock leadership. Socialists in the Labour Party must understand this witch-hunt, fight it on every level and realise how it can corrupt every limb of our movement.

Peter Bowing,
(Exeter CLP)

G NOWHERE

sprawling ghettoes will be heartened at the thought of Zola Budd checking into the Convention centre before barefooting it around the track!

A few better councillors will be elected to the Labour group in May and this could herald the beginning of a different political make up to the group. At the same time the scale of the entrenched right wing domination makes the prospect of any real change remote. Even the possibility of exerting pressure from the grass roots is hampered by the undemocratic nature of the Party. At present decisions taken at policy conferences are simply ignored or publicly rubbished. Thus although the city is nominally committed to a range of proposals designed to increase awareness and education about the gay and lesbian community these policies have no chance of being carried out! When they were dicussed at this year's policy conference the group leader warned that "our people" would not stand for it and others muttered darkly about perverts and paedophiles. Similarly the decision to raise Birmingham's rate by 14% was presented almost as a fait accompli with virtually no consultation with the city party.

The sad truth is that although Labour may win in May the people who vote Labour probably won't. The light at the end of spaghetti junction still looks a long way off.

Birmingham Labour Briefing

BRIEFING

Next issue out: April 16th. Deadline for articles: Monday 7th April. Next Editorial Board: Sunday 20th April at 1pm at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham.

VOTE KINGSLEY ABRAMS FOR THE NEC!

YOUTH BRIEFING

The debate on Black Sections will be a central one at National YS conference. Kingsley Abrams, the Black Sections candidate is standing for the LPYS place on the NEC. Kingsley's campaign has had wide support from many YS branches, Scotland, Yorkshire and London, and he has been round many of the regional YS conferences. He also has the support of the majority of the Labour Left Coordination. Youth Briefing asked Kingsley to detail the political platform he is standing on.

"I would like to make it quite clear to LPYS branches that are supporting my candidature for the LPYS seat on Labour's NEC that I am not "the anti-Militant tendency candidate. I am the militant candidate because as a black youth living in racist Britain I am extremely angry. The anger and frustration of black youth in Britain were demonstrated clearly in the uprisings in Liverpool, Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham. Bernie Grant, leader of Haringey council and Chair of Tottenham Black Section, fully grasped the challenge before him by making sure that the anger and frustration of black youth, brutalised by unemployment, police aggression and institutional racism, no longer went unheard.

Black youth are angry and fed up with the Labour Party purportedly speaking for them and then dismally failing to address their needs once in power. Black self-organisation within black sections has become a radical, progressive and socialist grouping within the Labour Party, fighting for a fair share of the political, economic and social cake. We will accept nothing less.

Opposition to Witch-hunts

In placing on record my total opposition to the witch-hunts and purges launched by Labour's national leadership against socialists who support the Militant newspaper and are members of Liverpool District Labour Party, I must at the same time state my opposition to the Militant Tendency's reductionist approach to class politics. This simplistic, reductionist approach has led to Liverpool City Council's opposition to 'positive action' as a means of reversing the hundreds of years of oppression and inequality which have held back black progress in Britain.

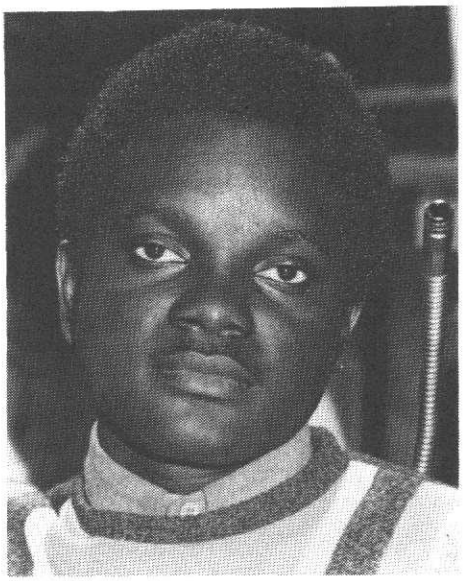
As the Black Section candidate for the LPYS seat on Labour's NEC, the major part of my campaign is support for a strategy of full employment based on 'A million jobs a year', securing full employment, nationalisation of the banks and financial institutions, as a means of irretrievably shifting the balance of power towards control by working people is a must for any Labour government. If elected I will prioritise employment and industrial issues, the fight against imperialist oppression and ensure that struggles (led by the working class, women, gay men and lesbians and black people) receive full and prompt support.

I would:

1) campaign for a shorter working week, guaranteed jobs for all workers and youth and an end to discrimination in employment, housing and education.

2) step up the Black Sections campaign against the YTS, which is reproducing racial disadvantage in the labour market and entrenching inequalities in the work place.

3) campaign for full support for black workers who face the threat of racial violence and oppose all immigration controls and call for immediate repeal of the immgration and nationality acts.



Kingsley Abrams John Chapman

4) campaign to end British imperialism – whether closer to home by calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland to allow the Irish people to determine their own destiny or through supporting black liberation movements and independent trade unions in the struggle for the liberation of Azania, as well as anti-imperialist movements in Central America.

5) support the rights of women, gay men and lesbian women as well as black people to organise autonomously. As we saw during the miners' strike, with WAPC, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners and Black People Support the Miners, these movements increase class solidarity rather than divide the working class.

6. campaign against all witch-hunts of socialists in the Labour Party. It is not merely Militant comrades who are being expelled – Amir Khan from the Birmingham black section and members of Exeter Labour Briefing are all being expelled by the right wing.

Finally, I am standing for the LPYS seat on Labour's NEC as a black socialist and an active supporter of black self-organisation. In canvassing your support I call on all LPYS branches to back me on my commitment to the struggle for socialism in the Labour Party."

For further information contact Kingsley Abrams, Youth Organiser for Labour Party Black Sections. For those who want further information on the campaign Youth Briefing is fighting around this year's YS conference, contact Fran Rayner, Flat 7, 35 Maresfield Gdns., London NW3, tel: 01-431 0357.

DOWN BUT NOT OUT

150 youth came together at the end of January for the 18th Greater London LPYS regional conference. For years it has been a Militant rally but this year it was a bit different. For on the Saturday, the chair seemed not to realise who were non-Militant supporters. Although Militant still control the majority of YS's in London, there were a number of YS branches/delegates/visitors under the Youth Fightback banner.

It gave Militant quite a shock to be challenged. For the first time, Briefing supporters stood 'officially' against the Militant leadership. We stood as 'Youth Fightback' members mainly on the ticket of supporting Kingsley Abrams for the LPYS place on the NEC, the Black Sections candidate. The motion from Hornsey and Wood Green LPYS in support of Black Sections was defeated by 6-1. The leadership could only call it a 'waste of time' whilst others labelled it tokenism. Briefing supporters called the Labour Party 'an apartheid party which refuses to allow black people to speak for themselves'. The YS should support black sections within the Labour Party, just as it does with youth sections and (just about!) women's sections.

Once more, on Ireland, black sections, police and women we saw the present leadership of the LPYS speaking along the lines of the Kinnock leadership.

A ticket of unity was over expulsions where the conference voted all together against the witch-hunt in Liverpool DLP. Motions stated that comrades should be free to read what they want. That may well be why free copies of Youth Fightback were reasonably welcome! Hardly a copy was left lying around and even those on the platform were seen to be reading it.

The Sunday turnout was the poorest yet, according to many people. This time the chairing was firmly in favour of Militant with about only three non-Militants speaking. After the conference had closed the Greater London LPYS had an anti-racist rally. A number of speakers did not turn up which made this conference, billed as the 'largest conference yet' a bit of a flop.

We left the conference down but by no means out, knowing that we have made our mark and looking forward to national conference with renewed hope.

Alan Dobbie & Jane Connor, Hornsey & Wood Green LPYS delegates to Regional/National Conference

WE'RE ALL GOING TO BOURNEMOUTH!

It's spring again, and a young woman activist's thoughts turn to Bournemouth and the LPYS Conference. The background to this year's Conference is that of a massive attack from the Labour Party leadership. Whilst the purge of Liverpool DLP makes headline news, the witch-hunt of the LPYS is pushed into the sidelines. The LPYS budget has been slashed, the full-time organiser post is facing the chop and tens of LPYS branches are under threat of closure. But this is just part of the crisis of the LPYS, not its cause.

Over the last year, the Militant dominated leadership have been unable to halt the decline in the LPYS. The enormous mobilisations of school students last year haven't been turned into a growing, active membership. This failure to actually build the LPYS, stemming from both Militant's sectarianism and lack of any mass focus of youth radicalisation, makes it much easier for the Labour Party leadership to trample on the LPYS.

Kinnock has used the Red Wedge tour to by-pass the LPYS. Thousands of young people have joined the Labour Party, but they won't be won to the LPYS unless it can show itself to be a credible and effective place to organise young people against the Tories. Until the LPYS can take forward the demands of black youth, young women, students – all those at the thin end of the blue wedge, it won't grow.

Militant counterposes the LPYS 'Young Workers' Charter' to the Labour Party 'Charter for Youth'. Both are inadequate. Militant's programme ignores the reality of racism and sexism and the necessity for self-organisation and self-activity. Kinnock's Charter is all form and no content – after you wade through the glossy packaging it contains only one concrete demand: raise the YTS allowance to £30!

The "real" left has to start now to develop the kind of policies that we would want a Labour government to have for youth – not imposed from above as both Kinnock and Militant do – but in discussion with different sections of youth, Black Sections, YCND, YTS action groups, young women in NAC and LWAC. The debate on the economy needs to integrate youth demands and only groups like Briefing can ensure that happens.

There is an argument common on the left that the LPYS is somehow immune from the processes going on in the wider labour movement. Whilst Militant have tried to isolate the LPYS from the rest of the left, the 'recomposition' will have an enormous impact on the LPYS. *Because* youth are more open to radical ideas it is all the more important for the left to take seriously the task of playing a role in the LPYS – the LCC do. It's not enough to say that because Militant's economic programme is OK we can leave them to it.

This year Youth Briefing will be organising at LPYS Conference, producing a bulletin and building the LLC and Black Section fringe meetings. Kingsley Abrams, the Black Section youth organiser is standing for the NEC and Youth Briefing fully supports him standing. The LLC meeting marks a turning point in the left's attitude to the LPYS, but we don't want your support just at conference time. As Briefing develops, the potential exists for it to be a focus for organising youth in the LPYS and *into* the LPYS – through defending its independence from the control of the Labour Party leadership and through developing a political alternative to Militant and the right wing.

Jane Connor

SOUTH WEST WASH~OUT

I don't know what other comrades' regional conferences were like, but ours in the South West was probably the worst. Already before the conference had even started, it was reduced from two days to one. There were only six resolutions put forward, and at the actual conference only four of those were taken due to branch delegates not turning up. The chair didn't arrive until early afternoon and no members of the Standing Orders Committee were present.

Despite all this though and the usual Militant carve-up, some good did come out of it. Our resolution from Weymouth and Portland around Anti-Fascist Action did get passed and I will be making sure that the new Regional Youth Committee does implement its proposals.

Also at the conference we did manage to get enough people together for a Youth Fightback/Briefing fringe meeting. Steve Reicher from Exeter CLP spoke about the political climate behind the current witch-hunt against him and other members of Devon Labour Briefing. It was also decided at the meeting to set up a regional bulletin amongst YS members in the South West, linking comrades from Weymouth, Bristol and Exeter as an alternative to the Militant Tendency.

Alan Holder,
Weymouth and Portland YS

Review: THE BLACK JACOBINS

Generally speaking, successful, let alone "great", plays in English have been written by theatre professionals. English theatre has usually been the fearfully guarded preserve of a clique: we have never had a "theatre of ideas" which (as in France) could provide a vehicle for theoreticians and analysts; and reviewers, being theatre professionals themselves, usually give a cold reception to "outsiders". It is not surprising, then, to find that the media, even if (like the *Guardian*) they gave the play good coverage before it opened, were not enthusiastic about CLR James' *The Black Jacobins*. The consensus was that the work is interesting but fundamentally flawed.

From a socialist perspective *The Black Jacobins* looks rather different. The members of Talaw Theatre Company certainly deserve high praise; and it is true that the play lacks "trade finish". Some scenes seem, at the time, too long; minor characters intrude on the story; the narrative thread and the "meaning" of the play are often obscure. We cannot reject the play on these grounds. To do so is to insist that "outsiders" adopt our standards before we will listen to them, and thus to reject — in this case — not only an individual's vision but the black experience from which this play has sprung.

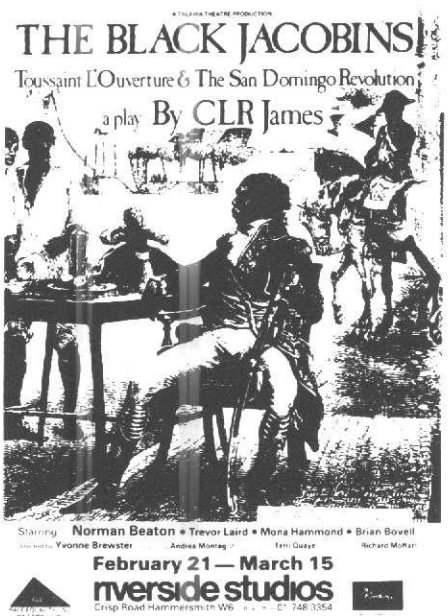
Besides — what we can do instead is to accept that this play is (as Talawa claim) a masterpiece. If we do, we can see that it shares its faults with "real life", which rarely fits into the framework of what a theatre audience finds comprehensible and comfortable. We will also notice moments in the play that are as purely theatrical as anything the professionals produce; especially its closing scene. By then, Toussaint L'Ouverture, the guide and inspiration of the Haitian Revolution, has been removed from the action, to a prison in France. Dessalines, once his faithful lieutenant, has made the leader of his country.

Dessalines has schooled himself in French culture; he knows that plays end with the tying up of loose ends, and a dance as the symbol of harmony re-established. The "loose ends" are the whites; they are all to be massacred. The dance will be a real one, and Dessalines himself leads it. As it commences, the news of Toussaint's death is brought. Dessalines (that fine actor, Trevor Laird) is already physically contorted, deformed by the power he has amassed; now his face distorts with grief. But the dance goes on, because history goes on.

The night I saw *The Black Jacobins* the audience responded to this scene with embarrassed laughter. Violence in the post-colonial world is supposed to be presented to us as the result of indigenous savagery, not European culture. But we may remember that James seems only to have given, as a reason for writing *The Black Jacobins*, that "a play was needed". *The Black Jacobins* was an attempt — like the Black Theatre of contemporary Britain (and South Africa) — to extend the boundaries of what theatre can do and be. If it is no a successful attempt, perhaps we should be pointing the finger at our culture and our society?

Steve Parry

For details of other events in the Black Experience Programme phone the GLC Race Equality Unit on 01-633 1671.



TRADE UNION
BRIEFING

The teachers' campaign continues

Despite an *apparent* end to the teachers' pay dispute, with the ACAS deal in the Burnham Committee, the NUT's pay campaign continues. This appearance of a 'settlement' was on the cards ever since Keith Joseph re-jigged Burnham so the NUT lost its majority vote.

The leaders of the NAS–UWT have been flattered that they hold the balance of power. There is a long tradition of NUT leaders attacking NAS–UWT and vice versa. Yet the ordinary members in both unions have co-ordinated their action throughout this dispute and worked to build huge joint rallies, like the one held at Birmingham which was attended by thousands of NUT and NAS/UWT members. Clearly the lower levels of both unions have a keener political understanding of trade union solidarity than those in more elevated positions. The resolution which gained the support of the largest number of local associations on the agenda at this Easter's NUT conference calls for a single teachers' union, affiliated to the TUC. At a local level members of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) have also been welcomed at NUT rallies and meetings.

The government has constantly been trying to play one group off against another. The settlement EIS leaders have agreed on behalf of their members contains large chunks of the formula Sir Keith has already tried telling English and Welsh teachers they have to accept. He hopes to weaken the one fight by appearing to grant a vague concession to the other; the usual Tory 'divde and rule' tactic.

Labour Party

The Labour Party as represented by the local authorities has hardly been supportive. The reknowned "lefties" of the ILEA, for example, have announced their intention to dock pay for whole sessions from teachers whose strike only lasted for a part of that session. Giles Radice too has adopted an equivocal line – with at least one foot in the populist camp of "Our children will suffer". He perhaps requires learning support services to help him to consider the future of education if NUT policy to defend teachers and the service is not implemented.

The NUT's National Executive now say they will attend the ACAS talks. The Socialist Teachers' Alliance and many other NUT members regard the Executive's reasons for participation as highly dubious and oppose it. The Executive claim they want to be there to defend teachers' interests and prevent a sell-out. At this time any backing down from the clear line given by NUT national conference (no linking of pay and conditions) can only be regarded as a softening-up process preceeding acceptance.

This key demand against linking is more than an abstract slogan. Keith Joseph was undoubtedly angered when the dispute forced him to provide the money for LEAs to employ supervisors for dinner times – in the place of teachers. How many other trade unionists would give up their lunch hour for the cost of a plate of beans and chips or custard? Ending this system permanently provides new jobs for others and gives teachers the break which means they can start afternoon teaching with renewed energy.

Another voluntary duty which has helped no-one but the employers was the practice of exploiting teachers to cover classes for absent colleagues. No teacher in France or Australia, Germany, Denmark, etc., would dream of undertaking this unpaid labour. Now British teachers – including most of those in the NAS/UWT, whose Executive have promised a return to "normal" duties – have learnt from the campaign that they can say "no", and will continue to do so. In turn, new jobs in a supply pool of teachers can be created to cover absences. Maths covered by a French specialist is no great educational loss to school students. But their French books remain unmarked and their French lesson unprepared while the French teacher tries to hold a maths class together.

Conditions of service and of education are also threatened by Joseph's attempt to get assessment/appraisal schemes established and linked to pay. Headteachers – the chosen instruments for implementation, are very largely white and male. Black and women teachers are generally left on Scales I and II, yet it is these lower ranks who raise, develop and implement progressive educational initiatives – often against the head's own initial inclination. Headteachers have, in at least three schools that I personally can think of, banned anti-sexist women's groups in school. They view such an initiative as divisive, but offer no alternative. If the head had total control over their salary and promotion prospects, many teachers would have to keep their mouths shut even if he proposed, for example, re-streaming or other reactionary moves.

Full strikes may disappear for a short time; but the vast majority of teachers will not return to "normal duties". NUT members' combativity remains strong – and it's just as well for the 1986 pay claim has yet to be submitted (and must be soon) while the previous claim is unresolved and LEA spring budgets will undoubtedly aim to cut the education service. The Tories have provoked militancy on the part of unions which used to elevate themselves as "professionals" above hum-drum trade unionism.

Throughout the dispute, NUT groups have tried to inform and convince parents of their case – usually through Parent-Teacher Associations. In the main, they have been successful. But we need to develop this support from parents in their unions and Labour Party. It's not only teachers' pay but pay and conditions in the public sector and the quality of service it provides which are at stake.

Ask your Labour Party and your union to pass a resolution on these lines:

"This ward/branch:

1) recognises the justice of the teachers' case for a restoration of their pay to 1974 levels, and supports the teachers' pay action – as part of a well-resourced education service.

2) deplores the Secretary of State for Education for:

a) holding down teachers' pay;

b) attempting to tie increases in pay, however inadequate, to worsened conditions of service for teachers and tighter management control through regular assessment of teachers.

3) deplores the position adopted in negotiations by Labour local authorities which reflects the views of the Secretary of State on pay and conditions.

4) supports the fight of the NUT to improve pay and defend conditions.

5) deplores the failure of Giles Radice, shadow spokesperson on Education, to speak out in support of the NUT.

6) calls on Labour councillors, representatives and spokespeople to support the fight of the NUT, and resolves to invite a speaker from this union to its next meeting."

Jan Pollock

BRITISH LEYLAND: JINGOISTIC

British Leyland factories are being hawked around by Tory ministers like a bunch of crooks selling off stolen goods.

So eager are they to sell off everything in sight and look after the big US multinationals at the same time, that they have been riding roughshod over any political challenger to the General Motors bid. They have been prepared to compound the political crisis of the government in order to do it.

To make things worse it turns out that the Tory government entered into talks with GM over 18 months ago, the results of which would probably never have come to public notice until after the event had the issue not been raised by Labour MPs.

In contrast to GM other bidders who were not the chosen suitor of the government were given only a few weeks to make an offer without even being allowed to look around the plants concerned.

There has been a lot of jingoistic hot air in the House of Commons and the unions against it, but nothing has been done. One nationalist statement after another came out demanding that BL be kept "British", when the issue is

JUSTICE FOR THE MINERS: KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM

The fighting spirit of the miners' strike was very much alive at the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign's demonstration on 2nd March. 8,000 miners, women from the pit communities and their supporters came from across the coalfields to mark the anniversary of the strike and to show their support for the 500+ sacked miners, for the dozen gaoled miners, and for the NUM, whose funds are still in the hands of the receiver.

Tony Benn MP told the rally of the Justice for Mineworkers Bill recently presented to Parliament, and which is built round the successful NUM resolutions to the 1985 TUC and Labour Party Conference. Peter Heathfield, NUM General Secretary, called on the "trade union leadership to back those in struggle now as the Tories seek to destroy trades unionism."

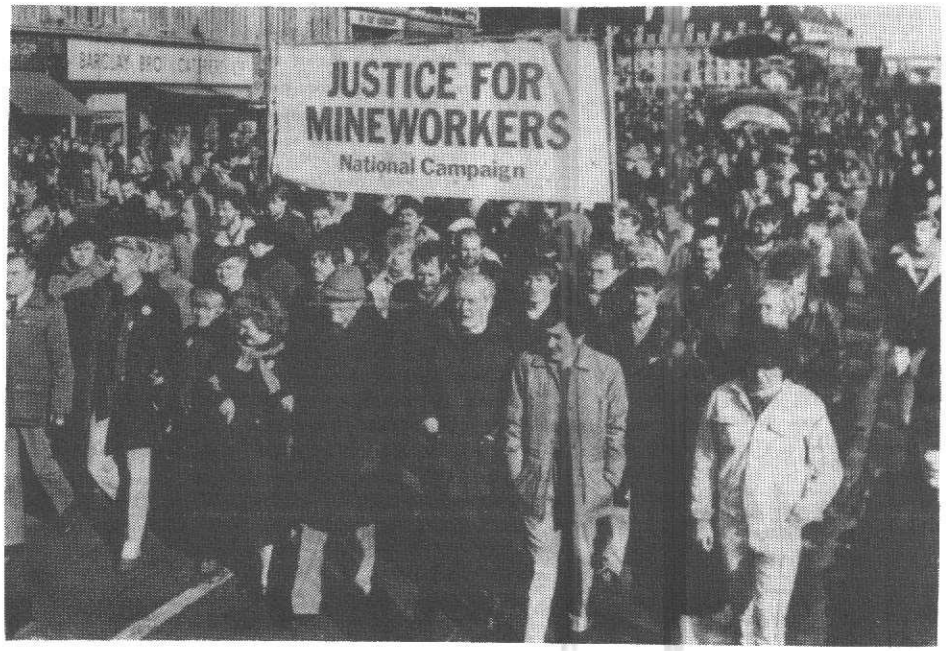
Dave Nellist MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP both attacked the Labour leadership's obsession with witch-hunting socialists in the Labour Party, while miners remain sacked and printers are fighting for their jobs at Wapping. Both Sean Geraghty (EETPU London Press branch) and Ginger Wilson (FoC Sunday Times) compared Wapping with the miners' strike, and attacked Eric Hammond's scabbing. Although invited, Brenda Dean did not attend. One of the biggest rounds of applause was given to Martha Osamor from the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign.

Contingents came from the Welsh valleys, from Rufford in Notts, "the dirty thirty" from Leicester, Kent area, Cortonwood women's support group, from Notts and from Durham.

The South Wales mobilisation was hindered by the attitude of the (Euro) Communist Party/Kinnockite-dominated Area Executive. Initially the executive opposed the campaign, and only belatedly circulated the branches about the event after the National Executive had decided to give its support. Despite the support of Eric Clarke (Scottish NUM area secretary), the turnout from Scotland was also small, perhaps for similar reasons.

The demonstration was followed by a highly successful concert at the Albert Hall, where £10,000 was raised for the national solidarity fund.

Our supporters are currently working to set up regional Justice for Mineworkers groups.



These are being established in Yorks, Notts, South Wales and the South West. Fringe meetings are being organised at regional Labour Party conferences, separately or jointly with Labour Left Coordination.

March 2nd set the ball rolling. Our aim must be to keep up the momentum.

Notts NUM members are suffering increasingly vicious harassment from the area Coal Board, which recently sacked three activists on flimsy pretexts. Their "crime" has been to successfully rebuild the NUM in Notts. Nevertheless their fight would be strengthened with the support of the national campaign in rolling back the combined efforts of the Board and the scab UDM to destroy their organisation.

Trade Union Briefing therefore supports the call for a march through Mansfield, followed by a political and musical rally, which would, in effect, revive the traditional Notts miners' gala.

Secondly, we propose the launch of a petition to the TUC General Council and Labour Party NEC to implement and campaign for TUC and Labour Party policy in support of the miners – that is, the successful NUM resolution. We need resolutions to both conferences this year, reaffirming last year's policy and in support of the Bill, in case the leaderships try to reverse it or water it down by some bureaucratic backdoor method. In building this pressure on the TUC and Labour chiefs we should organise a mass lobby of this year's TUC and Labour conferences.

Trade Union Briefing will urge the campaign to strengthen TUC and Labour Party policy on the miners' issue by fighting for resolutions which:

a) call on the General Council and NEC to actively campaign for their existing policy, including a national demonstration;

b) call for the unconditional release of the gaoled miners;

c) oppose all recognition of, or dealings with, the breakaway UDM.

Such a perspective of mass action, combined with pressure on the TUC and Labour leaderships, will meet opposition from many quarters, not least from the CP/Kinnock alliance which now dominates the NUM Executive.

In these circumstances the campaign must work in close collaboration and with the full involvement of NUM leaders and activists, but at the same time be prepared to act independently of the NUM, as it did in calling the March demonstration. The National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign can play an important role, not only in stemming the inevitable demoralisation in the coalfields, but in rallying the forces of the left nationwide.

Already Kinnock is reported to have told the Scottish Labour Party Conference that sacked miners should be reinstated. Unfortunately, not many of us would put our money on Neil's fine words being turned into deeds; but it shows he's already under pressure.

Peter Cooper, (NCU)

HOT AIR

keeping BL *public*. The issue of privatisation has been lost sight of. It makes little difference which private company or multinational takes it over. On top of that a number of the unions have said they will invest pension fund money to help keep it "British".

There is no doubt at all that the Tories intend to sell off the whole of BL, including the Austin Rover Group volume cars division. The most likely buyer for ARG is Honda, which already produces joint models with ARG. The new Maestro is in its pre-production stage and a deal has just been signed for a new joint Maestro.

The appointment of Graham Day from British Shipbuilders to replace Sir Austin Ride and chief executive of BL seems to be a part of this strategy.

BL workers have been attacked continuously for the past 7 years. Work effort on the tracks has been doubled and trebled, yet there is little doubt that the appointment of Day signals a new round of attacks.

Day is entirely in the Michael Edwardes/Ian MacGregor mould: an international industrial hatchetman. He has made his reputation fighting the unions in the shipbuilding industry and is now moving on to prepare ARG as the most attractive possible package for selling off.

By Alan Thornett

PRINT UNIONS MUST CHANGE COURSE—

ALL OUT TO BEAT MURDOCH!

Unless the leaders of the key print unions — SOGAT, NGA and NUJ — are forced to change course and mobilise a serious fight, the battle against Rupert Murdoch's union-busting is doomed to dwindle away in a shameful stalemate or surrender.

The stakes are high for the whole trade union movement. Every employer in the country is looking to Murdoch as their advance-guard in establishing

- no more closed shop
- no more strikes
- no disruption
- management veto over union representatives
- total, unfettered "right to manage"
- legally-binding agreements.

5,500 printworkers have been sacked: yet the low-kay tactics of seeking to win the "hearts and minds" of the general public and shame Murdoch into surrender — have proved utterly bankrupt.

SOGAT has had its entire assets sequestered without even ensuring that the patchy boycotting which triggered the court action is fully enforced, or lifting a finger to escalate the fight. SOGAT members in Fleet Street and throughout the industry are working on as if nothing had happened.

The **NGA** has escaped sequestration largely by taking even less effective boycotting action than SOGAT.

The **NUJ** has sat back as 600 of its members each day defy the Union's timid calls for them not to cross Wapping picket lines, and make it possible for Murdoch and his electricians to keep publishing. The NUJ has refused to call its News International chapels out on strike in defence of the 30 loyal members who have been sacked or suspended for obeying the Union's instructions. Instead it has called on freelances and members in public relations to carry the main brunt of the action — by boycotting the sending of copy to the NUJ members still working at Wapping!

That this tokenistic action is praised by the print union leaders simply underlines their reluctance to mount a real fight.

Of course these developments suit Neil Kinnock, Norman Willis and the labour movement's "new realists" down to the ground. They are committed to ditching class struggle methods. Having betrayed the NGA two years ago at Warrington, and consciously isolated the miners into defeat last year, TUC leaders are no doubt relieved by the NGA/SOGAT tactics, which include no call at all for supporting strikes.

Sorry Contrast

What a sorry contrast to the miners' strike — where Scargill and Heathfield struggled to pull out the scab areas, fought to mobilise mass pickets, defied the pressures of the mass media and easy "popularity" by defending pickets against police violence, raised repeated calls for supporting action, and captured massive, enthusiastic support on the basis of the first serious class action against mass sackings.

Instead, we have seen Dean and Dubbins

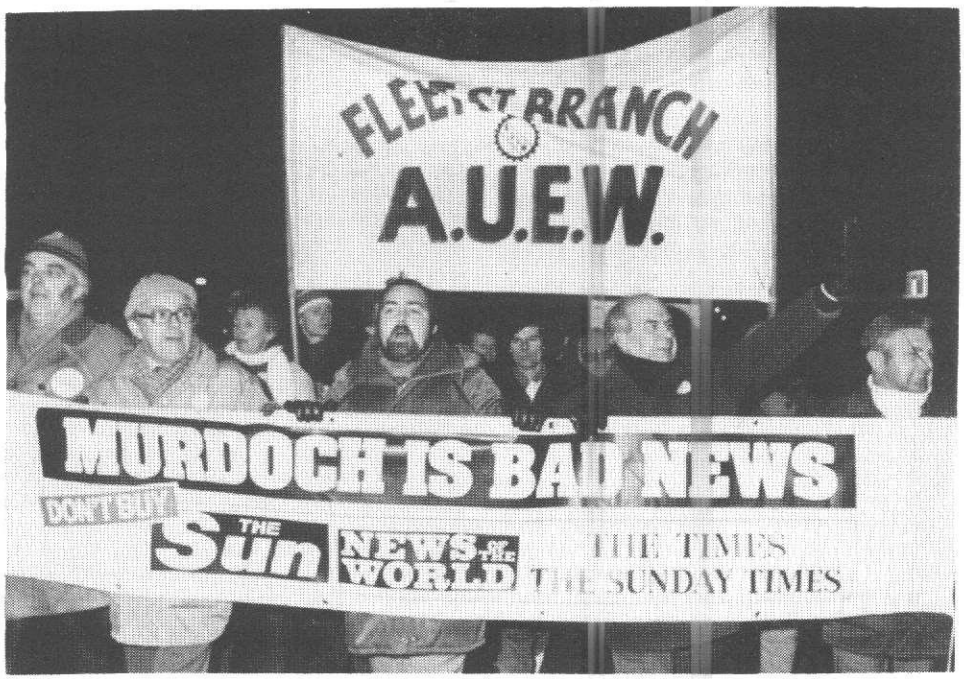
- Ignoring their own members scabbing for Murdoch;
- Opposing mass picketing;
- Denouncing outside support and joining police in blaming pickets for violence;
- Making no move to call out Fleet Street members;
- Peddling ludicrously over-optimistic claims on the impact of the strike;
- Seeking to restrict support work to the vague, moralistic "boycott" campaign.

Already many rank and file printworkers are losing patience with the line of their leaders, which is argued by an alliance of right wing and Communist Party supporters (the CP also opposed mass pickets during the miners' strike). The regular mass pickets on Saturday nights and some of the local support groups have developed as a focus for printworkers critical of the Dean/Dubbins line.

Support Groups

In turning these policies around, the building of support groups to unite militant printers with the sections of the labour movement in each area who want to fight Murdoch, must play a crucial role. By mobilising to reinforce the Wapping picket lines, and to challenge the attempts by Dean, Dubbins and the Communist Party to wall off printworkers from political discussion, the left can show its commitment to the fight at the same time as arguing for a change of course.

Support groups can also take up local initiatives — especially picketing key wholesalers, TNT depots, and printing plants linked with Murdoch: they can and should organise public and workplace meetings with print union speakers which open up a real debate on the way forward while building support and raising funds. Where miners' support groups still exist, these should take up support for the printers.



John Chapman

But the key to the dispute is the policy of the print unions and the NUJ.

- The **print unions** must take action against their members scabbing on the dispute. They must mobilise their Fleet Street membership, preparing to call an all-out strike in defence of the sacked 5,000. Only when print workers can be seen taking action to defend their own members' jobs with the tenacity of the miners' strike will the necessary supporting action be built elsewhere, in the form of boycotting action and solidarity strikes.
- The **NUJ** must immediately take disciplinary action against its members at Wapping who are defying Union instructions and contributing to the demolition of trade unionism by crossing picket lines. Only this kind of resolute action, which should be accompanied by calling the News International chapels out on strike in defence of their victimised colleagues, stands any chance of sustaining the non-supply of freelance and PR material, which is already in danger of cracking. This fight must be taken up by the new NUJ Broad Left to be formed this month.
- **All four main print unions** must institute offical mass pickets at Wapping and demand a TUC instruction to the EETPU to stop its members crossing. When they refuse, the EETPU must immediately be suspended and expelled from the TUC, with other unions urged to "poach" their members in every sector of industry. The TGWU, too, must instruct its TNT members to stop crossing picket lines — and expel those who continue to do so.
- Labour Parties and trade union bodies must demand that Kinnock and Co. actively support the fight at Wapping. With Kinnock planning to hold on to much Tory anti-union legislation if Labour wins the next election, this fight focusses on a major political issue. Labour Parties must play a full role in printworkers' support committees.

If these steps are not taken, and the Wapping dispute is left to drag on for month after month, the prospects for victory grow ever slimmer.

International Women's Day at Wapping

On Saturday, March 8th, over 5,000 women celebrated International Women's Day by marching to Rupert Murdoch's scab plant at Wapping in an impressive show of solidarity with the sacked print workers. There were trade union banners and Labour Party banners, many of them from women's sections, and a strong contingent from Women Against Pit Closures, including women from communities in Yorkshire and South Wales, making the connection between the fight to save the mining communities and the battle for the printworkers' jobs.

The march was scheduled to move off from Lower Thames Street at 5.30 pm, and there was supposed to be a rally at Wapping at 6 pm. In fact, it was after 6.30 when we finally moved off. Apparently the reason for the delay was that Brenda Dean's train had been delayed, and the march could not move off until she was there to lead it! Eventually, we left for Wapping minus any leader, but with a large police escort.

Men had been asked to line the route of the march and show support for the women marchers, and there were many men who responded to this splendidly. However, there are always a few macho specimens who can't bear to be left out of the action, and this was no exception. There were a few men who insisted on walking on the march, and even on shouting out instructions to 'their women' through megaphones, despite having it firmly pointed out to them on several occasions that this was meant to be a women's march. There were also a few men lining the road calling out to us to go home and get our husbands' teas, but they were a minority. Women responded to the gibes in a good-humoured way, singing 'I'd rather be a picket than a scab' and 'I'd rather be a woman than a man' in reply.

There was little trouble from the police until the end of the rally. Some of us did wonder if the march had been called for such an early time to avoid clashes with the police, as the picket proper does not usually begin until about 9pm when the first of the lorries carrying copies of the Times and Scum start to leave the plant. After a while the police horses were moved forwards and the police effectively cordoned women attending the rally into a circle. Several arrests were made of women who were blocking the roads leading to the plant entrances.

Saturday night proved that women are mobilising in support of the printworkers. 5,000 women at Wapping is a strong base to build from. Once again, as in the miners' strike, women have shown that they have a role to play on the picket line and an important part in building the opposition to Murdoch. Sisterhood is powerful, together we can stop the lorries coming out of Wapping!

Jane Prust,
(Deptford CLP)

Some printers and journalists already argue that the cause is lost, and that calling for an all-out strike on Fleet Street is a mistake. But *every* Fleet St employer is now looking to slash print and journalistic jobs and smash union organisation. If they see the print unions prepared to "up the ante" and go all out at Murdoch, defy the courts, confront the EETPU, and rally the best sections of the labour movement, they might be less eager to chance their arm. It's a case of hang together — or be hanged separately.

So far the timid SOGAT/NGA/NUJ line has done nothing but demoralise those sacked, confuse the militants and encourage the employers. A real fight back can only be better than that.

By John Lister,
Secretary Oxford NUJ
(in a personal capacity)

BUILDING A FIGHTBACK IN THE CPSA

Whilst attention has been given to the Witch Hunt inside the Labour Party, there has been comparatively little coverage to the parallel Witch Hunt inside the Unions. And yet it is here that the sharpest and most damaging political and organisational splits have taken place.

In November 1984, as the rise of what has become known as 'Kinnockism' took place, the CPSA Broad Left was deliberately split by a combination of LCC supporters and the Communist Party. The dynamics of this split can be traced back to the debacle over GCHQ and the aborted attempt to oust Alistair Graham (General Secretary) over his incompetent handling of the whole affair. The 'Cuddly Left' (as it has become known) refused to take Graham on in a special election by refusing to pass a vote of no confidence in him at that year's conference. The Hard Left around 'Militant', the SWP and the 'Socialist Caucus'* (plus a large number of otherwise unaligned Labour Party members) moved the resolution of no confidence. This had been passed by an overwhelming majority of Broad Left members at the previous night's BL meeting. The supporters of what has now become known as BL 84 refused to stand by that democratic decision and their votes were enough to save Graham's neck on the conference floor. As a result the best opportunity to oust Graham for his treachery was lost.

BROAD LEFT WITHOUT MILITANT

At the November Broad Left conference in Manchester the Soft Left made a staged walk out to pre-booked rooms to found their own bogus BL 84 organisation. They argued that they wanted a Broad Left without 'Militant', but this was a position that the rest of the left could not accept. The cuddly left have since joined Alistair Graham in his unabated 'Trot Bashing'.

The most obvious result of the split



Kate Losinska Labour Party Photo Library

was the take over of the union by the right wing, and in the CPSA that *means* right wing. Kate Losinska and her 'National Moderate Group' won an overwhelming majority on the NEC as the left vote split. The BL 84 group won 2 places on the NEC, but were ousted in the largest section of the union the DHSS.

Elections however are not the all important factor in building a left wing current in the CPSA. It is over the question of tactics and the encouragement of rank and file activity that a socialist fightback is made. And it is here that the betrayal of the Kinnockite left has had its most dire effects. During the longest running dispute at the computer centre in Newcastle, BL 84 sold out the strikers. Even in more local disputes such as the struggle over staffing in Ilford DHSS one BL 84 member Colin Middleton demanded the strikers went back to work despite the overwhelming support of the strikers to continue. Most disturbing is

CONTINUED OVER

GLYN'S IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION

John Palmer
(Socialist Society National Steering Committee)

Richard Barbrook raises some very important issues about socialist economic strategy and its links to demands of a self-emancipating and politically 'prefigurative' nature in his review of Andrew Glynn's *Million Jobs a Year* pamphlet in January's *Briefing*. It must be said that his critical but non-sectarian tone is to be welcomed not least because it contrasts with the hysterical and witch-hunting flavour of the reaction from leading figures on parts of the realigned left.

It is of course true that a programme for public ownership and planning which is advanced out of a context of working class mobilisation and intervention in both economic and political decision-making could end up as a sterile programme for state capitalism, not socialism. It has been used as such in some countries by Stalinist, and a variety of other such tendencies. None of them have the remotest possibility of securing a significant social or electoral constituency in Britain today.

UNFAIR AND UNJUSTIFIED

It is also true that the Cripps/Strachey programme in the 1930s was, as Barbrook reminds us, a curious 'statist' mixture of Stalinism and Fabianism. What is unfair and unjustified, however, is to suggest this has anything in common with the approach taken by Andrew Glynn. It is not necessary to agree with every single aspect of Glynn's approach (I do not) to reject the notion that his case for social ownership and control of the major financial institutions and trans-national corporations and for national economic planning in any way amounts to a 'restructured and reorganised capitalism.'

Perhaps I may be permitted a personal word. As a student/practitioner in the field of workers' plans, popular planning, support for worker co-operatives, community based economic intervention and enterprise boards I am acutely aware of the fact that all of these initiatives are subject to the massive warping and subversive influence of a national – indeed an international – capitalist economy in crisis.

Such socialist initiatives can be compared to guerilla campaigns operations behind enemy lines. They operate in hostile terrain confronting alien legal constraints, accounting practices, the power of big business and the finance institutions and other forces in conflict with any trend towards popular working class power and production for need rather than for profit.

CONFRONTATION WITH POWER OF CAPITALIST STATE

The tendency among left sectarians is to deny any mobilising 'prefigurative' potential in the exciting local socialist initiatives taken in recent years. It is the hallmark of left opportunism to pretend that a socialist strategy can be built on such initiatives alone and, worse still, that it may be possible in this way to avoid confrontàtion with the power of the capitalist state, big business and the financial institutions.

Such a policy will, sooner rather than later, lead to the utter marginalisation or the destruction of such initiatives. The signs are that the Labour leadership, while paying due deference to 'local socialist' initiatives is bent on a minimalist reflationary strategy which risks simultaneously failing to substantially reduce unemployment but also triggering an 'inflationary' financial backlash from the City and the international foreign exchanges.

There are many questions which need exploring and discussing by socialists which arise out of Glynn's important contribution which relate to gender and race issues in unemployment as well as the relationship between independent working class strategies and demands on a future Labour government. That is why the Socialist Society, taken with the Campaign Group, and others on the left held an important conference on 'A million Jobs a Year' at County Hall on February 21st and 22nd.

IMPOTENT

A strategy for planning and public ownership which is not infused by and subordinated to democratic worker and community control and which is dismissive to gender, race and other forms of oppression will be dismissive and incapable of generating a political and social base. A strategy which seeks to split prefigurative, socialist, local community or democratic working class initiatives from the central issues of economic power nationally will be impotent.

To add just one more personal note. When the left has thrashed out a coherent economic strategy it will have to help orient a rank and file campaign to put the jobs crisis at the top of the Labour movement's agenda. And, in its turn, this may open the way for new campaigning and policy links with the working class and socialist movement throughout Europe.

CPSA (continued)

their abuse of power in that they put the long term interests of their coterie before the members and have spent most of their time scuppering action over staffing disputes etc in the Broad Left controlled DHSS section so that they can try and claim that the Broad Left has done nothing!

In the DHSS this appears to be backfiring on them and 2 branches in SE London and Hackney which were previously controlled by BL 84 have been won back by the real Broad Left. That said there is still a long way to go and the struggle between the two left groups continues. In the 1986 elections the Broad Left must be built (on the broadest possible basis) and some of the better BL 84 activists persuaded to return. But as one leading Broad Left activist and Socialist Caucus member Margot Hill put it, 'The split has been quite healthy politically.' It has become increasingly clear over the last 18 months of the split that the Kinnockites have nothing to offer the CPSA membership. They have been revealed as a group of careerists who are unable to handle the growing crisis in the DHSS and the DE.

WIN BACK THE CPSA

As the elections approach every effort must be made to persuade CPSA members to vote for one Broad Left, and to reject the divisive maneouvrings of the LCC and the CP in BL 84. The elections are wide open in 1986 as we see the National Moderate Group splitting as Kate Losinska and Pat Wormesley fall out. The members will now be presented with no less than 4 slates of candidates in the elections. Every vote now counts and we have a chance to win back the CPSA from the right wing.

However the internal struggle of the CPSA is inextricably tied with the fight now taking place in the Labour Party. There has been a witch hunt against 'Militant' on a scale comparable to only what is happening in Liverpool. If we are to defend the rights of all socialists then the fight back must be taken in tandem with the struggle inside the Labour Party. Already the Broad Left National Committee has opened links with the magazine 'Witch Hunt News'. Further a section of the Broad Left the 'Socialist Caucus' has voted to seek links with 'Labour Left Co-ordination'. These developments are in their early stages, and controversy continues unabated within the Broad Left. But it is a healthy sign that we have open and democratic debate in the Broad Left. It was from this that the LCC and the CP ran away. They have chosen to attack the left at a time when the real fight is against the right.

Join the Broad Left by writing to the Secretary, 48 Elisore Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 2SL.

Howard Fuller
National Organiser CPSA Broad Left

** The 'Socialist Caucus' is an alliance of non aligned socialists and is active in three civil service Unions including the CPSA. The politics of the organisation are similar to those pursued by Briefing. Membership is open to members of any civil service union and can be contacted via Alistair Wallace 138 Boleyn Road, London E7.*

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS IN STRUGGLE

Last November the largest and most representative workers' body in South African history was formed, COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions). COSATU encompasses many unions such as SANUM and MAWU (Metal and Allied Workers Union) and its role is to take up and to promote solidarity in the struggles of these unions throughout South Africa. Andrew Lewis describes how MAWU workers struggle for union recognition in the Sarmcol plant in Howick (Natal).

"We have built the country by fighting" has been the cry of the 950 striking British Tyre and Rubber (BTR) Sarmcol workers during their long and enduring struggle since April last year. The dispute was not sparked off by any particular event but was a culmination of over a decade's fruitless negotiations with the Sarmcol management over union recognition.

Victimisation

MAWU began organising workers at Sarmcol in 1974 and right from the start they were met with victimisation from the management, the banning of key union officials and police harassment, making it extremely difficult if not impossible to recruit workers to MAWU. Even by 1983 the management claimed that MAWU only represented 35% of the labour force and so wouldn't recognise it. But the union pointed out that Sarmcol's intense rationalisation process (the rapid introduction of mechanisation and semi-automation which reduced the workforce from 4500 in the early '70s to 2600 in 1980 to currently 1300) has given the company the opportunity to retrench many union members.

In 1983 MAWU resorted to using legal action to defend themselves, by taking the company to the Industrial Court alleging that the company had used unfair labour practice in retrenching workers without notice, negotiation or compensation. There was an out of court settlement in which the union was granted access to membership and within a month MAWU had claimed 90% of the workforce as fully paid-up union members!

Strike

But still there were disagreements over the recognition agreement, so finally the union balloted the membership for a mandate to undertake a legal strike in support of their demands to the recognition agreement. The strike started on 30th April 1985 and by May 3rd all strikers were dismissed, and the recruitment of scabs followed. This was an open declaration by management that they were not going to negotiate, so the striking workers had to adopt tactics beyond their withdrawal of labour to bring the management to the negotiating table. They went to neighbouring towns and villages and to the tribal chiefs in the nearby KwaZulu rural areas to put their case to potential scab labour and build support for the struggle ahead.

Support groups

Support groups, of a similar nature to the Miners' Support Groups experienced by the British labour movement during the miners' strike, were formed in early June in Pietermaritzburg and Durban. Their tasks comprised of fundraising for the strikers and their families and convening meetings between local community organisations and MAWU. Further to this, in Mpophomein a clinic was set up to monitor health problems of the area and the effect of the hardship that the strike had caused in the township. Many other organisations such as Natal Indian Congress, Black Students Society, SA Tin Workers Union, housing action committees and political organisations gave their full active support to the Sarmcol strikers. Rallies were held throughout Natal publicising their case and other actions included a near 100% stay-away and trade boycott of white businesses in the P'burg area.

Malnutrition

It is now over ten months since Sarmcol workers were locked out and doctors in the area have drawn attention to the high rate of malnutrition, especially amongst children. MAWU has set up a campaign to appeal for donations to provide eggs, which are high in protein, for the strikers' families. This is one of the first real opportunities that the labour movement in Britain has had to express solidarity with South African workers. The struggle against apartheid is not just a democratic one, but a struggle against capitalism. Apartheid is a racist system used to oppress blacks and Asians in South Africa who make up the vast majority of the South African working class.

The Sarmcol workers have courageously stood up against the multinational company and by fighting have made advances in workers' unity and solidarity action. And so must we in Britain extend this solidarity internationally to the Metal and Allied Workers Union by publicising the Sarmcol workers' case and taking collections and sending the contribution to:

Egg Campaign, MAWU, Central Court, 125 Gale Street, Durban, South Africa.

Material used from a contribution from Labour Monitoring Group of Natal to South African Labour Bulletin).

SALB, 31 Melle Street, 2001 Braamfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa.

REPORT FROM LABOUR MOVEMENT DELEGATION TO EL SALVADOR

After 60,000 deaths in six years of civil war, the struggle in El Salvador has turned back towards its roots. Strikes and demonstrations are again at the heart of Salvadorean politics. The unions are reorganising fast. Workers are beginning to find fresh confidence, despite the collective trauma left by so many activists murdered at the hands of the death squads. Inside the country President Duarte's Christian Democrat government is utterly discredited.

It is crucial that this new reality be brought home to the labour movement in Europe. In particular, any temptation among certain Labour leaders to see Duarte as some sort of 'democratic middle road' needs to be firmly squashed. These are a few of the lessons of the first Labour Movement Delegation to El Salvador, including Joan Burbidge and Larry Smith of the TGWU National Executive, Dave Boyle, a sacked miner from Silverwood pit, and Islington North MP, Jeremy Corbyn, which visited the country in January.

In the presidential and national assembly elections of 1984 and 1985, Duarte made many promises; to halt human rights abuses, implement the land reform, regenerate the collapsing economy and, above all, to hold peace talks with the FMLN-FDR liberation forces, who already controlled almost a third of the territory. Sections of a war-weary people gave him the benefit of the doubt. Most importantly, the moderate union federation, the UPD, the only one to have escaped the death squads relatively unscathed, signed a 'social pact' with Christian Democrats, giving Duarte their support in exchange for such pledges.

Less than a year later it was clear to the delegation that even his supporters felt Duarte had completely failed to meet these commitments. To start with all efforts have been concentrated on stepping up the war, with a massive increase in US supplied, maintained and directed air power. The victims of this highly sophisticated weaponry are not the FMLN, who have proved remarkably successful at adapting their tactics to this new kind of warfare. They are the civilians living in or around the areas controlled by the FMLN and on a devastating scale. About one-quarter of El Salvador's entire population have been forced to flee their homes through the war, mostly as a result of the most intensive aerial bombardment ever seen in the Americas, and one that cer-

(CONTINUED OVER)

PHILLIPINES: THE CHOICE

The overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos was achieved primarily by the courage of the Filipino people. Unarmed women and men came out into the streets to form human barricades in front of Marcos' tanks. The tanks stopped, the generals ran away; and finally, the dictator himself realised it was time to go.

For the vast majority of Filipinos, however, the struggle for democracy, national independence and more equitable distribution of wealth is far from over. Their struggle was not only against Marcos, but against domination by the United States, widespread poverty, and the monopolisation of politics by a small, wealthy elite.

Marcos had ruled the Philippines for 20 years. His regime had grown increasingly and more obviously repressive, and this had alienated the upper and middle classes as well as the poor. The murder of opposition leader Benigno Aquino in 1983, particularly, demonstrated to Marcos' rivals among the elite that he was determined to exclude them from power. The result was extreme political isolation for the regime.

Military

As Marcos' health deteriorated and public protest grew, his supporters began to squabble over the succession. The military, his main power-base, were divided into rival factions, one led by Chief of Staff Fabian Ver and the other by Ver's deputy, Lt. General Fidel Ramos. Ramos' faction favoured military reform and had support from the Defence Minister, Juan Ponce Enrile.



Cory Aquino

Labour Party Photo Library

Another major problem for Marcos' government had been the rapidly shrinking economy. This had caused a widespread increase in poverty which affected not only the poorest sectors, but also many of the middle class and this fuelled

El Salvador (CONTINUED)

tainly contravenes the Geneva Conventions on the bombing of civilian targets.

At the same time Duarte has broken off all talks with the FMLN-FDR, and it is now patently clear to all that his government is wholly subordinate to the real seats of power in the Armed Forces High Command and the American Embassy. This does not mean that the historic crisis within Salvadorean ruling circles has been solved; only that the real balance of strength has reasserted itself. A small example makes this clear. At Christmas the FMLN proposed a ceasefire to allow people to visit friends and family freely. Duarte agreed. The most prominent army commanders in the field, who are both the blue-eyed boys of the new US Ambassador and military advisers, and close political associates of the far-right ARENA party, continued their operations normally. They said pointedly that no-one had told them there was a ceasefire.

The unions move in

The result is a contradictory one. A relatively static military situation (neither side expects decisive victories in the short term) comes together with an extremely fluid political one, both resting on a social fabric whose convulsions are already acute, and likely to become more so. The dynamic new element is provided by the militant trade unions, grouped around FENASTRAS (National Federation of Salvadorean Workers) and the broader First of May Coordinating Committee. Under a new generation of young leaders (most of the General Secretaries we met were under 30 years old), these have moved rapidly to occupy some of the political space opened up by Duarte's abdication rightwards. The immediate reasons for their success are obvious: around 70% unemployment and underemployment, wages that have lost over half their purchasing power in the last five years, a new IMF-inspired austerity package aimed at financing the war which will make things even worse. In this situation it is not surprising that 1985 saw some 60,000 workers take strike action, compared with 26,000 in 1984 and 2,600 in 1983. However, the crucial factor in the unions' political impact has been their ability to combine organisation around such immediate economic demands and demands for trade union freedoms, with the central political question of the day in El Salvador, the demand for peace. In this they coincide not only with the FMLN-FDR, who have been pressing for talks and a political solution to the war for over two years, but also with the moderate UPD union federation, who from its different starting point has now broken with Duarte precisely because of his failure to pursue a peaceful settlement. Relations here are delicate, because the UPD leaders have still not broken ideologically with their former mentors in the American Institute for Free Labour Development, and do not want to be too openly associated with the left-wing unions. However, as the militant FENASTRAS puts it in posters plastered all over the walls of San Salvador, "without peace, the crisis will not end". No union that wants to hang onto its members can ignore this fact.

Mass movement

For the Salvadoran authorities, 'peace' has become a subversive word. It is around this question that a mass movement is reforming in El Salvador, and it is on this question that the left, both in the unions and in the form of the FMLN-FDR, has seized the initiative. It is only such a mass movement, combined with the pressure of international solidarity, that can break the military deadlock imposed by ever escalating US intervention.

And for those purists amongst us who feel 'peace' doesn't sound like a very revolutionary demand, it is worth remembering how FENASTRAS explain in one of their bulletins what they mean by peace:

"There can be no peace without justice; and for justice not to be a mere formality on the statute book, we need to transform the material conditions of people's lives, that's to say, transform the economic basis of society . . . for that we first have to control society, and that means having political power in our hands . . . Peace, like everything else, will be built by the workers."

If you want a speaker from the Labour Movement Delegation to El Salvador for your Labour Party/Trade Union, contact El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, Caxton House, 13-16 Borough Road, London SE1.

Iain Bruce, Norwood CLP (personal capacity)

BEFORE AQUINO

Pat Mortimer,
(Philippines Support Group)

the growth of political unrest. Some of the discontent was expressed in the emergence of a large, non-violent nationalist movement, particularly after the Aquino assassination. This movement aims at ending US domination of the Philippines and instituting a more participatory form of democracy than that which existed before Marcos declared martial law in 1972.

Opposition to Marcos also came from illegal organisations, the largest of which is the National Democratic Front (NDF). The NDF consists of eleven major organisations, including the Revolutionary Workers' Movement and Christians for National Liberation, as well as the better-known Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed group, the New People's Army (NPA). The NPA has been growing rapidly in numbers and influence.

Reagan Administration

The growth of the armed resistance and of the legal nationalist movement had greatly alarmed the Reagan administration. The basic aim of US policy on the Philippines is to preserve American strategic and economic interests there. The most important strategic interests are the two enormous US military bases at Subic Bay and Clark Air Field, which the Pentagon considers vital to US strategy in the Pacific.

To preserve its interests, the US administration wants a Philippine government that is willing and able to defeat both the NPA and the non-violent nationalist movement. Marcos had become a problem because his regime was so isolated, his counter-insurgency effort was failing and his poor health was encouraging political instability.

Presidential election

US pressure on Marcos to carry out reforms eventually provoked Marcos into calling a presidential election. The traditional right-wing opposition was eager to participate. The keenest was Salvador Laurel, a former Marcos supporter who had his eye on the presidency for some time. The moderate nationalists made an alliance with some of the other traditional politicians to back Corazon Aquino, widow of the murdered opposition leader. Her political programme originally reflected some of the nationalists' demands. It included removal of the US bases by 1991 and unconditional release of all political prisoners.

Laurel and Aquino agreed to team up after considerable pressure from the US Ambassador and the head of the Philippine Catholic Church, Cardinal Jaime Sin. Aquino would run for the presidency, with Laurel as vice-presidential candidate. Aquino's political programme changed, to become closer to that of the pro-American Laurel. The commitment to remove the US bases became a promise to renegotiate the bases treaty, while release of political prisoners became conditional on their renouncing violence.

Radical nationalists boycotted the election, because they were certain that Marcos would rig the results. They also complained that Aquino was not fighting a campaign on the basic issues of US domination and the economic crisis. However, they supported the electoral opposition in attempts to prevent fraud and terrorism by Marcos supporters. The NDF also called on its supporters to boycott the election.

As expected, there was widespread fraud and violence during the election. Amid huge protests in the Philippines and condemnation from outside, Marcos persisted in having himself declared the winner. Corazon Aquino called for a campaign of civil disobedience, which received approval from the Catholic Church hierarchy. Bayan, the federation of radical nationalist groups, although it had boycotted the election, wanted to challenge Marcos' claim to legitimacy and called for a general strike. The value of the peso fell as Marcos' future began to look uncertain. In the US, it seemed that only Reagan still dithered. Slowly and with great difficulty, State Department advisers prodded him to publicly criticise Marcos.

Crisis

The crisis was brought to a head on February 22nd, when Lt. General Ramos and Defence Minister Enrile barricaded themselves inside military headquarters and announced their support for Aquino. The main reason for their action was fear of imminent arrest by General Ver's faction. Marcos demanded that Enrile and Ramos should 'stop this stupidity and surrender'. Like most of Marcos' orders in the next few days, it was ignored. Meanwhile, Cardinal Sin called on the people of Manila to gather outside the military headquarters to protect the rebel troops. Hundreds of thousands of people did so.

Marcos sent troops and tanks out, but they were pushed back by the crowds. The air force went over to the military rebels, who captured the government TV station in the middle of a broadcast by Marcos. Some of Marcos' generals quietly ran away, leaving their troops at a loss. By February 25th, even Marcos had realised he could not win.

Aquino's government

Aquino's government is basically a coalition of the right and the centre. It includes military leaders (Enrile and Ramos), traditional politicians like Salvador Laurel (who is vice-president, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister), several former Marcos supporters and a few moderate nationalists. Some of them have close links with the Catholic Church hierarchy. Most of the new government have been drawn from the ranks of big business and large-scale landowners. Now that Marcos and his closest friends have left, Enrile is probably the richest man in the country: he is on the board of five government-owned companies and has extensive interests in the timber and coconut industries. He has been kept on as Defence Minister. The new Finance Minister, Jaime Ongpin, is president of the Benguet Mining Corporation, one of the country's largest mining companies. The Trade and Industry Minister, Jose Concepcion, is a millionaire industrialist, while the Laurel and Aquino families have very large estates.

There are a few liberals in the government who advocate substantial democratisation, but the coalition is basically dominated by the right. It has a broader power-base than Marcos had, but because of the disparity of interests within it, it is relatively fragile. Arguments on policy have already begun.

Aquino's government does have the advantage of broad international support and a large measure of acceptability to Filipinos. It also has a programme of reform aimed at removing the worst excesses of Marcos' regime. Bayan, the federation of radical nationalist groups, has expressed qualified support for the new regime. Its representatives say they expect positive changes from the government in terms of greater democratic rights, though not in terms of agrarian reform, resistance to the IMF, or removal of US bases. They see the role of the legal left as being to encourage the government to respond to the demands of the majority of the people, who are workers and peasants. They also intend to help develop organisations representing various sectors in soceity which would provide the base for opposition to the government should it fail to serve the interests of the people.

Aquino has announced that she wants a ceasefire and negotiations with the illegal opposition. The NDF says it is willing to consider a truce, but that it would depend on the terms offered. The NPA certainly has no intention of laying down its arms altogether.

The US administration has expressed full support for the new government. It has tried to claim some of the credit for Marcos' downfall, and has promised to increase aid to the military. Reagan expects to have fewer constraints in providing military aid and there will certainly be less opposition from Congress for it.

The US government is still concerned about NPA insurgency, the consolidation of the new government and economic recovery. Its aims of widening the regime's power base, installing Ramos in charge of the military, and improving the regime's image have all been achieved. The majority of the ruling coalition can be counted on to support US aims.

Corazon Aquino has gained a great deal of credibility by ordering the unconditional release of all political prisoners, in spite of protests from the military. But there are many other problems facing the Filipino people. Many have been the victims of military abuses, and this includes 5.7 million people uprooted in the course of counter-insurgency operations; the countryside is still dominated by wealthy landowners; interference by the US administration and pressure from the IMF will continue.

Corazon Aquino has a choice: she can support the interests of the majority of Filipinos, or she can agree to the demands of the military and the US government. If she does the latter, she can be sure the people will fight.

For further information, please contact: Philippines Support Group, 1/2 Grangeway, London NW6 2BW. Tel: 624 7819.

WEST GERMANY'S S.D.P.—OFF TO BONN WITH THE GREENS?

Remember 1983, that depressing year with the conservative election victories in close succession in Britain and West Germany, followed by the deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles? It may be dangerous to speak too soon, but 1987 may well see the turning of the tide with another two elections in the same countries leading to the downfall of the Tory and Christian Democratic governments, albeit perhaps not yet the dismantling of the missiles bases.A date for the next British general election has yet to be announced, of course, but in January 1987 the voters in the largest capitalist country of Europe will go to the polls to declare their verdict on four years of conservative-liberal coalition. First indications are promising: not only is Chancellor Kohl under investigation by the Public Prosecutor in connection with the Flick bribery scandal, but opinion polls point to a possible majority for the combined forces of the SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, despite the name roughly the equivalent of the Labour Party rather than the British Social Democrats) and the radical environmentalist Green Party. Both, of course, have only recent formed a joint government in the important federal state of Hesse.

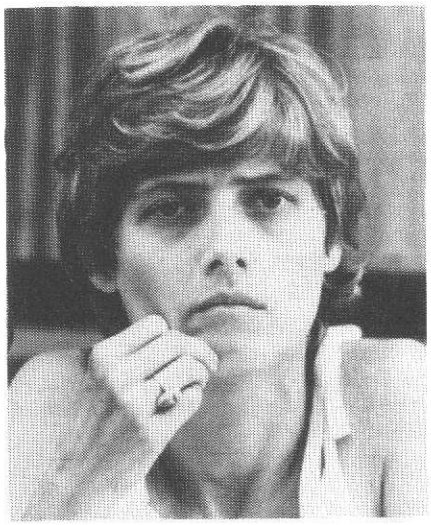
A year may be a long time in politics, but it is difficult to see the Christian Democrats recovering in time from the combined effects of damaging scandals, inept leadership and economic crisis to reverse today's trends. Yet even if the centre-right coalition fails, as expected, to secure another parliamentary majority, it is by no means certain that the 'Hesse model' of red-green coalition government will be repeated in Bonn. For a start, the SPD's candidate for the chancellorship, Northrhine-Westphalian prime minister Johannes Rau, has publicly declared his implacable opposition to such an alliance. So, of course, did the SPD's leader in Hesse, Holger Borner, less than two years ago. The truth, however, is that both the Social Democrats and the Greens are deeply divided over this issue.

This debate cuts right across the traditional divides between the left and the right. Most of the SPD's left wing are in favour of linking up with the Greens, to be sure, and virtually the entire right is opposed. But the Prime Minister of Hesse has always been regarded as a stalwart of the right, and one of the most prominent figures on the party's left, Oskar Lafontaine – the only senior West German politician to have publicly questioned the Federal Republic's membership of NATO – is a well-known opponent of red-green coalitions. Similarly, in the Green Party, the 'fundamentalist' anti-coalitionists are often to the right of the self-styled *Realpolitiker* on other issues. What are the issues at stake?

SPDs INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT

The SPD's internal development has, over the past ten years, taken a course very different from that of the Labour Party. To some extent, this can be acounted for by the fact that it remained in government until Autumn 1982 under the strong right-wing leadership of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. In addition, the economic crisis had not yet bitten as hard as it has in Britain (many of the jobs lost were those of 'dispensable' foreign immigrants, largely from Turkey) and the highly bureaucratic trade unions remained more servile to Schmidt than even the TUC to Callaghan in 1979.

Most crucially, however, the long period of uninterrupted SPD government (sixteen years from 1966 to 1982!) had created the conditions for the emergence of a strong and youthful left wing radicalism *outside* social democracy – which finally in the early eighties, after a decade of failed Maoist sects and fragmented campaigning, and under the impetus of the huge peace movement, crystallised into the Green Party. All this stifled the growth of the left wing within the SPD so that even after 1982/83, there was no British-style upsurge of 'Bennite' leftism.



Labour Party Photo Library

Petra Kelly of the West German Green Party

To be sure, the party as a whole moved gingerly away from the positions of Schmidt and under the guidance of its elder statesman and chairman Willy Brandt adopted a more leftish stance, especially on defence and foreign policy, but rank-and-file activism remained weak and sporadic. The parliamentary left around the *Frankfurter Kreis* (Frankfurt Circle) resembles the Tribune Group of the mid-1960s rather than the Campaign Group of the 1980s, and Lafontaine and Eppler are still far from being the West German Benn and Heffer.

SECTARIANISM

Thus it is not only the right wing which, for obvious reasons, rejects any kind of alliance with the Greens, but many of the left who see the demise of the Greens as a precondition for altering the relationship of forces within social democracy. Such sectarianism, however is a dangerous game to play, because it not only plays into the hands of ring-wing plots to return to the 'Grand Coalition' with the Christian Democrats of 1966-69, but could also be the decisive factor in ensuring the continuation of the present government: for there is very little prospect of the SPD gaining an absolute majority, and only open campaigning for a red-green alliance to bring down the right will swing crucial sectors of the electorate leftwards behind a realistic alternative to Kohl-Genscher.

TRADE UNION LEFT

A clear perspective for an alternative government – be it an SPD-Green coalition or a minority SPD government 'tolerated' by the Greens – is also needed to give a political cutting edge to the trade union mobilisations which will accompany this election campaign. The Day of Action called by the West German TUC against the planned abolition of unemployment payments to workers locked out during a strike in which they are not directly involved could be the beginning of a hot industrial summer and autumn if the giant metalworkers' union, as is expected, resumes its campaign for a 35-hour week this year.

In recent months the trade union left has increasingly assumed the leadership in the struggle against the Kohl government and in the course of this campaign forged the first real links with the Greens, as the triumphant reception for the metalworkers' deputy leader, Hans Jansen, at the recent Green Party conference showed. More and more rank-and-file trade unionists are losing their inhibitions when it comes to turning to the Greens for support in their struggles and a sectarian attitude on the part of the SPD left will only be seen as counter-productive to the common cause and thus further weaken, rather than strengthen, its influence. It will also, of course, do little to overcome the mirror image sectarianism of many Greens towards the SPD. Thus both sides could, by destroying the only real prospect of bringing down the centre-right government, combine to blunt the political edge of the coming mass mobilisations.

There is a lot at stake in all this, far more than the short-term interests of the SPD left. Just imagine a government in Bonn, traditionally the main bulwark of Atlantic imperialism in Western Europe, demanding the removal of the Cruise and Pershing missiles, seeking to renegotiate its relationship with NATO, and breaking with the monetarist, anti-union consensus currently so dominant in the politics of capitalist Europe. It would, of course, not herald the imminent socialist transformation of the Federal Republic – the SPD is still far too right-wing and the Greens far too confused for that – but it would decisively swing the general trend of developments in Western Europe. It is *possible* and, if the opinion polls are to be believed, desired by the overwhelming majority of both SPD and Greens supporters. The leaderships of both, and especially their left wings, carry a heavy responsibility.

BY GUNTER MINNERUP

STALINISM AT ANTI-APARTHEID CONFERENCE

Phil Ward Walkely Labour Party, Sheffield (personal capacity)

The main purpose of the Anti-Apartheid trade union conference on March 1st was organising for the April 14th–18th week of Action. Organisation will be difficult, with the Week only a short six weeks away, and it is also in doubt by the failure of the AAM to discuss a militant policy for trade union action at its AGM in December.

Abdul Minty (Honorary Secretary), opening the Conference, denounced the hypocrisy of the Tories in claiming to stop the import of Kruggerrands, and yet not making this illegal, as a recent attempted prosecution by customs discovered. He pointed out the need for continued pressure for government sanctions, while also advocating "people's sanctions", although not attempting to outline how the actions of the workers at Southampton docks (in boycotting the Marconi radar system) or the boycotting of South African goods by NUPE members in Portsmouth could be made more widespread.

Ron Todd (Chair of the TUC International Committee) also failed to outline what the TUC — who also support the Week — is planning; and did not make any concrete suggestions for what activists could do.

Instead, the platform, and their supporters on the floor, were hostile to suggestions for unions to build up local links with their counterparts in South Africa, and even to speaking tours and fundraising for them (as Camden NALGO did with the Metal & Allied Workers' Union last year).

The hesitancy of the TUC and the Stalinist-influenced AAM leadership can be understood by comparing the platform and policies of COSATU with those of the TUC. The TUC can support the desire to demolish apartheid, but COSATU also advocates industrial unionism, a militant programme for Women's rights, workers' control, a sliding scale of wages and hours, and extensive union democracy!

But the arguments advanced by SACTU (the South African Congress of Trades Unions), the underground union movement sponsored by the ANC and the SA Communist Party, were puzzling. SACTU presents itself in Britain as *the* South African trade union movement, gaining support from many TUC unions at the expense of FOSATU and CUSA. But in reality, it has never recovered from being destroyed by the state after the Sharpeville massacres, and now plays the role of a pro-ANC grouping in COSATU.

SACTU are now supporting COSATU, but still insist that all contacts with unions in South Africa are organised through themselves. In particular they implied that all money for COSATU should be sent via them, or it could "get into the wrong hands", endangering militants in South Africa. They also warn that COSATU's legality and openness makes it vulnerable to repression, and argue for building SACTU.

If these arguments are valid, SACTU should be pledging to facilitate direct links until COSATU is established enough to do it itself. Otherwise it sounds as if SACTU is just trying to keep control of the British solidarity movement.

The Conference illustrated the inadequacies of the present AAM leadership in building the solidarity movement. There is a current opposed to the present course, but its only organised expression appears to be the Revolutionary Communist Group and the Socialist Workers Party. While they both make valid criticisms, and some good proposals for action, they tend to allow themselves to be provoked by the AAM leadership into heckling and disruptive behaviour.

More Labour Party members should involve themselves in AAM, particularly in London, to show how to build a solidarity movement effectively and then hopefully build a coherent opposition to the present AAM leadership.

In the meantime, we should be trying to get union branches, Trades Councils, Labour Parties, etc., to tour South African speakers and to campaign nationally for our unions to organise real solidarity work with COSATU. We should find ways of linking in the question of Namibia, by campaigning against the import and reprocessing of Namibian uranium. This will prepare the ground for more widespread "workers' sanctions".

ERIC HEFFER ON WOMEN AND IRELAND

Last month, Briefing featured the first part of an interview with Eric Heffer. We conclude the interview by setting out below Eric's views on women's sections and the Anglo-Irish accord

Briefing: *I'd like to ask your views on Women's autonomous organisations in the party, particularly in relation to the demands of the Labour Women's Action Committee, for example that the women's conference should elect the NEC Women's Section and that there should be a woman on every shortlist.*

Eric Heffer: I have supported consistently the proposal that the women should elect the representatives on to the National Executive through the Women's Conference. I think it is quite disgraceful that women should not elect their own representatives. At the moment you get people from the Women's Section there at the gift of certain trade unions, and they don't necessarily represent the views of the Women's Section of the party.

In relation to women on every shortlist, I don't like anybody being put on as a sort of token, because I am not keen on tokenism within the party. But I have to say I would like to see a woman on every shortlist, though I am not certain it should be in the constitution. I may perhaps be slightly conservative on this matter, but I'm always open to be convinced.

So if you like I am a product of my age. If comrades can convince me that they are right, I am not going to stand in the face of historical development. But I would be dishonest if I didn't say that I am not absolutely convinced that you have to say that women must be on the shortlist.

Although if a local party decides that is what they are going to do, then that is their responsibility.

B: *Briefing has always been very concerned to promote debate around Ireland in the Labour Party. And in view of this it would be interesting to know your views on the Anglo-Irish Accord, and how you voted and your reasons for it.*

EH: I abstained. And the only reason I abstained is I didn't feel I could go in the same lobbies with Mr Paisley and company, because I knew they were opposing it for very different reasons to me.

I didn't agree with the Anglo-Irish accord. I think it is a con. There was an argument in the left as to whether one should abstain or vote against. Some comrades voted against. Quite a number of us abstained. It was a pity really that the number of people who deliberately abstained for the reasons that I put forward weren't counted.

In my part of the world, in Liverpool, it would not have been understood, if I had gone in the same lobby with Paisley. The Orange people in Liverpool would have said: "Ha, Heffer is voting with Paisley against", and therefore you would then have been "a supporter of Paisley".

When I stood for the leadership of the party I was asked who my heroes were. I said I don't have any particlar hero. I have one hero and one heroine. My hero is, if you want to use those terms, James Connolly and the heroine was Rosa Luxembourg. These are the two figures that influenced my political thinking.

As far as I am concerned there is only one answer to Ireland: a united Ireland. As long as there is no united Ireland, there will always be trouble, there will be fighting, there will be violence. And the real outset for ending the border is withdrawal of British troops. Then the interesting thing is the Protestant working class who find themselves actually becoming quite a force as a working class together with the Catholic working class, would only then realise that the potential is in that direction instead of being as they have been so often, and still are, misguided and led into by-ways of sectarianism rather than in class politics.



G. M. COOKSON

SELLAFIELD—LABOUR'S LOST OPPORTUNITY

Since they first came to power back in 1979 the Tories and Thatcher in particular have adopted a brazenly pro-nuclear stance. Within a few months of taking office a massive programme of reactor building was announced — which fortunately hasn't happened yet — and Thatcher had posed for the press on top of a nuclear reactor to show us all how safe it was. Even leaving aside its role as a stick to beat the miners with, nuclear power was clearly an issue that Thatcher had one of those famous "gut" feelings about. Today even she must be regretting the Tories' public image as *the* pro-nuclear party.

The Sellafield Leaks (23rd January – 1st March)

5th Feb. Plutonium nitrate is released in an accident at "Building 205". It caused an "amber alert" and the plant was closed down for 15 hours. Eleven workers are thought to have been contaminated. BNFL originally said no one had been effected.

8th Feb. A broken pipe led to the leak of contaminated water from a cooling pond.

23rd Jan. 440kg of uranium is discharged into the Irish Sea in an accident similar to the one in 1983 when BNFL was fined £10,000. They originally said only "a few" kgs had been discharged.

1st March. A broken seal in "Building 277" (where fast breeder fuel is fabricated) led to the contamination of possibly 12 workers in the building.

During this time it was disclosed that during the period 1952–55 over 20kg of uranium was discharged into the air instead of the previously claimed figure of 0.4kg.

Also on 28th Feb. the *Guardian* revealed that a report commissioned by BNFL on the military nuclear reactors Calder Hall & Chapple Cross concluded that an earth tremor would have between 1/100 and 1/1000 chance of causing the complete destruction of either plant. BNFL rejected the report.

Pat Cadwallender, Brighton SERA.

The last few weeks have seen such a deluge of leaks and revelations that it is hard to keep up with it *(see insert)*. But Thatcher had boldly been declaring that the industry has her full backing — even in the face of resignation threats from Tory MPs who are suddenly faced with nuclear waste dumps in their constituencies. The British nuclear industry is on the run and Thatcher's dogged loyalty is likely to be another factor in her eventual downfall. Both the Irish government and the European Parliament are calling for Sellafield's closure. With Labour now committed to an anti-nuclear power policy from last year's conference it is a wonderful opportunity for Labour to take the lead in exposing the Tories and arguing for a rational energy policy based broadly on coal, conservation and research into the renewable technologies.

Cunningham

The response of Labour's Environment spokesperson to this opportunity has been to call for a review of management procedures at Sellafield. Sadly Jack Cunningham, whose constituency includes the Sellafield plant, is avidly pro-nuclear. His initial response to the conference decision was to appear in BNFL news and make the following statement: "The Labour Party has supported the development of civil nuclear power for decades. One conference decision won't change this and I don't expect it to be included in the next manifesto. The Labour Party is in the business of looking for structures to create jobs and investments in Britain. It is not interested in crude political decisions to shut whole industries down."

In fact the conference resolution guarantees the employment of those workers afffected by the changeover — some would be involved for many years in decommissioning existing nuclear plant and looking after spent fuel and nuclear waste, power engineering workers would be needed for building coalfired stations and converting existing stations to CHP, and a non-nuclear energy policy would create thousands of new jobs throughout Britain and would be more labour intensive.

SERA's Campaign

Clearly if conference policies are to oe taken into account Cunningham is the wrong person for the job — but it would be wrong to make this into an issue of personalities. Not one leading Shadow Cabinet members has made a significant anti-nuclear speech even during the last few weeks. The Labour leadership is as committed to nuclear power as it has always been, and calls for Cunningham's resignation are likely to fall on deaf ears. More important is SERA's campaign to ensure a ⅔ majority for the anti-nuclear policy at the next Party conference. This will mean a lot of hard work over the coming months to win more Union support. Crucial unions are now the GMBATU and the Union of Communication Workers — further details from SERA's head office at 9, Poland Street London W1V 3DG.

Nuclear Power is on the way out — our task is to ensure that Labour is ready to finish the job.

Andy Porter
SERA Council and Brighton Labour Party

Andy is co-author of the "Energy Fix", a socialist perspective on energy policy to be published by Pluto in April.

Letter

Dear Briefing,

Alan Thornett's article on the front of the March national supplement was extraordinarily weak both in terms of analysis and demands put forward.

To say that the miners' strike was lost because their sacrifice "was not matched by support from the rest of the movement" is at best ambiguous. The real roots of the defeat of the miners lie in the treacherous role played by trade union leaders, who systematically blocked solidarity action by the organised working class. The NUR leaders settled their members' pay claim double-quick to prevent railworkers making common cause with the miners, and the dockers' leaders worked overtime to get the dockers back to work and prevent a united front developing.

The distinction between the leaders and the ranks of the trade unions is important and has its bearing on Wapping. Many on the left are calling for the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC, but no one has adequately explained to me how this will help honest rank and file electricians take on their scab leaders. Kicking the whole union out is a bureaucratic answer. How much more awkward it would be for TUC leaders to promote a movement inside the EETPU against the leadership. The precedent of organising open, broad left movements based on the rank and file might take root in other unions — which is why not even the most left wing union leader will call for it.

Alan Thornett's article doesn't deal with any of this. He concludes: "A fightback of this kind can help build a movement amongst the rank and file which can challenge the prevailing trends which are dangerous to the future of the labour movement".

Is it "prevailing trends" that are the problem? Or rather the passivity and capitulation of a whole series of trade union (and Labour Party) leaders to the Tory anti-union laws? If the TUC issued a call, workers would rally in their thousands to the printworkers. Instead, a consumer boycott is put forward by union leaders — which is just not going to get nearly 6,000 printworkers their jobs back.

I hope the debate about the way forward for the printworkers will continue in *Briefing*.

Yours for socialism,

Mike Phipps,
Hammersmith CLP.



LABOUR BRIEFING Streetlife Supplement on personal politics



Incest is the abuse of power !

As an incest survivor it has been an overwhelming relief to finally find a group (Incest Survivors Campaign), where it is acceptable for me and other women to talk about our reality and feelings, without being called neurotic, man hater, shunned, excluded, or being blamed for the actions of our abusers by rationalising (excusing) the irresponsible abuse and manipulation of their power over us. Our definition of incest is "the sexual molestation of a child by any person that child sees as a figure of trust or authority – parents, relatives (whether natural or adoptive), family friends, babysitters, social workers, teachers, priests, doctors, etc. We see the questions of blood relationship and taboo as red herrings which obscure the central issue: the irresponsible exploitation of children's ignorance, trust and obedience. Incest is the abuse of power." (ISC, 1981).

Work done by committed feminists and women's groups (mainly unpaid) indicate that 97% of abusers are male, we're talking about your friends and colleagues, husbands and boyfriends, comrades you may know, like and trust. They show that probably one in four women are survivors, and that sexual harassment, rape, battering and emotional abuse are part of everyday life for the majority of women in marriage, the workplace and in all areas of society, including highly educated and professional groups. The research shows that it happens in all socio-economic groups and classes, and is not related to poverty. (However, it is easier for middle class professionals to hide their actions and discredit the women and children concerned as they have more power and protection by colleagues).

Reality of men's power

The reality of men's power and control over us is apparent from the moment we are conceived. Men regulate our mothers' health, determine how and where we will be born, instruct how we will be fed, taught, treated, what our position and behaviour in society should be, and sometimes even start sexually abusing us from the moment we are born (as babies). This information and knowledge has been kept suppressed and hidden in the past by men, as it is the basis of their power and control over us. Any women, or women's groups, who manage to get into the professional power structure, and try to give women and girls some power and control over their lives, by sharing information with them, and involving them in decision and policy making, become a threat to men's power, and male colleagues, and risk losing their jobs, careers and funding (as is happening now with Wendy Savage and women's groups which had been funded by the GLC). One group which has refused to betray us, by not giving in to the pressure from the professional establishment to misrepresent the reality, Child Sexual Abuse Preventive Education Project, has had no offer of funding with the demise of the GLC.

My father, a social worker (and considered a radical socialist) is doing the courses on Child Sexual Abuse Therapy, and along with any of his colleagues who may be abusers, continues to have the same power and protection to abuse me and any other women and children, which they have always had. Men, including my father, are used to using political (socialist) and professional jargon to discuss and theorise intellectually on all their abuses of power, rationalising (excusing) and justifying those abuses and always blaming women and children, or other external factors. They are safe in the knowledge that their colleagues will devise therapies that safeguard their power and protect them.

We are seen as the problem

When women or children talk about their reality, show their emotions, anger, pain, fear, etc., or show other physical or emotional reaction to the oppression and abuse we suffer, we are seen as a problem. We are diagnosed and labelled as trouble-makers, pathological liars, neurotic, schizophrenic, mentally ill, etc., and handed over to the professionals (including professional abusers like my father), to be sorted out, controlled, pressurised and manipulated into denying and hiding our reality. Survivors are treated as the problem and punished, but you must all face the reality. Men's power, the abusers and the abuse are the problem. Men should not be allowed to work with women and girls who have been abused, even if a particular man is not an abuser he benefits from the control and power he gains from other abuses, and his career, status and acceptance in society depends on his male colleagues who may be abusers themselves. Secondary abuse by professionals has been recorded by feminists and women's groups as being quite common! Indeed even as a young child, four or five years old, I observed that my father's attitudes and behaviour towards children (including me) and women, were shared by many of his colleagues, and so never felt it was just me (although none of us ever discussed what happened. It was too dangerous. We saw what happened to women and children who talked about their reality).

When my father tried to persuade me to read pornography, or that I should be engaging in sexual activity (make myself available) to his colleagues, boys he approved of or himself, and I didn't cooperate, he would tell me I was making myself repressed, neurotic, and mentally ill. Freud said all girls wanted to sleep with their fathers, so there was obviously something dreadfully wrong with me, and he would have to have me put in a mental hospital. His colleagues were using the same arguments and rationalisations, and I saw them used on women and children alike.

Even the only way to protect myself that was acceptable to me, being ill all the time, (I lived in a constant state of fear and anxiety), my father diagnosed as psychosomatic illnesses due to repressed sexuality!!!

At long last I'm no longer ill all the time, due to strong courageous women who have been honest about our reality, who have broken the silence and who do not betray us or deny the abuse of men's power over women and children. Women who I trust and respect, who have given me power and control over my life by speaking the truth.

How many women and children are sexually assaulted, raped, battered and murdered every day, all round the world, not only in body but in mind? Have you the courage to be honest to yourself and others about the reality, even when it's your comrades?

Anne

We must look at the real issues

Social Services statistics reflect more than any others the social problems of an area or city. In the year 1979/80 Birmingham City Council employed 636 fieldwork Social Work staff who dealt with 40,572 referrals. By the year 1984/5 despite massively increased social problems such as bad housing and unemployment, only 32 more fieldwork Social Work staff were employed. Consequently, 668 fieldworkers dealt with 48,451 referrals. Even this large increase (19% as against an increase in fieldwork staff of only 5%) is understated by approximately 12,000 referrals to specialist teams for physically-handicapped, mentally-ill and mentally-handicapped people.

It is no good therefore just blaming social workers for child abuse cases. That will not stop it happening time and again. Social workers are only human and are under increased pressure from increased, and still increasing case loads. Admittedly it may be impossible to eradicate child abuse completely, but if we really want to tackle the problem honestly and attempt to reduce the likelihood of it re-occurring we must go beyond sensationalism and recrimination and look at the real issues.

John Wilton,
(PPC Birmingham Edgbaston CLP)

Fighting for more resources

At a time when jobs and services in the public sector are under attack by the Tories – local authorities are tempted to cut back on services regarded as 'non-essential'. In many parts of the country social work has suffered from these cutbacks. Priority is generally still given to statutory work and to practical measures. The less obvious and measureable aspects of the work are brushed aside.

The psychodynamic approach to social work is being overshadowed by service delivery.

But statutory work includes two of the most sensitive and difficult areas in social work – dealing with people who are mentally ill, in other words at an extreme of human distress, and working with families where children are at risk of physical or sexual abuse.

It is not easy to understand or work in either of these areas without psychodynamic training and supervision.

The sexual abuse of children – which is far more often incestuous than perpetrated by strangers – is not a disease of poverty. All social and financial classes are involved. Thus it will not be eradicated by simple redistributive measures.

The abusing parent has his reasons, and they are seldom the same as his excuses. He may not even know what they are; he may have forgotten the awful early experiences that left him feeling exploited, worthless, a toy to someone else's wishes. These were not necessarily sexual experiences in the literal sense. But in adult life, under the pressures of trying to live up to a masculine stereotype, angry and bewildered, he may translate them as such as he vainly tries to feel strong and wanted by making someone else feel as he used to, helpless and small.

Workers at Great Ormond Street and the Tavistock Clinic have been working intensively for some years with abusive families. They have identified two of the main kinds of family constellation in which sexual abuse is likely to occur.

In the 'moralistic rigid secretive family' there is an avoidance of open conflict among the members, and a strict taboo on open communication about sex. The mother becomes the caretaker of the family, but is distant or even hostile towards her daughter. The power relations become confused. By forming a sexual liaison with his daughter, father in one sense is the king, being serviced in different ways by the female serfs; from another viewpoint, he and his daughter have become equally 'naughty children'.

The 'pseudo-equal family' again features a man who is dependent for care upon his wife, but has no sexual relations with her. There is open marital conflict and the liaison with the daughter keeps the father emotionally bound into the family. Again there is a confused picture of power. Mother and father could be seen in a sense as using the daughter ruthlessly to keep their marriage together, whether or not this is acknowledged between them; from another angle, father again 'has it made'.

It may not always be a daughter who is used in this way. The unconscious notion that children exist for their parents' gratification can involve sons as well in these deeply confusing and damaging exploitations. Often the abuse is still perpetrated by the father, which may relate to some social expectation that it is men who are entitled to act out their emotional problems sexually. Incestuous mothers tend to be openly psychotic.

Life long

The effect on the victimised daughter or son is lifelong. The earlier the abuse occurs, the longer it goes on, and the more extensive it is, the worse the harm. Children need desperately to please the adults they rely on. They are trusting. The younger they are, the more easily they are confused about what is their fault when things seem to be going wrong.

One of the terrifying aspects of incest to the child involved is the sense of having a kind of power over their parents that feels very unsafe. S/he fears she could blow the family apart if she either refuses her father's advances, or tells someone outside the family. She is put in an impossible position.

She needs to believe in her father's goodness so may become convinced she is the one who is bad. She dare not turn to her mother.

If her mother were strong and accessible to the child's needs, so that it would be easy to tell her and get her protection, the abuse would be unlikely to happen in the first place. Certainly it would not recur. Having been exploited one is wide open to exploitation and to dependency on people who exploit.

The child grows up with a conviction of her own worthlessness; a craving for love and being needed (that she cannot distinguish from exploitation); a huge and helpless anger that readily merges into despairing cynicism; and a tendency to deep passivity and depression. Many very young prostitutes are refugees from incestuous families, doing the best they know how to achieve independence; and reproducing every working day their deep inner sense of abuse and exploitation.

Even if she escapes this fate, a sexually abused girl may grow up to find that she has married someone who assaults her daughter. The terrible unconscious patterns lock them in.

Treatment may be for the family as a whole or for the daughter, if she has been referred at an age when separation from the family is more appropriate than attempts to heal the hurt within the family. it is also possible to provide help for the several members individually as well as for the whole family, and useful work has been done on setting up groups for abused children.

Facing and understanding the terrible pain, sorrow and rage that impels the members into destructive relationships requires not only trained skill in the workers; it also means that staff will need much support for their own difficult feelings.

Attempting to set priorities because of financial constraints, health and local authorities are pulling back resources from these sensitive areas. Tory managers withhold money because they dislike paying staff and want to encourage the private sector to take over; socialist councillors want to use it on other, more practical and visibly necessary resources. Each has a blind spot. Tories tend to view therapy as an undeserved luxury, socialists to see it as unnecessary interference in people's lives. Both views avoid the pain and confusion of the real experience of troubled families.

As socialists, I think we should be angry about this.

I think we should be fighting for more therapeutic resources, more psychodynamic training for front-line workers, and more workers – not at the expense of decent housing and welfare benefits, nursery places, jobs, but as well as all these.

Patricia Land, social worker

STREETLIFE MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the **FIRST MONDAY** of every month and are open to all **Briefing** supporters. For details of time, venue and any other information contact: **JANE STOCKTON or ANN FLOWERS, 01-802 4604.**

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue, as well as continuing the theme of child abuse, we will be extending it into the more general issue of violence against women. All contributions are welcome, particularly those from people who can write from personal experience. For reasons of space they should be no more than 800 words, and should preferably be typed. Suitable graphics and illustrations are also welcome.

Contributions should be sent to: **JANE STOCKTON, 31 CRANWICH ROAD, LONDON N16 5HZ, by April 7th.**

Giving my father's funeral a socialist perspective

When my father died we – my mother, brothers and I – decided his funeral should include a substantial socialist expression befitting of his commitment to socialist ideas and defence of the environment; commitments he never wavered from.

We found the Co-op funeral service in Swindon very understanding and helpful and were very pleased when they found a retired socialist Unitarian vicar for us whose politically formative years – the 30's – matched my father's and mother's. Even so the arranging of the remembrance ceremony was not so easy. We found friends very supportive and helpful. It was vital to talk to people about his death, to come to terms with it. Indeed I think it is necessary to talk about these things.

We asked ourselves many questions. Would some who wanted to pay their respects not appreciate the ceremony we had in mind? Did it matter? What is a funeral for anyway? It seems to me a funeral is a ceremony to complete one's relationship with the person, as living (notwithstanding the ongoing relationship there will be). To me that necessitated showing to those who would come to the funeral what we saw as the essence of his life in a way which would enable it to be carried on.

So we went ahead. The notices made it clear the ceremony would remember his commitment to human liberation and defence of the environment. We avoided the word "service" although there was a religious content. A lot of people came. The ceremony included tapes of "Ode to Joy" and Joan Baez signing Blowin' in the Wind. I and my three brothers each read appropriate poems or quotations. A work colleague in Electrical Engineering read a statement and the vicar read a statement we had prepared. After the committal we sang the Red Flag and the International.

It was not easy, but necessary, appropriate and ultimately – because we expressed what we wanted to express – in itself gave satisfaction.

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP

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