MERSEYSIDE LABOUR
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Socialists for a Labour Victory

by
Kevin Feintuck
Arundel L.P.
John Nolan
Oxton L.P.

Another five years of Thatcher would be a disaster for British workers. We would see jobs disappearing at an increasing rate. All that we have fought and worked for in welfare services - health, education, pensions, decent housing - would be chopped, shriveled and sold off to cowboy privatisers. The present Tory repressive laws would be used to attack the rights of trade unionists, blacks, women and youth. Reagan's missiles would arrive and we would be on the count-down to a 'showdown with the commies'. The Tory disease could be terminal.

But a Labour Government would be a victory for the working class and a disaster for the bosses. So, why don't we elect one? The Bermondsey defeat showed us how not to elect one If we spend months slagging-off the candidate as 'extremist' and then expel five loyal members of the Party the night before the election, we have a good chance of not getting elected. But if we make it clear that, if we get elected we are likely to backslide on all the policies that workers support us for, we are certain to lose.



COALITION?

Already sections of the Left are showing signs of giving way to the Right wing led NEC and PLP in the run-up to the election. The manifesto looks likely to be marked by a general fudging of the issues and we have heard murmurings amongst the Left about supporting a future coalition government and/or allowing a Right wing putsch against Foot in favour of short- term electoral popularity. If the Left adopts these positions it will be following an unfortunate tradition of pushing forward on policies and then giving way precisely at the crucial time when the election is raising political questions in working peoples consciousness.

A coalition would be the surest guarantee of demoralising those who look to the Labour Party to stand up for their interests against the bankers and bosses. Likewise a Healey-Shore leadership would open the way to guaranteeing further betrayals coupled with witch-hunts which would dwarf anything seen to date.

If, on the other hand, we convince people that Labour will stop Cruise and Trident missiles, restore the NHS, get us out of the EEC, introduce a massive house-building programme and a 35-hour week, and take away police powers of arbitrary arrest and detention, Labour will be the next Government. This is precisely what Socialists for a Labour Victory sets out to do, to convince workers that we'll stop Thatcher's and Reagan's war drive, bring back jobs instead and kick out the Tories instead of the Socialists.

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People Campaining for Peace and Jobs p2

Socialists for a Labour Victory continued . . .

SLV was launched in the House of Commons on 7 March. It has the support of the Campaign Group of MPs - as well as leading Labour figures like Ken Livingstone. The campaign sets out to unite all active socialists in the Labour Party fighting for the election of a Labour Government, committed absolutely to implementing conference policies. As a minimum, these would include:

1. Unilateral nuclear disarmament - no nuclear weapons in Britain.
2. Withdrawl from the EEC, together with a re-nationalisation and house-building programme; restoration and expansion of the NHS and the education service.
3. The repeal of all the Tory anti-union laws with no incomes policy.
4. Full commitment to positive action for women's rights to work and control their own fertility, through public spending on employment, child-care and health facilities.
5. The repeal of all the racist immigration and 'nationality' laws.
6. An increase in civil liberties - reduction in police powers and increase in police accountability.
7. Labour's policies cover many other areas; a united Ireland; support for the liberation movements in other countries. These must also be part of a socialist campaign.

It is important that we take up this campaign immediately in the wards, constituency parties, trade unions, and community groups. But this will not be enough. Most of the people we want to reach are outside the Labour Party. Women, blacks, trade unionists, youth, are organising in all sorts of fighting bodies against the Tories.

The women of Greenham Common scare the Tories far more than a hundred resolutions. The threat of the May-June People's March from Glasgow to London, gathering the support of workers across the country in the run-up to the election, gives the bosses nightmares. So the campaign must be taken outwards into the mass anti-Tory movement and bring these campaigners into the Party to unite in the Campaign to bring in a Socialist Labour Government.

Practical steps we must take now are:

a) SLV must get the support of as many PPCs, CLPs, MPs, and trade unions as possible.
b) SLV must set up a series of regional rallies.
c) We must organise the Labour Party support for the People's March.
d) We must organise Labour Party involvement in Greenham Common, particularly for the May 24 Day of Action.

ORGANISE!

A Labour Movement Rally on Merseyside in support of Conference Policies, the Greenham Women and the People's March is the first step in achieving that objective.

THE UNION OFFICIAL AND THE BARMAID

Your article "The Barmaid and the Union Official" was not worthy of the gutter press. Obviously Ms. McCabe was upset, that is conveyed in the tone of her story. Unfortunately, her version of events simply does not tally with reality but perhaps more damaging was your decision, as Editor, to publish the article without affording the Union involved and the officer responsible an opportunity to confirm or deny the allegations.

If you had bothered to pick up the telephone, you would have found out that the story is pure 'Enid Blyton'. In fact, you may have even discovered that the full time Official paid to recruit, service, represent and fight for Bar Staff was a woman. That fact, would have, of course, smashed the whole purpose of the article.

I shall not comment on the details of Ms. McCabe's allegations rather I would prefer to meet her at one of our regular and well publicised Branch meetings. If the time is inconvenient, then I would be more than happy to meet Ms. McCabe at home, at work, at leisure or at will.

After all, as a barmaid myself, I do appreciate the difficulties of attending meetings which confront our members.

Rather than write to score points, my preference is to reach out to Bar Staff through your columns.

Let me tell you what the Transport & General Workers' Union is doing in Merseyside for bar staff.

Firstly, I have been appointed full time to represent bar staff. (Until November, I was a bar maid), but the fact is that the TGWU has put its money where its mouth is and paid me full time to organise the bar staff in this area, along with other full time officers whose responsibilities include bar staff.

Secondly, we hold bar staff branch meetings every month. The next one is Tuesday, 29th March and the following one on Tuesday, 26th April. Both start at 9:30 a.m. in Transport House, Islington. These are meetings at which the Branch Committee, the full time officers and shop stewards are held to account by our members. We also formulate policy and discuss how to implement that policy.

Thirdly, we are aware of the vulnerability of our members and the lack of Trade Union tradition in the licensed trades, so instead of talking about it, we are getting organised. That's why we are mounting a specific course for Bar Staff with a creche provided.

The course is from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. to suit domestic responsibilities. Action not words! Planning not platitudes!

Fourthly, as women, we realise the difficulties facing us in developing effective trade unionism.. That's why I've written to all TGWU branches in Merseyside asking for their support.

I should have thought that a Socialist Broadsheet such as Merseyside Labour BRIEFING would have supported our efforts rather than using us as excuse to validate its anti-bureaucratic political position.

Those who read this article will now hopefully bring to the attention of bar staff throughout Merseyside the work we are doing and help us to organise.

Information, leaflets and advice can be obtained from Transport House. Telephone 207 3388 and ask for Claire Stanley, bar staff official.

Mrs. Claire Stanley
Bar Staff Official
TGWU



POLICE:



Technology of Repression

The first public meeting of the Merseyside Science for People Group took place on 4th March in the Swan Hotel. About 40 people attended the meeting which took as its topic the alarming increase in riot control technology, and the information gathering capability of the police. Tim Shallice of the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, and Phil Scraton of Edge Hill College, outlined the ways in which the police are becoming the strong arm of political control with weapons on the streets backed up by a decision making bureaucracy. This has been made possible by improved information gathering and recall on computers and the advent of 'non-lethal' weaponry.

RIOT CONTROL

Water cannon and CS gas were found to be ineffective during civil unrest in America, Hong Kong and Northern Ireland. The introduction of rubber bullets in Northern Ireland in 1970 lead to 3 deaths, 1 for every 18,000 fired. However, their use as an aimable, personal weapon was very limited and so the plastic bullet was introduced in 1975. This "safer" alternative, at 50 yards, has the same effect as a snooker ball dropping from a 30 story tower block. During the period April-August 1981 they caused 30 serious injuries or deaths and since their introduction as a "safe" weapon one person has died for every 4,000 fired.



BATON ROUNDS LETHAL

Although this weapon is lethal the effect is less shocking than ordinary firearms. There is no blood on the streets, a victim dies quietly of brain damage or internal bleeding, hours or even days later, leading to a certain amount of immunity from public reaction. It also can result in a cavalier attitude to their use. They are misused at close range for retaliation and harrassment, which has lead to some of the fatalities.

MISUSE

Misuse of riot weaponry is not confined to Northern Ireland. It has already been seen during the 1981 riots in Liverpool when "Ferret" CS gas cartridges, designed to penetrate masonry, were fired directly into the crowd. Eleven police authorities are now armed with and trained in the use of CS gas and plastic bullets including "mobile" forces, used to back up other authorities. The use of these weapons can only lead to escalation, to everyday use and all the opportunities for misuse this implies.



COMPUTERS

A device which automatically reads vehicle number plates and then checks them against the Police National Computer and the Stolen Vehicle Index is on trial at the entry to the Dartford Tunnel. The special branch computer has a Teletext printout of any of these which are "of interest", this includes about 10% of the population. There are plans for extending this system to cover the M1 and eventually the whole motorway system.

MILITARY DESIGN

This device links three of the four main central police computer systems. The 4th is the "Command and Control" computer, based on a military design, for the rapid deployment of police squads in areas of unrest throughout the country. This removes any use of discretion by individuals at the point of unrest and all actions would be determined by the military style programme.

Experimental use of a local computer in Skelmersdale has increased the number of reported incidents by some three times with no equivalent increase in charges brought. This system will also allow for the storage of information picked up by our new style community policing techniques.

PUBLIC CONTROL

These two areas discussed at the meeting show how the introduction of technology by government is being used for political control as opposed to social benefit. Police capability and training in the tactics of social control and not public protection imply a militarist bureaucracy, with all the attendant decrease in public accountability.

The production, storage and use of plastic bullets must be ceased; information held on individuals must be publicly regulated, and accountability and democracy demanded.

Merseyside Science for People
Dave Harper 727 0155



PART OF A RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY POLICE COMMITTEE

(b)accept his report so far as the use of guns in incidents involving terrorists or armed criminals is concerned
(c)supports the decision of the European Parliament and reiterates its previous decisions abhoring the use of CS gas as being ineffective and plastic/rubber bullets as being dangerous if not lethal in public disorders.
(d)advises the chief constable of its express wish that he should dispose of his existing stocks of CS equipment, baton rounds and riot guns, and that such weapons should never again be used within the County of Merseyside.
(e)asks finance sub-committee to examine the cost in money and manpower (sic) involved in training for use of the equipment described in the report.

GRASS

CRIPPLED ALLIANCE

The mould breakers have broken with themselves in Liverpool. Ernest Carr, leader of the Liverpool SDP, asked to stand candidates in 13 out of Liverpool's 33 wards. No agreement has been reached and the Liberal leader is now talking of hammering the SDP at the polls.

WELL-WOMENS CLINICS

Women in Ormskirk and Skelmersdale are campaigning to establish well-women clinics in West Lancashire. Public meetings have so far been supported by more than eighty women. A steering committee is co-ordinating further action, and anyone who wants to know more or to support the campaign can contact the committee through Judy Pickthall, 237 Prescot Road, Aughton, Ormskirk.

SOCIALISTS FOR LABOUR VICTORY

Wirral Socialists for Labour Victory will hold a planning meeting for all activists at Transport House, Berner St, Wed, March 30th at 7:30. Contact I, Wellington Rd, New Brighton.



Over 3,000 people came to Wirral on March 6th to make a stance for peace. Their aim was to form a Peace Chain from British Nuclear Fuel's plant at Capenhurst to the Marconi factory at Neston, where Stingray torpedos are made. Unfortunately 3,000 were not quite enough, 5,000 would have been needed for the six mile link-up. The demonstration, however, was very successful, those present made their way to a rally at Capenhurst to hear speaches from Frank Allaun, Angela Phillips (of Greenham Common) and women from the Capenhurst Peace Camp, and to be entertained by live music. That so many did turn up was clear evidence of the strength of feeling that exists in the Wirral against nuclear weapons and of the support of local people for the magnificent initiative of the women who set up and ran the Capenhurst Peace Camp.

LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND

Following the success of the campaign to ban plastic bullets and CS gas on Merseyside (the police committee recently advised Oxford to get rid of existing stocks), many socialists are attempting to re-establish the Labour Committee on Ireland on Merseyside to take up issue such as this which make the connection between the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland and the repressive spin-off in Britian arising from methods developed by the RUC and other state agencies. For details of meetings and campaigns contact John or Jane on 051 - 728 9982.

MAY ELECTIONS IN LIVERPOOL

Liverpool will now be flooded with the Focus leaflets quoting our supposed plans to close church schools. Last year they said that the Labour Party was planning to close down churches. One Liberal leaflet in Kensington actually named (with pictures) the churches we were planning to close down. In 1895 the same tactic was used by the Tories but against the Liberals! This is obvously not a new tactic in Liverpool.

POLICY CONFERENCE

Liverpool Labour Party Policy Conference on March 6 adopted several radical policies. In education the party reaffirmed its commitment to 11-18 comprehensives. Other commitments include nursery facilities for every child of 3 years, grants for 16+ students, abolition of compulsory uniform and corporal punishment, and a radical programme for children in special schools. The Party condemns the present housing disaster in the city. The cornerstone of the housing policy is a plan to build 3000 municipal houses annually. The Party supports housing action areas. On social services the party is committed to restoring the cuts in 50 social worker posts and social work training, tackling the unacceptable waiting lists for homehelps and decreasing charges for domicilary services. The overall policy is no cuts and no rent nor rate charges. This was overwhelmingly carried on the grounds that any rate rise would merely pass on Tory cuts.

GAY SAUNA RAIDED

A sauna in New Brighton, frequented by members of the gay community was raided by officers of the Merseyside Police earlier last month. Twenty-six people were taken to the police station for questioning ranging from "what were they doing at the sauna" to "names of others who visited the establishment". Charges were eventually lodged against eight people including running a brothel, gross indency and buggery. Meeting places for gay people on Merseyside are few and far between and this attack is deplorable.



WRITE FOR BRIEFING

Merseyside Labour BRIEFING welcomes any contribution from Labour activists that is not racist or sexist. Contributions should be limited to 800 words; longer articles are liable to be cut. Articles should be written double spaced with wide margins. The deadline for copy for the June/July issue is May 10th. All material should be sent to MLB, c/o 8 Ashford Road, Meols, Wirral.

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ROOTING

GAY CAMPAIGN

The Labour Campaign Gay Rights will be holding a National Conference in Bristol on Saturday 9th April. The conference will be at Shepherd Hall, Old Market Street, Bristol 2 on Saturday 9th April from 10:30 a.m., to 5:00 p.m. The registration fee will be £2 (waged) or £1 (unwaged) and a creche will be provided. For more information about the conference or the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, please contact LCGR, 3 Raleign Road, Bristol BS3 IQP. Telephone 0272 634203 (evenings)

WORKPLACE BRANCHES

Labour Party workplace branches have recently been formed in Ormskirk's Edgehill College and St Helens College of Technology. Members report an encouraging response from college staff - 25 out of 250 staff at St Helens for example.

These workplace branches are important because they unite workers in different unions - teaching unions (not affiliated to the Labour Party), manual unions (which are) to clerical staff where only a few may be unionised at all.

One problem is that students are not technically "employed" by the colleges so they can not join the work place branch. Edgehill has nevertheless invited all student Labour Party members to its meetings. And St Helens has organised aseriesof public meetings to promote Labour's policies leading to a General Election. Barbara Castle will speak on the Common Market, Philip Whitehead on education and a speaker on disarmament with the film "Atomic Cafe".

POLICE POLICY

Labour took control of Merseyside with a comprehensive policy on policing, which was updated in May of 1982. Its implementation is now in progress. The Police Policy working group of the County Party have drawn up a newsletterto inform Party members, advise on developments and consider future areas of concern to the public. It is hoped that the next County Party GMC will endorse the circulation of the document to all wards and CLPs in the Merseyside area and that it will stimulate debate and ideas. Included in the newletter are views on:

Law and Order - more police do not reduce lawlessness.

Consultation with the Public - Community liaison forums as a way of increasing police accountability.

Complaints against the Police - Special complaints sub-committee of Police Authority; proposals for new complaints procedures.

Community Policing and Public Order- increasing foot patrols; improving relationships between police and' public; banning use of CS gas and plastic bullets on Merseyside.

Computers - Securing codes of conduct for use of police computers.

Many policing issues are being considered by Police Policy Group, the views and participation of all party members are welcome. Contact Paul Sommerfeld (convenor), 27 Canning St, L8 (709-2515)

EDITORIAL NOTE

The editorial collective of BRIEFING feel that the left should participate in the 'Law and Order' debate. We are therefore asking for articles on a socialist approach to this issue for the next edition of MLB.

Giz a Job

Well, here I am at the jobby again.
Been looking for a job since I don't know when.
Paid a ten on the bus, it's all I could afford.
I'll just have a look at what's on the board.
New Vacancies. Here's one for a travel clerk
"Must be over twenty five". God, that's a lark.
"Be a dentist in the Army, Four thousand pound a year",
a few bob, steady job, pretty good career,
"Must be under seventeen". God, it make's you puke,
If you're in your early twenties you don't get a look.
"Be a representative, travel near and far",
Oh aye, here's the rub, "must have a car."
What about an office job, "Book Keeper required",
That's what I used to be, before I got fired.
I used to work hard, had to sweat like a skunk,
then they gave me the bullet cos I came back drunk
one day off me lunch. Well, it make's you laugh
the bosses did it all the time, but I was only staff.
I'm sick of coming here now. Every day's a bore.
Come in, look around and go home. What for?
Look mate, there's three million others unemployed
And one look around this City makes you paranoid.

The Government say they can't give me a job,
then the bastards have the nerve to call me a slob.
You can't even get a part time job to earn a bit,
and me dole doesn't go as far as I can spit.
All I want is a steady job with a decent wage
and no bloody questions about me age.
And Uncle Norman Tebbitt says "Get on your bike",
Yeah, O.K. I'll get a private jet, if you like.
This is the new age, Great Britain's dream,
"all men are equal", ha! don't make me scream.
The pound goes down and they kick up a fuss,
Listen here, Maggie, don't forget about us.
You can go to the Falklands, but Liverpool's too far,
without us, love, you wouldn't be where you are.
Ah, you don't know how much it hurts. I've got me pride
When I see me mates at work, God I ache inside.
Well I must be off, I'm going to the chippy for me tea,
I do that once a fortnight, a treat you see.
Then I'll go home and try to mend me soul,
That's how you feel when you're on the dole.

Mark Wakeman

At the Municipal Policy Conference

Women and Blacks Snubbed

Despite passing many radical resolutions several delegates and visitors were alarmed at the manner of many of the debates and the Conference's attitude to women and ethnic minorities. The conduct of the debates on housing, positive action and the general policy on rates was spoilt by too many references to personalities. Comrades suggesting the party should encourage housing co-operatives were instructed by one DLP spokesperson to join the Liberal Party if they wanted to pursue Liberal policies. Socialists will have differences of opinion on matters like the rate policy, decentralising services, housing co-operatives and ways of countering discrimination in society. All too often comrades putting alternatives were treated to personal abuse rather than constructive arguments.

The Conference's most alarming aspects was its complete refusal to take positive action on redressing discrimination in society. A resolution from Anfield calling on the DLP to campaign more rigously on women's issues (demands ???) was remitted on the grounds that it contained a proposal to set up a Women's Committee on the Council



The saddest episode in the day was the overwhelming refusal to adopt the calls from Abercromby and Church wards to take more positive action in dealing with racial discrimination. The Abercromby amendment (printed in the box) merely called for a rigorous interpretation of last year's policy of positive action. Unfortunately these mild proposals were overwhelmingly rejected because allegedly they would patronise blacks.



One delegate informed the conference that black NALGO members had opposed a resolution from the Liverpool branch because it called for positive discrimination. We learnt later that it was true that some (not all) black members had reservations about the Liverpool motion. But the reason for their reservation was that it did not go far enough.



Question must be asked about the Liverpool Labour Party's attitude to fighting racial discrimination in a city whose daily experience is one of extreme racial disadvantage in educational, housing and work opportunities. In the meantime comrades from Granby Ward extend an invitation to all delegates on the DLP to help canvass in the ward in order to explain Liverpool Labour Party current attitude to race in the City.

Sam Semoff
Granby L.P.
Diane Henderson
Granby L.P.
Paul Lally
Anfield L.P.

ABERCROMBY . AMENDMENT

Recognising that despite the Equal Opportunity statement adopted at the DLP Policy Conference in 1982, the Party in Liverpool still fails to attrac black members or to be perceived by the black communities as genuinely concerned to combat racism and racial disadvantage.

This DLP asserts that:

a) It will energetically initiate and support policies in City Council that seek both to overcome the historical disadvantage suffered by blacks as a result of racism in this city, and to respond to special needs.

b) It recognises the importance of data to show whether equal opportunity is being achieved in practice, an will continue the system of six monthly 'snapshot' surveys of the numbers of black employees - without permanent records on individual files of racial origin.

c) It will set up a sub-committee of the DLP on the same basis as other standing sub-committees, to develop detailed practical proposals to make a reality of our commitment to positive action, and to re-activate our existing policy of liaison with black groups in the city.

d) Recognising that racial attitudes are built into this society it will involve the Labour Party in active campaigning against racism throughout the city through regular propaganda and by a policy of anti-racist education in schools and colleges.

This will involve positive actions to:

1) Encourage blacks to apply for posts.
2) Ensure discrimination by Council officials does not occur.
3) Provide training and education opportunities to assist them to acquire the skills and qualifications necessary to compete equally with others.
4) Initiate nursery and social services and other projects that respond to special needs. Without positive action we recognise that existing and longstanding institutional racism cannot be overcome.

WIRRAL: Fight For a Manifesto

After several years of discussing, defining and updating policy, Wirral District Labour Party has at last drawn its policy together in the form of a manifesto. The objective now should be to present this manifesto to the people of Wirral as the basis on which we will fight our election campaign.

DETAILED DOCUMENT

However, there are varying views in the Party on just how this manifesto should be presented to the people of the Borough. These range from a press release, issues to libraries and distribution in news agents,to merely a condensed version in the election leaflet of each candidate.

One comrade admirably defined the purpose of the manifesto as a document which, on taking control of the Council, the Labour Party would hand to the Chief Officers and say "There it is, get on with it". This, I thought, had convinced many party members of the need for a detailed and specific document.

Manifesto '83

The manifesto currently runs at 25-30 pages, "too long" came the cry, no-one will read it" was another. But the most disturbing remark was "what's the point of putting all that effort (and money) into a manifesto? People know what we stand for".

IN OUR OWN WORDS

Do people know what the Labour Party stands for? If so how do they know - through what they read in the right wing press? If we do not tell them they rely on the distorted, bigoted meanderings of for example, the editor of the Wirral Globe. It is essential that we, in our own words, tell people about the Labour Party and socialism.

SERIOUS ALTERNATIVE

If the Labour Party is going to present a serious alternative to the administration of Wirral, a full public declaration of what we stand for, what we will do and how we will do it is essential. Anything less is merely accepting the status quo that Wirral is, always has been and always will be under the control of the Tories.

I dismiss the question, "Does the Labour Party actually want to take control of the Wirral". Of course we do .....don't we?

Gaynor Farmer
Wirral DLP
EC member

CLOSE DOWN OF CAPENHURST

Six women from Caperhurst Women's Peace Camp were arrested on February 21 after a blockade of the gates to the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. uranium - enrichment plant at Capenhurst.

Charged with "obstructing a policeman in the course of his duty", the women appeared in Chester Magistrate Court on March 16. Three women pleaded "guilty", and received a two-year conditional discharge with a £15 fine. The other three women pleaded "not guilty", and will appear back in court on April 21.

During the Court proceedings, no one from the women's families nor from their host of supporters was allowed in the court room. This was done in a deliberate attempt to intimidate the women and to discourage others who might feel compelled to resort to civil disobedience to rid the world of this nuclear madness. In another attempt to intimidate, some of the women were strip-searched at the time of arrest.

Approximately 50 supporters stood in the hall way outside the court room singing peace songs to lend encouragement to the women inside. Following the court appearance, the mixed group of supporters moved outside to link arms and dance through the streets of Chester singing songs and passing out leaflets to passers-by.

According to the women, the act of blockading the gates and the related act of invading the CEGB duck pond in small boats were done to draw attention to the fact that more and more of our public lands are being taken over to build these horrifying death centres. The duck pond had originally been used by the villagers at Capenhurst until it was fenced off by BNFL some years ago.

As was the original plan, the Capenhurst peace camp closed on International Women's Day, March 8. The women had chosen to campaign at Capenhurst for a limited time with three major objectives in mind. They wanted first of all to draw attention to the continued involvement of the BNFL plant in military activities, while



professing to be a civilian facility. Secondly, the women wanted to alert local peace groups to the dangers of the new MOD enrichment plant at Capenhurst, which supposedly will supply fuel for Trident submarines, but could also provide highly-enriched uranium for bomb purposes. Lastly the women wanted to inform bath BNFL workers and local villagers about the dangerous activities that go on at Capenhurst.

Since these activities are seen as an on-going process, the women have chosen to re-form as a Merseyside women's peace group, and will continue to campaign, not only on Capenhurst, but other peace issues as well.

Capenhurst Women

A WOMAN'S PLACE ?

In a letter to the last editon of BRIEFING, Sam Semoff pointed out that most women viewed the Labour Party as irrelevant, because women live in a society "where all frames of reference bear the stamp - male." I would like to expand this notion, because I feel that, if the Labour Party is to encourage more women to join its ranks, there is a need for a fundamental shift in attitude by the Party and its members.

At present, except for a few token women, the Labour Party seems to perpetuate society's tactics of making women invisible - except for when forced to acknowledge them (e.g. the Greenham women) or when it suits to display them (e.g. Pornography). It seems that the Labour Party mirrors wider society's approach - that of paternalism and traditionalism.

Traditionally, men have been the 'doers' - the politicians, writers, fighters and orators. The level headed, assertive, rationalists. Women have been seen as the child carers (but not the paediatricians), the cooks (but not the chefs), the nurses (but not the doctors), the airline hostesses (but not the airline pilots), the absent-minded (but not the professors). Women are portrayed as the non-assertive, self-sacrificing, caring gender. These



views have been part of our society for thousands of years. It seems to me to be extremely naive to believe that all of this counts for nothing as soon as people walk into Ward meetings, and all members are suddenly 'equal'. Both the masculine and feminine stereotypes have qualities which I would judge to be positive in any human being. Equally, both genders are assigned what I would see as negative qualities.

WOMEN'S STRENGTHS

Equality is not about women becoming men. Women's groups have flourished all over the country, and part of their function is to explore





women's strengths and weaknesses, and attempt to reinforce the former and rectify the latter. It is depressing to see how few men are engaged in similar tasks. For example, women are working to gain confidence and speak out, but how many men are practising listening - not merely hearing, but actively listening. However, working in a women's group as opposed to a mixed group is quite a different experience. Women tend to gain confidence in men's absence, but in mixed groups (and Labour Party meetings) are greeted by the same "by men, for men, about men" routine.

POLITICS - MEN'S DOMAIN?

Creches, food prices, contraception, abortion and child benefits should not be seen as "women's issues", but as people's issues, which are of vital concern to both Labour Party men and women. I feel that the irrelevance of the Labour Party to women is not related to its policies, but in the Parties approach to issues and in its attitude towards female members. Historically, politics has been men's domain, and so the mechanics of politics have developed to be those in which men are comfortable. The solution should not lie in women "getting used to it" or "learning the ropes". This assumes that a male designed/created system is innately correct, and equality for women then means learning to exercise their new found confidence and 'freedom' in apeing men's behaviour and traditions.



PERSONAL/POLITICAL

I feel that positive change relies on men as well as women modifying their behaviour. Also, I think that the solution lies on the personal-political level. The problem seems to be that men, as always, are in control, and either like that way, or couldn't be bothered with the effort of changing. For women to function well within the Labour Party, men will have to relinquish a good deal of their power and traditions. I don't see that it is in their (short term) interests, and I can not see that they will. This makes me afraid for socialism. Is that too, to be male defined? Are women to be invisible in some kind of patriarchal but "socialist" society? No wonder that most women look once at the Labour Party and then move on. The Labour Party must be seen to be not only supportive of women's issues, but also living that support in members' behaviour and attitude towards women in the Party, and women in general.

Pam Blain
Broadgreen L.P.

From Bermondsey to Edgehill

When I first became actively involved in politics in 1968, it was only natural that I should join Bermondsey Labour Party. I knew of those radical organisations with the strange initials. Unfortunately, the Bricklayers Ward in Spa Road 15 years ago was about as inspiring as an omnibus edition of Crossroads. The politics was strictly parish pump -- the most heated issue, I seem to remember, was that of dogs fouling the pavements.

I asked about the Young Socialists; "The trouble with them was that they were too political. We had to close them down".

Bermondsey Labour Party was, in 1968, obviously not where things were at. It was not concerned about Vietnam, South Africa, anti-fascism and all the other burning issues of the day. It was senile, complacent and reactionary.

Like a lot of others on the Left, I sought to bypass the Labour Party until I realised that the revolution not going to be made between Kings Cross and the Caledonian Road. By the time I properly reintegrated into the Labour Party I had moved to Liverpool, Edge Hill. A 'safe' Labour seat for 30 years, and an MP who had done nothing for his constituents for most of that time.

By 1977, the movement for democratisation in the Labour Party was on the up and Edge Hill CLP unanimously kicked out Sir Arthur Irvine as its MP. When he died, however, a by-election in March 1979 turned a large Labour majority into a Liberal majority of over 8,000.

EDGE HILL

There are three important differences between the Edge Hill by-election and Bermondsey. Firstly Edge Hill has an extremely low proportion of council housing. Secondly, the Liberals have been in control of Liverpool City Council for a number of years and have used this position to political advantage, especially in the sphere of housing. (The frequent libel writs Liberals issue against opponents prevent me from further comment).

Finally the Edge Hill Labour candidate in 1979 (March and May) had the charisma of a sponge pudding and the local Labour Party was no match for the Liberal campaign machine. In all other respects however the by-elections were very similar.

SMEAR

In Edge Hill in March 1979, the National officers of the Labour Party gave us the distinct impression that they were out to lose us the seat. It wasn't so much a deliberate ploy as sheer incompetence and ineptitude.



Secondly, many voters will not take the explanation "it has all changed in the Labour Party now that the right wing has been kicked out". They see what has happened to them as a failure of Labour, pure and simple.

In Edge Hill we thought that Alton's victory would be reversed in a General Election. It didn't happen. (His majority was cut from 8,000 to 4,000. This is now a safe Liberal seat.)

The Liberals are presenting an image locally that they are like what the Labour Party used to be, or rather what people imagine it used to be. In Bermondsey, I think the same thing will happen. I cannot see the Liberal being shifted no matter how 'good' the Labour candidate, and clearly Peter Tatchell is the best Labour MP Bermondsey never had.

A fundamental lesson to learn from these two by-election defeats is the difficulty of trying to relate politically to old working class people. Old people are passive victims of councils, planners, media and government. It is really the problem of 'ageism' the left must address itself to.

43% of the Bermondsey electorate were classed as elderly one of the media surveys. They really were the one to fall victim to the anti-Tatchell smears put about by the dog robbers dog O'Grady, probably with the help of fascist elements. Examples of this I heard were "Do you know that if you're gay or lesbian you can get a council flat dead easy?" or "They say Peter Tatchell lives on the Rockingham Estate but he doesn't actually live there."

Despite the press, the Right wing ex-Labour mafia, the Foot leadership, the bigotry, etc., Peter Tatchell won nearly 8,000 votes. That in itself is a victory. Tatchell has helped in the restructuring and rebuilding of the Labour Movement. I hope he stands again in the General Election and wins the seat.

Then of course there was the smear campaign on the lines of "Labour hijacked by Trotskyists". In Bermondsey the Liberals didn't go in for this because O'Grady and Fleet Street were doing it for them. Nevertheless, Liverpool Liberals are well-known for their 'dirty politics'.

People said that Bermondsey was a freak result. They said the same about Edge Hill. In my opinion the Liberals will go on winning seats like these over the next five years.

They have the best by-election machinery of all three major parties and can really concentrate their forces. The present project of the Labour Right is for an SDP mark II. This must be resisted. An exodus from the Labour Party of people who don't like losing elections will be an object betrayal of socialism.

Peter Tatchell has politicised Bermondsey Labour Party. That is the reason why he is hated by our enemies. We have to carry on that struggle and turn electoral defeats into victory.

Bas Hardy
Picton L.P.

The debate on the future of the Labour Party continues at all levels. Nowhere was this more evident than at the recent AGM's of the LCC and CLPD. Briefings and their role are an integral part of this debate. A conference of Briefing supporters was held in London on Feb 5th and, on these pages, we publish the views of two local activists who attended.

BRIGHTON L' MERSEYSIDE LONDON LABOUR 30
BRIEFING BRIEFING A NATIONAL NETWORK
Women No 2 NOVEMBER FEBRUARY 1983
TOWARDS ALL

CONFERENCE REPORT

The organisers had expected the conference to be a small working one; in the event about 80 or 90 people turned up, mainly from London, but with a strong contingent from Brighton and 10-12 people from Merseyside, Manchester, Strat-clyde, Bristol, Oxford and the West Midlands.

OUR TASK

Graham Bash, editor of London Labour Briefing (LLB) set the background for the day. He emphasised that the idea of a national network was certainly not to set up yet another national "left group". Rather he saw it as building up a structure within which we can unify our forces. 'Our central task', he said 'is to transcend those divisions which prevent us from feeling our strength'.

BREAKING DOWN DIVISIONS

The aim of LLB had always been to break down these divisions. First to combat the isolation of the left in the CLP's by providing a line of communication between them. Second, to bring together the 'revolutionary' and the 'Bennite' left. Third to act as a bridge between the women's movement (and single issue campaigns) and the labour movement. Fourth, to link our struggles with those in other countries. And finally, though by no means least, 'to break down the divisions between politics and life itself'.

Graham felt that now was a vital time to press forward on all these fronts. Taking a lesson from the experience of LLB he suggested that this could only be acheived by working together 'in practice'; focussing our activity on organising for a Labour victory.

REPORTS

This introduction was followed by reports from the other Briefings. Comrades from Brighton and Strathclyde spoke about how their "Briefings" had been set up, what their political bases were, and what type of issues they had been involved in.

In my report from Merseyside, I explained how we had formed. I argued that despite our circulation (1,000 last issue) we had had less impact than we could have had, and that one reason for this was the lack of campaigning activity for us to focus our work around.

There were also reports from the W. Midlands and Bristol, and comrades from Manchester and Oxford told us that talks were underway to launch Briefings in their areas.

PAROCHIAL?

In discussion several speakers criticised the 'parochial' outlook of all the Briefings. Some argued that some formal national coordination was necessary to combat this. On the other hand one person argued against any form of collaboration between the various Briefings. In a particularly useful contribution John Bloxam pointed out that campaigning on local issues and collaborating together should not be counterposed. He said that we have to strive to work together and, at the same time, we have to respect the autonomy of the differing local Briefing groups.

The session closed with what I took to be general agreement that it would be useful if all the groups discussed trying to devote space in their next few issues on campaigning for conference policies and for a Labour victory in the General Election.

PERSONAL POLITICS

After women's and men's caucus meetings during lunch, the conference resumed with what was for me its most interesting session - on personal politics.

Cath Tate from London pointed out that articles in the "Street-Life Supplement" of LLB whilst often less radical than those in Spare Rib etc., caused ten times more apoplexy in the establishment. Cath felt that this over reaction occurred because by bringing these issues closer to conventional politics, Briefing had made them more difficult to ignore.

Anne Bliss spoke about the conflicts between being a parent and a councillor. 'What kind of a society are we building' she asked, 'if in order to be politically active we have to be childless?'

The overwhelming impression of this session was that we were really talking together. People were not afraid to expose their weaknesses, and there was a real sense of unity of purpose. Jane Stockton summed it up by saying that it was not a matter of choosing between politics and our personal lives, but of finding ways and structures which release us from being forced to make such choices.



LINKS

During the second half of the afternoon Ken Livingstone talked about the lessons for the left which had come out of the 'GLC experience'. The Left had to be 'more supportive and less critical', he said. Ken stressed that for him the greatest success of the GLC had been in establishing links between Labour in local government and the community outside.

cont.....

What next for BRIEFING?

As I have moved to London, it was possible for me to attend the "Towards A National Network" conference advertised on the back of February/ March Merseyside Labour BRIEFING (MLB). In the absence of pooled fares, only two other people from outside London/Brighton attended – one from Merseyside and one from Strathclyde.

"HARD LEFT"

The discussions were firmly rooted in the concerns of the London-based "Hard Left", and it is first necessary to set out this context. The heyday of London Labour Briefing (LLB) was 2-3 years ago – a time of success in removing right-wing councillors, and often replacing them with their own supporters; a time of advance on constitutional reform; when the memory of the failures of the last Labour Government was sharp; and when industrial militancy and confidence was at a much higher level than today. The Left appeared firmly entrenched, and with a monopoly of effective organisations was making gain after gain in the wards and CLP's. There were significant defections from the Right to the SDP. The problems of holding office (e.g. on the GLC) had not yet been met. Clear and winnable goals were being supported by LLB, and they were organised with enthusiasm and often success.

LEFT DISUNITY

Since then, the situation has changed. The Benn campaign has led to disunity on the left, and the right has organised. Un employment has shattered trade-union militancy. A split has developed on the left between those who wish to continue as before; and those who felt the priority was to defend existing gains and to broaden support, both for the left within the Party, and for the Party within the Country. These two contrasting views were expressed in MLB No. 1, pages 4 and 5.

In the last few months, the "Hard Left" has found its politics and its leaders are decreasingly popular within the left as a whole. They have suffered significant defeats in the National LCC and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD). LLB is one organisation in which the "Hard Left" is unchallenged, and it is therefore logical that in attempting to rebuild their political influence, they should attempt to use "Briefing" as a base, and to change it from a loose and open organisation to something tighter and more closed. Already, LLB has become a membership organisation, with only paying supporters allowed to vote at the previously open meetings.

BENNITES WORTH THEIR SALT

At the conference, "Hard Left" supporters know themselves as The Left, and this was described as consisting of three types of supporters – the Trotskyist groups around 'Socialist Challenge' and 'Socialist Organiser' and the unaligned (not all Trotskyists) who one speaker described as "Bennites worth their salt". It is the intention of LLB to promote a Briefing Network which would put over the political line agreed by the three groups which they define as "The Left". This is in contrast to the much more diverse politics which are found with Merseyside BRIEFING. For instance, in the absence of local elections in London this year, local government work is no longer seen as priority. One speaker stated clearly that he felt Merseyside BRIEFING 'too broad" and clearly this is a key issue to be decided by each local Briefing Group. It is unfortunate that most local groups did not attend the London meeting.

THE CHOICE

Either the priorities of the founding statement are continued — "We will campaign on issues, but we are not a "line" publication — or like LLB, MLB identifies itself with a particular set of policies within the Party, and serves primarily to promote those policies. There is also the view that promotion of political debate in itself is a positive political force which challenges Merseyside's geriatric politics. And genuine debate can only be sustained while opposing views are given fair coverage, and the readers ability to decide the best case fully respected. The decline in influence of LLB should serve as a warning of the dangers of pursuing the wrong course. But the questions can only be decided on Merseyside. Given my view that interference by Londoners is unlikely to be helpful, I will restrict myself to this report of facts as I see them, and will leave the actual debate to those directly involved.

Graham Barrett

BRIEFING BRIEFING BRIEFING

Jeremy Corbyn spoke on the need to build bridges between the industrial and political wings of the movement. This was an area which LLB had neglected; the establishment of work place branches provided an opportunity to work towards this end.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

A report from Lesley Lee on working with local community groups stressed that our role was to provide support for their initiatives. Briefings, she felt, had to try to provide the natural connections between the Trade Unions and the rest of the community.

There was also a useful contribution from Bryn Griffiths on how to produce a Briefing. Much appreciated – even by those of us who thought we had learned quite a lot in that area!

Finally the conference discussed and passed a resolution calling on LLB to sponsor a meeting of CLP and TU activists to press for the inclusion of conference policies in the manifesto and discuss how to campaign for a Labour Victory.

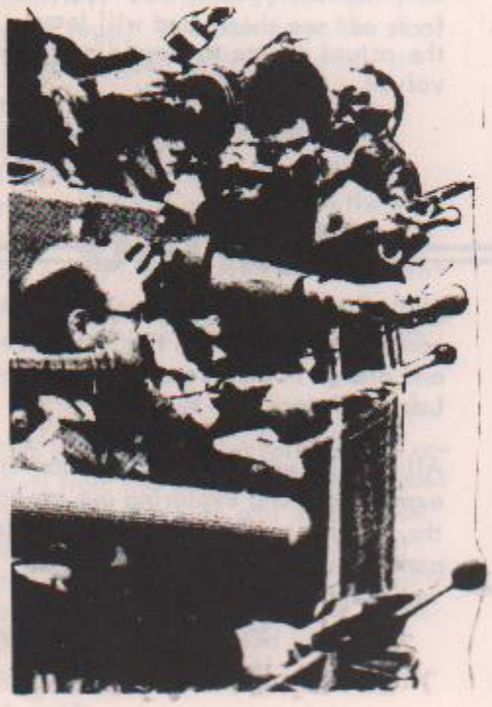
All in all a very useful day, sharing experiences and exploring our strengths, a process which I believe should continue. For me the journey was well worth it.

Stuart Marshall-Clarke
Hoylake L.P.

ECHO AND THE MONEYMEN

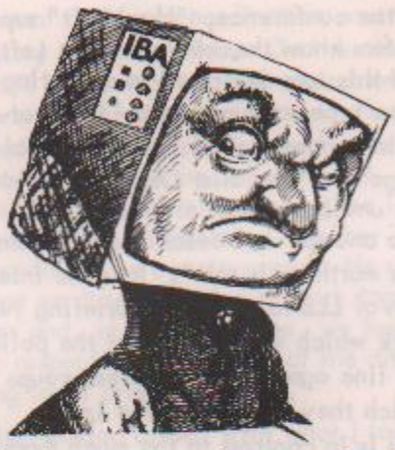
Do you want to hear some good news? It's not difficult in Liverpool. One of the leading BBC Radio stations, the 'brightest' independent and then there's the Post & Echo - all competing to bring you the news and happy hours. You might be less than happy if you were a Croxteth parent concerned about education cuts. Or a journalist thinking of examining the background of a school closure. Because you won't find much in the local media to inform you about local government; it's just too expensive for a paper to research those issues, to pay the staff to ask the questions to write the stories. This editorial guidance extends across the board with the same firm hand because the firms that handle the news (and their directors and distributors) tend to be the same people (and keep the same company, whether the company of Radio City or the Post). A pattern has emerged on Merseyside. But not exactly a new sound.

There is an urgent need for an alternative news service on Merseyside that reaches out beyond the confines of party activists and examines issues that the other sources aren't interested in. The General Election campaign of 1979 has heightened consciousness within the Labour Party of the devastation that well-organised press campaigns can unleash. Every day of the Bermondsey by-election campaign confirmed Peter Tatchell's attacks on undemocratic power. But too often debate in the labour movement on this vital issue is turned into a moan about 'media bias'. The idea of bias presupposes that the press ever could be objective; it certainly isn't intended to be. The professional skills involved in naturalising the idea that " industrial news" means 'who's on strike" aren't deployed by the ignorant in need of correction. Reforms enshrined in the (unsuccessful) campaign for a 'right of reply' are very necessary but we must also grasp the real nettle; the establishment of community newspapers. Because it is vital that the supply of information monopolised by existing papers be challenged in some small, even amateur way, but with the same commitment as the labour movement has demonstrated in monitoring the presentation of those stories that do appear.



USEFUL NEWS

The free press is a familiar expression on Merseyside, but it has nothing to do with the kind of free press James Goldsmith would like to buy. The Liverpool Free Press was, for several years in the 1970's, the most successful alternative newspaper in the country with a circulation of 10,000 for monthly issues. It was exceptional in



that it was written by professional journalists and achieved celebrity by digging into the corrupt foundations of Kirkby building contracts. The essential point of the LFP was that its political impact lay more in what it covered than in what its particular politics were. Its news content touched a nerve on Merseyside that no amount of abstract analysis can hope to do. Papers such as 'Left Out' and the 'Merseyside Labour Briefing' have different aims and functions and as Brian Whitaker, a LFP editor, admits in his book on the alternative press, ("News Ltd", Minority Press Group, 1981) the "Free Press" itself quickly



faced a dilemma. Many readers found the paper too critical, too negative without a balanced emphasis on the positive efforts of working people to improve their lives and communities. But the essential point was that the LFP's news was useful; a popular readership learnt very quickly the functions of some of the more obscure areas of the Mersey machine.

Any such project obviously faces huge difficulties; it ideally should lose the status of 'project' as soon as possible and become very much the paper of the people it's writing about: It needs to appear regularly, accurate, well-researched, well-designed and relevent. Initially I think that such a paper is best starting small and covering the basic issue that affects Merseyside more than any other area within local control - housing, the rents, rates and repairs. The news that could be useful , the news that helps, in the smallest way, the beginnings of a free press.

If you're interested in the potential (or problems) of such a paper contact Patrick Hawkins on 342-6990.

Patrick Hawkins

Merseyside Labour BRIEFING

An Independent Socialist Paper

Press panics the Party

It is a widely held belief in the Liverpool Labour Party that the right wing has the sole prerogative in spoiling Labour's chances of winning the next General Election. However in early March the Liverpool Labour Party helped to score a few own goals both nationally and locally. The issue concerned Liverpool's Labour Party's plans for education in the city. The DLP Policy conference spent a little over an hour discussing education. Owing to a lack of time and perhaps interest many other topics were not debated and accordingly were carried without dissent with the document as a whole.

LABOUR'S PLAN TO AXE?

The policy document, now party policy, was passed on to the press. The Echo (March 8) headlined one feature that had passed unnoticed and that was "Labour's plan to axe city's religious schools". The report also contained certain remarks made by Dominic Brady the DLP Education spokesperson, regarding the financial and legal sanctions the Labour Party might reluctantly explore to achieve its aim.

THE POLICY STATEMENT

The section on church schools goes alot further than last year which merely carried a statement critical of the manner of Catholic school reorganisation. It states: "The Liverpool Labour Party would like to see an end to the division of schools by religion...ideally we would have wanted an integrated system especially as the Roman Catholic community is working class. Ecumenical schools in some estates would have been a major benefit to the city. This does not appear feasible although Labour will enter discussions with Roman Catholic authorities and parents on this matter".

LABOUR'S RESPONSE

The untimely combination of the Education document, D. Brady's statement and the Echo article set the alarm bells ringing both nationally and locally. Local Alliance MP's were quick to get national publicity by putting down motions condemning Labour in the House of Commons. The national Catholic press carried critical articles. Labour's response was to express more clearly what was implicit in the document: Labour has no plans to close church schools (in fact the Labour Party is currently campaigning against Liberal plans to close 26 Catholic Primary schools).

Both Heffer and Kinnock made statements giving reassurances to the parents. The officers of the Liverpool DLP produced a long statement with the pledge that no church school would be closed without the consent of the church authorities. However despite these denials two Labour Councillors (Burke and Lafferty) are quoted in the Catholic press that they would not carry out Labour's plan and Jim Lloyd the Leader of the Labour Group on Knowsley Council has disassociated his group from Labour's plan.



LESSONS

Several immediate lessons can be drawn from this unhappy affair. If district policy statements contain as they often do long term objectives alongside the more immediate proposals, they should not be released directly to the press. Prepared statements of what the Labour Party intends to do in office should be released.

In future Labour spokespersons should be careful to avoid the press directing them away from the main purpose of our policy. To be fair to Dominic Brady the Party as a whole is too often guilty on this. The Labour Party should take leaf out of the Tory's book. They run extensive training courses for their people in how to handle the media.

The discipline of some Labour councillors must be called into question. They appear to have taken their cue from the capitalist press rather than checking with the Liverpool DLP. All too often in recent years have many leading figures in the party allowed themselves to be quoted attacking a person or part of the party on purely the image that the press have served up to them.

The most important lesson is fundamental to many of the current debates going on in the Labour Party at present. Democratic socialism obviously involves a continuing compromise between long term ideals and immediate practice. The tension between the two acts on all of us. However it cannot be resolved by pious long-term assertions which are then immediately rendered null and void by 'pragmatic' disclaimers. That is not the road to socialism, it leads only to confusion and disillusion.

Paul Lally,
Anfield Ward



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We must not accept

Why has the witch hunt begun?

The purge has begun. The expulsion of the five "Militant" editorial board members on the eve of the Bermondsey by-election demonstrates the contempt of the NEC both for the democratic right of "Militant" and for the electoral success of the party. The NEC have played a consciously cynical note in ensuring the defeat of Tatchell. It amounted to sabotage of the election campaign, resulting in a Liberal victory.

Tatchell faced a full scale Dr. Goebbels-style smear campaign from the media and the political opposition centred on anti-gay bigotry. The Labour candidate fought a courageous and uncompromising campaign only to be stabbed in the back by his "own" party leadership on the eve of poll. A more criminal note could not have been played by the leadership if the NEC had consisted of a set of cloned Ramsey McDonalds, Phillip Snowdens and J.H. Thomas's!

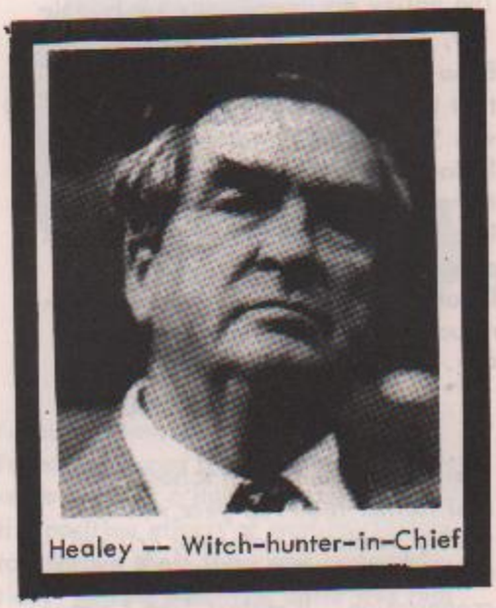
Tatchell is not a revolutionary by any stretch of the imagination. He is very much a left reformist radical. By "extra-parliamentary activity" he meant little more than CND type peaceful demos and liberal protest actions. And neither are "Militant" a "revolutionary" organisation, despite the fairy-tale media articles accusing them of wanting to overthrow capitalism by force. A quick glance at their pamphlet "What We Stand For" reveals a peaceful reformist strategy in which the transformation of capitalism would be "carried through in Parliament by means of an Enabling Bill" (P. 23).

But, however much serious socialists might be sceptical about the ability of either "Militant" or Peter Tatchell to provide the necessary political answers in the struggle against the bosses and their agents in the leadership of the Party; it is just as true that their muddled opposition to the right wing acts to destablise the Party and make it an unreliable instrument in government for controlling the working class, should the bosses need it as an alternative to Thatcher. In the present crisis this is doubly problematical for the bosses.

In order to resolve the declining position of British capitalism with respect to Japan, West Germany and the USA, a new redistribution of the semi colonial world between the imperialist powers is necessary. This must go hand in hand with the overturn of the nationalised property relations and the reintroduction of capitalism in the Eastern block - hence the cold war offensive, the nuclear arms race, and the drift towards a third, and final nuclear world war. The growth of the CND - influenced-left within the party, again makes the ruling class uneasy about the usefulness of Labour in office as a stable instrument of capitalism.

The witch hunt is designed to curb the left in order to re-impose "stability" in the party so that it can carry out its function as an instrument of imposing wage control and war on the working class. The danger in the witch hunt is that the left organisations will choose to abandon the policies needed for the defence of the working class in order to avoid expulsion, instead of stepping up the attack on the pro-imperialist, pro-Nato witch hunters in the Party Leadership and their "left cover" (e.g. Benn's loyalty speech at the conference).

However, the danger of nuclear war can only be combatted internationally. More than ever before, the international working class needs an international party with a common international democratic process and a common international discipline, that it is necessary to effectively combat and disarm world imperialism and Stalinism, before they destroy us. The size of this task must not prevent us from doing the maximum to achieve this goal now.



Healey -- Witch-hunter-in-Chief

It is not without significance that one of the items on the witch hunters' register was a question about whether groups were prepared to renounce all international links in favour of the pro-imperialist Socialist "International". This sham "International" that has collapsed at every serious test since the First World War, is merely a front for organised chauvism. Trotsky's fight for the construction of a genuine international party - the Fourth International - should be the fight of all Labour activists, if they are to have any chance of defeating world imperialism's cold war drive, and to avoid the treacherous duplicity that Peter Tatchell has experienced at the hands of Her Majesties loyal opposition of pro-imperialist flunkies. If we are forced to vote such a gang of reactionaries into government, it is merely because we consider it the best method of giving them sufficent political rope to hang themselves in the eyes of those workers who still have illusions in them; nothing more, nothing less.

Chris Erswell

Merseyside Labour Briefing

the expulsions!

STOP THE PURGE NOW!



Duncan Grant
Wirral CLP

A spectre is haunting the Labour Party - the spectre of socialism. For most of its history, the Labour Party has been dominated by those who see Clause IV as a meaningless ritual incantation, irrelevant to a mixed economy. Labour's aim, to them, should be to make capitalism palatable, to soften the edges and care for the weak while still preserving the sort of society where one can drink a good claret in one's Sussex farmhouse and reflect on the rewards of a life dedicated to 'socialism'.

The rise of the left and the democratic reforms of recent years have upset the applecart. The response to those changes has split the right wing into the Gang of Four and their coterie of clapped out parliamentary hacks on the one hand and those who have stayed to fight their corner within the Labour Party on the other. It is important to recognise that the difference between these two groups is fundamentally one of tactics rather than policies where, on major issues such as disarmament, the EEC or incomes policy, there is often little if anything to choose between them.

Where they differ is in the means of achieving their ends. The SDP believes that the best chance lies in snuggling up with the Liberals and convincing enough of the public to vote for its image (they would hardly vote for its 'policies'!) to enable it to get its foot in the door of government. To the hard right still within the party this was a cowardly action by a group whose bottle had gone, they believed that it was possible to win the fight within the party, with the help of their natural allies in many of the union bureauracies.

Both groups share a desire for reunion; the SDP wishing for more defections, the hard right hoping to draw back the defectors into a purged Labour Party. The precondition for this is the destruction of the left at any price up to and including electoral defeat. Of course, defeat for the Labour Party at the forthcoming General Election would not necessarily be a defeat for Healey and his followers - there is always the possibility of a coalition of 'moderate elements'.

The lengths to which the right will go have been made clear in recent months. A prime example of this has been the deliberate sabotage of Labour's chances in the Bermondsey by-election

WHO IS NEXT FOR THE STAKE

But, of course, the most serious action by the right has been the witch hunt, reaching its first climax on February 23 with the decision of the NEC to expel the five members of the editorial board of the Militant. It is absolutely clear that Golding, Duffy and the rest would like to get rid of thousands of socialists and that the attack on Militant is just a start.

We should be in no doubt that the hit list extends well beyond its original targets to all other indentifiable left



groupings. Indeed it may well be that the change of course will come sooner rather than later. Golding recently admitted, during a television interview, that it would be very difficult legally to expel ordinary Militant supporters, or even PPC's. On the elitist presumption that it is only necessary to cut off the head for the remainder to flap around aimlessly like decapitated chickens, 'names' connected with Socialist Organiser, Briefing, Socialist Challenge (Action) and so on are likely to find the faggots being piled under them in the near future.

IMPLACABLE OPPOSITION

The only way we can stop this is by demonstrating implacable oppostion to all expulsions and the mechanism that backs them up. There is no future in registering, lying low, biding our time; we must say quite clearly: 'we will not be driven out; we will not let you turn the clock back twenty years; we will not let the Labour Party be used, as it has so often in the past, to sell out the working class.'

The main focus for this action will be the CLP's, for it is to CLP's that each member belongs and it is only with the consent (or, ultimately, disbanding) of the individual constituencies that victims of the witch hunt can be expelled from the Party.

Nevertheless, individual CLP's are vulnerable and it is essential to let the NEC know what sort of a fight they face. CLP's should therefore do the following (all of which, I am proud to say, Wirral CLP has already done):

1)commit themselves to defending their members from victimisation and refuse to implement the register or any expulsions;

2)Pass resolutions calling for the immediate reinstatement of those already expelled and condemning all such anti-democratic persecutions;

3)Send messages of solidarity to the CLP's to which the expelled comrades belong (with particular emphasis on West Norwood which has decided merely to (comply) "note" (with) the NEC's decision);

4)Affiliate to Labour Against the Witch Hunt.

Labour has the policies the people of this country need. The only chance of getting them implemented is by stopping those who sell us out and building a socialist campaign for a Labour victory.

Ireland - which way forward?

- MILITANT'S RESPONSE

by Richard Venton
Militant Spokesman

The anonymous gladiator signed "Chris", who wrote "The Breckfield By-election and the Ballykelly Bombing" displays a remarkable ignorance of the working class of both Ireland and Liverpool. It would take a whole book to unravel the abstract confusions and dangerous nonsence in every line of his article. But let us reply to just a few of the issues raised, especially in answer to his attacks on the policies of Militant.

Militant supporters have a proud, indeed an unrivalled, record of arguing a clear socialist case on Ireland within the Merseyside Trade Union and Labour movement. Throughout the 1970's, we spoke at Labour Parties, Trades Councils and Union branches, gaining widespread support at a period when workers were understandably wary about "getting involved". If we knew who "Chris" was, perhaps we could judge his record, and whether he was giving us the benefit of his presence in the Labour Party!

PARTY OF LABOUR

Militant have consistently laid responsibility for the nightmare of poverty, 20% unemployment, sectarian violence and repression at the door of the British capitalist class. Their age-old tactic of "divide and rule" was perfected in Ireland, injecting the poison of sectarianism into the veins of workers in order to weaken and defeat the common struggle of Catholic and Protestant workers. In contrast to "Chris", Militant regards the Irish working class...and that means the one million Protestant workers as well as their Catholic brothers and sisters ..as the only force capable of defeating the sectarian division created by capitalist interests. In the words of the great Irish Socialist, Connolly, "The cause of Ireland is the cause of labour". Irish Trade Unionists and their families make up the vast majority of society, and have a history of class action. The 300,000-strong Trade Unions in Northern Ireland are the only organisation to combine Protestants and Catholics in common struggle. Militant campaigns for a political Party of Labour based on the Unions, armed with a socialist programme on jobs, housing and repression. Only such a movement could join hands across the border with the Labour movement in the South, building a workers' Ireland - a Socialist United Ireland. And only such a mass mobilisation of the working class would force the ruling class to end repression and withdraw the troops, whilst organising Trade Union protection of workers' families from sectarian gun-men.

CLASS SOLUTIONS

Any policies which endanger the growing unity of the working class "deserve to be branded with infamy". Militant makes no apologies to anyone (and especially not anonymous writers) for our condemnation of the methods and programme of the IRA. Armchair terrorists in Merseyside may applaud the Ballykelly bombings, shamefully ignoring the deaths of working-class youths involved; they may cheer young Catholics to imprisonment or death as they go down the blind alley of the IRA's methods. But the working class of Ireland or Breckfield won't take kindly to people whose policies are designed to divide our class and aid our capitalist enemies! Labour Party activists, including Militant supporters, have campaigned to cut across the old sectarian divisions in Breckfield, and have drawn workers to class solutions to common class problems. What haughty contempt "Chris" shows for the working class, in his complaint that workers oppose bombing campaigns in Britain! These are the very methods condemned by Trotsky as "the futility of individual terrorism", which have given the Tories and Labour-traitors like Roy Jenkins the excuse to step up repression. And the bombings have further driven the wedge of sectarianism into the working class.

FUTILE AND DIVISIVE IRA

Militant opposes methods which weaken the struggle against capitalism. We won't hesitate to counterpose mass struggle by a united working class to the futile and divisive IRA campaign, just as Lenin and Trotsky opposed the terrorist methods of the Russian anarchists. The IRA are further from their aims today than they were in 1969! And unlike the handful of ultra-lefts who today appoint themselves as the British attorneys for the IRA, Militant opposed the use of troops in 1969, when we called for workers unity in action as the only counter to sectarian murders!

LIVINGSTONE'S MISTAKE

Militant consistently defends other left-wingers from witch-hunts by the kept press of the capitalist class, and their echoes on Labour's right-wing. But we reserve the right to differ with the policies and actions of left-wing comrades, such as Ken Livingstone. The rank hypocrisy of the press, which hides the daily depression in Northern Ireland and the daily atrocities committed by the Tories against workers of all backgrounds, does not influence Militant. Nonetheless, Ken Livingstone made a drastic mistake in inviting Sinn Fein to a platform in Britain. We argued he should have invited activists of the Irish Labour and Trade Union movement to publicise their struggle to unite workers around socialist policies; or as a minimum measure, he should have made Sinn Fein answer for their sectarian record in debate with the non-sectarian viewpoint of the Labour Movement. Instead, an unopposed platform was given to such as Gerry Adams, who moved a resolution at the 1982 Sinn Fein Conference which declared that SF candidates would only be endorsed if they "unequivocally support the armed struggle".

The Labour movement of Ireland or Britain has absolutely nothing to gain from such policies or methods. Ken Livingstone's actions had the effect of introducing fears of sectarian divisions in areas such as Breckfield, driving a number of workers away from Labour for a temporary period. And this was not confined to workers of Protestant background, as "Chris" and his co-thinkers would have discovered if they had bothered to turn out to help Labour in the by-election! Militant will continue to march shoulder-to-shoulder with workers of all creeds, building a mass movement for socialism which will completely bypass ultra-lefts who indulge in their anti-Marxist abstractions.

'...WITH THEIR KNICKERS DOWN'

censored

With so many pressing issues all around us, one hesitates to use precious space refuting the ideas of Pam Blain and Sheila Hughes on the matter of pornography. Nevertheless, as some of their views are tendentious to the point almost of being sinister, it is perhaps a worthwhile exercise.

WHO IS TO DECIDE?

First, there is the issue of censorship. To any libertarian socialist, the very word engenders suspicion. The case in favour of censorship must surely be very strong before socialists can accept it. Blain and Hughes do not make such a case. Centrally, they call for the banning of all pornography, without bothering to define what pornography is. Is page 3 of the Sun pornographic? Is Mayfair magazine pornographic? Is "Gay News" pornographic? Is 'Spare Rib' pornographic? Is 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' pornographic? Are all these to be banned, or none of them? Who is to decide? Blain and Hughes? The Police? Magistrates? Mrs. Thatcher? Me? How are they to decide? What criteria are to be used? How is the law (if there is one) to be enforced? Can we expect extra police powers to raid shops and homes because there is a possibility that (ill-defined) pornography is to be found there? Surely one does not have to have much knowledge of history to know where that sort of thing can lead.

Secondly, Blain and Hughes seem hopelessly ignorant of what is available in sex-shops and the like. Perhaps they will allow me to enlighten them? a) 'Girlie' magazines such as 'Fiesta' and Playboy'. These show almost entirely women with no clothes on. Harmless enough, or does the banning start here? b) Male Gay pornography. How does this fit in to Blain and Hughes' scheme of things? As a man, presumably I should feel humiliated by it. Sorry, but I don't. c) Magazines portraying people have sex-intercourse, oral sex etc. Given that these do not show acts of violence, and they do not, why should people take exception to them? Why should a photograph of a man and a woman having sexual intercourse be humiliating to women and not to men? I don't follow. d) Violent pornography. And here we come to the heart of Blain and Hughes' argument. At first glance it seems a strong one. Violence is distasteful, many people would say, and censorship justified. Yet even here, on close examination, the issue is far from clear cut. First, the violence is obviously simulated, and the end result, frankly, utterly ludicrous. Second, and I can't emphasise this enough, the vidence displayed is just as likely to be by women on men as the other way round. Again, as a man presumably I should feel humiliated and degraded by this. Well, I'm sorry, but I don't. I can't take it seriously enough. Third, and again this is very important, the sort of material which shows women being mutilated or killed is not readily available in printed form at least. The press calls this 'snuff' porn. There is some doubt as to whether it really exists at all. If it does I've never seen it, I've never met anyone else who've ever seen it, and it it were to become available it would, quite correctly, be wide open to prosecution.

HANGERS AND FLOGGERS

Next we come to Blain and Hughes' argument that pornography leads to rape. This is the classic hangers and floggers argument. Juxtapose two issues, or sets of statistics, and then create an entirely unsubstantiated link between the two. In fact, Blain and Hughes produce no proof whatsoever of such a link. If they have such proof, they should state it. If not, their argument has no intellectual validity.

CENSORSHIP AND REPRESSION

Before summing up, perhaps I should make one further point. Aneurin Bevan once said - 'Why look at the crystal ball, when you can read the book?' There are in fact plenty of societies around which have just such laws as Blain and Hughes apparently favour. One such is on the other side of the Irish Sea, where a woman's naked breasts can never be revealed in published material. Another, until recently was Spain. Are these the sort of societies where Blain and Hughes want to live in? The fact is that heavy censorship of alleged pornography almost always goes hand in hand with other forms of sexual repression, to the great detriment of all women.

PRIORITIES

Attentive readers, if any now remain, may be wondering why, if I consider pornography to be an issue of monumental triviality, which I do, I should have written about it at such length. The answer is partially because it is so trivial. In the words of the hymn, Salvation's Camp, at the moment, is well and trully surrounded. Britain is in real danger of becoming a very right wing society indeed. Surely socialist women must see that the first priorities are the fights against Thatcherism, against the bomb, against the decimation of the NHS and education, not about the fact that a few of their (very highly paid) sisters are having their photographs taken with their knickers down.

Finally, I wonder if Blain and Hughes realize just how close their article comes to just that sexism which they and BRIEFING claim to oppose. They receive abuse from 'men'. 'Men' it is implied, do not 'give a shit about the oppression of women'. 'Men' want 'profits, a cheap thrill and maintaining (sic) the status quo'. 'Men' are the 'perpetrators' (what of?). 'Men' are 'the users' (Have Blain and Hughes never come across a woman who is turned on by sexually explicit material? Honestly? Never)

There was a time when I hoped that feminism would be one of the great intellectual and emotional opportunities of the twentieth century. Perhaps males having been given a well deserved kick up the backside, the two sides might start to understand and love one another more. Instead, the battle lines between the sexes seem to be being dug ever deeper. What a tragedy!

D.A. Rainbird
Anfield LP

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The first card vote of the NW Labour Party Conference (March 12 and 13) was over a motion to allow resolution 69 and 70 on the witch hunt to be brought forward to ensure they were debated. The vote was 481,000 for reference back and 553,000 against. Thus the regional executive committee had ensured that the purge against the left in the Party was not debated.

Other attempts were made to get a debate on the witch hunt, even the emergency resolution opposing the expulsion of the 'Militant' editorial board were not taken "due to lack of time".

LEFT GAINS

Despite the setback at the start of the conference, the left were able to beat the Regional Committee on other important issues.

A resolution on re-nationalising companies sold off by the Tory Government without compensation was carried despite the card vote.

Some gains were made in the women's debate. Resolutions demanding democratic reform of the Women's Section forced the Regional Executive to recommend that the next NW Women's Conference should take resolutions on whatever the Women's Section want.

The disarmament debate clearly showed that very few people, if any, believe that the present NEC or shadow cabinet seriously intend to implement conference policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament. Two main composites were passed. Both demanded an unambigous commitment to unilateral disarmament in the manifesto.

One of the composites calling for the nationalisation of the arms industry and its conversion to alternative production caused the regional committee some embarassment. They did not want to call for opposition in case they were defeated, so they attempted to add a reservation to the resolution. When the regional committee were summing up the debate they said they supported the statement, but conference had to understand that so many firms were involved that they would have to think about it. When the Chair, Jim Mason, was taking the votes he asked us to support the composite with that reservation, but conference made it clear that they supported the whole; it was not for the regional committee to add bits to resolutions before a vote.

Taking the conference as a whole it was clear that, although we were unable to debate the witch hunt, the constituencies were clearly against it, and despite the NEC being controlled by the right wing, the CLP's are continuing the fight for socialist policies within the Party.

Mick Cashman



DID YOU KNOW?

General Jaruzelski was getting worried about the crisis in Poland so he sent a telegram to Lenin (in heaven) saying 'Lenin, Lenin, there is a counter-revolution afoot, what shall I do?' Lenin sent back a Telemessage by CCCP satellite ... 'Arm the workers!'

TAKING THE COUNTY SERIOUSLY

Labour controls all the metropolitan counties; that's why the Tories have plans afoot to scrap this tier of local government. If the attitude of activists on Merseyside is any indication, their job will be a pretty easy one: we just don't take the County Party seriously.

REMOTENESS

The GLC has shown that such bodies are capable of delivering important gains for the movement. To London activists the GLC feels like their council. Here on Merseyside, however, there is a certain remoteness about the County Council and the County Labour Group. This was illustrated at the last County Party GMC when Keva Coombes, reporting on this years budget, said he 'hoped' that it would meet with the approval of the Party.

I don't believe that 'hoping' is good enough. If the Labour Group had been more open and had involved the Party in the preparation of the budget then Keva would have been assured of Party support.

ACCOUNTABILITY

This lack of input from the Party is just as much a condemnation of the rank and file as it is of County Councillors. We have to start turning up before we can start demanding a closer involvement in decision making and greater accountability.

TAKE THE POWER

Now is the time for nominating delegates to the County Party. The left should be looking to take these positions and to nominate people who are prepared to be active.

The power is there - its up to us to take it.

Stuart Marshall-Clarke
County Labour Party Delegate

Popularising the A.E.S.

Almost a year ago Labour's "Plan for Jobs was launched. Before that the Party had more or less settled on its "Alternative Economic Strategy". Last Autumn the "New Hopes, Jobs, Rights" campaign was unveiled; and only a few weeks ago the TUC's "Battle for Jobs" was published. In addition there has been the much publicised 70 page "Programme for Recovery" drafted by Labour's front-bench spokesmen on the economy. All have highlighted the macro economic variables which the Government can influence, and how these can be manipulated to arrive at the central objective, the reduction of unemployment to below one million within the lifetime of a majority Labour Government.

Yet, while over this whole period unemployment has remained the number one issue with the public, Labour's economic programme is not seen as convincing. Why?

Partly of course because some Party spokespersons have spent a disproportionate amount of time vilifying their fellow comrades, and not enough on projecting a socialist economic analysis. But also, I believe, because so often the analysis is presented in an utterly arid way,

True, we do talk about introducing democracy into industry (but then we did last time, didn't we), and about the magic ingredient the 'National Economic Assessment'. However, for the majority of people the overall impression must be that if the Labour Party's plans are different in degree from those of the Tories and the Alliance, and even if they are seen as 'best' in terms of unemployment, they do not project an image of a different sort of society, and presage the emancipation of the working people of this country.

GETTING ACROSS

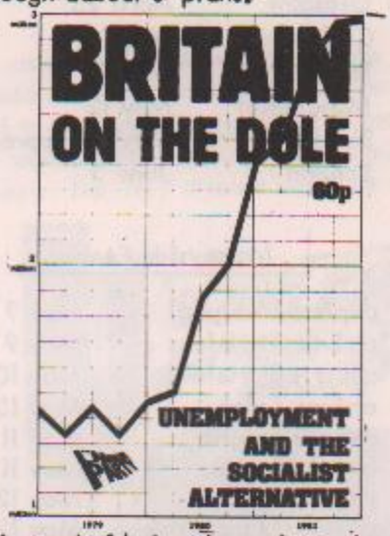
If the Labour Party is to get its message across then all of us, including but not only those who hold positions as spokespersons, need to bear the following in mind:

1. Keep it simple. We need to present our ideas in terms that people in the pubs, clubs, shops and factories can relate to. That's not to be patronising, but straight-forward examples of what we mean may be far more effective than long theories.



2. Keep it local. The Labour Party nationally should have drawn up its forecasts of jobs to be created from estimates made by the regions in terms of public sector projects which could be advanced together with national commitments.

We should be able to say with conviction the number of new jobs which would arise in Merseyside through Labour's plans.



3. Instead of being drawn interminably into the debate as to whether the "National Economic Assessment" is a backdoor way of enforcing a pay policy, let us project our view that to move towards a more equal society there has to be a massive redistribution of income and wealth, not only between those in work, but also towards those who for one reason or another are unable to work. There are now over 6 million people, including many pensioners, wholly or partially dependent on supplementary benefit, while the top man at Sainsbury's "earns" over £4 million a year. Enough said?

COUNTIES

4. Stress the role of local government. Merseyside as well as the GLC, West Midlands County Council, Sheffield City Council and others, is becoming more actively engaged in economic development, both with individual firms and the local economy generally.

5. The 'Social Strategy' of the Labour Party should be portrayed as an integral part of our overall plans, not as a poor relation tagged on at the end. Health, housing, education, leisure and employment are all inter-related, not separate.

6. The same comment applies to industrial democracy. Whilst it would be mistaken to force participation and control onto workforces unwilling to go along that particular road.

Positive encouragement to trade unions to develop their own corporate planning will force onto the industrial agenda a range of issues such as research and product development, resource and energy conservation, environmental factors, appropriate technology, social utility and so on, which to date have been left to management prerogative.

SOCIALIST VISION

In short what needs to be done to bring to life the Labour Party's programme from a series of stratified proposals, worthy, essential but still somewhat dull, is to project our socialist vision of a new society. That cannot be done simply by talking of £x billion being pumped into the economy, but about how society can be so altered that every person, man, woman, and child, has the same opportunities for self-fulfillment and personal development.

Of course it's easier said than done, but if we all keep such a vision to the fore in local campaigning and in dealings with the media, only then shall we have the chance of winning hearts and minds as well as votes in the coming months.

Jamie Robertson
PPC Wallasey

MARCH FOR PEACE AND JOBS

One major event of the next month or two is the national People's March for Jobs '83.

Remember that the major pressure for this March came from the Northwest, following the March from Merseyside to Manchester last October.

The Labour Party - TUC Liason Committee then ditched the project, only to reverse their veto following floods of resolutions from Trade Unions and local Trades Councils.

The TUC version has still not conceded the initial demand for a National Campaign for Peace and Jobs, but as the pace quickens in local areas, the March is increasingly seen as only one, however central, piece of a wider and longer campaign focussing jointly and equally on the threats of war and unemployment.

GET INVOLVED

In the North West local activities are generally being arranged by Trades Councils. The broadest possible participation and support are being sought.

Local organisations (Party, Union Branches, Peace and Women's Groups, ethnic minority organisations) needing more information should contact local Town's Committees or Trades Councils or the Secretary of the Merseyside Association of Trades Councils - Pete Lenahan (St Helens 24401).

John MacDonald
Sec. S.W. Lancs Trades Council (Ormskirk 78279)



March Details

March Route

Glasgow	April 23
Carlise	May 1
Preston	May 7
Manchester	May 12
Birmingham	May 21 (approx)
London	June 3

Merseyside Feeder

departs Liverpool	May 9
arrives St Helens	May 9
departs St Helens	May 10
arrives Leigh	May 10
departs Leigh	May 11
arrives Salford	May 11
departs Salford	May 12
arrives Manchester	May 12

Local Feeder

departs Skem	May 9
arrives Wigan	May 9
departs Wigan	May 10
arrives Leigh	May 10

Mass National Carnival and Demo
London --- June 4 & 5.

Briefing Deadlines

(for June/July)

Open Editorial Meeting....April 27th
(8 pm, Pig & Whistle, Covent Garden)

Copy Deadline.....May 10th
(Mail to:8 Ashford Rd, Meols, Wirral)

Production Meeting.....May 14th

Paste-ups.....May 21-22nd

MERSEYSIDE LABOUR COORDINATING COMMITTEE

RALLY

'SOCIALIST POLICIES FOR VICTORY'

speakers include:

Allan Roberts MP

Peter Tatchell

FRIDAY 22nd APRIL

7.30pm

CENTRAL HALL, RENSHAW ST.