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THERE IS A LEFT ALTERNATIVE!

KEN LIVINGSTONE

The rush to replace Michael Foot and Dennis Healey by the 'Haddock' team of Kinnock and Hattersley has confused the issues in the Labour Party, and it is vital at the Labour Conference and beyond for the left to state a clear alternative road for the Labour Party.

Eric Heffer and Michael Meacher have consistently fought the expulsions of 'Militant' and have argued against any retreat on the three main constitutional changes which the left has supported. They have fought strongly for unilatera ism, for Labour's Economic Policy and for withdrawal from the Common Market.

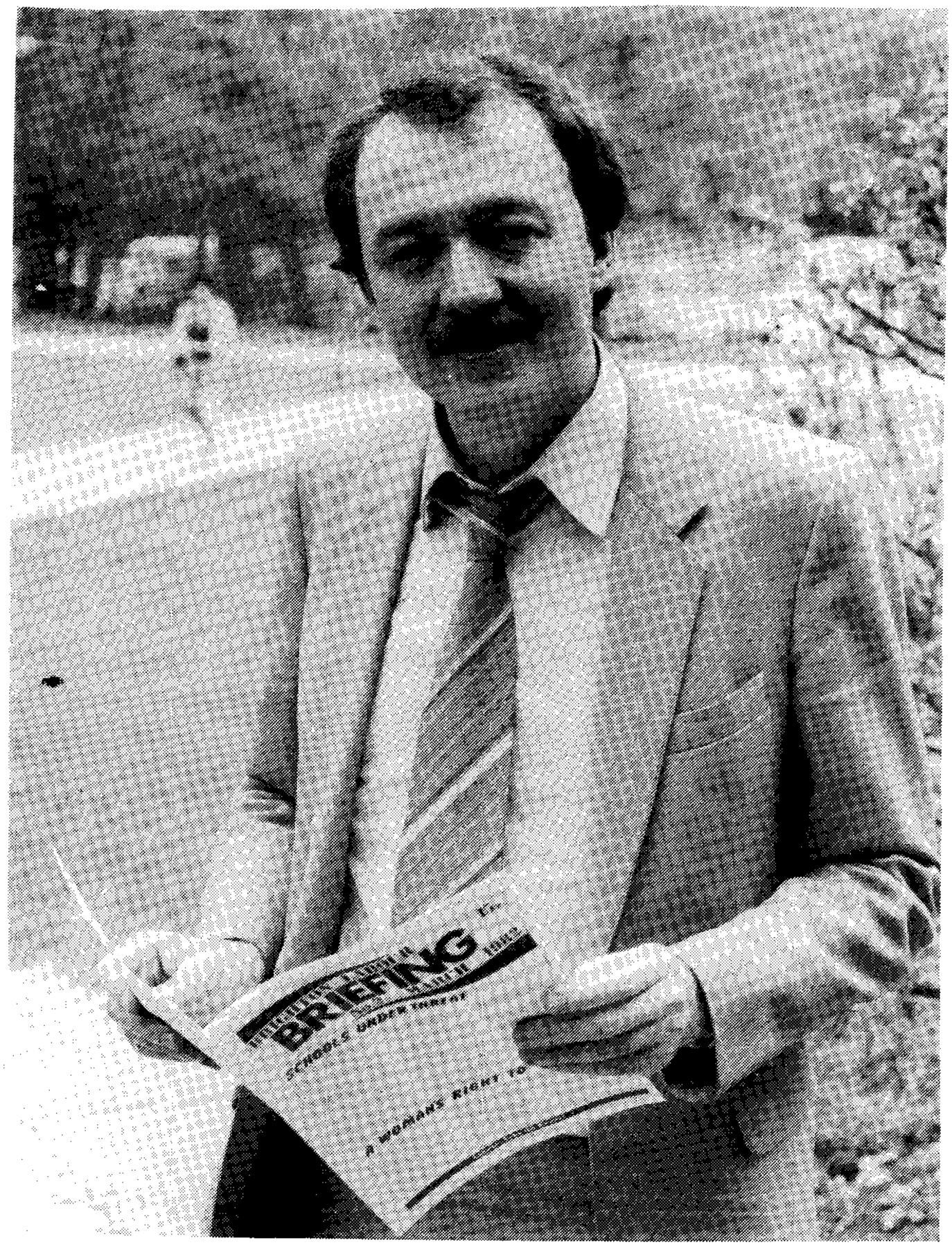
Kinnock and Hattersley both supported the expulsion of 'Militant'. Both refused to give support to those Labour councils prepared to resist the Tory laws against local authorities. Hattersley is clearly against Labour policy on the Common Market and Kinnock has shifted his position to indicate he no longer believes withdrawal is possible. A shift to the right on unilateralism is on the cards with Kinnock as leader unless a strong campaign in its defence is mounted.

Given these clear signs of confusion and an offensive to drive the Labour Party to the right — towards the policies of the Social Democratic Party — the left can and should develop its alternative.

First, we need to understand that in times of a recession as deep as this one, souped up social-democratic policies are not convincing or coherent. Potential Labour voters have a much sharper understanding of the economy than many activists realise. They could see that the weak and watered down policies which Shore presented were not going to work. People know that unless Labour tackles the existing concentration of wealth, funding our policies will involve tax increases and incomes restraint. Therefore, we have to clearly state that we will control the flow of capital, extend public ownership into the profitable sectors of the economy, and also base the state sector based on workers control and workers self management, getting away from the dreadful existing examples, unresponsive to consumers and responsible for the hostility to public enterprise that clearly exists.

On nuclear policy, our position on Polaris fell to bits because we had not worked out the concrete mechanism of how it was

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WHO WE ARE

This is the first issue of the National Briefing Supplement. It is YOUR supplement. Its strengths will be your strengths, its weaknesses yours. Please accept this responsibility and treat these pages as a forum within which you or your local left or Briefing group can publish and exchange nationally significant information as your right. Above all, please help ensure that this is a real "Briefing" – i.e. a source of genuine INFORMATION through which we can all share one another's strengths and combine our forces on a national scale.

This supplement is edited by and accountable to a National Briefing Committee, elected by members of Briefing groups in London, East of London, Brighton, Merseyside, West Midlands, Hull, Stoke and Oxford, with Strathclyde, Manchester and other groups involved in discussions about whether to join in the network. In addition, we have support from a number of MPs, GLC and other councillors, trade union 'broad left' groups and many sections of the peace and women's movements. On the basis of present orders it looks as if the print-run for this issue will be 7,000 – considerably beyond our expectations. All this means that we are uniquely positioned to act as a leading co-ordinator for the activities of the left in the Labour Party as a whole.

We are making this step forward as part of our answer to the defeats which we on the left have suffered in the recent past. The shift to the right which Thatcher has imposed on British politics – the seal having been set by the TUC's disastrous right turn – has exposed some real inadequacies on the part of all of us in terms of our ability to "get the message across". Some are concluding that the answer is to backpeddle on socialism itself, and this is undoubtedly part of the explanation for Kinnock's rise. Our view is that the very worst thing possible for the Labour Party would be to compound the errors of the election campaign by making even more concessions to the politics of the gutter press editorial writers and the SDP. Labour would only end up where the TUC's right wing clearly want it to be — back in the arms of the Gang of Four. But while intransigence on our politics is essential, so too is flexibility in relation to the tactics we use. There is now an unprecedented recognition on the "hard left" that while ideological pluralism and debate are essential, we can simply no longer afford to allow our differences to obstruct the maximum possible unity in action on all those issues on which we are agreed. Above all, we have to unite around the task of turning the Labour Party left outward, taking it back into the unions and the mass movement, uniting with them in common struggle in order to turn our socialist ideals into a practical reality and give them meaning in the eyes of millions of people who have been repelled from the Labour Party by the vascillations and duplicity of successive right wing leaderships.

Briefing will help build a left which is both pluralist AND capable of united action. Its editorial board will be entrusted with far more than the responsiblity of producing a monthly supplement. Our task, in the months ahead, will be to bring together all those who seek to defend the gains of the last ten years in the Labour Party, and to help bring together all those who are serious in their determination to overturn the unaccountable powers that now dominate our society. A network of local Briefing groups, trade union broad lefts, campaigning bodies, feminist organisations, ethnic minority groups, revolutionary socialists and other tendencies, co-ordinated within the framework of Briefing on a national scale, will allow us all to retain our own autonomies and identities, while drawing on each other's strengths in the battles which lie ahead.

There IS a left alternative (CONTINUED)

to be done. The obvious weakness is getting rid of nuclear weapons while remaining in NATO, and we should take a leaf out of the book of the Swedish and Astrian social democracy on this.

We must deal with the deep current of blimpery and jingoism that feeds the Tory vote in the white working class. The Labour Party's failure to oppose the Falklands War was a crucial error, and we have paid the price; it stands in sharp contrast even to Gaitskell's opposition to the Suez war. Opposition would not have ensured victory, but could have countered the prevailing mood and maintained ideological bridgeheads which would have been invaluable later.

Ireland is a time bomb for Labour unless we change course: we have to go into an election pledged to withdrawal within two years.

Labour cannot transform society unless it builds a coalition which includes the skilled and unskilled, women, black people and the oppressed minorities. We cannot just co-opt the women's and other movements cynically to get votes out of them: we must listen to what they are saying and change our policies and our organisation accordingly.

Can Labour win on clear socialist policies? In fact it can only win on them. Labour's attempts at 'compromise' politics drove many Labour voters even to vote Tory where they saw 'firm leadership'. But one person, one ideal 'leader' can't do it on their own. We need the bulk of the leadership, a large chunk of the PLP, the unions and the activists moving together to go out, build extraparliamentary action and win a popular majority for our policies instead of accepting public opinion as it is conditioned by the media. The whole of the party leadership needs to be out of parliament, stomping up and down the country talking to ordinary people and trying to convince them. This is their real job. We cannot hope to win the ideological battle for these policies just in the space of an election campaign.

The left has too often been disunited, more concerned with attacking itself, and must now unite to turn the party outwards towards the unions, towards active involvement in the struggles of women, black people, the unemployed, as well as the sexually oppressed minorities.

This is a clear alternative to the road to adaptation to the SDP and the media; the time to begin fighting for it is now.

BRIEFING CONFERENCE MEETING

Organising the fightback
Conference fringe meeting
Queens Hotel, Kings Road, Brighton
Sunday 2nd October
Whenever conference session finishes
Speakers:
Ken Livingstone, GLC Leader
Merle Amory, Deputy Leader Brent Council
Colin Talbot, POEU Broad Left Steering Committee
Jane Stockton, Editor, London Briefing Streetlife Supplement
Ann Pettifor, Womens Action Committee
Chair: Jeremy Corbyn MP

No to ALL nukes

By Joy Hurcombe, Labour CND

WITH just weeks before Cruise arrives, disarmament will be one of the most vital issues facing the Labour Party at conference and in the months to come. Conference will be the party's first chance to reaffirm support for the total rejection of nuclear weapons and bases, whether British or American, from British soil or waters.

That's what we voted for last year when Composite 51 gained a massive 71 per cent vote. At last the grass roots — so we thought — had a victory which had to be recognised. A clear policy for unilateral nuclear disarmament would go into the election manifesto. The voters could choose the party pledged to refuse Cruise, cancel Trident, scrap all existing nukes and bases, and adopt a non-nuclear defence policy.

This policy was never put to the voters. The Campaign Document shredded the spirit of Composite 51 to pieces. The NEC wrote in sufficient contradictions to guarantee confusion at the General Election. In particular, the section on Polaris as a negotiating tool totally contradicted the meaning of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The election manifesto was only marginally better, but was still open to interpretation. Would we get rid of the weapons in a five year period of government, or begin discussions on their removal? Who would we discuss with? For how long?

During the election the wrecking continued. The Tories exploited the weakness of our campaign, and Callaghan came in on cue with the spectre of Britain about to be made defenceless if Labour scrapped Polaris.

This intervention, unchallenged by Foot, not only destroyed the fudge's credibility but prevented further serious discussion on the real issue of preparation for nuclear war.

The right wing, and some who call themselves leftwing, are questioning Labour's nuclear policy because they say it lost the election. But this ignores two crucial facts. First, the Tories did not win the nuclear argument; they got only 42 per cent of the vote. Second, the Labour Party not only failed to present its polices, but relied on the traditional techniques of persuasion instead of adopting extraparliamentary campaigning to *change* voters' minds against the pressure of the media. CND and the Greenham Common women have shown that public opinion *can* be changed — a majority of the population now oppose Cruise — by vigorous extraparliamentary campaigning. The Labour Party has to stick by its policies, put them across clearly, and change its methods of activity.

That is why Labour CND urges all delegates to support the resolution that clarify the position on Polaris and the bases, and once again state the need to abandon all nuclear weapons. The party has gained nothing from compromises, and must turn itself outward to the people. That is why our resolution calls for an anti-nuclear weapons campaign up and down the country.

Nothing but the full programme of nuclear disarmament will do this time. We need to attack the Thatcher government for their part in escalating the nuclear arms race. We have to organise the blacking of work on Trident. We must support the peace camps and attack the lies in the press. We have to block the operation of the new civil defence regulations. We have to convince people of the obscenity of the abuse of resources. We have to explain why socialists oppose the capitalist promotion of war technology. We can stop Cruise if the state feels threatened by public protest; it is not too late to begin.



CND "HUMAN CHAIN" RALLY AT PADWORTH COMMON

Photo: G.M.Cookson

Fringe Events

We have an opportunity to fight back at the start of the Labour Party conference in Brighton. Join the Labour CND demonstration on Sunday October 2nd. Assemble at the Level, Brighton, at 1.30pm. March to the sea front via the Brighton centre. Join the rally at 2.30pm Listen to Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Bob Cryer, Helen John, Annajoy David, Ken Cameron, Richard Balfe. Join the demand to fight for the party policy to scrap all nuclear weapons. We need massive support — it has to be the biggest peace demonstration that the Labour Party has even seen.

Labour Against the Witch-hunt
Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting
Eric Heffer
Audrey Wise
Ken Livingstone
Reg Race
Jeremy Corbyn
Chair: Ernie Roberts

Saturday, October 1st, 6.30pm
Sallis Benney Hall, Brighton Polytechnic
(Grand Parade Site)
Opposite Royal Pavillion

Socialist Organiser
Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting

Building Workplace Branches

Speakers include:
Alan Fraser (Chair of Basingstoke Postal Workers Labour Party Workplace Branch)
Rob Dawber (NUR. Sheffield Hallam CLP)

(Plenty of time for discussion of the practical experiences of setting up workplace branches.)
5.30pm Tuesday October 4th
King's Hotel, Brighton

Defend Labour's Links With The Unions

Eric Heffer

Labour's 1983 election defeat has provoked demands by some politically-motivated people for an end to the association between trade unions and the Labour Party. The political basis of this view is that because the Party now obtains fewer votes from the manual working class, and because the effect of affluence' has been to slowly destroy old class-based political loyalties, the Labour Party should ditch policies which are not 'liked' by the electorate – and that the trade unions should distance themselves further and further from the political wing of the movement.

This view is based on a disastrous misconception of working class politics. The projection of these views, by media pundits and right-wing trade union general secretaries alike, amount to an attempt to impose a second great wave of revisionism in the Party. The first wave of revisionism followed Labour's election defeat in 1959 and, although the formal attempt by Gaitskell to remove Clause 4 from the Party Constitution failed, the Labour Governments of the 1960s and 1970s followed staunchly revisionist, Croslandite policies which culminated in a Labour Government embracing monetarism as an act of policy.

The next attempt at revisionism will be based on two propos itions: first, ditch the policies on which we fought the 1983 election; and second, change the institutional link between the unions and the Party. Both propositions need to be resisted vigorously.

We need to resist the revisionist push on policy because what is needed is a better and clearer explanation of our socialist policies to the voters, and not the ditching of socialist commitments. Our aim must be to *make socialism popular* – and not to trim our views so that they can be approved by the leader writers of the *Sun* and *Daily Mail*.

We need to reaffirm our links with the trade unions because they are, in essence, the institutional link which binds the party of committed socialist activists to the organisations of the working class. These links also represent, for us, the close unity between political and industrial action: and who can doubt if trade unions disaffiliated from the Party, or ceased to play a significant part in its affairs, that it would be much harder to persuade working people that only political action could solve the problems of hospital closures, mass unemployment, and legislative attacks on trade union rights.

This issue is important, because some TUC leaders wish to distance themselves from the Party and depoliticise the trade unions, making them as much like American business unions as possible. These proposals, if they were ever implemented, would shore-up the Thatcher consensus and throw away for good the political bargaining power of the whole working class.

ESTABLISH WORKPLACE BRANCHES

We need a different, and very positive strategy. A strategy to establish workplace Labour Party branches everywhere, to strengthen the links between the Party and the trade unions at a time when the proposed Tebbit legislation may weaken these links. Second, we need mass campaigning action to win support for socialist ideas. Third, we must democratise the trade unions so that the members of unions feel that *they* can control their own organisations *and* influence the political process. Advance, not retreat, should be our political motto.

FOR HEFFER — AGAINST WITCH-HUNTS

Active participatory democracy is fundamentally crucial for feminism and socialism. Without the big D all else can become so many dandelion seeds in the wind. You can have the most perfect socialist politics (ie include troops out of Ireland now and lesbian liberation in your revolutionary programme) but if we do not organise democratically we won't get very far. Get democracy right and you are at least on the right -or rather left - road. Get democracy wrong and the only road you're on is a Stalinist one leading away from socialism.

NO ABSTAINING

There can be no abstaining on democracy. If you are not for it then you are against it - by definition. You can of course have a different interpretation of democracy - maybe one that argues that those with different ideas of socialism should not be in the same movement as you. Thus you will seek to exclude from the socialist movement those with whom you disagree. You will not try to convince them of your socialist ideas by means of debate, discussion and argument. No, you will simply say 'out' or 'off with their heads' or 'expel them!'. Even as you do so you abandon democracy. Picking people out for special treatment with regard to membership of a broad movement for socialism constitutes one thing and one thing only - victimisation on the basis of political beliefs. Such victimisation leads to witch-hunts and McCarthyism.

Witch-hunts are anti-feminist and anti-socialist. Every socialist worth the name should condemn such travesties of democracy.

The ONLY candidate in the Labour Party leadership elections who does unequivocably condemn witch-hunts and defend socialist democracy is Eric Heffer. ONLY Eric Heffer defends and fights for the basic democratic right of every socialist to be a member of the Labour Party. A vote for Heffer is a vote FOR democracy and AGAINST witch-hunts. The larger the Heffer vote the more democracy is strengthened.

Heffer not only defends internal party democracy, he also wishes to see it extended by reforms to democratise both the CLPs and the trade unions. In a recent article in New Left Review, Heffer writes: 'The members of the party must themselves discuss and decide the issues at stake...The key to ensuring that the Party becomes a vigorous force for socialist and working class politics is to encourage both individual constituency members and Labour supporters in the trade unions to play a full part in the life and campaigns of the Party'. (Socialists and the Labour Party, NLR 140, July-August 1983.)

It is well nigh a truism to say that the more democracy is extended the more it is strengthened and the better the terrain becomes for feminists and socialists to win their demands. And consequently the more democracy is strengthened the more the left is strengthened and the more the Labour Party becomes a mass campaigning party capable of truly representing the interests and needs of the working class and all oppressed groups in society.

But while we must support Heffer we can not do so uncritically. For while Heffer gets the basic principle of democracy right and on many policy issues he supports what the radical left stands for, on some other crucial policy areas he is quite frankly dismal. A recent article in Labour Herald put it quite succinctly: 'Heffer represents...a philosophy based on a narrow trade union view and focussed on the fate of the male manual worker in manufacturing industry...Therefore he has had...a blind spot where the rights of women and gays are concerned'. (Heffer is best for the left, by Matthew Warburton, Labour Herald 26/8/83.)



Feminism and socialism should be inseparable. Unfortunately many socialists advocate a socialism that is not inclusive of feminism, Heffer included. While he stated in his original campaign manifesto a commitment to women's rights, while the NLR article argues for a 'sympathetic consideration of the recent demand for women to elect their own representatives to the NEC' and for ensuring that the Labour Party is in touch with the women's movement, even this minimal and skimpy support for women's rights is such a recent (ie with leadership election campaign) development that only the

WOMEN'S CONFERENCE CANCELLED

Lesley Lee
East Lewisham CLP

1983 hasn't been a very good year for women in the Labour Party. The most "important" events of the year seem once again to be political battles totally dominated by men and played by their rules. Despite all the talk about positive discrimination we have, after the General Election, only 10 women Labour MPs. And despite a Manifesto which, while nowhere near perfect, had the best set of campaigning policies relevant to women that the Party has produced, many women activists in many Constituency Labour Parties felt totally cut off from the Election campaign. These policies were just not taken up and campaigned on by many local parties.

ALIENATION

Even more disturbing, I think, is the increasing alienation many women are feeling from the Left in the Party. Can you blame us, with a leadership Election where the only woman candidate is a right-winger opposed to positive discrimination, and where the Left's candidate for the leadership has an appalling record on women, particularly on abortion. Personally, I will be reluctantly supporting Heffer because of his opposition to the witch-hunt, which I see as potentially very threatening to women in the Party. But I do feel angry and betrayed (though not very surprised) that the men who seem to have naturally assumed "leadership" positions on the Left should foist on women a candidate who does not support a "woman's right to choose". I can't be the only woman who sees free abortion on demand as one of the most fundamental concerns, central to women's liberation. Women ought to give the Left fair warning. We've had enough of little elites and kitchen cabinets drawing up slates which time and time again do not represent women in the Party, yet whom we are blindly expected to support in the interests of unity.

But one of the biggest blows women in the Party have suffered this year is the cancellation of Women's Conference. It should have been held in Cardiff in June and would have been 3 hard days of political discussion and policy making. However, due to the General Election we are now being allotted one day of discussion and workshops in London ... but with no resolutions there will no real policy making. There were 203 resolutions originally submitted for the conference covering a tremendous range of subjects of concern to women, and illustrating the fact that as far as we are concerned "every issue is a women's issue". Subjects covered included public services, the NHS and related issues, taxation, education, sexual harassment, pornography, child care, housing, gay rights, and women's organisation.

DISASTER

I believe that the cancellation of this important conference is a disaster. Because, as has been shown time and time again, only the women in the Party can be trusted to raise the issues of most direct concern to women. If the Labour Party attached the importance it deserves to its women's sections, then however great the difficulties, we would have had a proper, policy making Women's Conference. Similarly, if the Party gave our Conference the status it deserved, then the policy passed there would be seriously considered and studied by all levels of the Party (Eric Heffer could learn a thing or two, for a start).

Reading the resolutions submitted for the Conference constantly reveals that women in the Party do have different insights and approaches to many issues, and that these do reflect the needs and concerns of working class women. Policy making at National Conference is still totally dominated by men, very few of whom have the sensitivity and imagination to realise that policies drawn up by white, middle class, middle aged, heterosexual men (even if they are socialists) will inevitably reflect the experience and interests of that group. Until women, blacks, gays, the disabled and other oppressed groups can play a full and active part in policy-making, their needs will too often be ignored. Which is why the Labour Party needs an effective Women's Conference.



FEMINISTS GAINING STRENGTH

Women's Conference have seen feminists within the Party gaining strength and making important gains on issues of policy and organisation. The cancellation of one Conference won't stop that inevitable advance, but it is a blow in a year that's already been pretty depressing. I am totally in favour of conferences and day-schools using the workshop format, which through informality and lack of bureaucracy can encourage more participation, and exchange of ideas, and be a basis for the real political education which is so lacking in the Labour movement.

However, in this instance, I feel that the day of workshops, (which is after all a form of organisation favoured by feminists) is being used to block our right to a 3 day policy making Conference. Obviously we must use the day in London as constructively as possible to meet, discuss and organise. But most importantly, we should use it to build links between women in the Party, when we'll have to try again to get for women their rightful share of power in the Party.

Continued:

most naive would not believe it was just a little opportunistic. We of course welcome Heffer's suddenly seeing at least some of the light, but I think we may be forgiven some cynicism. Thus while voting for Heffer we must still raise our criticisms, still push for his support for the right of women themselves to decide on abortion, still campaign for his full support for all the demands of the Women's Action Committee that will give women full democratic rights inside the party.

DIDN'T VOTE

Not very long ago, in a certain other leadership election, a Mr Kinnock argued for abstaining, because he couldn't wholeheartedly vote for any of the candidates. So he simply didn't vote. And he 'simply' let the right wing in and weakened the left terribly. Such may in fact have been his object. It cannot and must not become ours, by virtue of our lack of wholehearted support for Heffer. If we abstain we weaken the left and strengthen the right. To abstain is merely to vote for the witch-hunt inside the Labour Party.

Michael Meacher recently said that it is not a 'touchstone' of socialism not to be in favour of the reinstatement of the expelled Militant supporters. He did not elaborate and one is left to draw one's own conclusions about the implications for Meacher's own political positions of this statement. But one thing is crystal clear - Meacher is crucially wrong about the touchstone. Democracy is a touchstone for socialism. On the other hand Meacher, up until this ambiguous remark at least has opposed the Militant witch-hunt. And he has supported women's rights including all of WAC's demands. Again the same criteria that applied to Heffer must apply to Meacher. Not our ideal candidate, but the larger the Meacher vote the more the left is strengthened vis a vis the right. And Meacher has some chance of even winning.

But whoever wins the leadership elections we must not let up on campaigning to increase party democracy and in our complete opposition to any witch-hunts. Democracy must be our touchstone.

Sarah Roelofs
Islington South CLP

LOCAL DEMOCRACY: STOP TORY SLAUGHTER!

DAVID BLUNKETT
Leader of Sheffield City Council

THE CONSERVATIVE Government have become irritated not simply with those Labour authorities who have tried to protect their communities against the onslaught of economic policies which would have resulted in the wholesale destruction of major services, but with Socialist councils trying to offer an alternative way forward. Mrs. Thatcher and her Ministers are obesssed with removing even the least glimmer of opposition from councils up and down the country.

Many people have heard of the proposals to abolish the Metropolitan Counties and the Greater London Council whose services are generally described as 'strategic' rather than 'personal', transport, highways, the fire brigade and — so far as anyone controls them — the police outside London. The threat is to hand them over to Government Departments or specially created quangos, which has already happened to the Water Authorities throught the country.

Not so many people have heard about the immediate threat which is to the very basis of local democracy itself. The Government propose in the new session of Parliament to remove the power of selected local authorities to determine their own expenditure, quality of services and the local rate they can raise to cover their spending. The immediate task is to stop the legislation going through and to prevent the centralised state which Thatcher seeks to create.

The Government's proposals were spelt out in a consultative paper in August, when they made it clear that they would determine the rules and force 15 to 20 of the largest and most vocal Labour authorities in the country to comply. Government would have the power to order councils to slash their expenditure by tens of millions of pounds affecting the whole community. Whatever people voted for in the local election they would get Conservative Party policy. Freedom and democracy in between the spasms of General Elections would be removed. The Tories are concerned that examples of popular democratic socialist alternatives to the so-called 'monetarist' policies of relying on the market place to determine how our resources are used, should not stand in the way of the new order.

Government already has the power to take away grants from councils they don't like, and as well as removing a staggering 9 billion pounds from grants and subsidies, the Government have chosen to 'fine' local communities who did not go along with Tory Party policy, by taking millions of pounds from councils who were then forced to raise rates beyond what they would have needed to cope with inflation and vital expansion. The Government force up rates and then blame the councils for raising them. It is a brilliant piece of political sabotage against their opponents, which provides them with a scapegoat along with trade unions to blame for the impact of their own distastrous policies.

Action can and must be taken both to stop the legislation and to carefully inform and prepare those working in the public and private sectors and those living-in and receiving services from the community for the struggle ahead.



Local services under threat — children's library, Hackney.

CREDIT: David Hoffman

This year's Conference must give more attention to this critical issue than has previously been accorded to matters surrounding what many people see as the fringe ativities of Local Government. Thatcher knows better than many senior politicians in the Labour Party just how important a Socialist Local Government can be in rebuilding a Labour Party which originated not from Parliament but from the community itself. An understanding of how economic and industrial policies at local level as well as the provision of services can merge into a socialist alternative to Thatcherism is crucial to the future of the Labour Party and to a popular socialist revival.

If a genuine vision of the future which catches the imagination of the mass of the population is to be rooted in the real world where people work out their every day lives, then local, along with central, party policies have a crucial part to play. Contemplating our own navels or retreating into resolutions as a substitute for action can no longer be tolerated.

Wythenshawe

The Manchester Wythenshawe Labour Party has been closed by the NEC since April of this year. On September 9th the constituency officers reconvened the constituency management committee which voted unanimously to re-open their Labour Party to normal business and defy the NEC ban.

LP National Agent, David Hughes, has written to the constituency calling this meeting invalid and unconstitutional. After the meeting, councillor Alf Home, constituency chair, replied 'as far as we are concerned the Wythenshawe Party is now fully re-established'. He said it had sought expert legal advice before holding the meeting and been advised that it was quite in order, as the NEC appeared to have acted unconstitutionally in the first place. 'The NEC are there to uphold the constitution, not to change it at will', he said.

The drastic move by the NEC to close the constituency during a period that has included both the local elections and the General Election reflects its determination to continue its interference in the affairs of the Manchester City Labour Parties. In a long running row in Manchester City Council, right wing councillors and the NEC have combined in an attempt to maintain the slender control of the right on the Council. Councillors who have attempted to represent party policy of no cuts and rent rises (now increased to 33 following the May elections) have been expelled from the Labour Group by the NEC. Attempts by local parties and the District party to select councillors who represent the party manifesto, continually receive the attention and op-

Problems with Left Slates

Mandy Moore

It now looks likely that the left will be able to make significant gains in the NEC elections this year. This success (if it happens!) will be partly due to the fact that the left's votes will have been concentrated on narrow slates of candidates; a move specifically designed to help us win back control of the NEC. And of course we will all be delighted if this strategy is a success and the right are removed.

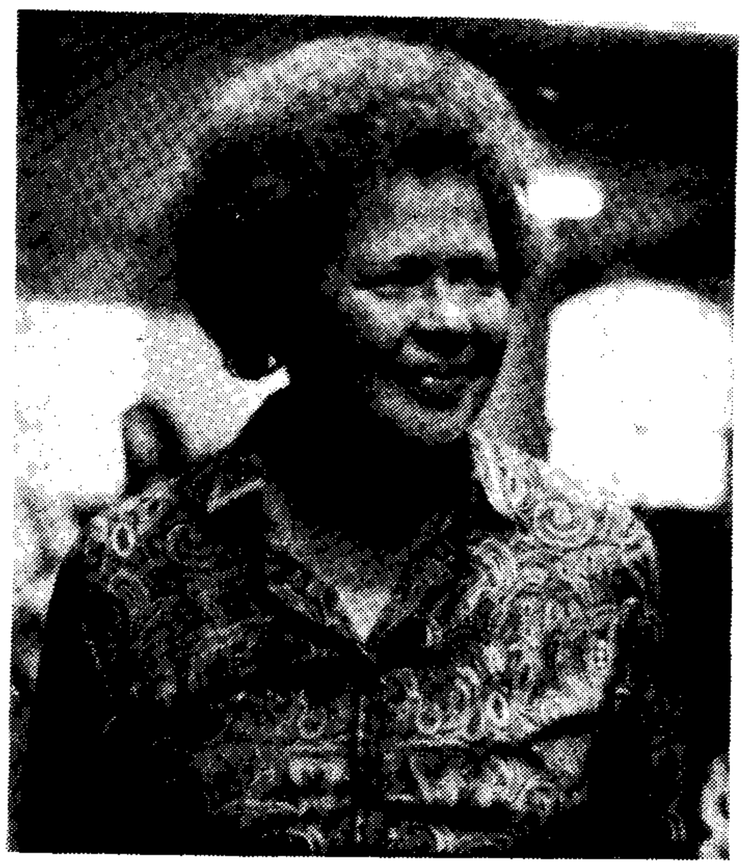
There are problems with slates however, which the left need to discuss before any further attempts are made in the future to continue this practice.

Firstly, who draws them up? At the beginning of 1982 the ill-fated Labour Liaison '82 attempted to draw up slates for the NEC in consultation with a wide range of left organisations. Whilst this consultation process wasn't perfect, it at least attempted to seek the widest possible consensus of opinion as to who should run; a number of left-wing contenders who had previously stood agreed not to stand so as not to split the vote; and we were told that although there were problems (particularly in the women's section) this was a one-off strategy and things would be different next year.

NO ATTEMPT AT CONSULTATION

Things <u>are</u> different this year. Slates have still been drawn up – but this time no attempt at consultation has taken place. There are a number of problems with this. If slates are to be drawn up then it must be with the widest possible consultation. This year a self-appointed elite, virtually all men, have decided who the left should vote for: names have been added to the list of existing left incumbents on the NEC to fill the vacancies left by the likely result in the leadership elections and the retirement of Frank Allaun. But, however worthy those comrades are whose names have been added, they have been put there without discussion on the left – and of course none of them are women.

In the past, a number of left-wingers have stood in the constituency section without a chance of winning – then they have steadily built up their votes over the years and have been in a position to fill any vacancies that have occurred. This is the way that Jo Richardson



won her place on the NEC. However, if the present situation continues, no new comrades will have the chance to build their support among the rank and file in the constituencies and any new additions to the NEC will be at the behest of a small self appointed elite.

WOMEN'S SECTION

The problems with the women's section are worse. The women's organisation in the Party believes that the women's section should be elected by Women's Conference. At present the women's section is, in all but name, elected by the Trade Union block vote. Because of this, men on the left have, this year, indulged in 'fixing sessions' where women are traded and a slate drawn up which is acceptable to the men in the Trade Unions, but which bears no relation to the sort of slate women activists would want to see. Consequently women on the left feel forced into an impossible position either supporting a slate they do not believe in or boycotting it and being accused of threatening the left's chances of regaining the NEC.

It is obvious that we need to do all we can to ensure the election of a left-wing NEC. However this must not be at the expense of our principles. If we really do believe in democracy, accountability, positive action for women, then all these factors MUST be a part of any strategy we follow. Otherwise we will find in the future that left slates will **lack** credibility and therefore no chance of success.

heo

Empty Property Unit
Lunch-time (12.30)
Tuesday 4th October
Metropole Hotel, Brighton
THE WAY FORWARD FOR LABOUR — HOUSING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR
Valerie Karn
Chris Smith
Clive Betts
Allan Roberts (Chair)
Gerald Kaufman

Housing Emergency Office

party defies NEC closure

position of the NEC.

The Wythenshawe officers were sacked and the constituency closed by the NEC on April 27th, for refusing to restage its AGM. Since then the administration of the constituency has been placed in the hands of David Hughes and his representative Joe Payne. Previously Payne had been employed by the Wythenshawe constituency as their agent but was suspended - with pay - when he tried to go over the heads of the elected officers.

The alleged irregularities over the AGM originate from USDAW delegate Pat Jones, a noted right winger. At the AGM, Agent Payne, no less, checked the records and found that Jones' papers confirming he was a delegate had not come through and ruled he was not eligible to vote. A similar ruling was made on AUEW delegate Barday Patois, who has never challenged this ruling and has no complaints. Nevertheless, the NEC have upheld the allegations of one person, Pat Jones.

Meanwhile, in the Woodhouse Park Ward, the local Party had selected Frank Booth over a sitting right winger to stand as councillor in the May elections. Disgruntled the right contacted Hughes alleging the now familiar 'irregularities'. Hughes contacted Payne at the beginning of April and instructed him, against the wishes of the Ward and CLP Executive to organise a new selection meeting. When Payne attempted to go ahead he was suspended on full pay by the CLP. The NEC on April 27th which closed the constituency, reinstated Payne and has since taken over responsibility for his pay.

The ludicrous situation now is that the suspended Joe Payne, who was responsible for the administration of the AGM, is now solely responsible for the whole of the constituency under David Hughes' instructions, while the rest of the constituency has been closed down.

For Alf Home, 'the fight for Wythenshawe is vital if the witchhunt in the party as a whole is to be stopped'. The reconvened GMC has unanimously agreed to lobby the LP conference at Brighton. They will be asking conference to overturn the NEC decision. Councillor Home will also be addressing a fringe meeting organised by Labour Against the Witchhunt. The Manchester City Party has called for the sacking of David Hughes for his part in the whole affair.

DEFEND THE GLC

By Valerie Wise,
Chair GLC Women's Committee

Exactly two years ago I wrote an article for London Labour Briefing with the same title: 'Defend the GLC', I wrote then that the GLC was under attack from both the press and the Tory Government. What's new?

The attack on the GLC has intensified. The Conservative Government has a manifesto commitment to abolish the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils.

It is no accident that the Tories want to get rid of the GLC, as it has been one of the main areas of opposition to the Tory Government since May 1981. Let's not forget that the Tories set it up in the first place in 1963 because they wanted to get rid of the London County Council which was always held by Labour. The Tories thought the GLC would have a permanent Tory majority. This hasn't been the case and the GLC has swung back and forth between Labour and Conservative.

VITAL WORK

Since the present administration led by Ken Livingstone was elected we have seen for the first time how the GLC should be used. The GLC has a good record and carries out important, indeed vital, work.

- ***Transport*** *– the GLC has successfully cut fares on London Transport again in spite of its first fares defeat by the Law Lords. Even that defeat was important in showing people how the law could be used to prevent an elected Council from carrying out an important promise to help the majority of people through lower fares and better services. Now the GLC is continuing to use its powers to influence transport policy for the benefit of Londoners.*
- ***Leisure, Culture and Sport*** *– the GLC in making these more accessible to Londoners.*
- ***Housing*** *– the GLC runs the largest housing development and modernisation programme in the country.*
- ***Safety*** *– the GLC has built the Thames Barrier to protect London from flood devastation. It has one of the finest fire services in the world, and it is responsible for London's pollution control. Its Police Committee campaigns for the police to be accountable to the local community. A wish for genuine law and order is felt by many people and is perfectly sensible. The Tories distort it to pave the way for 'law and order' which is repressive instead of protective. The GLC Police Committee shows the way to a genuine constructive police policy.*
- ***Employment*** *– the GLC has established the Greater London Enterprise Board to provide finance to new and existing enterprises. It has also set up the Greater London Training Board.*
- ***Discrimination*** *– the GLC was the first local authority in the country to set up a Women's Committee to promote the interests of women in London. It also has an Ethnic Minorities Committee which is actively promoting equal opportunities and good relations by combatting racism in London.*
- ***Planning*** *– the GLC is the overall planning authority in London, and tries to put the needs of people first.*
- ***Voluntary Sector*** *– the Tories talk about 'volunteers' as part of their retreat to Victorian ways, either charitable crumbs or exploiting good hearted people instead of providing proper community services. The GLC, in contrast, genuinely helps many groups of people engaged in self-help, mutual help, and community service and builds a bridge between local government and socially-responsible citizens.*

London will be the only capital in the western world not to have an elected Council. Many Londoners no doubt think that they will save an enormous amount of money if the GLC is abolished. This is a myth.



Many of the services the GLC provides will still have to be provided on a London-wide basis. You can't run a public transport system borough by borough, or a fire service. Sometimes things done in one area (like the Thames Barrier) benefit in a very wide area. And so on. There is no administrative logic to the Government proposals.

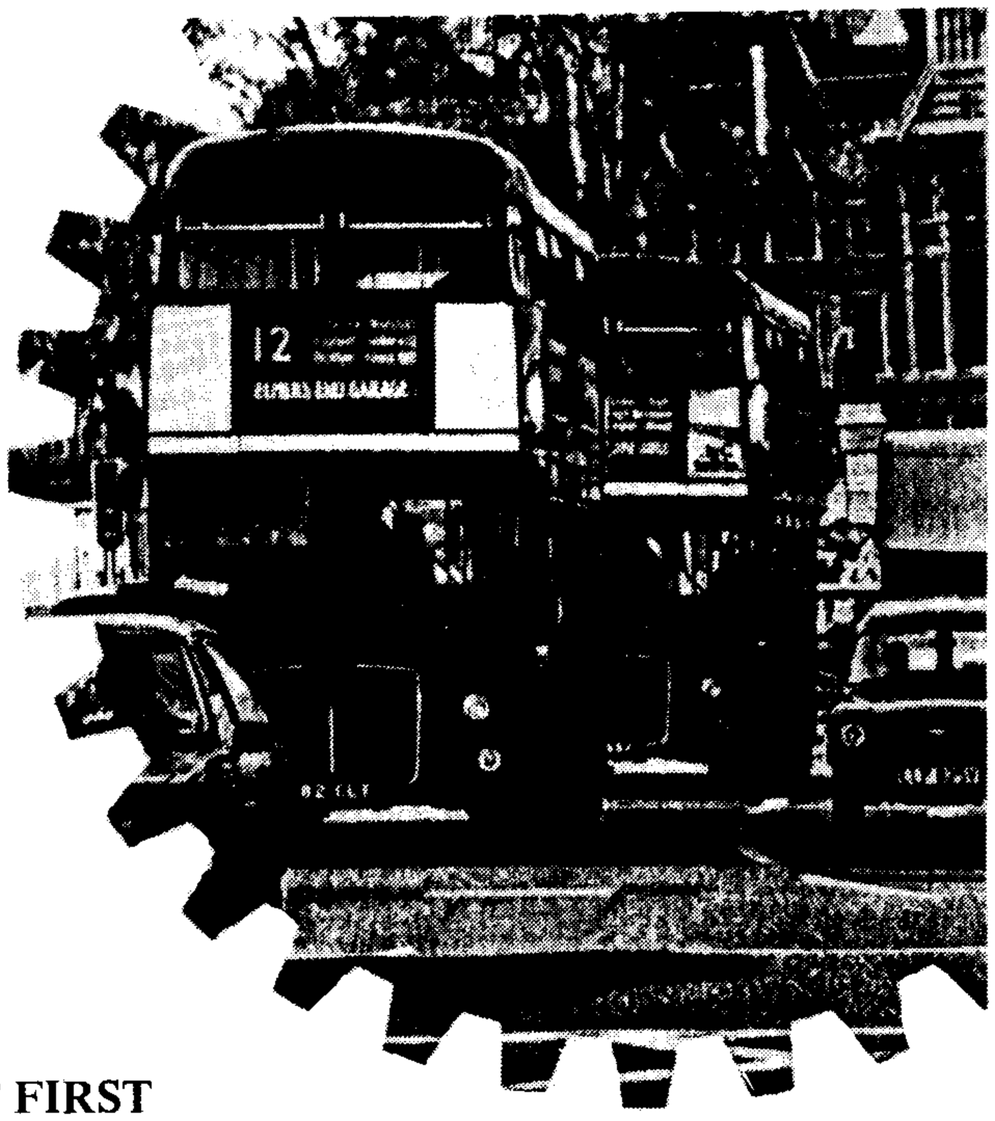
The logic is entirely political. They will set up undemocratic and unaccountable quangos. Londoners will still have to pay out – but they will be paying for poorer services over which they have ceased to have influence or control through the ballot box.

RE-DISTRIBUTING WEALTH

Although Labour did not set up the GLC in the first place, we now have an excellent mechanism for re-distributing wealth. The great part of our rate income is from commercial properties especially in the City and Westminster. We are using those rates for the benefit of people in London who need them. The City, the banks, the multi-nationals, the big hotels and the huge shopping complexes object to paying rates which are then spent on public services to which they are opposed. And in many cases rates are the only non-avoidable and non-evadable taxes, in fact the only taxes they pay! Let's not forget that these people are the bankers for the Tory Party.

The needs of Greater London have to a large extent been created by the City itself, which needs a skilled, educated workforce that can get to work. This need can be most *sensibly* met by a good public transport system, good schools and decent housing. But the City and the Tories reckon that it can be most *profitably* met by forcing each individual to make private provision through the private sector.

A third of the GLC rate borne expenditure goes on its historical debt. Presumably this will still have to be paid – unless the Tory Government adopts GLC Labour Group policy to nationalise the banks and annul the housing debt! Otherwise the money will still need to be paid by Londoners.



PUBLIC TRANSPORT FIRST

Perhaps surprisingly the Government has chosen to have its first battle on our strongest ground -- London Transport. A White Paper has been produced which proposes to remove London Transport from the GLC by the summer of 1984. The Government proposes to set up a new quango, the London (Regional) Transport, which will be totally unaccountable to the people of London. It is extremely likely that fares will rise, services will deteriorate and free fares for the elderly disappear.

Ironically, if the Government goes ahead with this intention to remove London Transport from the GLC next summer and pass responsibility for providing free fares for the elderly to the Boroughs, it will be the Tory Borough of Bromley (of Law Lords fame) which will face the biggest financial burden, as so many elderly people live in their area. Of course, like other Tory areas they may decide not to give this help to elderly people!

The Tories have good political reasons for their axe. A government which is sweeping away all guaranteed standards, both in terms of levels of services and the pay and conditions of the people working in them, cannot afford to have important centres of elected power like the GLC standing out against them.

London has equally good political reasons for defending the GLC. The difference is that these coincide with the interests of ordinary Londoners – whereas the Tories want to clear the way for a demolition job on public services.

There are many pressures and problems faced by elected Councils, especially facing a Tory Government for whom no holds are barred, a hostile and distorting press, and a collapsing economy. The GLC is certainly not perfect (and Councillors are very aware of this!) but it is a fighting authority, trying to protect old ground and break new ground, trying to provide services and mobilise people, trying to keep faith with its voters in the face of unprecedented attacks.

The ferocity of the Tory attack must be out-done by the passion and determination of the Labour defence. What will you do to help?

ACTION

The GLC is running its own campaign. It has produced fact sheets, a leaflet and a booklet on what the GLC does; Fringe meetings are taking place at all the Party Conferences; each committee is also doing things.

However this is not sufficient. The Labour Movement must be fully involved in campaigning.

- *Local Labour Parties and trade union branches should organise meetings, leaflets, petitions etc. in local areas.*
- *Gain support for resolutions at Labour Party Conference.*
- *Demand that the NEC and the Parliamentary Leadership give a lead and show their full support for the retention of the GLC.*
- *Write to your MP (of whatever Party – even some Tories are worried by Government intentions).*
- *Talk to your friends, workmates, neighbours.*
- *Write to your local newspapers defending the GLC.*

Everyone can do something to help the campaign.

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

GUATEMALA
The August Coup

The recent coup has brought Guatemala out of media obscurity. In the last two years, what sparse comment there has been has concentrated on the eccentricities of the now deposed President, General Rios Montt and his espousal of the weird Fundamentalist Californian sect, El Verbo (The Word). His major claim to eccentricity must be his propensity for pious moralistic, 'Christian' statements, whilst presiding over the systematic and brutal massacre of some 10,000 Indian peasants and the displacement of some million more; making it the bloodiest and least reported 18 months in an already bloody history.

This history is long. When speaking of the struggle for freedom going on in Central America, we would do well to remember the last 20 years of guerilla activity in Guatemala, and the present massive involvement of the Indian peasants in this struggle. When speaking of US intervention in Central America, we would do well to remember that since the CIA backed coup that displaced the democratic reformist government in 1954, the Guatemalan army has received the most sustained and concentrated military aid and training from the US, of any army in the region.

MASSACRES OF ENTIRE INDIAN COMMUNITIES

Many counter-insurgency methods now common in the rest of Latin America, first appeared in Guatemala in the sixties. Death-squads and disappearances have taken their toll of more than one generation, and napalm was used in a massive and temporarily successful campaign against guerillas between 1966 and 1968. The massacres of entire Indian communities and the creation of 'model' villages/internment camps, now put these methods in the shade.

It is unlikely that the poor and oppressed can expect anything different from General Mejia, the new President, who has said that the counter-insurgency campaign will continue, and is quoted as saying, that he'd like to see the word 'Indian' eliminated from the Guatemalen dictionary. However what is significant about the coup, is that Guatemala has now entered explicitly into the arena of US policies in the region. Before making any comments on his policies for his own people, General Mejia launched into an attack of the Nicaraguan government, criticised the Contadora Group (Venezuala, Colombia, Mexico and Panama) who are trying to promote negotiations; and gave his full support to US intervention in the Region. In the light of the known expertise and experience of the Guatemalan army (the largest and most efficient in Central America) his offer to train El Salvadorian troops in counter-insurgency techniques, could provide a serious alternative to the direct increase in US military involvement in El Salvador, which is so unpopular with the American Electorate.

US INVOLVEMENT

The circumstances of the coup further confirm its significance to US policy and their direct involvement in it. One week before, Mejia went to Honduras and met with the Honduran and El Salvadorian Chief of Staff on the US aircraft carrier, The Ranger which now lies off the Honduran coast. At the scene of the coup the US Military Attache was seen complete with walkie talkie dodging out of the sight of the TV cameras.

These details tell us nothing new about US intention in the area, but the further consolidation of links between repressive regimes who would previously be counted on to squabble, can only bode ill for the freedom struggles of their people.

Frieda Schicker

Anybody interested in solidarity work on Guatemala, or any information please contact

The Guatemala Working Group
c/o LAB
1 Amwell St
London WC1

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL

Labour Party Conference – after the leadership elections

Debate on international issues, and recognition of the importance of international solidarity with fellow socialists, is deplorably limited at Labour Party Conference.

Last year in an attempt to redress this situation the London Region Co-op Political Committee joined with eighteen solidarity campaigns and human rights groups in presenting an international rally and highly successful social evening.

This year the Campaigns are providing delegates and visitors an opportunity to relax after the leadership elections on Sunday night. Live entertainment from Chile, Southern Africa, Middle East and the Phillipines will be backed up by a Carribean disco and a late bar until 1am.

Admission is £1 at the door, and the social will be underway as soon as conference ends at the Sussex Room, Bedford Hotel (3 minutes along the front, past the Metropole).

Jerry Hughes



Relatives and friends of prisoners on trial for their lives wait outside the court building

TURKISH TRIALS • Eyewitness • Report

JEREMY CORBYN, MP for Islington North, visited Turkey earlier this month. His constituency includes nearly ten thousand Turkish people, and his visit was fulfilling an election pledge. His overriding emotion immediately after the visit was shock, despite having some knowledge of the conditions in Turkey before going. Next month Jeremy's full report of the delegation will be printed.

Whilst there the delegation witnessed the trials of Dev Yol in Ankara after circumventing various bureaucratic and practical obstacles laid down by the Turkish regime. Jeremy reports:

"It takes place in a military camp in Ankara, with extensive guarding and registering. When were arrived we were then accompanied to a former sports hall that had been converted for the trial.

Outside, in a dusty courtyard, were soldiers, all armed and all continually directing the few relatives who were present; they all tried hard to stop our delegation talking to them. Inside the building the sight was incredible: two hundred and five men, all young, sitting on benches in civilian clothes but shaved heads, surrounded by soldiers. Sitting on the front row were thirteen young women prisoners, also wearing civilian clothes. All the accused were surrounded by a steel fence. At the back, in a sort of grandstand, were no more than a hundred families, who were also closely guarded.

Apart from us the press benches were empty, and the lawyers' benches, totally separate from the prisoners, contained just two people.

On a huge dais at the front sat seven military officers, all wearing uniform and a high collared cloak. One of them was apparently the prosecutor, but it was difficult to distinguish his presence from that of the judges.

The guard was changed every twenty minutes, with a very intimidating means of marching soldiers in and then standing double guard until positions had been doubled, and then marching the previous guard out. Any defendant wishing to go to the toilet has to be accompanied by a soldier.

All of the defendants had been in prison for about three years, and some of them were only aged eighteen, which means that at the time of arrest they were aged fifteen. As the prosecutor read out his charges in laborious detail the defendant concerned was then ordered to the dock to give his response. (The women were not called whilst we were there). In all cases they denied the charges, and mostly stated that they had been tortured. All said that the statements were obtained under duress and in some cases that they had signed them whilst blindfolded.

It is quite clear that none of the defendants ever had free access to lawyers, that they were not allowed private visits, and that they had been subject to torture. We met people who told us the most horrifying accounts of being dragged from their homes at night in mid-winter without proper clothes on; torture was a wide variety of vile methods but included cold water, keeping awake under questioning, electric shock and hitting with sand bags. The ever-present threat of harming relatives was also frequently used."

Elections on November 6 are being presented as a return to democracy in Turkey. The repression and total lack of any form of justice in the country preclude any free elections and only the sham of democracy can result from these. The elections must be exposed as another manoeuvre to prop up the unacceptable regime of that country.

NICARAGUA NEEDS OUR HELP

By JEREMY CORBYN, M.P.

Nicaragua is facing the classic strangulation of its liberation that all third world countries face when they try to unshackle themselves from western domination. As a strategically important state in Central America it has always suffered from American incursions more than most. For the first thirty years of this century US marines were seldom out of the country. In 1933 the United States, tired of fighting an endless guerilla war, installed the Samoza family in power as dictators and gave them unremitting support for the next forty-six years.

The heroism of the followers of Sandino in taking to the hills and fighting for the liberation of Nicaragua during this time lives in the folklore, lives and culture of every Nicaraguan. The dream of Sandino of Nicaragua free from the domination of American money was not to be realised for another forty-six years when the latter-day followers of Sandino led the triumphant Sandinista forces into Managua and the disgraced Somoza family, having adopted a scorched earth policy against their own people, decamped to the welcoming arms of the Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner – with all the country's money and a sixty-five million dollar loan that the US had thoughtfully provided through the World Bank.



Sandinista rally in Managua

Incredible Changes

Since 1979 the changes in life in Nicaragua are quite incredible. With tears in their eyes very poor people told me that they had been to see a doctor and that their children visited the Health Centre regularly to be checked. Until 1979 the very idea of ever being able to visit a Doctor was hardly a pipe dream for most people.

To be guaranteed food every month, for every family is the greatest liberation of all. The threat of hunger is no longer a pall draped over the poor masses of the people and the literacy and education programmes mean real liberation. Four years ago fifty-five per cent of the people were illiterate; the current figure of twelve per cent is the second lowest (to Cuba) in the whole of Latin America. Yet, all these achievements, and many many more are under threat at the present from the very forces that were so soundly rejected by the people in 1979.

Daily Threatened With Invasion

This small country of less than three million people, who have generously honoured all Samoza's debts to the IMF and World Bank, and are trying to give a good standard of living to all, are daily threatened with invasion. American ships are steaming along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of Nicaragua, 6,500 US ground forces are on 'exercises' in nearby Honduras, and American-equipped ex-Samoza guards make nightly raids into Nicaragua from the comfort of their bases in Honduras and Costa Rica. The ever present military threat means that the whole country has to be on a war footing, and the 'CONTRA' forces managed an abortive bombing raid over the airport in Managua, at a time when it was packed with people.

To follow up their military threats the United States Government are mounting and directing an economic blockade of the country. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund, who quite happily poured good money after bad in Samoza's day, are now refusing loans on the insistence of the U.S.A., with the willing support of the British representatives. This is then backed up by a refusal of credits from private banks and large trading companies.

Shortages exist in Nicaragua. Everybody is eating and for most of the people they have never known such living standards or security, yet the blockade means that medicines are difficult to obtain, and petrol is rationed. Lack of spare parts for vehicles mean that hundreds of buses are laid up. Paper is a valuable commodity and precious foreign exchange is needed to help finance many of the development projects.

Genuine Liberation

The real reason why the USA are trying to strangle Nicaragua is because the White House cannot allow the example of genuine liberation to become the inspiration and example that it is to millions in Latin America. They are obsessed with the Monroe Doctrine which, they believe, entitles them to enslave everybody south of the Rio Grande; yet they know that any serious attempt at invasion will be met with opposition that will make the Vietnam parallel a frightening reality. The people of Nicaragua are everywhere painting slogans on the walls and on their houses, 'Todos las Armas Al Pueblo', they are defending their revolution and their liberation, and they are also building a society free to organise and the Council of State, (a fifty-one member body of popular organisations), have just approved a law on political parties and are preparing the details for future elected assemblies. Something the people of Nicaragua have never known before.

Any developing country has terrible problems. To change the domination of five generations of American Bankers in a few years would be a remarkable achievement in itself, but to do this in the face of blockade and military invasion is to be saluted.

The country's economic development is under threat from the blockade. The Sandanista Government has succeeded in opening a thermal power station to reduce the reliance on imported oil, they are developing a new railway system, and trying to execute the hundred year old dream of a coast to coast railway. In Britain we have railway engineering workers being made redundant from making the very equipment that the Nicaraguans need – yet for Mrs. Thatcher the slavish following of the USA is more important than assisting development in one of the poorest parts of Central America.

Nicaragua needs our help, not our charity, and the poorest people we spoke to said "tell your friends what we are doing, tell the USA to leave us alone and let us liberate ourselves from their domination".

Ireland — "to the centre of political debate"

Sarah Roelofs, Islington South CLP

'The time has come when British withdrawal from Northern Ireland must be moved to the centre of the political debate . For too long those who have so courageously advocated it have been denounced as if they supported terrorism.

Yet it must be obvious to everybody that the present policy of military repression has failed, is failing, has no prospect of success and in so far as it is intended to enforce partition, does not deserve to succeed.' Tony Benn writing in the *Guardian*, July 1983.

Benn went on to argue for a date to be set for British withdrawal — *'not more than two or three years ahead'* — and for a UN peace keeping force to replace British troops and *'sustain law and order until such time as the new government could assume that responsibility.'*

SIGNIFICANT ADVANCE

That the public debate on Ireland has ever come as far as a leading British politician calling for British troop withdrawal in a major 'serious' Fleet Street daily, is in itself a significant political advance. But a quick and prompt withdrawal is vitally important — every *day* it is delayed is a day's more preparation for Loyalist shock troops. Two to three *years* for troop withdrawal would be two to three years too long. And proposing UN troop intervention shows a blind spot about the real role that such 'peacekeeping' forces play. After all the British troops themselves were originally sent in to 'keep the peace' and the current international peacekeeping force in the Lebanon aren't making such a successful job of it!

In a letter to the *Guardian* on the 29th on July, Niall Power, Secretary of the Labour Committee on Ireland, asked the pertinent question — 'why hand over to a Northern Ireland government? Sectarianism is intrinsically part of the "Ulster" statelet, its borders being drawn on the pure basis of religious head count. Was it not Tony Benn who called partition a 'crime against the Irish people"?'.

But together with Livingstone's trail blazing efforts, Benn's article was another major breakthrough in the wall of silence on Ireland. In Northern Ireland itself there have also been major political advances with Sinn Fein's electoral successes and involvement in community politics. The powers that be, the British state led by Thatcher & Co., deeply appreciate these advances and have redirected their considerable energies from Prior's pathetic Assembly to something altogether more fruitful. An old strategy — criminalisation — has spawned a new tactic — supergrasses. Once the British sought to criminalise the political prisoners, now they seek to do the same to Sinn Fein.

MOVE QUICKLY

British socialists need to move quickly to defend the gains that have been made on both sides of the Irish sea. This means organising to defend *civil liberties* without placing conditions on those who will agree to support us in defence of these basic freedoms:

1. Free speech on Ireland — building support for the right of Sinn Fein members to come to Britain to speak directly to British people.

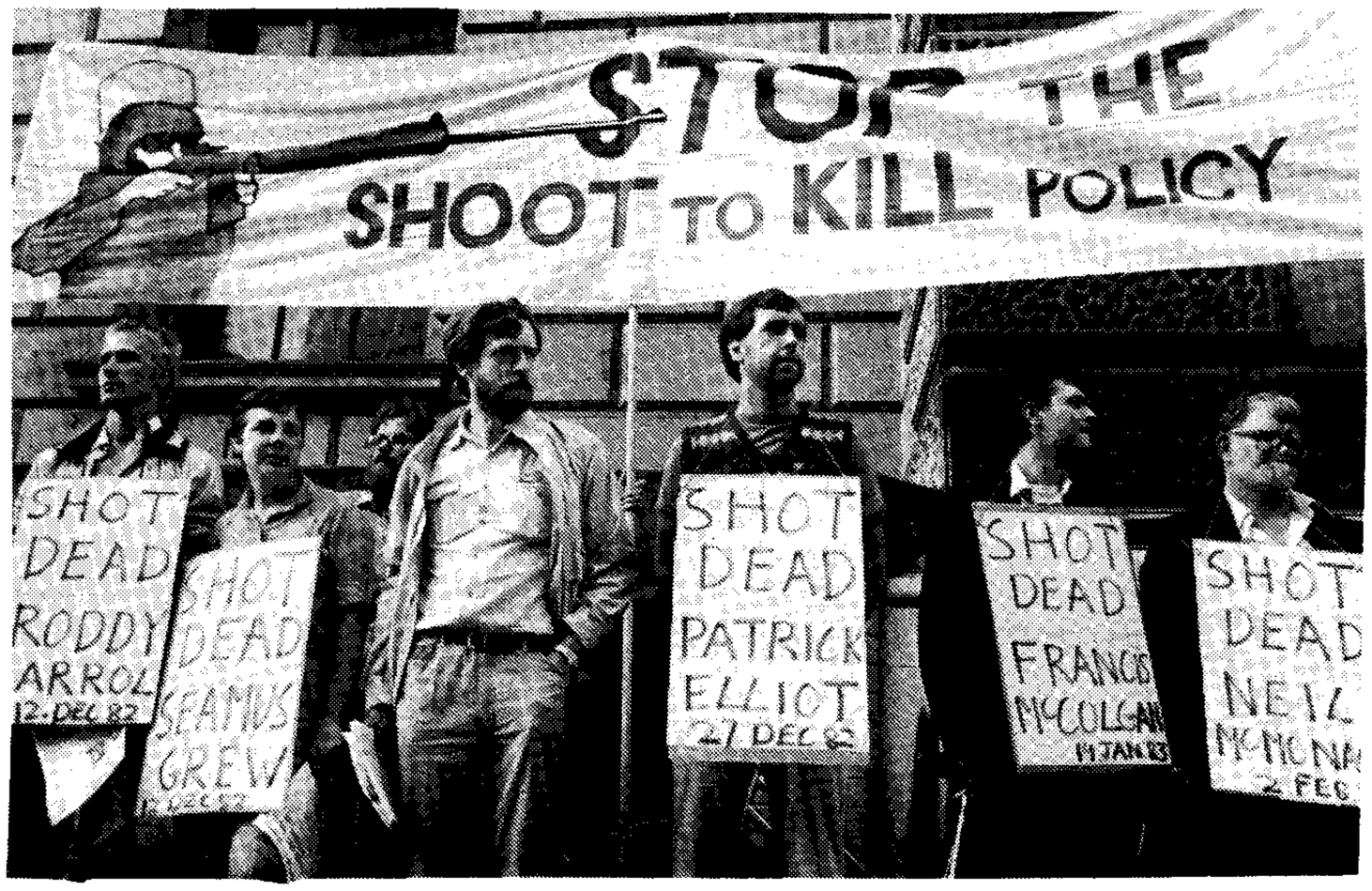
2. Repeal the PTA — this act, which no less a person than Roy Jenkins once described as 'draconian', is frequently used to prevent Irish people coming in to Britain to address meetings here.

3. Stop the strip searches — the sexual harassment of women prisoners in Armagh by means of petty strip searching.

4. End the supergrass trials — they are unlawful and are even further discrediting a judicial' system that is already in considerable disrepute.

In the Labour Party we particularly need to increase campaigning activity against the sectarian notion of 'majority' contained in the gerry mandered 6 County state and end the Labour Party's (fuzzy though it may sometimes be) support for the Unionist veto.

All this activity will serve to bring Ireland into the political limelight where it belongs and take us nearer our fundamental aim of unconditional British withdrawal.



photograph: Nick Oakes (Photon)

Above: Jeremy Corbyn MP with others on the picket on 31st August.

Jeremy Corbyn M.P. condemned the shoot-to-kill policy of crown forces in northern Ireland when speaking on a picket of Jim Prior's office in Westminster. The picket was called by the Troops Out Movement to publicise the shoot-to-kill policy and to call for charges to be brought against those responsible for the killings of 12 unarmed Civilians since November 1982.

Speaking 'with the mandate of my Islington North Constituency whose large Irish population elected me with a clear Troops Out Ticket', Jeremy Corbyn contrasted the widespread condemnation that followed the murder of Martin Malone on 30 July with the inactivity of the R.U.C. — 'One month later no-one has been charged with Malone's Death, despite the presence of several eyewitnesses'.

Also supporting the picket were Harry Cohen (Leyton MP), Ernie Roberts (Hackney North MP), Tony Banks (Newham North-West MP), Alf Lomas (London North-East MEP), Ken Livingstone (GLC Leader). Islington borough council, in line with its policy on Ireland, supported the picket in a letter from the chief whip.

ABORTION REFERENDUM IN IRISH REPUBLIC — The 2:1 majority in support of an amendment to the Southern Irish Constitution to completely and utterly and forever outlaw abortion is an awful defeat for women's rights. Many more Irish women will now be forced to travel to Britain for abortions or recourse to the backstreets. There are some glimmers of light in this gloom contained in the voting figures. The turnout was extremely low with only just *over half of the electorate bothering to vote at all. And only 35.7% of the electorate voted in support of the amendment. The problem was that only 17.6% voted against it. However, the Anti-Amendment Campaign is fighting on and has pledged itself to defend contraceptive facilities and family planning clinics should the victors in this unrepresentative result decide to turn their mysoginist attention to such services.*



INDUSTRIAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Women In Telecom

It is nine years since British Telecom declared its policy of Equal Opportunity. It came with the passing of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts in the early 70s. But, as the trade union movement has recognised, there has been little improvement in the position of women in the workforce. That's why since 1980 the TUC has called for Positive Action.

Women in Telecom was established in 1981 and has fought for women's issues to be a key part of the union's concerns. With the backing of a grant from the Equal Opportunites Commission they have prepared 3 issues of Women in Telecom Magazine to investigate equality of opportunity in the industry.

The first issue looked at the policy and statistics of women in BT. There are currently 77,093 women employed by BT – 30% of the workforce. They are concentrated in the lowest paid areas – factories, catering and cleaning – and in the 'women's jobs' – operators and secretaries. Only one BT engineer in 500 is a woman and in motor transport the figure is one in 5,000. Yet they make up more than three quarters of telephonists, secretaries and canteen staff.



Job Segregation

This job-segregation is a typical picture for women workers and as the TUC argue is the main impediment to equal pay. The second issue of the magazine looked at women's experience in working for BT, their concerns and opportunities. It carried interviews of women across the industry. In the 3rd and final issue currently available the women have produced a programme of positive action which seeks to give women a better deal. The programme sets targets for the proportion of women who could be working in certain key grades in 5 years time if the management and unions put the plan into action. They argue that these targets are a minimum and are realistic if action in a number of areas is undertaken. They set out ways of helping women in recruitment, training, promotion and in the working environment.

This form of Positive Action is only partially encouraged by the law. Positive action in the USA is guaranteed in law, all employers are obliged to review their workforces to establish women's and ethnic minority under-representation and to produce goals and targets to redress that discrimination.

The union action advocated by *Women in Telecom* would be boosted by such a change in the law in Britain. The Labour Party has to date not adopted such a policy although the TUC in its 1982 report advocates it.

Men's Fears for their Jobs

Positive Action has become more necessary as a result of economic policies of the Tories. Job segregation makes redundancies all the easier for management who play on men's fears for their own jobs. The Tories' attempts to privatise BT make women's jobs vulnerable. BT will be slimmed down in the name of competition and the so-called non-essential areas (i.e., non profitable) have a high proportion of women workers. *Women in Telecom* have combined their fight for positive action to the fight for jobs, as their recent editorial concludes.

"If we don't hold the line against women being made redundant, where do we hold the line? When do we start taking action? Whose job is worth fighting for?"

Denny Fitzpatrick
West End POEU
Hampstead and Highgate CLP

NUT Facing Crisis of Perspectives

Ken Jones, National Executive, N.U.T. -Outer London. (personal capacity)

Socialist tendencies in trade unions can now, less than ever, limit themselves to urging the defence of jobs and pay by militant means. Essential though that task is, it is just one part of a broader perspective. This article tries to show, with reference to the NUT, that what teachers face is a crisis of trade union perspectives of an historic dimension. Particularly in the public sector, unions confront not only attacks on jobs and pay, but also important changes in state policy. Changes which alter educational objectives, transform the ideologies traditionally associated with it, and undermine the positions of influence painstakingly gained by the unions. Moreover, the Tories have been able, in a classic display of the martial arts to use their opponents' own weight against them; the influence gained by public sector unions is presented as a major part of the problems of the sector. Non-accountable, sectorally-minded unions are held responsible for the crisis of the service.

Nowhere is this more the case than in state education. For 30 years after the 1944 Education Act, education policy was broadly a matter of consensus between the classes. 'Equal opportunity' was accepted as a policy goal which would simultaneously achieve economic efficiency and social justice. On the basis of this consensus (of which it was a supporter) the NUT made several gains. The setting up of the Schools Council and the CSE Exam strengthened the influence of teachers' organisations on the curriculum. Teachers gained some control of their work situation, free from regular inspection, assessment and prescription. Their jobs were secure. In fits and inadequate starts, education spending was increased.

In this context, political alignment and the winning of active popular support did not seem to be a necessity of union policy. The union didn't even join the TUC until 1969/70. Consolidation of teachers' influence was seen to depend on the exclusion of all 'outside interference'. Dialogue with parents and, of course, school-students about education objectives was ruled out. As long as access to education was expanding policy relating to its content was unnecessary.

HISTORIC PROGRAMME DEMOLISHED

This historic 'programme' is now being demolished. New goals dominate state policy — represented in the YTS and its school spin-off, the TVEI. The School Council has been abolished, and teacher control of exam syllabuses is weakening. Temporary contracts, compulsory redeployment and redundancy threats undermine the security of their tenure. Employers make new proposals for pay scales, which link promotion to forms of assessment. Almost unrestricted 'parental choice' between secondary schools places pressure on schools to conform, and encourages in parents an interest in the future of *their* child, alone.

In short, 1944 educational resettlement, and the position of teachers which rested upon it, are being radically revised. These changes have thrown the NUT into turmoil. On the one hand, there has been a move to the left: backing for militant action in some areas (such as the six-week strike in Barking in 1982); and edging closer to the mainstream of the labour movement, embodied in support for 'an' alternative economic strategy and for the healthworkers' action in September 1982. At the same time, women in the union have had success in changing some areas of union policy, and in getting it to convene a conference on equal opportunities — an event which must become annual.

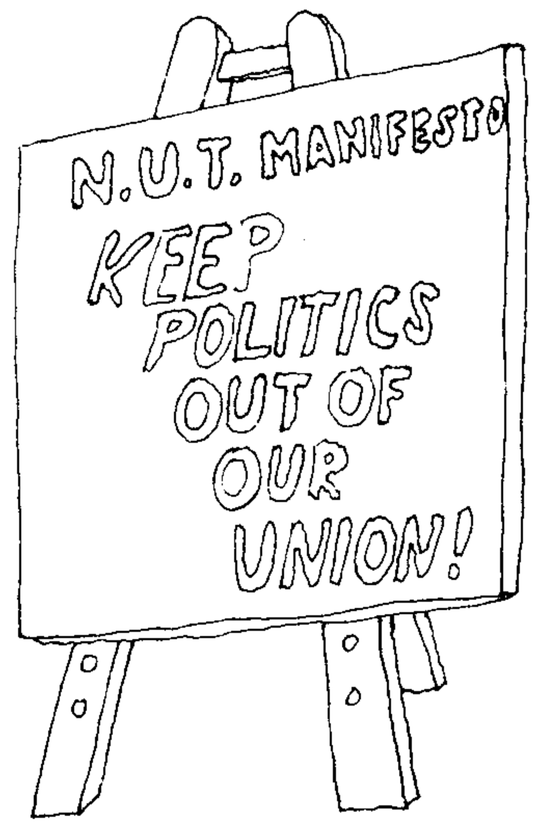
On the other hand, the NUT leadership is trying hopelessly to revive the spirit of 1944. Its Education Memorandum to 1983 Conference evoked a tradition of Conservative benevolence towards state education, stretching from 1870 to Edward Heath. Its 'manifesto' for the General Election was written in anodyne terms, to gather all party support. (Labour and Alliance endorsed it.) This all-party strategy, and the corresponding claim that education is a non-party-political issue, are coupled with the leadership's offensive against the politicisation of the union. It argues that the non-political status of the NUT comprises its very identity. To introduce politics will weaken and split the union. It points to the membership figures and to the threat posed by 'non-political' teachers' organisations (the NUT has barely half the teachers in England and Wales in membership) and to pre-election opinion polls to reinforce at argument.

All the while these issues are contested at national level, the daily pressure on schools continues. Job loss, compulsory redeployment, and 'cover' for absent teachers are permanent issues. The combination of struggle on these issues with a sense of the crisis in the overall policy of the union helps to explain the growing influence of the left. About half of the NUT associations in the Greater London area now have left leaderships. The left's positions get a consistent 40% of the vote at Annual Conference — though in ballots for the National Executive it does less well.

SOCIALIST TEACHERS ALLIANCE

The major organisation of the left— especially since the SWP wound up 'Rank and File Teacher' earlier this year — is the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA). In a union where the 'Broad Left' has traditionally been a secretive caucus grouped around a section of the CP whose views and methods are unequivocally Stalinist, it is the STA which serves as an organising centre for the left. It has been able to take advantage of the gap between the union's policies and those of the mainstream of the trade union movement to present itself as the force in the union which presses for the full integration of the NUT into the labour movement.

Unlike its Rank and File predecessor, the STA does not see itself as *the* left in the union, but as an initiator of unity in action on major issues. Thus it has been able to work with some CP and 'old' Broad left activists in unilateralist campaign. Thus also in many localities STA members rather than forming separate groups, work with others



in 'left caucuses'. A modest achievement perhaps, but at least one that is firmly based in non-sectarianism.

The obstacles that the STA faces in making the politics of the left hegemonic are formidable. Not only sixty years of professional aspiration on the part of the union, but also the renewed impetus that Thatcher's election victory has given the right in the union. Now the right is able to argue that Labour is in decline; that the union would be foolish to involve itself in campaigns or policies associated with Labour; and that the union should follow its own course of seeking something from all parties. After all, Labour was not the only party which endorsed the NUT manifesto, and there may be a coalition government before long. And, on top of all that, there are 'membership implications' in any political alignment.

In reply, the left must show that such arguments do nothing to resolve the crisis in the union's perspectives — only to stave off change it will have to show concretely that the defence of jobs, control over work and resistance to the reshaping of education depend upon a new 'strategy that involves effective industrial action', close links with other unions and an attempt to develop genuinely popular conceptions of educational purpose. In addition, the left has to prove itself capable of assisting and working with a movement of women teachers, without which the union will not be able to mobilise a large section of its membership.

It is in this context that the left in the union can link a strategy for the defence of education to the issue of the union's support for Labour. It is a matter of arguing for the entire re-alignment of the union, so as to respond to the range of its current problems. The STA will be discussing these questions at its AGM in London on Saturday October 8th. Contact the STA Convenor, Tony Gard, 72 Belmont Park London SE13 for more details.

Jobs not YTS

By a Careers Advisor & LP member

At TUC conference the trade union leaders won the debate to continue to give support to the Tory government's Youth Training Scheme. Bill Keys , one of the TUC representatives on the MSC, and chairman of the Employment Policy and Organization Committee argued volu bly against withdrawing trade union support from YTS: *"We cannot walk away from the young of this nation. Where do all the young people go to if we as a British trade union movement walk away from them?"* I wish to reply to this and argue instead that this is precisely what the TUC has done in giving such uncritical support to this scheme.

Bill Keys holds the view that only if trade unions are involved in the scheme can young people gain any experience of trade unionism at work. I very much doubt if YTS will convince young people of the value of trade unionism. The TUC have after all put their weight behind:—

**1st year apprentice rates falling from £45 plus a week to an allowance of £25 a week.*

**trainees are given non-employed status and therefore have no job security.*

**as non-employed trainees they stand outside the protection of the Sex and Race Discrimination Acts. They also have no protection from the Health and Safety Acts: there have been 2 deaths and 300 accidents under YOP.*

**a scheme that is compulsory; young people who refuse to take part in the training scheme will have their benefit reduced by 40% for 6 weeks, leaving them with just £9.50 a week. Originally the TUC refused to back the scheme simply because it was compulsory. It is therefore even more astonishing that they are now urging support.*

As well as ignoring these unpleasant facts, the TUC leaders also seem to be prepared to ignore such minor problems as 460,000 work experience places perhaps replacing 460,000 jobs. Unlike the Youth Opportunities Programme, there is no clause that states that trainees should be supernumerary to existing employment needs, no clauses about refusing



training places if there have been recent redundancies within a company. Obviously the opportunities for exploitation and job substitution are much larger than they were under YOP.

These facts were not ignored by many of the speakers who opposed Bill Keys in the debate. Brenda Philbin of the NGA quite rightly said: *"We are betraying those who have fought and made great sacrifices to create decent conditions of employment."* In my view we are not only sacrificing them, but 460,000 school-leavers each year. Effectively the trade union leaders have bargained collectively with the MSC to remove all conditions of employment for young people. Once again the trade union leaders are adrift from their members.

The gains that have been won by the unions within YTS are those such as the NALGO agreement, whereby trainees receive a basic minimum wage, e.g. Hackney Council has agreed a £52 a week wage for its trainees. The TUC are now encouraging its affiliated unions similarly to consider topping up allowances. But topping up is necessary to make the allowances more acceptable, and thereby make YTS more popular with youngsters. It is illogical not only because it seems to make acceptable what in trade union terms is unacceptable, but also because what should be fought for is a decent training allowance.

What could be achieved through YTS is not topped up allowances, but employee places, i.e. normal employment secured with a normal contract of employment, offering full training and subsidised by MSC with the YTS allowance of £25 a week. It seems pointless to train where jobs do not exist, and it is more positive in my view to argue for a validated quality training where employment normally exists.

Employee YTS places could become a useful example of what can be achieved in training in a socialist planned economy. What we, and young people need is for the trade union and Labour Party leaders to campaign against the exploitation of youth, to campaign for real employment, and real training for real jobs. To do this the trade union leaders need to give a clear lead by pulling out of the MSC now, and by pulling out of talks with Tebbit.

Politicising The Student Movement

There will be a new socialist newspaper for students around the colleges as the new term begins. *Socialist Student* will be published twice termly. It is the paper of Socialist Students in the National Organisation of Labour Students (SSIN).

At present the threat of unemployment, and the way in which the cuts in further and higher education are hitting women, mature and working-class students hardest, is deeply damaging student radicalism. Many student 'politicians', especially those around the communist-inspired Left Alliance are prepared to passively adjust to the rightward drift of student consiousness, rather than attempting to change it and offer a socialist leadership. The apolitical approach of the Left Alliance allowed Sue Slipman to follow an almost natural progression from Communist students to the S.D.P.

About three years ago Labour Students split from the Left Alliance

If students are going to be effective in their campaigning they must get away from the idea of operating like a specialist youth pressure group. Many Labour students feel that NUS should work more closely with trade unions, seeing itself as a collective organisation similar to a Trade Union. At a local level Labour Students should initiate and participate in Trade Union Liaison Committees in their colleges. They should also ensure that their student union takes up observer status on the local trades council and fullv participate in its affiars.

Socialist Student is ideally placed to help the more active Labour Clubs in this kind of work. Many of its supporters come from the disbanded National Fightback organisation which attempted to unite campus workers and students against higher education cuts. The Socialist Students Alliance, an organisation of students on the far left opposed to the Left Alliance's bureaucratic approach, have also agreed to participate.

The new academic year is an ideal time to get involved with a new organisation building new Labour Clubs and attempting to remove the Clause Four hacks from the leadership of Labour Students. To be of any effect we must try to unite students unions around their campaigning societies such as CND, Palestine Solidarity, Anti-Apartheid and women's groups, gay groups and overseas students groups. Attempts to politicise the students go hand in hand with the task of making full-time student union officers accountable to the membership. Labour sabbaticals should act like shop stewards, acting on the wishes of students as expressed at Union General Meetings and Labour Students branches.

Times are not easy in NUS, but we must not react with a headlong run to right and apolitical student unionism. We should try to organise the militant minority of students who undoubtedly continue to exist.

Socialist Student can be contacted through Andy Bennet, D.S.U., Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham. (copies 10p each).

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