LABOUR
BRIEFING
No 37 FEB 11-FEB 24 1987

INSIDE

- NCU
- Rape: our verdict
- Local government debate
- NCC report
- After Sizewell

40p

As NCU workers start action

DEAN'S WAPPING BETRAYAL



PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Wapping anniversary demonstration

The striking News International printers had the will to fight on.

That is the first thing to be said.

It makes even more criminal the decision of the SOGAT Executive, followed by the NGA's, to withdraw support for the News International strike..

The decision comes in the wake of the police assault on the 25,000 strong first anniversary march. Cavalry charges, riot squads swiping with truncheons, the spraying of indelible red dye, smashing the windows of the ambulance van; all this got lost in the subsequent police and Tory attack on the unions, and the Labour leadership's "even handed" condemnation of the "small minority".

In particular, "Trotskyists" and "agitators" were singled out as using the marches and pickets for their own ends and would bear the brunt of any "public enquiry".

By John Tuite
Norwood CLP

The strikers themselves were taking a very different direction. A meeting of News International chapel committees had just voted for organising a 24-hour stoppage of Fleet Street. Women Against Murdoch had decided for a picket of the Home Office.

But Normal Willis was letting it be known he wanted the pickets and demonstrations called off. And decisively Murdoch stepped in, using last July's High Court decision, to sue SOGAT and the NGA for damages of up to £250,000 each. Amazingly he also issued writs for the cost of security at his Fortresss Wapping to be paid by the unions! The Tory anti-union laws were being used with a vengeance.

The response of the SOGAT leadership was total capitulation. Exploiting the unanimous decision at last year's delegate conference, folishly agreed to by the London leadership of the strike, that stated SOGAT should avoid sequestration at all costs, Dean found her long searched for excuse to dump the printworkers.

The NGA leadership for all its pretensions to being more left than SOGAT, collapsed the next day using SOGAT as the excuse.

The Tory anti-union laws had found their target Faced with this display of the laws' deadly potential for any union dispute or strike, the TUC certainly didn't react by offering the endangered unions guarantees of financial, physical and political support. "There was no other option," crooned Willis, no doubt glad he'll soon be able to talk to News International reporters in an election year.

The response of the London leadership of the strike so far has been angry condemnations of the SOGAT executive's decisions combined with total silence on where the strikers should go now.

Significantly, the *Morning Star* — even before the

● continued on page 5

Golding's sell-out bid

A 20,000 strong demonstration called by the NCU's City of London District Council on February 4th marched past BT headquarters chanting "10% and no strings".

The rally was addressed by Terry Fields MP for the Campaign Group of MPs and Phil Holt — Chair of the National Broad Left — NCU General Secretary John Golding was "too busy" to attend.

But it was undoubtedly this show of strength rather than the General Secretary's supposed negotiating abilities which persuaded BT to drop their previous insistence on a return to work as a precondition of negotiations.

By Pete Cooper
London West
and Mick McKeever
Long Distance Faraday

They realised a quick "knockout" victory was not on, and that they would need the collaboration of the union leadership to achieve a return to work on terms at all favourable to management.

A new sell-out deal was then promptly hatched up between the right wing NCU Engineering Executive, which is to be put to the members on Wednesday as we go to press.

First reports indicate a 2 year deal, with a maximum of 12.75% payable in 4 stages. The most important strings, including total flexibility and regrading, are still firmly attached.

A 2 year deal would give BT a breathing space to prepare a renewed confrontation with the union. Disgracefully, it has been John Golding the General Secretary, who has been

● continued on page 5

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Home News

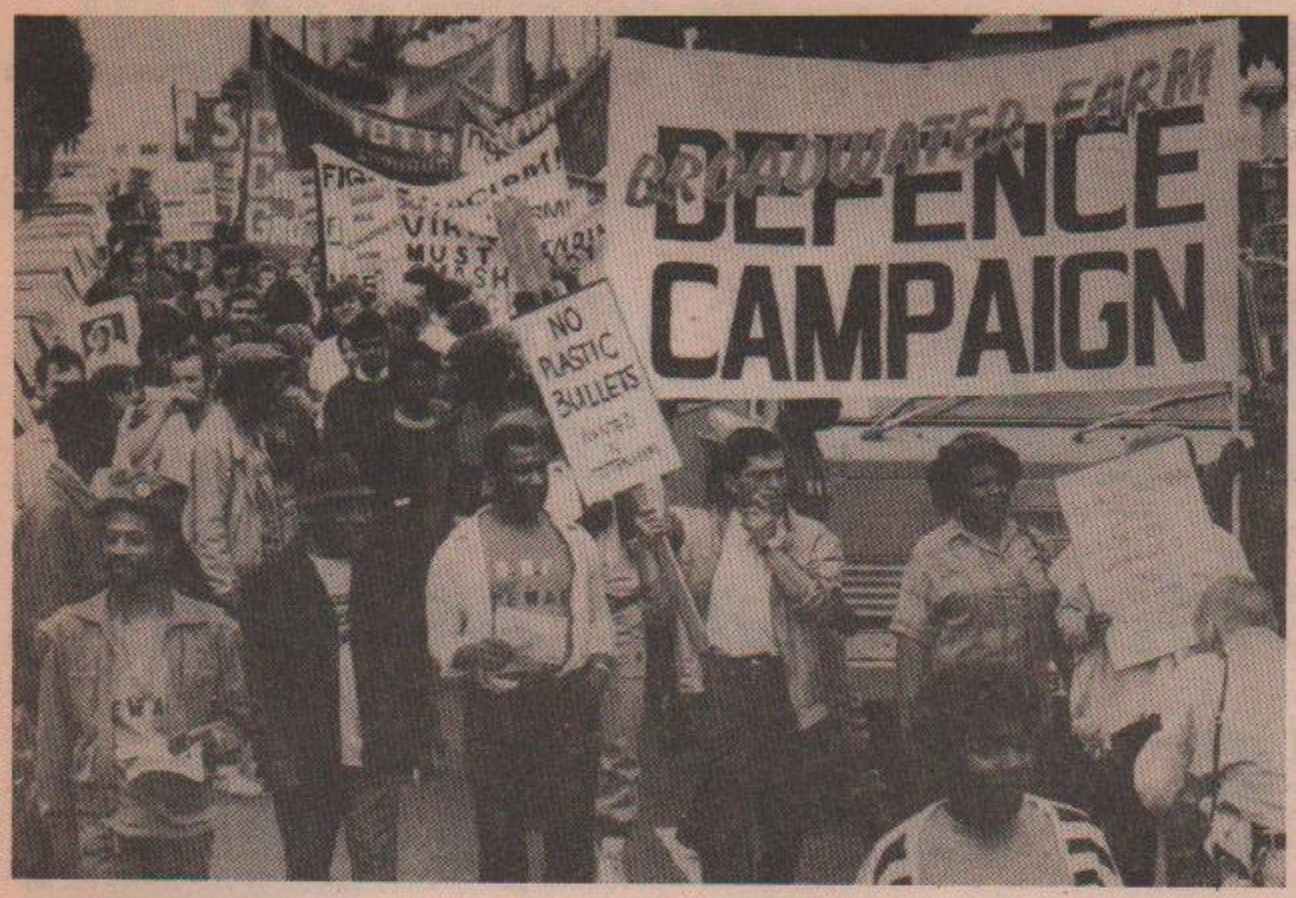


PHOTO: Jez Coulson (IFL)

Trumped up charges!

By Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign

The first stage of the trial of six youths for the alleged murder of PC Keith Blakelock has been used by the prosecution and its allies in the media for a general attack on the people of Broadwater Farm.

Police accounts of the uprising of October 6th, 1985, have been sensational, emphasising details of Blakelock's wounds and characterising youth on the Estate as "vultures".

The famous story about plans to decapitate Blakelock and parade his head has been repeated ad nauseam. It is a trumped-up police fantasy, uncorroborated by any forensic evidence or witnesses.

The purpose of these vague, emotive charges has been to dehumanise the defendants not only in the eyes of the Jury but before the public in general.

Meanwhile, the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign continues its efforts to build solidarity with the defendants. Another mass picket of the Old Bailey was held on Monday February 2nd. Sixty people attended, including delegations from Bristol, Brixton and Handsworth.

Support for the framed-up youths has been received from members of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, including Dennis Skinner and Joan Maynard, from both Haringey PPCs, Bernie Grant and Barbara Roche, and from Haringey Labour Councillors.

At the retrial of Gary Potter on a charge of affray, Detective Constable Sergeant failed to turn up for a second day in the witness stand and was later reported to be in no fit state for further questioning.

Sergeant is the police officer who played a crucial role in the interrogation of many of the Broadwater Farm defendents and secured many of the bogus confessions on which the trials are based.

It has been revealed in court that several years ago he was found guilty in a civil action of cruel and unacceptable behaviour during the interrogtion of a Black youth.

The pickets of the Old Bailey will continue. Send a delegation and get a speaker from the Defence Campaign to attend your next meeting.

Contact: Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, c/o 12-16 Tangmere, BWF Estate, London N17. Tel.: 01-808 1667.



Out Now!

New *London Health Emergency* Paper of London Health Emergency 20p from LHE, 335 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

The victims of misrule

The referral of the Birmingham Six to an appeal court is a testament to political campaigning by the Irish community over a very long period against immense odds.

Among other things, it raises the question of why the Labour front bench, now so keen to pursue the issue, were more interested in sordid deals with Loyalists and jailing Irish nationalists when in government themselves, in the 1970s.

The battle, though, has hardly begun.

As cover-up after scandal over the last year has shown — the state rarely admits to its crimes. The important aspect to remember is that a successful political campaign is possible.

However, the refusal to reopen the cases of the Maguires and the Guildford Four shows how much is to be done.

The Guildford Four — Patrick Armstrong, Gerry Conlon, Paul Hill and Carole Richardson — have already been in prison for 13 years of a sentence described as the longest ever imposed, 21 life sentences apiece. At the end of their trial judge Donaldson recommended that Hill should never be released.

Yet their conviction was based solely on alleged confessions, said to contain 100 contradictions, extracted through interrogation methods that are no longer legal in this country. Two were interrogated while suffering from drug withdrawal.

More devastating is the admission, with an accurate and detailed account, by three members of the IRA unit arrested after the Balcombe Street seige that they did it.

As well as aiming to bolster the Anglo-Irish Accord and Fitzgerald's chances in the Irish election, Hurd is clearly trying to play off the Birmingham Six against the other cases — hoping the anger over all three can be diffused by conceding a tiny bit on one.

He must not be allowed to get away with it.

The Labour Party has a lot to gain, especially in election year, if it campaigns for the immediate release of the Birmingham Six and Guildford Four prisoners and the exoneration of the Maguires as the framed up victims of British misrule in Ireland.

Council attacks NALGO members

On January 22nd, the initial meeting of the Camden Polce Consultative Committee was met by a picket of NALGO, Camden Printworkers, City * Anti-Apartheid, Camden Council for Community Relations, Camden Unemployed, Black Workers Group, King's Cross Women's Centre, Gay and Lesbian groups and *Briefing*. Local feeling was clearly in favour of a boycott of this sham committee which was set up to head off growing demands for police accountability and to rubber-stamp police activity.

By Woody Haut and Steve Taylor Hampstead & Highgate CLP

In probably the largest gathering of groups since rate-capping, about 150 people met outside the Camden Centre to be joined by some 50 police who "consulted the community" by shoving people around while escorting councillors, community "representatives" and their fellow officers into the meeting. Among those who crossed the picket line were Labour Councillors Ken Hulmes, Ben Griffiths, Alan Rippington, Janet Pope, Barbara Hughes, Robert Latham, mayor Mary Cane and Council leader Tony Dykes.

Particularly provocative was Hulme who in his attempt to break through one official NALGO picket line violently barged through four women, although only a fraction calmer was Robert Latham (frequent contributor to *Briefing*) who screamed he was carrying out the manifesto.

Not the case! Not only had the manifesto stated that Camden would participate in the Consultative Committee on a trial basis — that year ended in December, up to which time the Committee had not met — but the basis on which it was included in the manifesto was both questionable and controversial, with both GCs, the LGC, Borough Conference and community groups all against participation.

Once the collaborators got through the picket line, there wasn't much to do so it was decided to leave the police to stroke their truncheons while we moved inside to put our views to the meeting.

Once inside, a woman remarked, "surprise, surprise, not a single black woman on the Committee." A black comrade held up a placard saying "Who killed Cynthia Jarrett? Who shot Cherry Groce? These are the real questions that this committee won't answer."

The following week, the Council began disciplinary action against two members of NALGO's EC, including the Chair, for organising the picket.

During the same week, though Holborn & St Pancras GC voted to continue participating in the Committee, Hampstead & Highgate GC voted to withdraw, a view reaffirmed at Borough Conference on January 31st.

If there is another Consultative Committee, it doubtlessly will be picketted by even more people. The police present last time were adamant in their desire to have an accountable police service — one that won't harrass black people, gays, women and workers. They wanted assurances that plastic bullets and CS gas would never be used in its borough.

But they know none of this can be accomplished through this Committee. It is difficult to have a rational conversation with someone who's just hit you over the head. This issue has now become a priority for the people of Camden. The Labour Party should take notice before it's too late.

Socialist Society

Not another magazine!

The Socialist Society and the Conference of Socialist Economists are launching a new magazine called *Interlink*. Why?

By Nick Lewis

Naturally enough, for it wants to disseminate its views, the Left has a compulsion to publish. However, and with all respect to *Briefing*, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of the articles, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and leaflets (not to mention statements and manifestos) printed by the Left in Britain over the years has served to boost only the self-importance of their authors and publishers.

This is not an insult. People need to feel important.

For example, the purposely scruffy-looking newspaper of the International Leninist Workers Party, written in stream of consciousness style by one man, aided by a scissors-and-paste job on the latest *Soviet Weekly*, from his Hazel Grove front room each Thursday, quite recently contained a thundering polemic concerning the vital importance of Hazel Grove ("near crucial sections of industry and equally pivotal motorway junctions") as a centre for Leninist revolutionary activity. I think it was the mighty *Spartacist* which had questioned the relevance of a paper from such a source.

So, why start yet another magazine?

First, we won't be handicapped by a party "prescience". Parties and party lines have tended to fill publications with what the party wants to hear about itself, but not what people generally want to read.

Second, there is a neglected area of politics and social activity and activists not reached by current magazines. We all make the obligatory noises about "new social movements", but most of us want to inflict a line on them, something deadeningly Stalinist like the Eurocommunist "broad alliance of progressive forces for peaceful change in the direction of electing a Labour government with SDP policies", for instance.

Interlink wants to reach and reflect people who are active in all sorts of autonomous ways against capital and its culture, from socialist to feminist to trade unionist anti-racist to third worldist, who feel their activity to be valid in its own right, but who want to know what's going on in other spheres. Many of these would refuse to be realigned either as soft and sensible Kinnockites or an unreconstructed Leninists.

Third, the "realignment" referred to above implies that the Left is incapable of producing policy alternatives to those of social democracy or the fundamentalists. On the contrary; the average non - sectarian - left - activist - on - the - street does not appear to be short of ideas.

Fourth, we are funding ourselves, besides the conventional ways, by making *Interlink* useful — both by featuring resources available to the whole Left, but also by making our pages available at cost for groups and organisations to use either as a bulletin for their own membership, or to inform a wider arena of what they're up to.

Our first issue is available now from ***Interlink****, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG.*

School on Socialism and Nationalism
Saturday 4th April
10am-6pm
City Hall, Glasgow
Speakers: Gunther Minnerup, Denis Canavan MP, George Kerevan (Edinburgh councillor), Jim Young

Editorial

BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Beware the Tories' motives!

The rows over the Secret Society film and the subsequent use of the Official Secrets Act may seem miles away fom the concerns of socialists battling to maintain trade union organisation, defend local services and fight racism and sexism. But the fate of these battles is tied up with the future of the media in Britain.

The Tories are intent on shifting the grounds of debate in British politics, along with altering the balance of class forces. They look to the United States as an example of how a predominantly privately-owned media can benefit the ruling class. The strategy of the Tories is to discredit the BBC with allegations of incompetence and "lack of patriotism" as a prelude to post-election privatisation.

The banning of the Zircon programme is part of this strategy. The use of the Official Secrets Act, the trawls of Scottish BBC and *New Statesman* offices are designed to associate the BBC with the left and attack both. Unfortunately Kinnock, rather than defending the right of information, fell in behind Thatcher in her attack on the *New Statesman*, charging her only with incompetence at preventing the publication of Duncan Campbell's article.

It is likely that the successor to Alistair Milne as Director General of the BBC will have an unwritten brief of doing a Griffiths NHS-type job on the management of the Corporation. This will be made all the easier given the turmoil and demoralisation caused by recent events.

The consequences of letting the government get away with all this will be dire. The Tories have a head of steam on broadcasting. They have already started to use the Police and Criminal Evidence Act as an excuse for random checks of press photographers, and are clearly intent on using the Official Secrets act to initimidate and harass those who stand up for freedom of speech.

Both the BBC and the media in general have an anti-working class bias; both are racist, sexist and homophobic. However, the BBC, as a public corporation and because of the traditions which have grown up over the years, does have some independence from the capitalist class and its state machine.

Constraints

Also, through the laws governing broadcasting, it does carry a range of opinions, including those which are critical of the British establishment. British traditions of investigative journalism may fall short of those of the States, but within the constraints of having no Freedom of Information Bill the tradition is still alive — bolstered by the independent left press and the NUJ.

We must defend the BBC critically — just as our defence of the NHS, or the education system, is critical. The attacks by the Tories amount to censorship, censorship of material the public has a right to know.

Despite the anti-working class bias of much BBC reporting, we should oppose theTory plans to hand over the BBC to their friends in the City to make profits at the same time as manipulating the media for their own ends.

The Tory goal is a privately run system in which journalists are either too scared or are prohibited from reporting as they would like. The aim is to alter permanently the type of material which comes to people from their radios and TVs. The consequences for freedom of discussion are all too obvious.

We need to develop a debate around these issues at grass roots level. The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom has a Media Manifesto* which can be used to start the debate off.

Not to do this, to think the BBC and its journalists deserve to be bitten by their paymasters, is to miss the point. Our battle for working class access to the media, against sexism, racism and homophobia, will not be won if we lose the first round by surrendering the rights which exist at the moment.

**Available from 9, Poland Street, London. 01-437 2795*

Latest rape trial outrage:

Whose justice is it?

Five years for burglary, five years for rape... The clarity of the injustice of the sentence in the "Ealing Vicarage Rape Case" has led to a public outcry.

How can burglary — a crime against property — be as serious as the brutal rape of a young woman?

Well, that's the logic of capitalism for you! The capitalist system is based on property — you are what you own, and the "law" is there to uphold your right to keep it.

The same judicial system that valued burglary and rape equally at 5 years also sentenced Kent striking miner Terry French to 5 years for punching a policeman. Five years for standing up for workers' rights, five years for violating women's rights... Whose justice is it?

By Jenny Fisher
Bow & Poplar CLP



Women Against Rape demonstrating outside the Law Courts.

PHOTO: John Chapman

But the treatment of the case, by the press and the Judge, reveals yet more horrors about our system of so-called "justice".

Would there have been the same kind of public outcry if the victim had been a prostitute? Clearly, sadly, the answer is "no". By stressing the victim in this case was a virgin, part of a Christian family, the press made clear she didn't deserve the attack — but this angle implies that other women do!

When people judge alleged rapes on whether they were "deserved" or "provoked" they help perpetuate rape by perpetuating a possible "defence".

We demand the press condemns rape attacks *because the victim was a woman* rather than because of virginity or family status — because we demand a fight against rape being committed at all.

We also demand: no questioning of a victim's sexual history — it is irrelevant to the crime committed. This includes marital status: rape in marriage must be made a crime.

The Judge reduced the sentence because the Christianity of the victim would "help her get over it". Women don't "get over" rape — the trauma lasts for life — and ability to work, to travel, to go out, to continue living in your own homes may also be permanently affected.

We demand public funding — without strings — for rape crisis centres throughout Britain, for ongoing support schemes, for women's transport and for rehousing where requested.

The last public outcry — when a TV documentary showed the treatment a woman received when reporting rape — led to some improved procedures and facilities, but nowhere near enough. We demand:

- special rape suites in every police station;
- rape victims to be seen by specially trained women police officers and women doctors;
- complete anonymity for rape victims.

The Ealing case has led to many people — including Neil Kinnock — demanding longer prison sentences. But *just* demanding longer sentences, then sitting back and thinking you've done your bit isn't good enough.

- Many sex offenders reoffend after release from prison;
- Sex offenders notoriously get a "bad time" from fellow prisoners. In some cases this treatment can lead to a stronger desire to assert himself in the same way on release;

and encourage re-offending.

- Many rapes are committed close to (and sometimes *in*) the rapists' — and the victims' — homes. A released offender, returning to his old haunts can, even after many years, force a victim to move away, as the only way to avoid her attacker.

Longer sentenes in conventional prisons will keep rapists off the streets for longer; but if they only delay a repeat offence, or delay a loss of freedom for the victim, they are no great comfort.

While demanding longer periods of custody for convicted rapists, who should — like those convicted of racial attacks — not be returned to the scene of their crimes prematurely, we also demand:

- the emphasis in custody should be on preventing re-offence, with treatment and rehabilitation: the likelihood of reoffence should not be left to chance!
- extend sentencing beyond simple prison custody; include active probationary supervision on release — aimed at preventing re-offence; introduce conditions on release — make the rapist move away, not the victim.

Above all, we demand measures aimed at preventing rape in the first place — not just dealing with it after the event:

- self-defence classes for girls in all schools; free classes available in all LEAs, with free childcare and transport; for classes organised in the workplace, in worktime, with no loss of pay.
- adequate street lighting where women want it; adequate staffing levels on public transport; public funding for women-only transport.
- full support — with funding — to programmes in schools and in local authorities generally to promote positive images of women and to promote women's self-organisation.

These are demands we must make to increase women's safety in the here and now. But we make them in the knowledge that rape, as the ultimate expression of male power, will only be truly challenged with the overthrow of capitalism, and eradicated by the victory of socialism.

Trade Union Briefing

Hangers management ordered to go!

It's been an active time for the negotiations at JE Hangers & Co. The supposed deadline was January 28th. The company have admitted that they have drawn up a "hitlist" containing at least 8 disputes committee members and possibly seven other union activists.

The offer on January 27th included a bribe of £25,000 to be shared by the disputes committee if they would recommend acceptance. Latest terms included 92 full time jobs and a £52 reduction in wages for the store workers.

The company has also decided to terminate apprenticeships and issue papers to those in their fourth (and last) year, regardless of their not finishing the course. Pressure is also being extended to the foremen to work on the bench and do the scked men's work.

At the mass meeting on January 28th the disputes committee did not recommend the latest offer. However, 34 did vote to accept with 142 voting to reject it, after they were persuasively encouraged to accept the deal by TASS Assistant General Secretary Mr Jones, and FTAT General Secretary Colin Christopher.

On February 1st, ASTMS invited Christopher and Jones to a meeting with two members of Hanger's management present. The following day, the disputes committee were told to report to Park House, TASS headquarters. Thirteen were there for a gruelling 13 hours, with two of management in a room next door.

It was agreed to try and find new common grounds to end the dispute. The company declared that they would reduce the numbers on the hitlist down to eight. A third perons is in the process of being reviewed, and may also be removed from the list. And they dropped the plan to reduce the store workers' wages.

The £25,000 was still on the table, but management saying there really wasn't a hitlist and that they will give give glowing references and not impede anyone's employment in the artificial limb industry, but they still wouldn't be allowed towork at Hanger's. Steve Blease of the disputes committee said "Management's coments on the hitlist are highly dubious."

After much heart-searching, it was agreed by a very close vote (with 2 resigning before the vote and one abstention) to recommend that latest offer.

On February 4th, 5 minutes before the start of the mass meeting, the management offer was withdrawn. The company negotiating for BTR said that the local Hanger's management had no right to make the offer and are not allowing them to continue in any future negotiations.

The sacked workforce now plan to escalate their action and go to the other Hanger's branches for support. Hugh Steeper & Co., a private artificial arm maker firm in Roehampton, have withdrawn from national joint wage negotiating panel. They are also members of FTAT and refuse to sit on the panel with BTR.

ASTMS have now instructed its members to abide by Rule 27 as rigidly as possible — that is, the rule saying not to do any work of the sacked workers. Management has been warned officially that if any ASTMS member is threatened with dismissal or sacked then ASTMS will also enter official dispute with Hangers.

Support is coming from varied quarters. The Bishop of Kingston has said that Hanger's behaviour is immoral. The TUC has voted BTR the worst employers in the UK. And even David Mellor, Putney's Tory MP, has said that he will come out publicly in support of the sacked workforce and will savage BTR in the press.

It is alleged that Hanger's gave their reassurance to the government that they would sort out the dispute. This is clearly not the case. Pressure should be mounted nationally on the DHSS through Parliament to solve this dreadful situation.

Police are now quite vigorous on the picket line. On Monday February 2nd they decided that only six were allowed on each gate and no one is allowed to use a loud hailer at any time. Roehampton Vale is one of the busiest roads for traffic in London, so the marginal noise created by using a loudhailer would be minimal!

Hanger's women's support group held a very enjoyable and successful disco for their men and families on February 6th.

Please send messages of support and financial support to Steve Blease c/o TASS, 520 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4YQ.

Kathy Pick, Wandsworth Councillor, Putney CLP



Victory for LRT Workers

Following the suspension of the NUR's one-day strike last month, negotiations with LRT Catering Services management have won significant concessions.

LRT has withdrawn the £30 per week wage cuts and all canteen staff will get a 5% increase in basic pay backdated to April 14th 1986.

Management have failed in their attempt to hive off an important section of the workforce as a separate bargaining unit. Canteen workers have received the same increase as all other LRT workers for 1986. The NUR's campaign has stalled the whole process of competitive tendering for this section of London's transport workers for at least one year.

For the union movement in LRT there is also another significant gain. Mangement clearly calculated that in the present situation the union and its negotiators would quietly ignore a wage cut aimed at the very weakest section of the workforce.

By Patrick Sikorski NUR

After the defeat of the union's strike against one person operation in May, 1985, they must have thought it reasonable to assume that if the overwhelmingly male, majority white, and economically strongest section of the workforce wouldn't fight against the elimination of the whole guard grade then it was a pretty safe bet they wouldn't exert themselves for the canteen workers, who are overwhelmingly female, majority black, and the traditional object of moans about food and service. The NUR surprised everyone by showing that it will defend every single one of its members.

Management have now withdrawn their implementation date for the closure of Euston train crew depot on the Northern Line. Had the closure of this small depot gone through it would have created a dangerous precedent, encouraging management to go ahead with plans to close smaller depots throughout the Underground. The question of competitive tendering has been put back into negotiation.

The proposed destaffing of stations and the introduction of the automated Underground Ticketing Systems have also been delayed.

Nonetheless, the management's overall strategy has not been reversed. Their wholesale competitive tendering plans remain on the table, although now within the agreed machinery. Working parties have been set up nationally and with some of the separate "profit centres" (like LRT Catering) to "determine how best to make (them) more competitive." True, agreement with the unions must be reached at every stage before changes are introduced. But the continuing danger to the membership is all too clear. It is not a question of whether there will be further confrontations but only a matter of when.

Wheelers strike steps up action

The Wheelers Strike was brought to London at a public meeting at the Covent Gardens Community Centre on February 2nd.

The strike has received considerable support from Brighton Council, students groups and other political groups in Brighton, but there is still much ground to cover.

A London support group is needed to reach the large numbers of highly exploited Chinese catering workers based in London.

This industrial action by the four Wheelers chefs could have a massive impact on attempts to engage Chinese workers in active trade union membership, and support from their Chinese comrades would be an enormous boost to the strikers.

There is also obviously a large pool of support within black organisations, trade union branches and political groups based in London which this strike needs to tap into.

Some sympathetic media coverage has stimulated much grassroots response; but we still require financial and organisational support, especially now that there are several important conferences on the horizon.

Wider mobilisation became particularly significant when four other workers in separate Wheelers branches in London were sacked for no apparent reason. Though these workers were not at the time union members, it has meant that Kennedy Brookes, owners of the chain of Wheelers restaurants and other major establishments, and well-known in the catering sector for being virulently anti-union, could no longer deny involvement in the Wheelers dispute in Brighton. The campaign to boycott the Wheelers restaurant in Brighton much also extend to all the Kennedy Brookes restaurants in London, to force management to agree to negotiations.

Events coming up: Sat Feb 28th: T&G demo in support of Wheelers strike. March from Queen's Square, Brighton, noon.
Thurs Mar 5th: All-out leafletting of Wheelers branches in London.
Sat Mar 31st: Wheelers strike benefit in Peckham.
Further details and information about support group meetings, speakers on the Wheelers strike and donations to: Chinese Information and Advice Centre, 152-156 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2. 01-379 5098.

By Ai Meun Lim Wheelers Strike, London Support Group

Speakers at the meeting included Mee Ling Ng (Lewisham Labour Councillor), Fawaz (Migrans, Immigrants and Refugees Unionisation Group), Dave Turnbull (Secretary of the T&G Hotel and Catering London branches) and San Han Cheung, (Wheelers striker shop steward).

The strikers and Support Group also took this opportunity to show solidarity with the NCU (E) comrades on strike, with Manny Blake, City Branch Secretary, addressing the meeting. Bennie Buncie was also there to give a message of solidarity from Labour Party Black Sections.

The organisers reported on encouraging progress they had made, in particular the commitment by the TGWU Regional Committee to give the strike some legal and financial assistance. There had also been recent moves by Kennedy Brookes to enter into discussions with Union representatives overone of the sacked workers in London.

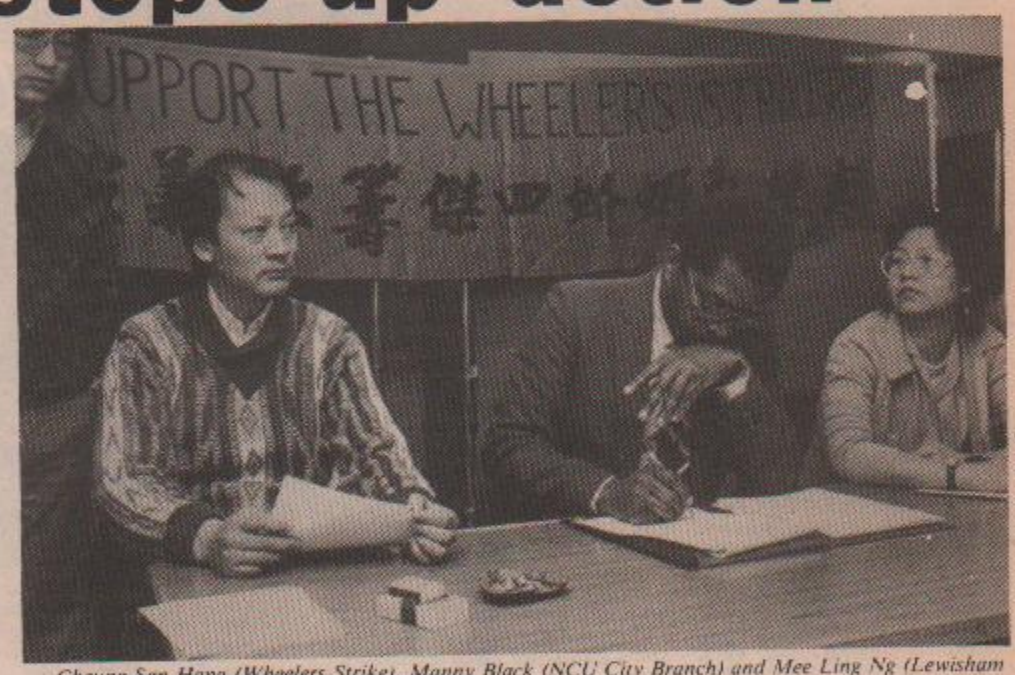


PHOTO: Chi Chan

Cheung San Hang (Wheelers Strike), Manny Black (NCU City Branch) and Mee Ling Ng (Lewisham Councillor) at the London Support meeting.

The Support Group also managed to win Union agreement on the payment of interpreters' fees and travellling expenses. We hope this will now become normal Union practice, as the presence of interpreters on this picket not only greatly contributed to its effectiveness, but also challenged some of the blatant racism encountered from the Police and customers.

A public meeting and TGWU sponsored demonstration is being organised to reassert this fight to the wider labour movement.

The experiences of the Chinese community in countering both powerful management and bureaucratic unions, and the soldiarity links they hav established through this strike will no doubt hold them in good stead for future struggles. But with the many other Chinese workers and black catering workers looking to this strike to prove the power of direct action and collective bargaining through recognised trade unions, a victory is imperative.

NCU

National Communications Union

Golding's sell-out bid



PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)

10 per cent — no strings!

● *continued from front page*

publicly pressing for this arrangement.

Under the sell-out proposal, BT would make a major step towards the lower paid and smaller engineering workforce that has been their major objective in this dispute. Redundancies would inevitably be involved.

But the major London branch leaderships will almost certainly recommend a rejection of the deal, and there are signs of a nationwide revolt against the leadership's conduct of the dispute.

The Doncaster, Newcastle and Derry branches have passed "no confidence" motions in Golding as General Secreatry.

The strike is solid nationally as it enters its fourth week in London, and its fifth for many out of London. Mass meetings have reaffirmed support for the dispute by 99-1% margins.

BT management and union leaders alike have been caught largely unprepared for this reaction.

They had been counting on a rapid collapse of the membership and a swift settlement on their terms.

After all, the NCU (E) had just elected a right wing General Secretary and Executive Council, and had never called a national all-out indefinite strike in its history.

Despite a wall of silence from management, the City, the union leadership and the media about the effects of the strike, reports indicate that it is biting around the country, with whole exchanges crashing, major cable breakdowns, and customers severely affected. Access is threatening to sue BT for £2½ million *per day* for loss of service!

Management personnel and the few scabs are unable to cope with the volume of faults.

You don't hear about all this, because the government is preventing publication through the use of "D-notices" on grounds of "national security"(!)

Far from collapsing, the strike has grown in strength and militancy, and the union's Engineering Group Executive Council, which is facing re-election in two months' time, is under tremendous pressure from the branches over the "strings" — and the flexibility and regrading questions in particular.

From the beginning branch leaderships and activists have been intensely and justifiably critical of Golding's conduct of the dispute and negotiations.

An increasingly prominent role in co-ordinating branch responses is being played by the unofficial Co-ordiating Committee of London branches. This has already been able to draw together information about the effects of the strike and to formulate and co-ordinate policy nationally — independently of the national leadership, so limiting its room for manoeuvre. These include little tricks like union HQ informing provincial branches that London is wavering and vice versa.

Unfortunately, the Broad Left-led clerical Section Executive failed to grasp the nettle of calling an all-out indefinite strike in pursuit of their own claim, and its 3 day action ended in tragic scenes of its members having to cross engineering picket lines.

The engineering section strike *can* be won. BT's City slicker management is on the run.

The trade union movement desperately needs a victory after years of defeat and retreat. But we can expect no help from the TUC or the Labour leadership.

Many of our members are beginning to experience real hardship as the NCU does not pay strike pay.

Please invite speakers, organise donations and collections in your workplace, Labour Parties and trade union branches.

10% — No Strings!

Strike bites in North West

Telephone engineers in Lancashire and Cumbria voted solidly at mass meetings to join the NCU strike. Picketing has been comprehensive in the District, with all depots and offices covered.

For 2 weeks the clerical section joined the action. Clerical workers voted unanimously to stay out until the District Management lifted any threat of suspension. As the company have now accepted the clerical workers' ban, they returned to work — but with the overtime ban and work-to-rule intact.

Engineering and clerical workers took their campaign to the rest of the area with Preston based staff organising a march and mass rally in the town centre.

Resisting management provocations over emergency cover show the mood of the engineers clearly: angry and prepared for a fight.

The Preston branch of the NCU (E) launched a hardship fund and organised an appeal for support from other trade unions.

JUSTICE for Mineworkers

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign

(South East Region)

MINERS BENEFIT

with

Hangers, Silentnight, Printworkers

at Wembley Conference Centre

7.30 Sunday 1st March

(date and artistes to be confirmed)

Caterpillar occupation: what next?

Caterpillar say the reason for their closure of two plants in the US and one in Scotland is the decline in orders from underdeveloped contries and compeititon from Japan.

Yet the company has opened plants in Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia and India over recent years. Many workers belie production is being transferred from the US and Scottish plants to take advantage of lower labour costs in the third world. According to management, the Scottish plant was "the right size to close'. Only three months prior to this, the company held an open day for employers and their families. Wide publicity was given to the announcement of a £62 million investment plan.

Many of the 1220 workforce took the compnay on faith, and made important decisions (taking on a mortgage, buying cars, even starting a family). No wonder enfuriated workers immediately occupied the plant when they learned of management's closure plans.

Support for the occupation is so broad that even the Tory Scottish Secretary has all but approved of it. At present Caterpillar shop stewards are attempting to mobilise solidarity by an appeal for moral and financial support. While this is important, it's not enough. Moral and financial support will gradually dissipate unless it is linked to a clear strategy.

Commenting on the Scottish occupation a US trade union official, interviewed in a Scottish Sunday paper, said "We can't understand why the cops ain't in their bustin' heads. After all, it is company property."

This business unionism (which the EETPU seeks to import from the USA) makes the propsect of a joint struggle between the Scottish and US plants earmarked for closure a non-starter. The alernative well-worn path of heading down to Westminster to lobby support from MPs offers little hope, even in an election year.

The Gartcosh steel works, a stone's throw from the Caterpillar plant, closed last year despite a workers' march to London to lobby MPs.

Both Tory and Labour Party leaders in Scotland seek to pressure the parent corporation into a change, or alternatively to find another buyer for the plant. Although this isn't entirely impossible, it implies the workers should return to normal working and present a picture of moderation to potential buyers. In the meantime, lack of a clear means of winning the struggle will demoralise the workers.

Send support and donations to Caterpillar Occupation Appeal, Thomas Stevenson, Treasurer, 17 Campsie View, Bargeddie, Baillieston, Glasgow.

Jim Niblock

Wapping betrayal



PHOTO: Andrew Ward (Report)

● *continued from front page*

chapels voted — shifted from talking about "jobs and trade union rights" at Wapping to talking about "unionising Wapping".

Hardly the way to give fighting spirit to abandoned strikers in the consultation period (that ends as we go to press). Murdoch has reopened his offer of compensation for a month, no doubt remembering not to take for granted that the rank and file will give in.

Some chapels have already voted to accept the NEC decision. One thing is certain. Any continued fight by printers will have to confront head-on the Tory union laws, no doubt backed up by disciplinary measures from their unions.

Soon, another shadow will loom over continued picketing — the Public Order Act. After January 24th, both the police and Douglas Hurd pressed for its passage to be sppeeeded up. It will give police sweeping powers to control or simply refuse marches, pickets and assemblies.

Whatever the outcome of the chapel meetings, the nucleus of strikers that form the Fleet St Support Unit will continue to fight, particularly around the acutely urgent question of accountability, as well as for a single union for the industry. At London Labour Party Conference this year there are plans to set up a Broad Left.

For over a year the endurance, solidarity and principled fight of the News International strikers remained unbroken. If they continue to fight independent of their national unions, solidarity must be stepped up enormously by the rest of the labour movement. If, isolated and betrayed, they finally succumb, the major blame goes on the shoulders of their national leadership.

But it doesn't stop here. The defeat at Wapping will encourage every print baron to press home the enormous attacks around new technology and job cuts that Fleet St has seen this year.

The betrayal will have lasting effects. Lastly, like the miners, there will be printers without jobs and printers in prison. Like the miners we must support and fight for justice for these people now, and demand any future Labour government ensures it.

Local Government — Debate

A *political* finance strategy for local government

Since the introduction of rate-capping, local authorities have used a number of ingenious financial devices to secure additional funds.

It has been difficult for Party activists to keep up with the complex financial situation and the new loopholes that seem to be discovered almost daily.

In the absence of any long-term strategy since the demise of the "refusal to set a rate" gambit, Labour authorities have been drifting.

Two and a half years ago Haringey Labour Briefing, with many others on the left, advocated a deficit budgeting strategy. Our intention was to maintain spending at existing levels, set a rate within the rate-cap limit, and work to ensure that the ensuing financial crisis would unite service users and Council workers in a national campaign to secure increased funding and an end to rate-capping.

By Cllr Craig Brewin
Haringey

Unfortunately, this position was never adopted in practice by any of the Labour Councils. We all know the debacle which ensued.

Last year, Haringey Labour Briefing decided that the time had come for a re-examination of the local government financial position. Simply restating a formula arrived at two years earlier was no longer satisfactory. We had to take into account the changed political situation, the lessons learned from the rate-capping struggle of '85, the change in the nature of creative accounting (increasingly used to supplement revenue), and the results of the May '86 elections.

In this election Labour in Haringey scored an historic victory. Campaigning openly on an expansionist and confrontational manifesto, with a high priority to anti-racism, anti-sexism, and anti-heterosexism, and improved service delivery, we secured the biggest Labour Group ever in Haringey. We no longer require merely a restoration of block grant and an end to rate-capping. We need an increase in total resources to meet the needs of the borough, which have increased dramatically since 1979. The basic premise of the old deficit budget strategy is therefore outdated.

Haringey Labour Briefing has produced a pamphlet entitled "Implementing the Manifesto" (phone 01 881 1479 for copies). This was drawn up after lengthy collective discussions in several meetings.



"Democracy week" national demo against cuts in services

PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni/Report

Our strategy is based on the objective of no cuts in jobs and services and full implementation of the manifesto. While much of our Manifesto requires little new finance, we do have commitments which entail major capital and revenue expense.

We say that if these funds cannot be raised from the rates or from central government we should attempt to borrow them. Since adopting this position we have faced criticism from both the right and the left.

The right believe we should subordinate our politics to expediency and forget our Manifesto rather than put ourselves massively in debt. Some comrades on the left have argued that we are forming an unholy alliance with the forces of capital by relying on the city for funding.

For us the Manifesto is not a document to be locked away until some future day when implementation becomes easier. Labour Councils must engage today in the struggle to meet the needs of their constituents — not wait for the never-never of some future Labur government.

We do not accept that borrowing is in itself "unsocialist" or that money secured from banks is somehow more tainted than money secured from taxes, rents, or service charges. Under capitalism, all finance for local government represents a surplus appropriated from workers.

As long as we remain in local government we must struggle to redistribute this surplus in the interests of the oppressed while at the same time using this struggle to mobilise workers in the larger class struggle.

In reality, borrowing means spreading the cost of current expenditure into future years. Local authorities have always done this. An expansion of borrowing to fund an expansion of services must however go hand in hand with an expansion of the political awareness of workers and service users. We must say clearly that the required borrowing may lead to a future debt financing crisis which we will only be able to overcome with broad political support.

A debt crisis will not automatically lead to cuts and job losses. We can learn the lessons of other cities and countries which have faced similar problems. The involvement of finance capital would put additional pressure on the government to ensure that there was no default on local authority debts.

Historically, banks have leant over backwards to restructure the debts of countries in the southern hemisphere rather than risk default.

A high price has been paid by workers in those countries because of the terms of restructuring — but in none of these countries has a socialist administration been in power with the will to mobilise the population to demand a better deal.

In the capitalist heartlands, a number of cities have faced severe financial crises with varying results. Where New York went down to the bankers' threats, Cleveland stood its ground and won refinancing on its own terms.

One of our tasks must be to link our struggle with that of the third world and those other western cities which face similar crises to our own.

Clearly, the success or failure of a borrowing strategy wil depend on the political will with which it is carried out. In the absence of real support for the immediate deficit budgeting strategy, most authorities (those which still refuse to make cuts) will be taking the borrowing road by stealth, if not strategy. Where secrecy and muddling are the order of the day, little support can be expected from Council workers or service users.

Our main priorities now will be building up a political campaign around our financial strategy, tighter control to ensure there is no underspending on service budgets, the agreement of a step-by-step plan for manifesto implementation, and the discovery of sources of finance sufficient for our needs.

We have all been at fault over the last few years in failing to develop a coherent strategy on local government finance. Haringey Briefing has taken a step in this direction. What is needed now are hard figures, honest political assessments, and, of course, a determination to mobilise workers for the fight with this and any future governments, of whatever political colour. There is no scope for empty gestures or the maintenance of a spurious ideological purity.



Nursery facilities, amongst other services, are needed now

Our policy

At its last Steering Committee, *Briefing* had an initia government: budget policy.

We print here two debate articles, outlining some was based.

***Briefing* supporters also met in Haringey on Febru below.**

Whilst, as the resolution shows, there is much ag general aims we have in local government, the next decision between the different views presented in th *Briefing* supporters.

But remember, although we may take democratic our paper are always open to further debate.

This meeting of *Briefing* supporters — councillors, t following points on the crisis of local government

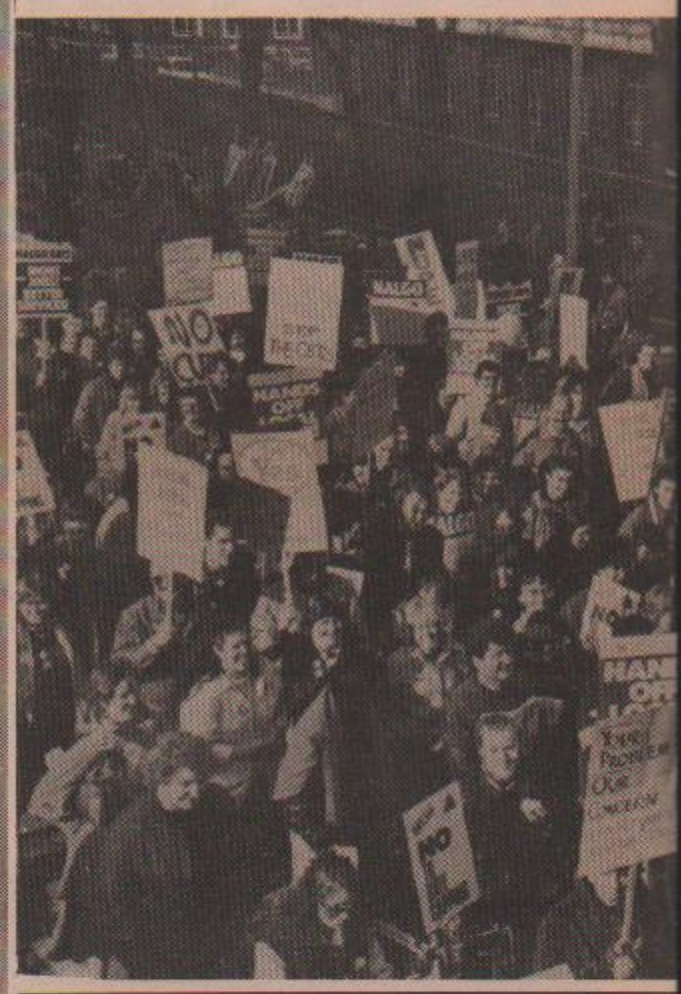
1. This crisis has been provoked by the Tory gove available for local government and Labour Councils i leadership's refusal to back those councils confronti of repealing Tory laws on local government or on pr funds.

2. We will give full support to any Councils which Tory government or end up with a deficit budget

3. We will give full support to the workforce in an to introduce cuts or deterioration in jobs and servi

4. We will under no circumstances support any cu Councillors will resign any positions as Committee C against them in the Party and Group and campaign

5. We will begin to work now for the adoption of borough and for the full and speedy implementatio



Ridley Rid

The House of Commons is being bombarded with new legislation on local government.

The Rate Support Grants Bill (and there's more to come) received its Second Reading in the Commons on February 4th, and is designed to give the Secretary of State sweeping new powers.

The Bill abolishes **"flowback"** — the system which, in 1986-87, is to redistribute around £600 million in unclaimed Block Grant to all local authorities.

Under the present system, most local authorities spend more than the government assumes they will when its sets the amount of Block Grant payable to all Councils in any single year. When authorities spend *more* than the government has anticipated, they lose grant. This "lost" grant remains, at present, in a national "pool" of cash, which is subsequently distributed to all local authorities.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

The Bill will *end* this redistribution — and it will simply return to the Treasury. Reliable estimates indicate that this change would net the Treasury around £400 million in 87-88 (if authorities overspend by 3%). The more the "overspend", the bigger the windfall for the Treasury.

Only a year after the Tories abolished targets and Penalties — arguing they were confusing and unnecessary — **the new system imposes a fresh set of penalties.**

Worst of all, the Bill enables Ridley **to pick out any Council he chooses in the future and to discriminate in favour of or against** it by determining the

debate

debate on the crunch issue facing local

of the different ideas put, on which the discussion

ry 7th, and passed a resolution, which we print

eement between *Briefing* supporters on the Steering Committee of *Briefing* will be taking a e debate articles, to define the majority position of

decisions to determine our "line", the pages of

ade unionists and Party members — agree the inances:
nment, systematically reducing the funds particular. It has been aided by the Labour g the Tory government or to give any guarantee viding an adequate level of central government

either openly go down the road of confronting the hile attempting to meet local social needs.
borough in opposing open or backdoor attempts es provided.
ts, open or hidden, in jobs or services, and airs rather than implement such cuts, vote openly against them.
udgets in each locality based on the need of the of such manifestos.



es Again!

amount of Block grant it gets.

In the past, Secretaries of State had to base differential treatment on *"classes"* of councils with the same functions (e.g. *all* County Councils!. Now, he can single out Lambeth, or Brent, or Haringey if he dislikes them; or give additional grant to his friends in Tory councils; or give less grant to all ratecapped Councils; or arbitrarily set rate limits designed to slash services and jobs.

The new Bill also gives Ridley further **"Judge-proofing"**. It virtually rules out any legal challenge based on the argument that the Secretary of State has acted "unreasonably".

The new Bill also **rectifies yet more recently identified illegalities in the operation of the Rate Support Grant system since 1981.**

As recently as last summer, the then Environment Minister William Waldegrave told the Commons that the Rate Support Grants Bill 1986 was "the final solution" (!) to the problem of illegal acts perpetrated by various Ministers. And yet, within months, they have had to introduce two more Bills to validate yet more foul-ups!

They are not finished yet. A *further* Local Government Bill, to be published in mid-February, will deal with the compulsory privatisation of local authority services, and will attack publicity and creative accounting powers.

Ministers are desperate to choke off any access to the courts by local authorities on points of administrative law.

They are keen to make the Grant system even more unfair. And they hope, by vilifying progressive Labour Councils, to win the General Election and set in train yet more undemocratic legislation.

The final crunch

Briefing supporters in different councils are taking different approaches on the latest round of local government budget-making.

In Camden and Haringey, massive borrowing is proposed. In Ealing a huge rate rise is the order of the day.

Ealing should be warned. We have been down this road before. This sort of attack on working class pockets paves the way for mass abstention at the polls as happened in many boroughs in 1982. Of course, for many London boroughs the Ealing option no longer exists.

Ratecapping has moved the debate on. The Hackney experience is the more typical. Having given up during the ratecapping struggle, and scraped through this year boroughs are left facing mammoth deficits. The answer would seem to be further special finance deals, along with retrenchment.

Praying

Manifesto commitments are out of the window as special accountancy measures only just manage to keep council budgets out of deficit. And of years to come — let's all pray for a Labour government willing to bail us out.

In Camden we seem to have the left variant of this strategy. Let's borrow like mad so that we can meet our Manifesto commitments. At least this has the merits of being honest in its intent, but can it deliver? Like other strategies being put forward by ratecapped boroughs, it requires a future Labour government to bail it out.

As other boroughs, who have been borrowing massively for years in order to stave off a fight are beginning to find out, there comes a time when accountancy tricks run out. And then, having put off the fight for so long, it becomes impossible to rally the troops.

In Lambeth, the surcharge of the last Labour Group has meant that the new Labour Group, whilst committed to continuing the battle against ratecapping has been more cautious in deciding its budget strategy. Against the advice of the leadership, it agreed to apply for limited redetermination. Not that it did much good, as Ridley has done away with the thing.

By Cllr Greg Tucker Lambeth

How do we proceed in Lambeth? With a standstill budget of £203 million and a government expenditure limit of £152 million, no strategy will be easy.

On the one hand, Linda Bellos and others are arguing for massive creative accountancy, including using £12 million from the workers Superannuation Fund. Unfortunately, this still cannot bridge the gap and £10 million more will have to be found, just to keep at a standstill.

The worry is that £10 million will be found by means of cuts. How any growth to meet manifesto commitments will be possible is unclear.

On the other hand, a Borough Conference, organised by the local Parties and attracting over 100 Party members and Council trade unionists has agreed to fight for a budget that begins to implement our Manifesto and address the needs of local people.

Committee Chairs have been asked to bring forward proposals for growth. At the same time, the Conference rejected measures to reduce the Budget such as the use of the Superannuation Fund or capitalisation of housing repairs. Instead, it called on the Council leadership to draw up proposals to come back to another conference to be used as the launch of a widespread campaign to defend and extend council services.



Linda Bellos

Caucus

Will the Labour Group even start to go down this road, especially when a large LCC caucus is waiting in the wings, ready to take over and make the cuts the government wants?

Unfortunately, by standing against the decision of the local Parties, Linda Bellos is making it harder to rally the left in defence of the Manifesto.

Only with a clear and honest deficit budget, aiming to meet the needs of local people, can we build a real campaign to defend local services and local democracy. Half measures and fudged budgets based on massive borrowing only have the effect of destroying the council's capital programme, and of demobilising the struggle.

As in 1980/82 this debate on strategy cuts right across the *Briefing* left. As then, *Briefing* suporters are to be found on more than one side of the debate. It might be a debate among comrades — clearly those supporting cuts are elsewhere — nevertheless, as then, this debate is of central importance for our activity in local government.



PHOTO: John Chapman



Lambeth Councillors march to the High Court.

Building Briefing

500 Club Winner

Not only do we move out of London (at last!) for this winner, we move out of England too!

Congratulations are in order to A. Scandrett of Cardiff — holder of the winning share number 73.

Now that we're drawing the prizes, comrades are returning standing order forms, and joining up.

***Briefing* needs your support. We have no financial backing other than the share club, and going fortnightly means we double our expenses. So please, sellers, remember to send your paper money in quickly after *each* issue — not after each two or three or four...**

Thanks this week to comrades at the London Local Government debate meeting, both to individuals who filled out standing orders and to the comrades as a whole for taking a collection.

Please complete every section of this form, and then return it to: **Labour Briefing, c/o Jane Kelly, 26 Crofton Rd, London SE5.**

Bankers Order

To: .....

..... (bank name, sort code)

At (address) .....

.....

From: ..... (your name)

(your address) .....

.....

My account number is: .....

Please debit from my account each month the sum of £4, in favour of Labour Briefing No 2 account, Co-operative Bank, Stratford E15, Code 08-90-76, Account No. 50349957.

Starting on .....(date)

Thereafter on .....(date) of each month

Signature .....

Dated .....

Labour - Take the power!

New pamphlet out now!
Price 30p, plus 30p p&p from Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.
Bulk order rates available on request.

Socialist Policies for a Labour Victory!

Conference organised by *Labour Briefing*

Sat/Sun 28/29th March
Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton

Speakers include: Eric Heffer MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Mildred Gordon PPC, Joy Hurcombe PPC, *Chair Labour CND*, Nadine Finch *Chair LCI*, Narendra Makanji *Chair Labour Party Black Sections*, John Palmer *Socialist Society*.

SUBSCRIBE TO BRIEFING

Make sure of your copy of the fortnightly Labour Briefing. For an annual subscription send £12 to Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5 (cheques, etc., payable to Labour Briefing).

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Briefing is a very easy paper to sell — why not take a few for your workplace, Labour Party or campaign meetings?

Bulk orders of Briefing are available on sale or return (minimum order 5 copies).

I would like to be sent . . . . . copies of Briefing on sale/return.

Name .....

Address .....

Send to 26 Crofton Road, London, SE5

Letters

Write to Letters Editor, 26 Wattisfield Road, London E5.

Dear Sisters,

The exasperation expressed in the report on WAC's AGM is shared by many WAC members. After a year on the WAC EC (West Midlands rep) I too had become extremely frustrated with the organisation and was seriously considering letting my membership lapse.

Fortunately, I hesitated and reconsidered why I had joined WAC and those reasons have not changed. We still need to change the structure of the Labour Party (and society) if women are to gain equal power to men.

Despite contraception, equal pay, equal opportunities policies, easier access to further education, increased — though still limited — childcare provision, working class women have gained very little in the last fifty years (if we discount the war years).

It is only if more women gain power that we will then achieve equal rights for all women.

A single visit to the House of Commons was enough to convince me. What I witnessed filled me with an intense desire to ensure more women get into power and change the anarchic school-boyish system. Any socialist women who witnessed the dark suited leaders of our Party laughing and joking with the opposition while a serious debate was taking place concerning the needs of the physically handicapped, would see the importance of change.

Women have the will, the way, the energy and the imagination to create a socialist society — we just need the chance. This Labour Party has not given us the chance.

WAC's aims will win equality for women.

It is common sense that the National Executive Women's section should be elected by Women's Conference, of course the Women's conference should have the right to table five motions on any subject to Annual Conference, to appear on the agenda as a right.

Positive discrimination for women on every shortlist would soon secure equal representation. Many men as well as women would wish that parliament kept to office hours.

As a WAC EC delegate travelling once a month from Birmingham to London, I was fed up with arriving at meetings to listen to London WAC dicuss issues that they should have discussed at their regional meetings.

I was fed up with not knowing who the various visitors to the ECs were and not knowing who had the right to vote. I was fed up feeling like a country mouse coming up to London. Fed up with not understanding the "in talk" and negotiations that went on, that I could not see the need for or the reasons why regional WAC representatives could not undertake. So I stood for Chair.

WAC must now move on by consolidating its membership, clarifying its stance, build up its support at branch level, and attract more members in order to ensure that sympathetic resolutions go through branches, sisters get nominated as delegates, and that sisters get the support they need if nominated for council or parliamentary seats.

Hundreds of women in the Party have never heard of WAC. The more politically experienced members of WAC need to link with new members to increase WAC's expertise and encourage by example more women to challenge men.

More women must be involved in bulletin production, resolution production, leaflet preparation, resolution composition and support seeking. The whole conference circus needs demystifying.

Finally, book your diaries sisters: the next WAC AGM is December 5th, 1987 in Bristol (so it will not clash with the Greenham demonstration. When Rosa Luxembourg urged socialists to build towards a socialist world for our children and grandchildren she had not considered such a thing as nuclear war). Let's hope next year's AGM report is positive and that sisters in the Labour Party are united in working towards our goal of equality with those powerful men in dark suits, and then we can achieve socialism.

Pauline Purnell
Chair, WAC
(in a personal capacity)

Dear Comrades,

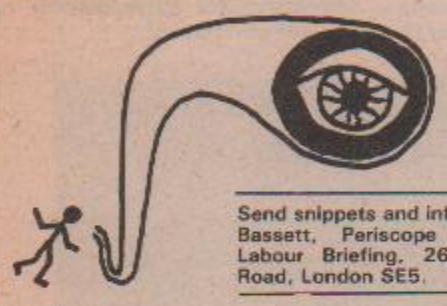
Reading the prophetic item in the last *Briefing* about Terry Waite, I was reminded of a story recounted by the central character in Norman Lewis's novel *The Sicilian Specialist*.

The character, a mafia hitman, recalls an article he had read about the burial of an Egyptian pharaoh amidst his treasures, followed by the strangling of all those involved in the building of the secret tomb by an executioner — and was himself then strangled!

A lesson there for the Archbishop and his envoy?

Dave Robinson
Haringey

Periscope



Send snippets and info to Greg Bassett, Periscope Column, Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.

Brent hunts defectors

It was quiet — almost too quiet — in Brent East. It didn't last long. Ken Livingstone shattered the calm of the GC meeting with his bombshell claim:

"There are ten people on this committee who hate me."

Anxious looks were exchanged. You could have heard a principle drop.

Was he bluffing? Had some comrades been Kinnocked? *Why only ten?*

It should be easy to check whether any had really "gone over" to Livingstone. Even Ken had recognised the giveaway symptoms of the hardened oppositionist:

"I see their faces contorted with hatred; and they adopt aggressive body postures towards me."

Yes, but are we really to believe that the less handsome punters of Brent East are all part of a mass movement against poor old Ken?

Who *are* the "top ten"? And why have so many others been left off Ken's list?

Periscope demands a recount: will Ken put his claimed figures to the test of a secret ballot?

Meanwhile plans are in hand for a run of badges proclaiming "I am the Eleventh Person". That should baffle the public!

Cashing in on AIDS - 1.

A bank offering no interest? Yes, a commercial blood bank is planned to be established in Gloucestershire.

The idea is as simple as the intended account holders. Depositors with more money than sense would be able to draw out exactly what they put in — their own blood. The idea is to prevent any risk of AIDS from donated blood.

The "Lister Arthur Medical Centre" will cost £250,000 to set up as a focus for wealthy paranoids. The two businessmen involved intend to convert an old warehouse, and will store frozen stocks of blood. They promise rapid delivery — by helicopter if need be — if a customer is in urgent need of a transfusion.

But lumps of fozen blood do not transfuse too well — and would need to be thawed out. Apparently microwave ovens are not suitable. Add this problem to the time taken to travel from the warehouse to the accident or emergency, and the blood is likely to be too late to do much good for a dying depositor.

Building sufficient stocks to facilitate major surgery or serious treatment could also be along task — unles the customer is bled dry! With no facilities for an overdraft, it would be necessary to check your blood balance before having an accident.

Anyway, the business will be a bit of a break in the routine of the bosses behind the scheme: at the moment they run a laundrette!

Cashing in on AIDS - 2.

Cheap imported condoms are the latest danger to face the British public, according to a *Daily Mirror* reporter.

The sheer horror of sub-standard French letters, India Rubbers and generally Foreign Johnnies arriving in their thousands at British ports is enough to work any chauvinist into a lather of xenophobia.

Could it be that the "Buy British" slant of this latest scare is encouraged by condom giant London Rubber, who have so far not reported the expected surge in sales?

What bugs Golding?

One thoroughly British Johnny is NCU leader John Golding. Even while leading the Telecom engineers' first ever national dispute, he has kept a firm grip on his priorities — with defence of the realm top of the list.

When he discoverd that his telephone discussions (on the possibilities of a swift sell-out?) had been tapped, Golding's response was more one of sorrow than anger.

Scab phone-tappers, he told *The Observer*, are not up to the standard of the NCU members who normally do the job.

This was worrying, he went on, because it could mean that during the strike, more people will become aware that their phones are being tapped — and this would inhibit the guardians of national security in the daily routines of eavesdropping and harrassing lefties and subversives.

Perhaps it is just as well the NCU rank and file haven't used tha argument in their leaflets! A reputation as the union with more taps to its credit than Fred Astaire would do the NCU no good at all.

If that approach did catch on, next thing you know the Prison Officers will be arguing that only their members know how to beat up prisoners properly without leaving obvious bruises; or the Inland Revenue Staff Federation will claim that only union members know how best to let the wealthy dodge taxes while clobbering the workers!

Odds on Guinness

In the wake of the Guinness scandals there has been much talk of the City as a "casino" economy, but is the metaphor quite right?

True, in a casino, as in the City, a punter expects to make a fortune without actually producing anything. But in a casino, at least, the odds are supposed to be the same for everyone who plays.

Maybe a better comparison would be the kind of casino pictured by W.C. Fields in one of his comic routines. Fields was dealing blackjack when he was approached by a naive, would-be gambler. The gambler asked "Excue me, sir, is this a game of chance?"

"Not the way I play it," Fields replied.

Clever money

The Common Market is to spend more than £893 million this year.

Not on creating jobs. Not on promoting human rights. It is to be spent on storing its food mountains!

Labour Party policy was clearly decided in 1981 on a card vote — to withdraw from the EEC. A single line in a general document in 1983 changed this — without debate — to "retaining the option of withdrawal".

But how could we possibly withdraw when our money is being so wisely and productively spent?

Rest period for Plastic Baggers

The completion of the selection process in Greenwich, and the looming prospect of a General Election may have brought a temporary respite for the restless journeys of the nomadic horde of would-be Labour MPs.

Travelling countless miles hopefully, with decreasing chances of actually arriving in Westminster, this band of unlikely, rootless trekkers tends always to bring a handy stock of their C.V. in carrier bags, in hopes of interesting someone. Many have adopted chameleon-like qualities of blending imperceptively into what they feel are the prvailing politics of local selection meetings — sometimes with a different line for each ward in a single constituency.

The same "Plastic-bagger" can be a witch-hunter in South Wales, a devolutionist in Scotland, and a radical in left wing London CLP's. The more winnable the seat, the more principles they will jettison to grab it.

With reselection now largely completed, the "close season" has now begun, with only freak by-elections offering possible openings for the unplaced Plastic-baggers.

Some will now look elsewhere for advancement, and full-time union positions beckon. A few of these unwanted politicians may swiftly become unloved officials; others may not even make the shortlist.

Watch out! a Plastic-bagger could be heading for *your* union office even now!

A different kind of PPC
Waiting for the NEC

On December 14th last year Streatham Labour Party selected Anna Tapsell by an overwhelming majority to be its PPC.

Anna is a local activist and has been a Labour Party member for 35 years. The candidature has not been endorsed by the NEC because the Selection Conference was held with the full participation of Streatham's Black Section who have held delegate rights to Streatham GC for over three years.

All the Lambeth CLPs have written to the NEC in support of Anna's selection but to date nothing has been heard.

By Anna Tapsell

I've given up waiting.

There are better things to do, like taking up neglected housing estates, providing an advice line for the elderly caught in the freeze, listening to women's views on violence, street lighting, transport...

Mind you, there is a kind of morbid fascination in watching a surprising variety of comrades vacillate on their commitment to Black Sections, in particular some amazing gyrations by certain newly-selected PPCs!

I make a mental note that if I ever become an endorsed personage at Walworth Road I'll try not to behave like one. At least I don't think I could ever become a celebrity groupie. I am, after all, the chair who, in introducing Denis Skinner to a packed public meeting, forgot his name!

I do admire the uncompromising, discomforting attitude of the Black Section. Institutional racism in this Party will not be exorcised without pain and I don't see any of those dominant white male figures stepping aside voluntarily.

In Streatham the white men did just that, to their everlasting credit, by deciding to exclude white men from the parliamentary selection panel. (Are you reading me Roy? Does the clipping service cover *Briefing*?)

How, I wonder, does the NEC analyse what has occurred in Streatham? Are they really so cocooned from reality that they will dismiss the significance of that part of Brixton that lies within the constituency boundary?

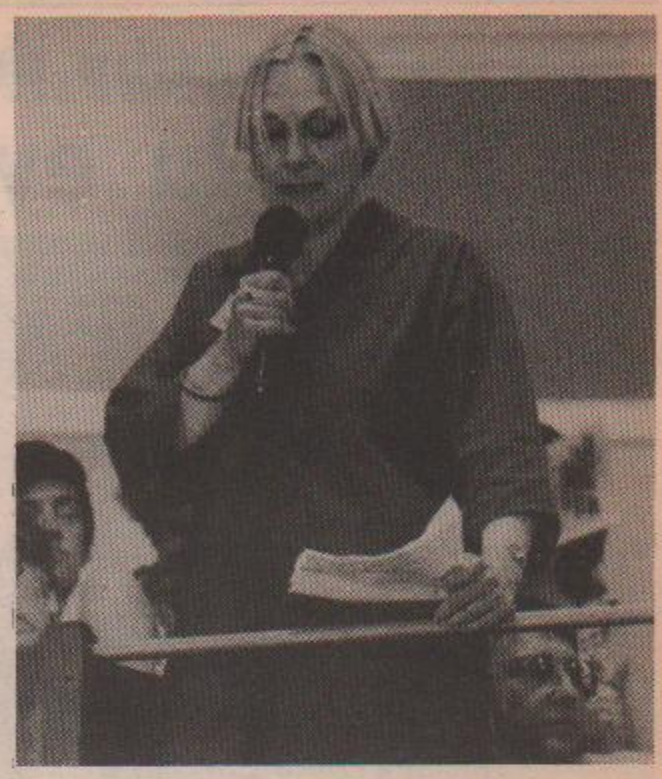
Are they really unaware that *The Voice* and *Caribbean Times* are the best source of local news and required reading also by the jobless... which is pretty well everyone here?

Do they really think that in Lambeth where six black comrades are surcharged councillors we could easily renege on a commitment to the Black Section?

One of those extra-galactic beings from the Region warned me, just prior to the selection conference, that Streatham CLP would be "a laughing stock at the London Labour Party", if it persisted in holding an unconstitutional selection.

Having explained to her that most us us would view that as a compliment, I went on to say that if we jettisoned our Black Section we would be pariahs in our community.

That, seriously, remains my view.



Anna Tapsell

PHOTO: John Chapman

Foxhunter unseated

By Dave Carter
Middlesborough CLP

The NEC's decision to endorse Ronnie Campbell as parliamentary candidate for Blyth Valley should be welcomed by all Party activists.

Campbell has a fine record as a local councillor and NUM activist and will make a refreshing change from the fox-hunting barrister John Ryman.

Ryman has bitterly opposed Campbell's selection as his successor. The NEC enquiry team could find no evidence of Ryman's wild allegations about the composition of the CLP. Ryman's fantasies are unsurprising given that he has not been seen in the constituency since a visit by the Queen last July.

He recently announced that he has become "bored with the triviality of politics."

Ryman now appears to be back-tracking on his threat to resign his seat and force an immediate by-election. If he lost such a by-election, he would also lose the large "pay-off" pension for which all retiring MPs qualify. Hence his more likely decision to run as an Independent at the General Election in order to help the SDP's chances of winning.

The resignation from the Labour Party of Ryman and his agent Peter Mortalis will not trouble Party activists. Mortalis was convicted of electoral fraud after the October 1974 election when Ryman narrowly defeated the late Eddie Milne. Meanwhile the Bar Council and Scotland Yard's Serious Crime Squad are investigating complaints against Ryman by his own legal chambers.

Tony Campbell, chair of Granlington Young Socialists, is being promoted in the local press since he has announced he will set up a group to contest May's local elections. His claim that local councillors are willing to join his "Democratic Labour Party" has been greeted with astonishment by Ronnie Campbell's agent, Bill Landles, who is a Northumberland County Councillor.

Campaign Forum
Public Meeting
Fighting racism
Defending Labour Councils
Campaigning for Socialism

Monday 16th February
Lambeth Town Hall
(Brixton tube)
7.30pm

Speakers:
Bernie Grant, *Leader Haringey Council*
Arthur Scargill, *President, National Union of Mineworkers*
Tony Benn MP
Eric Heffer MP
Gul Zarina Khan, *LP Black Sections*
Dennis Skinner MP
Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign
Labour Women's Action Committee

Admission:
£1 (50p unwaged)

Fun games for natural justice

The National Constitutional Committee is now up and running.

It had its first meeting on February 5th and there will be many more to come given that there are already outstanding cases to be dealt with from St Helen's, Liverpool, Stevenage, Billericay, Coventry, Sedgefield and South Wales.

Moves were made by one member of the Committee to force us to keep everything secret and not "go to the press" or "caucus". However, some of us objected to this and of course it's quite unenforceable.

A number of good decisions were made concerning the procedure for dealing with cases amid much talk of "natural justice and fairness". These included:

By Mandy Moore
Tottenham CLP



Mandy Moore

● paying expenses for defendants and their representatives and agreed witnesses;

● ensuring proper notice and procedural information is given to defendants;

● agreement that the NCC, where appropriate, would travel to the place concerned rather than everyone having to come to London;

● and that at no time should the Party Officer who services the Committee be involved in prosecuting cases.

Alan Haddon was elected Chair by 7 votes to 3 (1 member was absent). Not a surprising result!

For the immediate future, we will be meeting on the first Thursday on the month — with the next meeting on March 5th.

A school student's view:
The attack on sex education

Recently the Tories have shown great concern for the moral welfare of young people and, in particular, young women.

Over the past few years we have had to defend ourselves against their concern and against the concern shown by Gillick and Powell in their attempts to undermine our rights and those of all women.

Sex education, as well as the right of doctors to prescribe contraception for young women, has been gravely affected. Teachers are worried about breaking the law by teaching about contraception, and are concerned about getting complaints from parents. Young women in schools were very badly affected by the High Court's judgement on the Gillick case.

The syllabus for sex education is very much at the discretion of individual schools. In my own experience, it is based on heterosexual intercourse and how this leads to babies. In the simplistic teaching of junior schools, the heterosexual couple were always married.

By Judith Paton

However, some Councils and schools are now making efforts to change this way of teaching. They are trying to promote a more positive attitude towards lesbians and gays.

The right wing response to this, through "Parents' Rights Groups", has been vicious. We have seen these groups act in Haringey, when they tried to ban copies of "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin", a book about a young girl living with her father and his male lover.

Attacks on sex education are part of a wider campaign against all forms of sexuality outside marriage. We have seen racist Enoch Powell try to push a bill through Parliament which would have severely limited reproductive rights for women — including both fertility and abortion rights. It would actually have given legal rights to embryos.

We have also seen, more recently, the massive media campaign against lesbians and gay men, thinly disguised as concern about AIDS.

Is the concern shown for our health and welfare genuine, or are the Toreis really trying to protect the institution of the family?

The patriarchal family is very important to the well-being of capitalism, as its continuation requires the reproduction of a healthy labour force socialised into the norms of a capitalist society.

Homosexuality is a real alternative for many people to the family and therefore threatens capitalism. No wonder that the Tories are not keen for it to be talked about in schools!

The Kinnockite response to all this has been to point fingers at Cecil Parkinson and Jeffrey Archer, shouting "Tory hypocrites". When we start highlighting the dirty deeds of various Tory MPs we ignore the real issue — attacks on young people's and lesbians' and gay men's sexuality.

It implies that if Jeffrey Archer kept clear of the tabloids and Cecil Parkinson knew more about contraception, it would be acceptable to make these massive attacks on sex education and lesbians and gays.

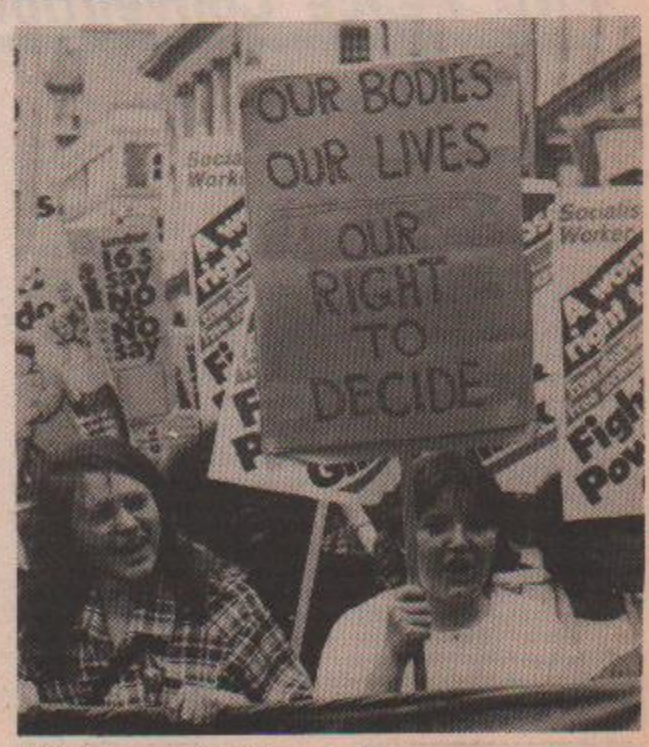
The attitude of the Labour leadership has been to disown the more progressive Councils which have been liberalising their teaching about sex.

This is because reformists do not want to change the basic structure of society by challenging the family, and in this they are in complete agreement with the Tory Party.

There is no organised body of school students to resist the attacks on sex education and it is very difficult for young people with radical ideas, particularly around sexuality, to get heard in schools.

The groups which have been and are defending sex education and positive images of lesbians and gay men have been the so-called "loony left" Councils, the Positive Images Campaign, and the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

We must support them in their struggle and demand that the reformists make good sex education in schools a reality when they come to power.



1985 "Reverse Gillick" demonstration

PHOTO: Stephano Cagnoni (Report)

Sizewell decision announced:

A PWR in every back yard?

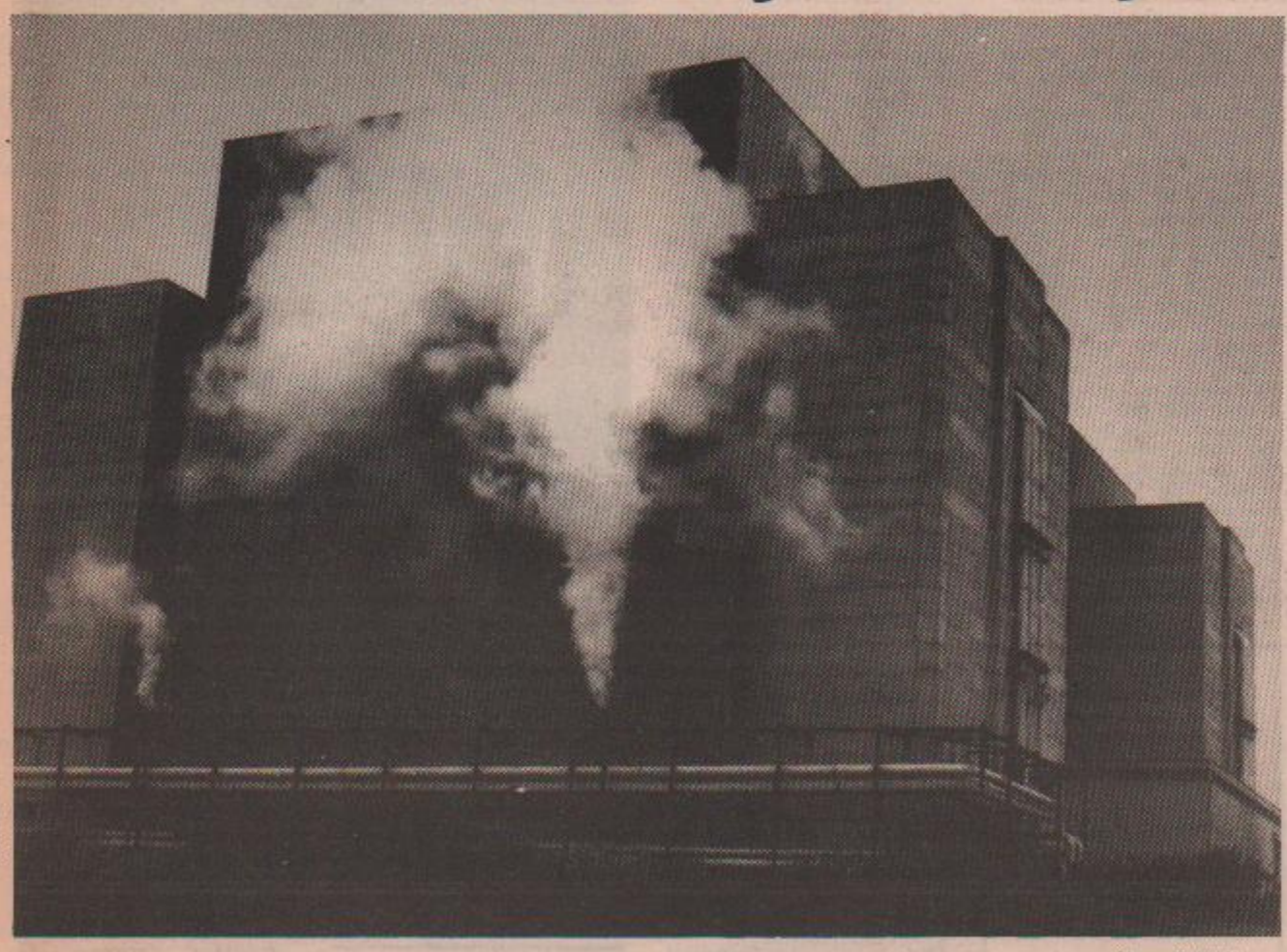


PHOTO:Andrew Wiard (Report)

Sizewell "A"

After all the years of waiting, the Sizewell enquiry has finally come up with the answer the Tories wanted all along.

The CEGB now has the go-ahead to build a pressurised water reactor (PWR) power plant at Sizewell and to develop a programme of PWRs at other sites around the country.

Now more than ever we need to get the message across:

- **Nuclear power presents unacceptable risks to workers and the public alike, through the production of radioactive nuclear waste, the transportation of dangerous nuclear materials, the day-to-day releae into the environment of radioactive elements, and the risk of a serious accident.**
- **Although the chances of a Chernobyl-type accident occurring are very slim, the consequences of such an event are so devastating that it is grossly irresponsible to even consider risking it.**

In the event of a serious accident at Sizewell, thousands would die and hundreds of square miles of land (some densely populated) would be rendered uninhabitable.

- **Even leaving aside the safety issue, the CEGB's economic case for the Sizewell PWR is seriously flawed and depends on high estimates of the future cost of coal and oil.**

In the past, despite claims to the contrary, nuclear power has *never* produced electricity as cheaply as modern coal-fired plants.

A rational energy policy would, in any case, eliminate the need for an increase in electricity generating capacity. A radical socialist energy policy would:

- **incorporate energy conservation and efficiency measures;**
- **allow a small but significant role for renewable energy sources;**
- **return coal to a central role in British energy provision.**

Such a policy would allow for economic growth whilst cutting electricity demand. It would make nuclear power an irrelevance.

Friends of the Earth organised a lobby of parliament on February 4th. Socialists must support such events and attend in large numbers.

CND has announced that it is planning a mass sit-down against the Sizewell PWR outside the House of Commons on May 15th.

For further details: Friends of the Earth, 01-837 0731; SERA, 01-439 3749.

By Andy Porter
SERA

Perdition: fact or fiction?

A show-trial is shaping up.

The accusers: the Board of Deputies of British Jewry, Zionist organisations, and their friendly historians.

The accused: Jim Allen, socialist playwright and author of the play "Perdition".

The judge: a British press sympathetic to Zionism and none too hot on civil liberties.

What's missing? Only the body in question.

The body — the play in performance — isn't there because various pressures forced the Royal Court to cancel its production. Threats of pickets, charges of historical inaccuracy and of defamation of Zionism, Jews and the state of Israel, fears of a withdrawal of Arts Council funding — all contributed to the scuttling of "Perdition".

By Andrew Hornung

What is "Perdition" about? Of course, as we haven't been allowed to see it on stage, or to read any of the various drafts which appear to be circulating among interested parties, we have to rely on press reports to form any idea of the play.

It appears to take the form of the trial of a Zionist accused of having colluded with the Nazis in the extermination of Hungarian Jewry in return for the safe passage abroad of a relatively small group of Zionists.

"Perdition" is based on a historic Israeli trial. A senior official in the Israeli Labour government, Kastner was accused in a pamphlet of being guilty of the deal with the Nazis. Kastner took his accuser to court where the truth of the accusation was upheld.

The more serious critics of the play allege that Jim Allen's play is riddled with inaccuracies. Without either a text or a performance it's pretty hard to take sides in relation to any particular allegation. The best one can do is to look at the underlying issues.

Did some Hungarian Zionists do a deal with the Nazis? The answer is clearly "yes". Did some Zionists put building the Jewish settlement in Palestine before saving the lives of European Jews? Again, the evidence points to a "yes" answer. Were many Zionists passive in relation to growing anti-semitism, believing that it could not be fought? Again, the painful answer must be "yes".

Allen is quoted by *Time Out* saying that the Holocaust is "a myth". I find it difficult to believe that is what he said. More likely he said something to the effect that the Zionist version of the Holocaust (which carefully avoids giving an accurate picture of what Zionism actually did or didn't contribute to the struggle against Nazi genocide) is a myth.

Let's be clear: only a fascist could argue that Nazi Germany was *not* responsible for the death of six million Jews. But this overwhelming historic fact does not exempt other movements and forces — Zionism, Stalinism, British and American imperialism — from a critical appraisal of their role in these horrific events.

One final point: those loudest in claiming that Jim Allen is trying to minimise Nazi responsibility for the Holocaust are generally those closest to the Board of Deputies of British Jewry who have consistently done their best to sabotage mobilisations against fascism in Britain from Cable Street to North London Polytechnic.

★ *Briefing welcomes additional opinions on the issues surrounding the censorship of "Perdition". The left needs clear debate on the question of the struggles against both Zionism and anti-semitism.*



PHOTO:Andrew Wiard (Report)

PWR at Snape Maltings

END Peace Convention: Open house for activists!

Two thousand delegates from all over the world are expected to attend the sixth European Nuclear Disarmament Convention to be held in Coventry from July 15th to 19th.

Previous conventions have been held in Brussels, Berlin, Perugia, Amsterdam and Paris.

The International Liaison Committee chose Britain this year because of the coming British General Election and its probable focus on the issue of defence.

Undoubtedly, many in CND think current Labour Party defence policy is marvellous and want the movement to rally uncritically round for Kinnock. On the other hand, many visitors from Europe have had bitter experience with social democratic promises on defence in Spain, France, Greece and Scandanavia.

They will *not* see Kinnock as a saviour. Also, nearly all peace activists are opposed to NATO. So a lively debate can be expected!

By Dave Spencer
Coventry Labour Briefing
Convenor, END Convention Local Committee

Many in CND will want to use the END Convention to push the Gorbachov proposals from Rejkjavik. They will point to liberalisation in the USSR as a hopeful sign.

The Independent Peace Movements of Eastern Europe, however, have had great influence on past Conventions and will no doubt be here again, either in person or on video. The traditional END line has been distrust of peaceful negotiations between states and a desire to get "beyond the blocs" by starting dialogue among the citizens below. Again, here is a source of heated debate between Stalinist elements and others.

The making of links between nuclear disarmament and these struggles has been high on the agenda of previous END conventions. National liberation in Palestine, Nicaragua, South Africa, the Philippines, the South Pacific have all been discussed with representatives of the national liberation movements present. European activists will expect the issue of Northern Ireland to be raised at a convention in Britain and we can only hope it will not be ducked.

Links between the struggle for peace and anti-sexist and anti-racist struggles have featured in the past. In Amsterdam, for example, over half the platform speakers and half the participants were women. The questions of nuclear power and ecology have also been raised, particularly by the German Greens. This year, in Britain, we should discuss unemployment, workers' action against nuclear weapons and power, and alternative products and methods of production.

The Conventions are very open. There are only one or two plenary sessions — the rest is workshops, discussions, stalls and cultural events. It is a golden opportunity to share experiences with peace activists and socialists from all over the world.

Any groups or individuals interested in taking part should contact Martin Butcher, CND Offices, 22-24 Underwood St, London N1 7JG. (01-250 4010).

EUROPE

Using the past — to shape the future

Another Bloody Sunday Commemoration has come and gone.

Some comrades may ask: is nostalgia an appropriate basis for political mobilisation?

Playwrite Dennis Potter, speaking on TV the night before the demonstration, defined nostalgia as a way of remembering the past that keeps it in the past, safe and separate from our present lives.

But there is a way of using the past that makes it a living force in the here and now. For activists engaged in the tedious battle against an apparently never-ending present, recapturing the past, its heroism and tragedy, is as important an activity as outlining a socialist future.

Listening to the son of someone killed on Bloody Sunday reading a message from Republican prisoners at the Sheffield Rally helps lift our horizons above the day-to-day tasks and petty disputes which cramp such a large part of our political life.

All the more reason to make sure such commemorations are a positive experience for those taking part.

The struggle of those who are fighting and dying in Ireland should not be used by groups on the British left as an excuse to parade irrelevant factional differences. Some of the scenes in the City Hall were disgraceful and reflected very badly on those responsible for them.

Solidarity with the cause of Ireland quite clearly took second place as self-important groups and tendencies vied with each other in mutual denunciations.

The Sinn Fein speaker was incredibly restrained when he told the rally "You must unite — we need your support." If we can't behave decently towards each other, what hope is there that we can assist anyone's liberation, even our own?

The march and rally pinpointed once more the varied tasks facing us. Clearly, there is a need for a major campaigning body for British withdrawal which is not confined to members of the Labour Party.

There is a need for a movement of women for withdrawal and of the Irish in Britain for self-determination. But there still remains the need for an organisation like the LCI which works to build a broadly-based body of support for withdrawal and self-determination within the only political organisation in Britain with significant political representation of its working class — the Labour Party.

Sectarian demands at the rally that there should be no Labour speakers because "Labour sent the troops" are hardly helpful to the cause of Republicanism in Ireland.

The Labour Party is facing an election this year with a policy on Ireland which is fundamentally flawed by its

By Cllr Richard Chessum

acceptance of the Loyalist veto over a united Ireland.

The 26 Counties of Ireland go to the polls in the next few weeks, and although the 6



The everyday reality of British occupation

Counties will not be the main issue, the result could have serious implications for the future of Southern policy towards the north, and particularly for the fate of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which enshrines the Loyalist veto.

Contrary to Loyalist belief, the Anglo-Irish Agreement is a recipe for continued partition and British military and political involvement.

Garret Fitzgerald is a great believer in Irish unity — but not in his lifetime. I questioned him on one of his visits to England some years ago about the possibility of Britain leaving Ireland. "Don't worry," he said, "if there was any danger of a precipitate British withdrawal, we in Dublin do have powerful friends in governing circles in the United States who would exert sufficient pressure to make sure that Britain stayed."

Charlie Haughey is much less responsive to British pressure, but just as terrified at the prospect of having to cope with a challenge from Sinn Fein. It is not surprising that Peter Archer, Labour's Front Bench Spokesperson, should feel free to say to the LCI: "We cannot move faster in the direction of Irish unity until the Irish themselves, through their elected representatives, give us some indication that they wish us to do so."

Yet we know from experience that a Labour government which accepts this limitation would find itself once more embroiled in governing a police state in the 6 counties, and ruthlessly suppressing the aspirations of nationalists in those areas where they are strongest.

This could be precisely the situation we find ourselves in before the year is out. What better reason to turn our backs on futile factionalism?

If the Bloody Sunday rally has strengthened the resolve of at least some sections of the left to achieve real unity for Irish self-determination, it will not have been in vain.

Policing the Irish Community Conference
Saturday February 28th
10am-4pm
The Albany, Douglas Way, Deptford, London SE8 4AG

Speakers; videos; workshops on PTA, Plastic Bullets and strip searching.
Stalls, books, etc.
Free creche
Wheelchair accessible, signer available
Organised by Greenwich and Lewisham Councils
Ring 01 854 8888, ext. 2056 for further details

Trade union upsurge in Namibia

The past months have seen a significant re-emergence of trade union activity in Namibia.

This follows a period in which the labour movement had been forced underground after the arrest on terrorism charges of trade union leaders in 1980.

In 1972 Namibian unions were smashed by the occupying South African forces following mass participation in a general strike.

The closing months of 1986 saw the launch of the Namibian Food and Allied Union (NAFAU), which subsequently called two successful strikes over pay and conditions.

At the same time workers' committees from almost every mine in Namibia founded the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN). Consolidated Diamond Mines' 50th Anniversary "celebrations" were unanimously boycotted by black workers.

By Piers Mostyn

Underlying this upsurge in labour movement mobilisation is the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), who, inspired by the success of COSATU, have been instrumental in the establishment of the unions.

The NUNW was set up by the SWAPO Department of Labour in the early 1970s and its national organiser, Ben Uulenge, is a recently released long-serving SWAPO prisoner on Robben Island. He is also General Secretary of the MUN.

"MUN"

At the launch of the MUN Uulenge stated "the workers struggle for the advancement of their interests as a class can only be part and parcel of our wider anti-colonial national liberation struggle."

Trade union activity in Namibia has gone hand in hand with an upturn in political mobilisation; 1986 saw a series of mass rallies in support of SWAPO, including one of 25,000 (of a population of 1.5 million), said to be the largest in recent Namibian history.

Ben Uulenge is expected to visit Britain during February and it is hoped that he will be able to speak on labour movement platforms. It is clearly vital that the British labour movement extends political and material solidarity to Namibian trade unions.

Any unions wishing to make these contacts should get in touch with the Namibia Support Committee, PO Box 16, London NW5.



PHOTO: PHOTON

Support the Sandinistas!

The Sandinista government is now facing real problems.

By Jeremy Paton

That was the message to a meeting of the *Briefing* Youth Commission from a comrade recently returned from two years in Central America.

Though the Contras enjoy no significant support, their murderous attacks are damaging the economy.

Prices in the free, and especially the illegal, market are higher than official prices and street traders are now amongst the top wage earners.

For the majority of the Nicaraguan working class living standards have declined since the Revolution of '79.

The FSLN strategy is based on economic collaboration with a politically powerless capitalist class.

Immediate expropriation might well provoke political resistance and economic disruption.

The Nicaraguan working class is relatively small. The population is still predominantly peasant and even in the cities most families contain both workers and small traders. Any move against private property and the illegal market would encounter resistance from many of those whose support is essential for the Revolution.

Nonetheless, popular support for the Sandinistas continues at a high level, despite widespread complaints about the economy..ny.

The government's defiance of American bullying is highly popular. Most people believe a US invasion could be defeated.

The high level of politicisation of the people is impressive. About one in five Nicaraguans is involved in one of the mass organisations allied to the Sandinista Front.

The votecatcher's debacle

The West German elections, while returning Chancellor Kohl's Conservative-Liberal coalition to power, surprised may of those who saw (or wanted to see) the country in the grip of a tide of conservatism and economic complacency.

By Günther Minnerup

For, contrary to all predictions, they brought a shift to the left.

Conservative

The Conservative Christian Democrats lost 21 seats and suffered their lowest share of the vote (44.3%) since 1949. Their right wing rhetoric, and in particular that of Bavarian leader Franz-Josef Strauß, drove a large portion of the middle-calss electorate into the arms of the liberal FDP which stands for a critical distance from Reaganism and moderation in domestic repressive legislation.

The combined total of both wings of the government fell while the combined vote of the left — the SPD and the Greens — rose to its highest point (45.3%) for fifteen years. The Social democrats lost seven seats, while the Greens increased their parliamentary strength from 27 to 42 on an 8.3% share of the poll.

Even a relatively stable economic situation — zero inflation and stagnant unemployment figures — did not benefit the government. West German politics have always been dominated by foreign policy issues, and the majority of Germans are strongly suspicious of the new Cold War and committed to peaceful relations with the East.

Reagan, Star Wars, and nuclear missiles remain deeply unpopular. Kohl's notorious comparisons between Gorbachov and Goebbels and his talk of "concentration camps" in East Germany, designed to polish his image on the right, turned out to be vote-losers.

Coalition

The centre-right coalition also lost ground on ecology issues, brought to the fore by Chernobyl and the poisoning of the Rhine by giant chemical plants.

The gains scored by the Greens were to be expected under these circumstances. But what about the SPD? Not so long ago it won convincing overall majorities in the key state of Northrhine-Westfalia and the mining state of the Saarland, and was riding high in the opinion polls. Only a year ago the prospect of a "red-green majority" was the talk of the newspapers.

Then the right wing of the party went on the offensive. Johannes Rau, chosen as its candidate for the chancellorship, proceeded to rule out any collaboration with the Greens and to bury freshly-adopted radical conference resolutions under a pile of meaningless gibberish along the lines of "Reconciliation not Division".

Target

His proclaimed target of a majority for the SPD alone was so glaringly unrealistic that traditional SPD supporters concluded that Rau was not interested in replacing the Kohl government. The inevitable result was a series of severe defeats in local and regional elections, brought about by defections to the Greens and abstentions.

Rau, the self-styled "vote-catcher", suffered a personal debacle on January 25th and has now retired to his premiership in Northrhine-Westfalia. The signs are that his successor will be Oskar Lafontaine, the closest equivalent the SPD has to a Tony Benn, who has publicly questioned West Germany's membership of NATO and is prepared to work with the Greens.

The right, however, is unlikely to take this lying down and has already nominated Rau's predecessor, Hans-Joachim Vogel, to challenge Lafontaine for the party leadership when the present chair, Willy Brandt, retires next year.

The contest between these two is going to be more than one between different personalities. It will be an all-out struggle for the soul of the party on all the key issues of foreign, defence, social and economic policy.

LEEDS LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE:

"Limp performance, tame poodle"

The 1987 local government conference in Leeds accurately revealed the basic problems facing Labour as it moves up a gear before a general election.

The leadership are not prepared or able to learn from the radical socialist strategies that have been the hallmark of the best of Labour local government in



By Steven Cowan

John Prescott assured us at a meeting organised by the centre for local economic strategies that 300,000 "real jobs" in two years would be the target. These, he told us, would arise from co-ordinated initiatives at local level.

Roy Hattersley flatly contradicted this a day later when he warned darkly that the pace of job creation must be "limited" by competing constraints and pressures. In this way the political differences within the leadership between the Hattersley "Solidarity" group and the Tribune group led by Prescott are surfacing to wreck local government strategy.

On education — the largest element in local government spending — most delegates came to Leeds to flesh out the Conference resolution for a 1988 Education Act.

Giles Radice offered what one northern chair of an education committee described to me as a limp performance from a tame poodle. The thorough-going cautiousnes and conservatism of the Kinnock - Cunningham - Radice - Hattersley team is the feature which depressed the Conference delegates.

The proposals for creating democratic regional tiers which would incorporate a range of public services — from police to water, health to arts — must be supported.

Such structures offer a real possibility for creating a vehicle through which initiatives characteristic of those of the metropolitan counties can be pursued.

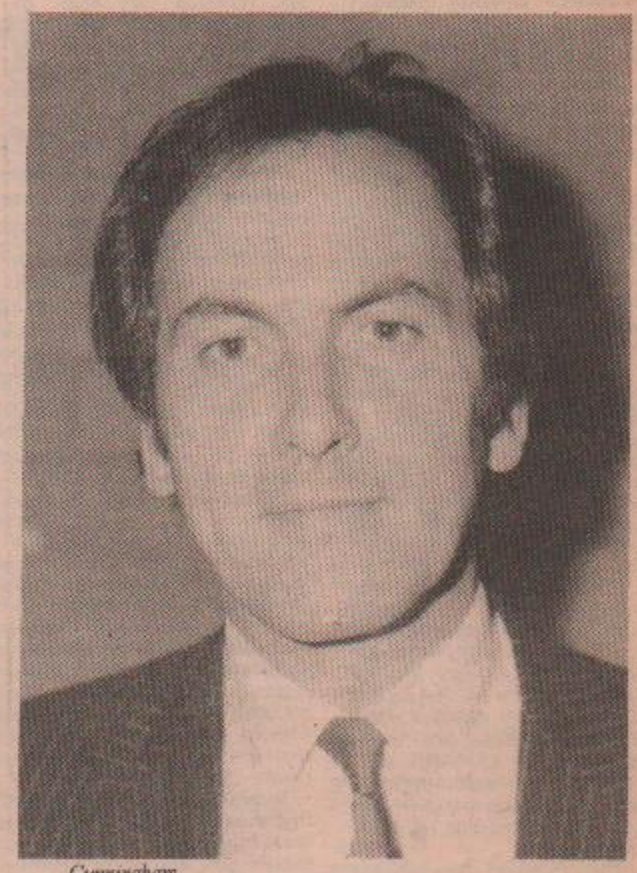
The proposals seem unlikely to succeed unless the left organises for them. This is so because the likes of Cunningham and Hattersley don't actually want to set up radical and alternative centres of power and decision making within the Labour Party. Strong regional government does imply a weakening of the centre.

John Austin-Walker, leader of Greenwich, attacked the leadership for dragging its feet on supporting ratecapped London Councils.

"Creative accounting" was not done by choice, it was essential to the task of protecting jobs and services, he said. He demanded a clear commitment that surcharges will be lifted on all disqualified councillors.

Behind the exhortations for unity in the period before an election lies the shambles of there not being an agreed policy or strategy for the restructuring of local government.

CLPs should make submissions about the proposals to ensure that services such as water, police and economic development are included.



Cunningham

PHOTO: Labour Party Photo Library

Published by Labour Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5. Printed by MPS (TU), Acre Lane, London SW2.

LABOUR BRIEFING

No to Orange Fascism!

FIGHT FASCISM NOW!

The Labour-led Exeter City Council are set to spend £60,000 on celebrations in 1988 to mark the Tercentenary of William of Orange landing in Britain.

The celebrations are part of Labour's strategy of promoting tourism in Exeter.

Devon Labour Briefing believes these celebrations are provocative and insensitive, given that Wiliam of Orange is the historical figurehead for British imperialism in Ireland and for Orange fascism amongst the Protestant population.

The issue is not about seventeenth century history but what celebrations in the name of William of Orange mean *today*.

The argument put forward by the Exeter Labour Party right wing that the celebrations have nothing to do with Ireland and are only about an important British historical event ignore two things. But there is no reason why socialists should promote celebrations for a bourgeois revolution in 1688 in which the working masses took no part.

The Exeter Labour Party right wing seem impervious to the argument that the celebrations have fascist and imperialist overtones. The Executive Constituency Committee refused to even reconsider the issue in light of a letter written to the *South West Morning News* by the South West Organiser for the Constituency saying that the reconsider plans to bring its a letter supporters from all over Britain to support the celebrations.

By Peter Bowing
Exeter CLP

The William of Orange celebrations have become a matter for internal Labour party democracy as well. When the LPYS became aware of the proposed celebrations a motion condemning them was put before the Constituency general committee and passed overwhelmingly. The City Council Labour group and the Constituency officers have refused to carry out the resolution.

The campaign against the Orange celebrations is being stepped up. A lobby of the city council will be followed by a public meeting with speakers from the Labour Committee on Ireland and Labour councillors in Bridgewater, Somerset, where fighting broke out after a British Friends of Ulster march which was heavily supported by the National Front. Ironically, some SDP, Liberal and Conservative councillors on Exeter City Council are opposed to the celebrations. There is a definite possibility that even if the Labour group cannot be persuaded to drop the celebrations, they could be outvoted by the bourgeois parties.



NF in a peaceful moment at the Cenotaph last year: there would be no peace in Exeter

PHOTO: John Chapman

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!