LABOUR
BRIEFING
No 39 MARCH 11-24 1987

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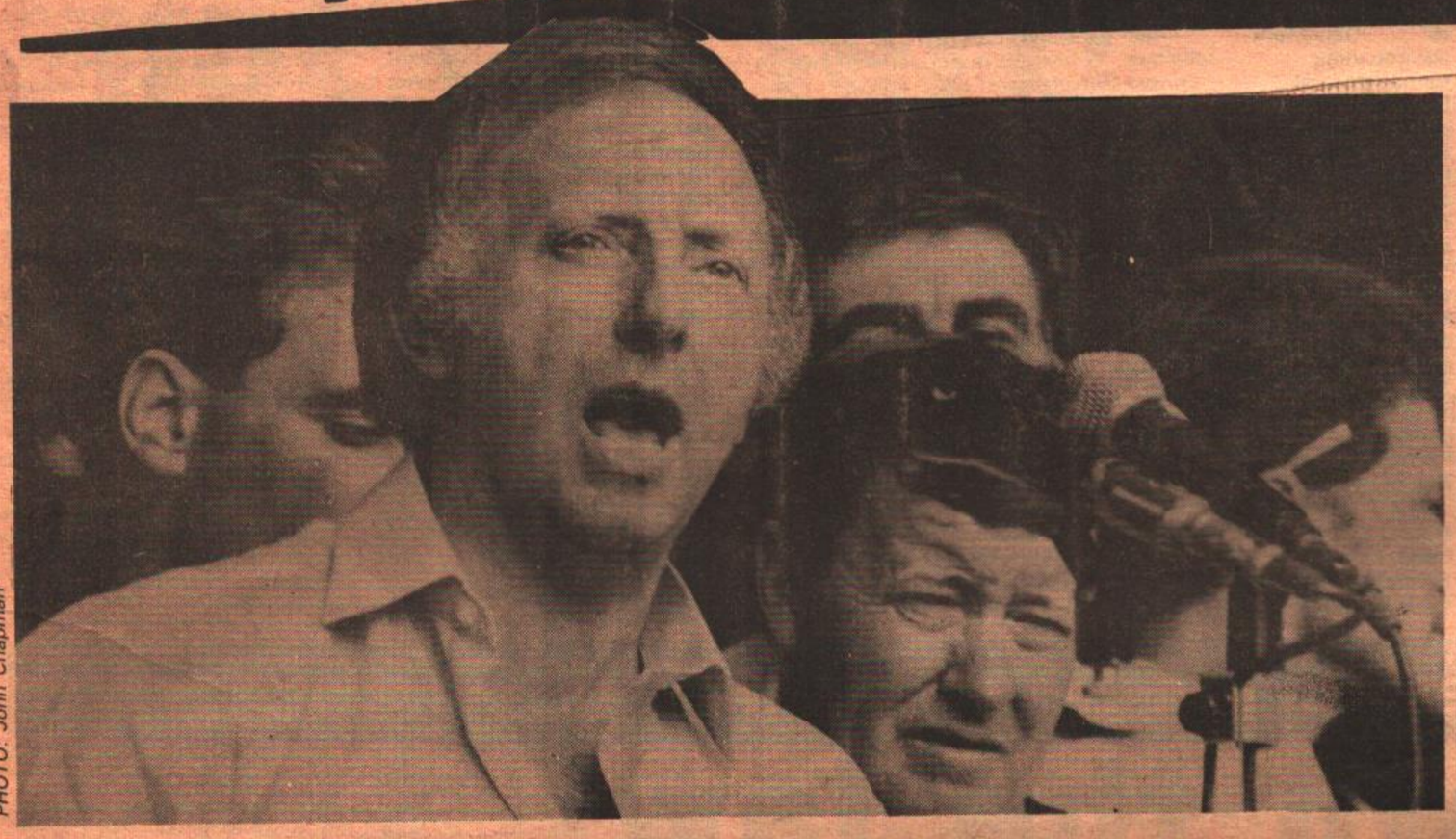


PHOTO: John Chapman

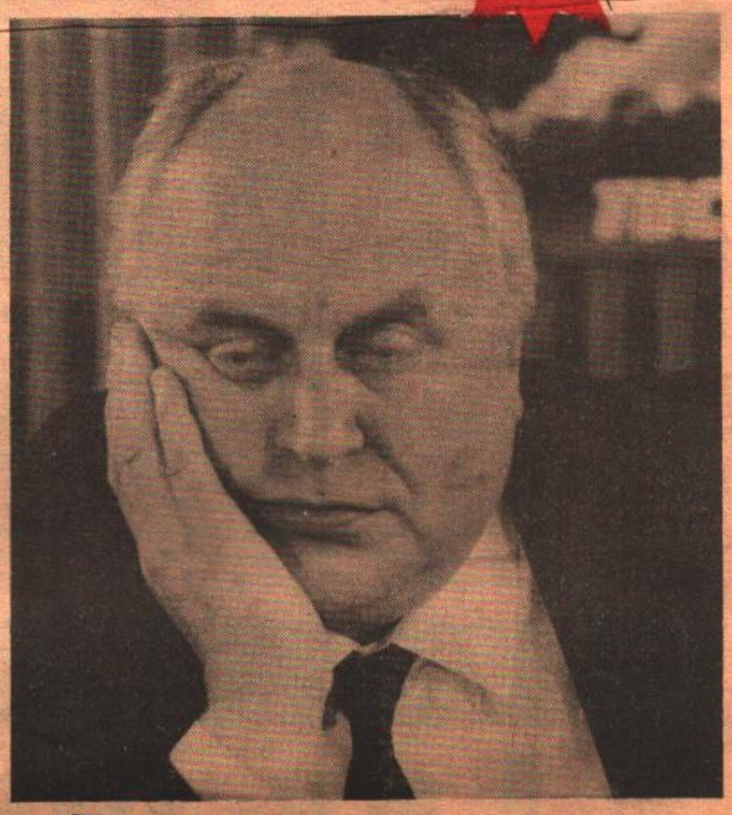


PHOTO: John Chapman

WHO WILL DEFEND OUR UNIONS?

Democracy would go out of the window if the Tories win another chance to press home new anti-union laws.

Unions would be handed over, bound and gagged, not to their members but to individual scabs, to the bosses, and to the courts under new Green Paper proposals unveiled by Employment Secretary Lord Young.

Added to the armoury of draconian legislation already imposed on a prostrate TUC during seven years of Thatcherite "counter-revolution", the new proposals (see box) would tighten a rigid straitjacket that would make almost any form of active trade unionism, effective strike action, or class solidarity unlawful.

Of course, Alliance leaders rushed to welcome this latest Tory onslaught: their employment spokesperson Malcolm Bruce greeted the Tory government's "conversion to substantial tracts of the Alliance policy"!

By JOHN LISTER

But Labour's leaders too have already tacitly conceded most of the key principles to the Tories, and have consistently refused to pledge a full repeal of the existing anti-union legislation.

In the unions, the hard-line right wing of the TUC (Hammond, Jordan, Golding) sees its future working hand in glove with the bosses as a second-string tier of management. The "centre" (like GMBATU leader John Edmonds) have reduced their ambitions to retaining a membership by acting as cheap insurance brokers, legal advisors to individuals and holiday tour operators.

Any real spirit of trade unionism has long been extinguished in these circles. Thatcher has merely taken advantage of this weakness.

The vanishing TUC "left" typified by NUPE boss Tom Sawyer, appears to believe the issue is one of ideology — involving some kind of debating match against Thatcher's hit-squad.

The reality is that every concession , every retreat by the TUC bureaucracy has served simply to encourage the Tory offensive.

The latest Green Paper is the bitter fruit of the Dean-Dubbins Wapping betrayal — but also the outcome of all the miserable sell-outs since the 1980 Steel Strikes and the TUC's refusal to mobilise any action to fight the Prior anti-union laws of that year.

Since then, every major confrontation with the employers, their government and its laws has been hampered by blatant sabotage from at least part of the TUC leadership.

Small wonder that under the hammer of compulsory and voluntary redundancies, management victimisations and attacks on shop stewards' organisations, a growing bureaucratisation of the remaining structures and a refusal of officials to organise new layers of low-paid and part-time staff, the unions have lost a massive 3 million members since 1979.

What workers need to fight this new threat is a Labour and TUC campaign which drops the flowery phrases and subordinates the hunt for the Yuppie vote — concentrating instead on basic class issues.

We need a Labour campaign which at a bare minimum:

- rejects the whole battery of Tory anti-union laws since 1979 and pledges to repeal the lot at once;
- gets off the fence, and sides on every issue with the shop floor workforce against management; with the low paid against the wealthy; with the victimised against the employers; with the pickets against the cops; with the exploited against the profiteers;
- commits itself to enforce justice for the jailed and victimised miners, printworkers and other class struggle victims;
- pledges to roll back the Tory attacks and massively improve social security, health, education and housing.

We need a working class programme to rally the trade union and working class votes, without which Labour cannot hope to beat Thatcher.

The fiasco of Greenwich, in the same week as Lord Young's latest arrogant challenge to the workers' movement, shows how far we have yet to go before we get such a leadership.

The Tory proposals mean that:

- Individuals who scabbed on democratic decisions for strike action would win legal backing to undermine the majority crossing picket lines. Disciplinary action against them would be outlawed.
- Even if 80% of a workforce cast ballot votes in favour, there would still be no right to establish a closed shop: any worker sacked for non-membership of a union could sue for huge damages.
- Workplace ballots, and mass meeting votes — in which larger numbers of workers actively participate in elections and decision-making, would be *outlawed*, in favour of individual postal ballots, in which only tiny percentages take part, and which maximise the influence of the Tory press and mass media.
- Punitive "compensation" would be awarded to scabs who were expelled from unions effectively tearing up union rulebooks and handing total jurisdiction to the courts.
- Individual scabs would be able to join with employers in suing unions that embark on "unlawful" strike action.
- Lazy or bashful scabs would be assisted by a new government commissioner to fight on their behalf, with a whole apparatus specifically designed to hound defiant unions through the courts.
- Unions are to be compelled by the bosses courts to rewrite their rulebooks to make all officials stand for regular re-election — in an undisguised attempt at unseating "life" officials such as Arthur Scargill.
- Trade union trustees would be obliged to take on an unpaid policing role, compelled by law to prevent union funds being used in defiance of the courts.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Lesbian and Gay Rights campaigns

The struggle for lesbian and gay rights in Haringey

Haringey Council's commitment to lesbian and gay rights, with its introduction of positive images of lesbians and gays in education, continues to come under attack.

A coalition of fundamentalist religious activists, right wing Tories and known fascists has moved into Haringey to build on the hysteria whipped up by the right wing bigoted "Parents Rights Group".

The government's paternal campaigns and Bills desperate to dictate morality, and media lies based on homophobic and racist reporting have prepared the way for bigots and extremist groups.

Despite these attacks Haringey remains isolated, with no support from the Labour Party Front bench or other Labour controlled local authorities. Ealing, faced with opposition, has virtually backtracked on its policy of

By Leesa Herbert
Positive Images

combatting the oppression of lesbians and gays.

The bigoted attacks have spread to Lewisham where the Tories have co-ordinated a number of fundamentalist churches to oppose the Council's policies on lesbian and gay rights (yet to be formulated) in a leaflet distributed to all households in the Borough, claiming that to challenge inbuilt discrimination of lesbians and gays "will break up the family". Why? Because "it's against nature" and "God says so".

Haringey Council, in the face of this pressure, has tried to keep its head down. It has taken seven months to produce a Borough-wide leaflet on their policy to combat the lies allowed to go unchallenged up till now. Unfortunately the long-awaited leaflet only informed Haringey of its Lesbian and Gay Unit, with no mention of the Council's policy on lesbian and gay rights and why it is committed to the policy.

The opposition turned up in full force to last month's full Council meeting: the "Parents Rights Group", plus suitably selected black and minority ethnic right wingers claiming to represent their communities, religious fundamentalists, known National Front thugs, and to cap it all the frail fasting vicar, Rev Rushworth-Smith, who hasn't eaten since Jan 12th, claiming he will fast to death if the Council do not reverse their policy.

Rushworth-Smith plus supporters requested to address the Council. This was denied by a weak front bench speech, and finally a vote. At this the opposition managed to totally disrupt the meeting, hurling abuse and threats to the lesbian and gay supporters also in the gallery.

The mayor suggested emptying the gallery, which many feared would end in violence, and finally chose to bring the police in to remove a noisy, black "Parents Rights Group" supporter. Angered by the council's failures to deal with the situation and the presence of the police and likelihood of violence the lesbian and gay supporters left the Council meeting.

Faced with this bigoted racist backlash in Haringey, Positive Images (the campaign group set up in support of the Council's policy to combat the lies) decided to step up their campaign.

Haringey Black Action had been formed, as a group of Black Lesbian and gays working to counteract the reactionary and opportunist forces in the Black community strongly objecting to the Council's policy of Positive Images. This split in the black community was clearly encouraged by the racist "divide and rule" tactics exploited by the Tories and "Parents Rights Group".

Haringey Black Action approached Positive Images with the suggestion of working jointly to mobilise for a national rally and march through Haringey with the themes "Fight the Backlash"; "Lesbians and Gays Fight Back"; Black Lesbians and Gays Fight Back".

Work has begun with a joint committee of eight working to mobilise support in lesbian and gay communities and groups, black and minority ethnic groups and campaigns, labour movement and trade unions, and all the left. The march will demonstrate against the bigoted homophobia and racism mobilising in Haringey and the country.

The fight continues, with the recent news of the formation of a London based group "Londoners for Labour", which is fighting to challenge the Left in the Labour Party. As predicted the failure of Labour to win the Greenwich by-election is being blamed on the hard left candidate Deirdre Wood. Links have already been made to the "loony left" policies such as those of lesbian and gay rights frightening away the electorate.

Locally news has just broken that Rushworth-Smith has stopped his fast. He claims to have stopped to appeal to opponents from ethnic minority groups threatening to take the laws into their own hands to make Haringey reverse their policy — a further example of the racism of the oppostion.

Pressure is mounting both within and outside the Labour Party. We must show the bigots and racists our opposition in full strength and demonstrate to Labour Party members, fearful as an election draws near, their need to stand up for their policy and fight the backlash.

If Haringey capitulates on its positive images policy it will be a loss not only to lesbian and gay campaigns but to all campaigns fighting oppression of minorities. The left must get to its feet and challenge the backlash.

Details of the march and rally can be obtained from Positive Images and Haringey Black Action, c/o Reading Matters, Lymington Ave, London N22.

Why lesbian and gay people want to

Lay down the law!

The Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign (LLGRC) has been launched to fight for an end to the legal oppression of lesbian and gay people. A major conference will be held on May 23rd-24th to begin an intervention in the general election campaign. THERESA CONWAY and JAMIE GOUGH from the Campaign argue why and how you should support it.

"Now that homosexuality is legal..." — "Lesbianism has never been illegal." How often these things are said, and how far they are from the truth!

The 1967 Act which is supposed to have "legalised homosexuality" in fact simply removed penalties from sexual relations between men over 21 under very restricted circumstances. Acts of Parliament and judges' decisions mean that *lesbian and gay sexuality is against "public policy" and "public morality".*

This basic homophobia underlies all dealings of the courts and the police with lesbian and gay people.

The law enshrines discrimination against lesbian and gay people in the right to live with our children, in employment, and in housing. Young lesbian and gay people are often forcibly taken into "care" or "secure care" because of their sexuality. Lesbian and gay organisations, publications, and switchboards are harassed and restricted by laws on "obscenity", "indecency", "corrupting public morals", and "conspiracy".

Public expressions of affection, as well as "propositioning" between lesbians and between gay men are illegal. The police harass and commit violence against openly lesbian and gay people, entrap and blackmail us, and carry out publicity-grabbing witch-hunts.

The law helps to keep lesbian and gay sexuality hidden. It makes social and political organisation by lesbian and gay people difficult, and it makes everyday prejudice and violence against us appear respectable and normal.

With the election of a new Parliament imminent, the time is ripe to demand an end to this legal discrimination. The labour movement at every level must give its whole-hearted support to this campaign. It should ensure that the Labour leadership *fights* the election on the lesbian and gay rights platform agreed by Labour Party conference and speedily *implements* this policy once it is in office.

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights has published its own proposals for changing the law, *Legislaton for lesbian and gay rights*. The pamphlet is very useful for campaigning. Copies can be ordered c/o LLGRC at £1 each (incl. p&p), or take more for sale-or-return.

LLGRC, Room 221, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP
01-833 3860



MODEL RESOLUTION

The Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign has called an open conference on May 23rd-24th at the Camden Centre, London, to campaign for an end to discrimination in law against lesbian and gay people. We recognise that lesbian and gay people are discriminated against in all aspects of life, and in particular by the law and the way in which it is implemented. We therefore support this conference and campaign, and agree to donate £..... .

Calling all Lesbian and Gay People!

The LLGRC has already received suport from a wide range of lesbian and gay organisations. In the lead up to the conference in May, the Campaign is organising discussions among lesbian and gay people about what changes we want in the law. Discussion groups among lesbians, black, elderly, and young lesbian and gay people, and lesbian and gay people with disabilities are meeting or are being set up, as well as local discussion groups. Contact the Campaign for more information. A leaflet addressed to lesbian and gay people is available. Invite a speaker to your lesbian/gay group.

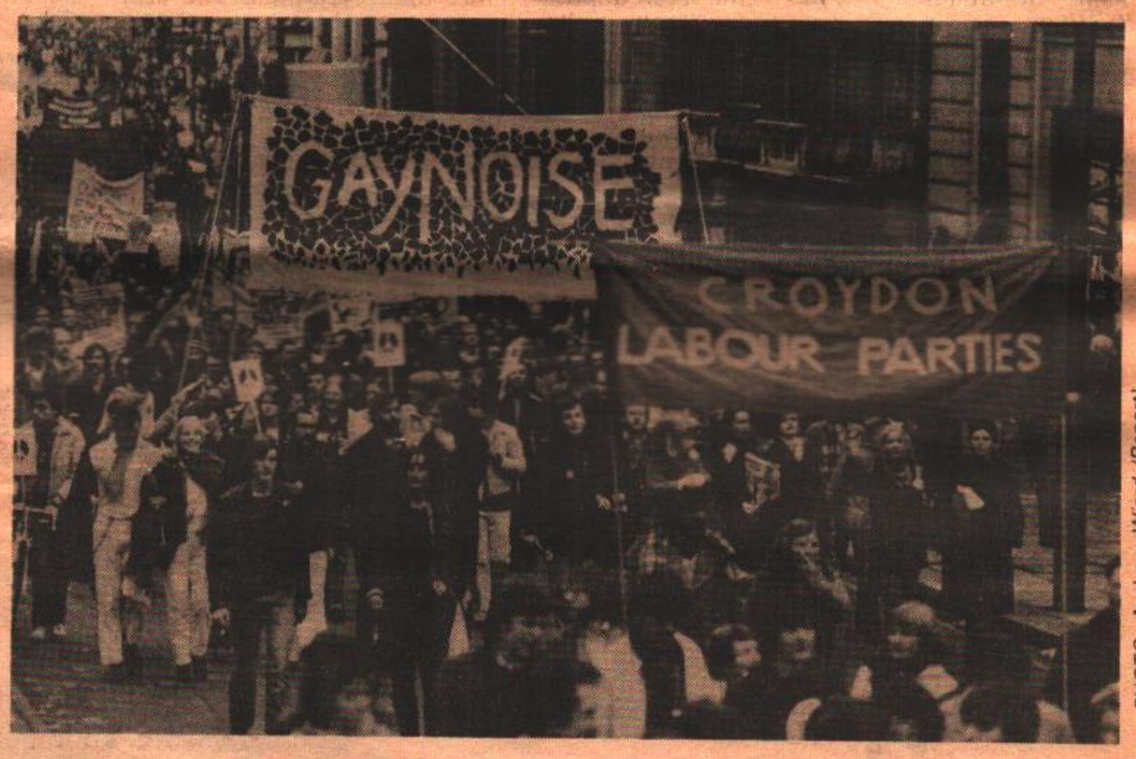


PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Unity of the lesbian and gay movement with the labour movement: CND demo, 1980.

Wombourne 12 - police nil!

Back in December, Bill "Gas the gays" Brownhill (leader of S. Staffs district Council) advocated "the final solution" to deal with AIDS.

He received the support of the Labour Group, whilst the Tories sang "Land of Hope and Glory".

In response, 12 members of the Lesbian and Gay youth movement demonstrated in his garden, and were arrested and viciously attacked by the local police.

After refusing them bail, magistrates dished out instant remands, and they spent the next week, including Christmas, inside. From their cells they set up a defence campaign, and

By Tobie Glennie

on being released began building support.

Public forums were arranged, and weekly meeting took place in London and Nottingham to organise the defence campaign. Other support groups emerged in Wolverhampton, Leicester and Oxford.

The main function of the Defence Campaign was to organise speakers and press coverage, raise money and build for the demo in Wombourne on February 23rd to coincide with the court case).

They spoke at 20 to 30 meetings, distributed a large number of regular bulletins, and raised £500-£600.

The police eventually realised that their case wouldn't stick, and dropped all charges. Nevertheless, the demonstration went ahead, attracting 300 people.

The defendants felt the campaign was a real success, and were really encouraged by the amount of support received. They are keen to use their contacts and information to build a **National Lesbian and Gay Defence Campaign** and those interested in such a project can contact them at: NLGDC, c/o LGYM, BM GYM, London WC1 3XX.

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

Blame our leaders — not the left!

The defeat of Labour in the Greenwich by-election has opened the way for the inevitable process of recriminations within the Party.

As usual, the left is being used as the scapegoat. The Greenwich Party has been accused of choosing a candidate who was on the "loony left", unrepresentative of the Party and of the loyal Labour voters.

The right wing are using his opportunity to step up the witch-hunt against the left, in particular the London Left. The launch of "Londoners for Labour", headed by Brian Nicholson of the T&G leaves little room for doubt as to their intentions — to set in reverse all the gains made for campaigning class politics in London over the past ten years, in effect the brand of politics associated with the name of *London Labour Briefing*.

Another aspect of this campaign is the crude attempt to stir up anti-London feeling in the regional parties. Members of the London Labour Party are being portrayed as a bunch of "loonies" who will lose Labour the election in spite of the efforts of the "sensible", moderate members in other parts of the country.

Certainly there were major problems with the campaign fought in Greenwich. These problems, however, were not the result of a left wing candidate who put off the voters.

Left policies were never put to the people of Greenwich. The problems were the result of a take-over by the central party organisation. Party members in Greenwich were kept well away from the campaign; it was made clear from the start that their role was to be confined to canvassing and pushing leaflets through doors. All the political decisions were made by full-time Party officials who decided that the best approach was to avoid politics altogether and present Deirdre Wood as a "woman with a nice smile" who "understands Greenwich". Not surprisingly, the electors wanted something more than this.

Past experience shows that Labour will run into trouble wherever election campaigns are run on an apolitical basis. Since we are the Party of social change — and the only Party of real social change — we will always be faced with the challenge of confronting the prejudices and assumptions of the status quo if we are to survive. "Agitate! Educate! Organise!" — for us, there is no avoiding such tasks. And if we expect others to come to us, the very first precondition is to show that we believe in our own policies ourselves. The moment the electorate in Greenwich began to sense Labour's lack of confidence in its own messge, the rot began to set in.

Proof that "left wing policies" were not in themselves the problem is the fact that despite everything, the drop in the Labour vote in Greenwich was actually less than the drop in the vote in Knowsley, where the imposed candidate was the eminently "moderate" George Howarth. In Chesterfield, Tony Benn fought a campaign based on socialist policies, run by the local Party, and won the seat against all predictions.

We must not allow the right to pin the blame for electoral defeat on the left, the blame must be firmly placed where it belongs, on them, and on their bankrupt policies.

Now Labour Party policy on the rights of lesbians and gay men, passed by an overwhelming 80% majority at last year's Conference, is being blamed as well. Pat Hewitt's letter, leaked from Kinnock's office, argues that "the gays and lesbians issue is costing us dear amongst the pensioners." Again, the "loony left" are blamed. It is more evidence too that Kinnock wants to drop any policy, including on issues which have the backing of the whole Party, which either the media attacks or which is not immediately popular amongst one of Labour's election "target" groups.

The radical policies adopted by the GLC on oppressed groups did not win huge public support by keeping quiet about them. On the contrary, their policy of dialogue with Sinn Fein, support for the Black community, for women, lesbians and gays, was defended all down the line, both by Livingstone and the majority Labour Group. In blaming the London Labour Left for the Greenwich defeat, Kinnock is trying to cover his own refusal to campaign on Labour Party policy.

The question is a very simple one. Is the Labour Party prepared to defend people against their discrimination or not! Nothing is ever won without fighting for it. That is what the London left have tried to do. Kinnock should do that too. What is he afraid of? Is it so unheard of for us in the Labour Party to *argue our case* — whether with pensioners, with young people, with trade unionists or with anyone else? When have we ever won a victory on any other basis? And doesn't Thatcher in her own way show that it is by believing in a cause and fighting for it that you win? Why won't Kinnock fight for our class with the conviction that Thatcher shows in fighting for hers?

Nor can we expect the working class to support policies which are indistinguishable from the SDP's. Faced with a choice between the SDP and "SDP Mark II", they prefer the real thing, or else they do not vote at all.

It has been said that the trouble with the campaign Labour fought in Greenwich was that it was a right wing campaign with a left wing candidate. This was a symptom of the problem, however, rather than the fundamental problem itself. While the present Party leadership remains in power CLPs will continue to come under pressure to select candidates acceptable to the Tory press — candidates who will run apolitical campaigns resting on the folorn hope of gaining media support. The problem will not be resoved until we have a leadership which understands our own movement's political power, resolves to harness it and knows how to fight back.

Briefing Conference

Socialist Policies for a Labour Victory

Lambeth Town Hall

March 28th -29th

videos Stalls Creche

Opening Plenary
11am-1pm
Eric Heffer MP
Mildred Gordon PPC
Narendra Makanji, Secretary, LP Black Sections

International Affairs
2-4pm
Workshops:
1. Getting Britain out of Ireland
2. NATO, the Warsaw Pact and Non-alignment
3. Breaking links with Apartheid
4. Racism and British Imperialism
Speakers include: Nadine Finch, Jeremy Corbyn, Anita Patel, Jim Boumelha, SWSC.

Economic Strategy
4-6pm
Workshops:
1. Taking over the City
2. What kind of nationalisation?
3. Fighting privatisation
4. Fighting for our economic policy
5. What kind of economic growth?
Speakers include: Andy Porter, Alan Thornett, Jeanette Findlay, Geoff Martin, Phil Hearse.

Evening Social

Social Policy
11am-1pm
1. Devolution and the national question
2. Restoring local democracy
'3. The Tories' police state
4. Tory attacks on the unions
5. "New morality" and the rights of the oppressed
6. Combatting the media
Speakers include: Joan Twelves, Rowland Sheret, Liz Short, Tony Richardson.

Closing Plenary
2-4pm
Speakers include: Joy Hurcombe, PPC John Palmer, Socialist Society Sharon Atkin, PPC Labour Briefing

Registration £2.50 for weekend, £1.50 per day (half price unwaged)
From: Labour Briefing, 51 Musgrove Road, London SE14 5PP.

Trade Union Briefing

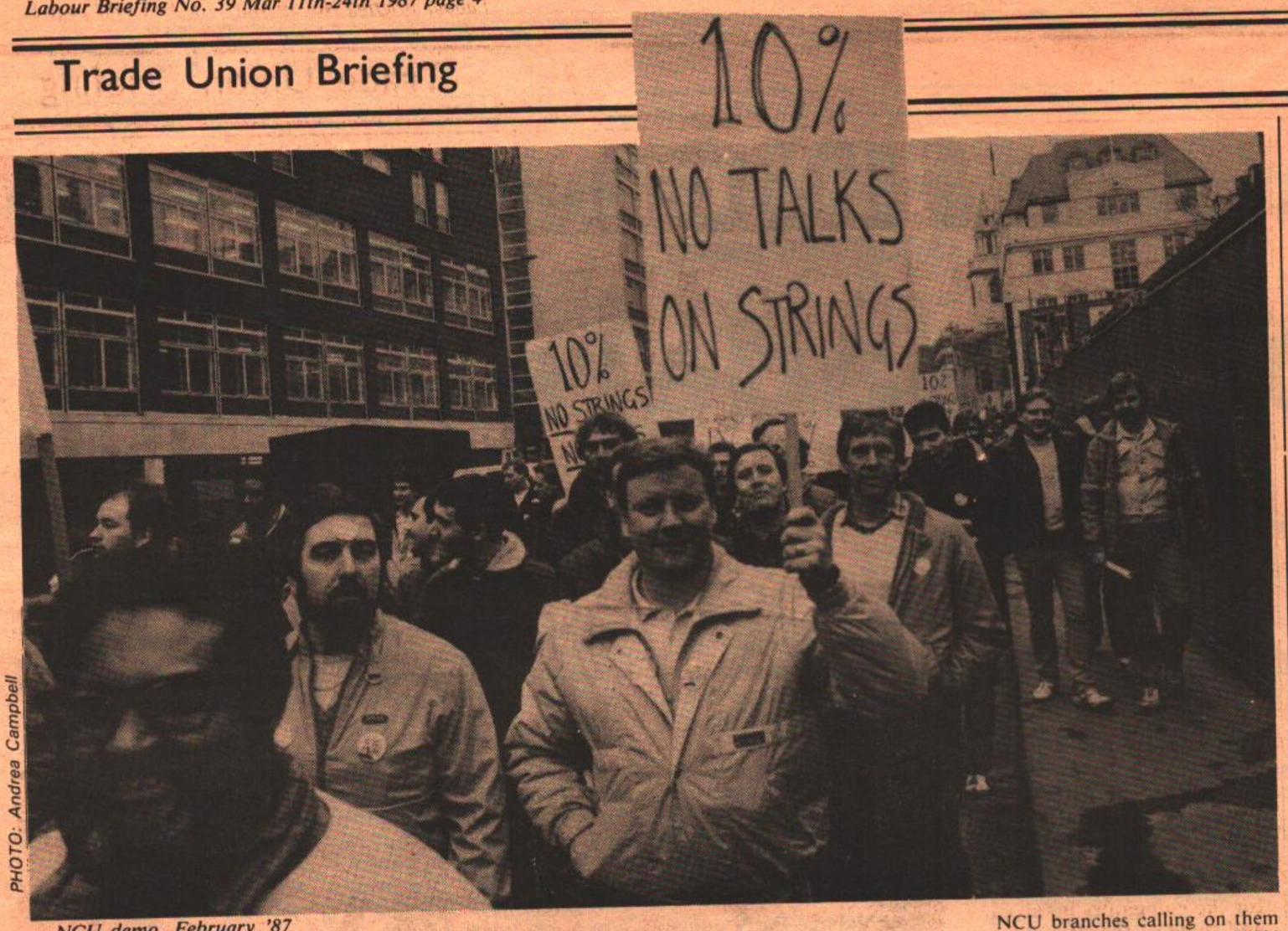


PHOTO: Andrea Campbell

NCU demo, February '87

NCU fights victimisations

BT management in the London City district have suspended 6 officers and members of the NCU London North Central Internal and City branches and charged a further 4 with disciplinary offences arising out of the recent NCU pay strike.

Most of the charges relate to alleged picket line incidents.

One of those charged saw a scab on the train into London and later allegedly said to him "It's a small world" as the scab crossed the picket line. For this he has been charged with "threatening" the scab!

By Pete Cooper
NCU

Another successfully defended himself against a mangement charge, only to be accused a week later of industrial sabotage before the strike.

The four City members who have not been suspended, have been moved from their normal workplaces to the relative backwater of Bermondsey (apologies Bermondsey!). One of them has now been moved out of the City branch area altogether.

Management has physically removed both branch officers from their normal premises.

The fact that all the accused were prominent or active in the strike, and the nature of the charges, clearly indicate that BT is out to weaken the union by victimisation tactics.

Fred Clarke, for example, was picket organiser, and is currently standing for Secretary of the city branch. Similarly John Moynihan of LNCI took a leading role in the strike in London.

Manny Blake, secretary of the City branch, speaking at a Broad Left rally, stated that he believed that BT intend to sack the suspended members, a view shared by other City members. City branch have circulated all NCU branches calling on them to pressurise the NCU leadership to defend these members effectively.

BT clearly wants to intimidate branch officials and union activists in the union as a whole. Furthermore, they want to weaken the union in City District in preparation for inevitable future confrontations, while possibly lulling the rest of the union into a false sense of security — although charges may be in the pipeline in the Westminster District.

Campaign

An active defence campaign across the union is needed. This is not a local matter. A policy of national industrial action in the event of any sackings must be fought for as a central part of the Broad Left campaign for the forthcoming Executive Council elections.

The defence cannot be left to the tender mercies of J. Golding Esq., the NCU general Secretary, who has a few scores to settle on his own account.

Bring down Baker!

By Ken Jones
Socialist Teachers Alliance

Eight years of Tory attacks on the teaching force have now reached a new peak. With the passing of Kenneth Baker's "Pay and conditions" Bill, teachers have now been deprived of the right to negotiate.

Baker has given himself the power to impose settlements, and has abolished negotiating bodies.

His punishment for 2 years of industrial action is sweeteened by short-term pay increases — up to a point some £1,700 *below* the point arrived at in negotiations between teachers and employers. It is accompanied by the imposition of tough new conditions of service: compulsory "cover" for absent staff; a longer working week; assessment; a charter for heads and managers.

Baker aims to create a new kind of teaching force: submissive, unorganised in trade union terms, resigned to greater management control — the kind of teachers who will not present obstacles to the implementation of Tory education policy.

But he's gambling. Gambling that there will be no effective resistance to his plans — hoping that divisions among teachers, and the confusion of their own strategies will allow him an easy run.

His hopes can be proved false. It is essential that teachers *make unworkable* the contract he imposes — by refusing to operate the new conditions. It is important that teachers begin to plan a reopening of their salary campaign. But for these actions to be fully effective they need:

- unity between the two main unions — NUT and NAS/UWT — which are already taking joint protest action;
- support from Labour Councils — which must not act as policing agents for Baker's settlement;
- an attempt to regain the high ground in public debate about schools and education — to win away from Baker the public support he covets.

Baker has claimed that he will bring peace and calm to the schools. He should be shown that anti-trade unionism and injustice are not the way to get it.

Keith Joseph, his predecessor, was brought down by his inability to deal with teachers' demands. For Baker, the same spectre of failure can be made to loom.

Joint NUT/NAS-UWT London strike and rally against Baker: Monday March 16th, 1pm, Kennington Park

CPSA

Politics rears its head!

The "yes" vote in the CPSA political fund ballot was a welcome relief to Broad Left activists who have had a rough time recently.

The result of 57,553 in favour to 21,497 against in a 53% turnout represents a decisive shift in the political consciousness of the Union.

The image of neutral civil servants servicing whoever happens to be in government has been undermined by the attacks mounted on the union by the Tories, but the Broad Left has been instrumental in steering the Union in a clear *political* direction.

By Alastair Wallace
CPSA Broad Left

Labour Party affiliation, which is already CPSA Conference policy, will be one of the central items on the agenda in the coming year, particularly with an approaching General Election.

Ironically, while the political fund ballot has been taking place there have been major political attacks on two of the largest sections of the Union: DHSS and Department of Employment (DE).

The CPSA has been served with injunctions for instructing its members in these departments to take action in support of the unemployed and claimants.

In the DE, the Section Executive Committee (SEC) was served with a writ for sanctioning industrial action against "ethnic monitoring" of claimants, long opposed as racist by the CPSA. Despite severe (some say willful) mishandling of the whole issue by the Kinnockite SEC, all trade unionists should recognise the dire implications of this use of anti-trade union laws.

In the DHSS, the tale is similar. The Broad Left-controlled SEC initiated a campaign of non-co-operation with parts of the new Social Security Act. In the face of the possible escalating of action across the whole of the DHSS, management served an injunction — taken out under *Labour's* 1974 Trade Union Laws (an illustration of the dangers of Labour's current proposals for trade unions, which go far beyond those of 1974).

In both cases, the union has been forced to back down. Action can now only be sanctioned for so-called trade union reasons, such as accommodation problems or danger to staff.

Sharp end

Civil Service workers, along with other public sector employees, have long been at the sharp end of Tory trade union policy. Because they recognise the importance of our role, the Tories have been all too ready to try out their anti-union laws against us.

UCATT democracy campaign

Cracks appear!

We unreservedly carry on our struggle to expose and condemn the ballot riggers and corruption within UCATT and to cleanse our union of this cancerous presence.

We of course also strive to replace present malpractice with healthy democratic organisation.

There are now definite signs that the UCATT General Secretary and Executive Council (EC) are starting to react to the pressure from below.

Some guilt has at last been acknowledged. Scapegoats have been found in order to attempt to cover up the much deeper and poisonous corruption which exists at national, some regional, and local levels within our union.

A two man enquiry team have presented a report to the EC which in essence supports internal union charges against Les Woods, the last Geneal Secretary, for misappropriation of union funds via his acquisition of a new union car just prior to his retirement. What of the people still active in the union, who aided and abetted him in this disgraceful action? We await results!

The Executive Council have agreed to re-run the General Council Election which returned Michael O'Brien as the Eire representative in December 1985. The basis of the re-run is that O'Brien's branch, Limerick, returned a grossly inflated vote for him.

Why has he not been expelled, along with all the others who directly assisted him in this gross deception? Is it because O'Brien and the same Limerick Branch were involved in the now infamous ballot rigging for the UCATT Executive position in December 1984 and March 1985? After ballot rigging was proved, there was a re-run for this position.

If O'Brien was expelled it could quite conceivably lead to his exposing others, more senior than him in the union, for serious malpractices and corruption. O'Brien actually has the affrontery to appeal against the re-run to the UCATT General Council!

Why have none of the other proven ballot riggers and corruptors been expelled by the UCATT EC and General Secretary? Is it because in protecting them the EC and General Secretary are protecting themselves?

Now we find that General Secretary Albert Williams, the Oliver North of UCATT HQ, is refusing point blank to allow publication of the traditional verbatim report of the 1986 UCATT Conference held in Bournemouth.

He has also scrapped an article on the same 1986 Conference, by a respected journalist, which had been commissioned by UCATT for publication in the official union mouthpiece *Viewpoint*.

The basis, we hear, for scrapping the verbatim report and the article is that both of these honestly reflected the widespread criticism, and sometimes outright condemnation, of the General Secretary and the Executive Council!

We have a Dictator as a General Secretary. We have an Executive Council who, it is now obvious, condone and may even orchestrate ballot rigging and corruption within our union.

By The Building Worker Group

But, thankfully, we also have individuals and groups of members in UCATT who are not prepared to let things rest until *all* the corruptors are swept out of UCATT.

The campaign for UCATT democracy took another step forward at the London meeting on February 14th. A very politically and industrially representative group of UCATT members debated and then voted unanimously for a UCATTT Democracy Campaign to be built around these four basic demands:

- the *expulsion* of *all* ballot riggers and their supporters;
- for a national *lay* leadership as opposed to the present five full-timers in the executive;
- for an *annual delegate conference* as opposed to the present once every two year affairs; conference to be the *only* body with the authority to change the rules of the union;
- for the complete *restoration* of all his rights as a UCATT member to Dominic Helier.

We ask all UCATT members who read *Labour Briefing* to take the campaign for UCATT democracy and these demands into the union. We ask all the Labour Party members to take the campaign into the heart of the Labour Party itself. The campaign must be political as well as industrial. *All* the present members of the UCATT EC are in the Labour Party as are the General and Assistant General Secretary!

While Eric Heffer, a decent MP and UCATT member, was being voted off the Labour Party NEC, Jack Rogers, a corrupt member of the UCATT EC was being voted on.

We ask all trades unionists who read *Labour Briefing* to take the campaign for Democracy into the TUC. How can we Building Workers — or the working class itself — rely on Albert Williams & Co., who sit on the TUC Construction Committee, to even begin to represent our interests?

How can we begin to tackle the deaths, on average, of over *150* buildig workers every year in so-called site accidents? Murder in the name of profit we call it!

How can we tackle the needs of millions of working class people living in sub-standard housing? Not to mention the members of our class who have no homes at all? How can we possibly fight the blacklist, the *gangsterism*, the mass unemployment which is endemic in our industry today?

How can we fight all of these things with a General Secretaryship and Executive Council who are so obviously corrupt?

How much longer can these people be allowed to remain within the Labour Party and the trades union movement? Imagine how long they'd have been allowed to stay if they'd been on the revolutionary left!

Hangers celebrate in the courts!

On February 19th, FTAT and TASS solicitors obtained a deferment in the Law Courts over injunctions issued by BTR against the two unions and 45 of the sacked limbmakers, preventing them demonstrating at Vincent Square, BTR's headquarters.

By Kathy Pick
Wandsworth councillor
Putney CLP

Over the past 15 days, charges had been withdrawn against 42 of the men. However, Les Gould, Steve Blease, Graham Croucher and the unions were still cited.

On Friday March 6th the judge threw the case out and ordered BTR to pay the costs. The men felt quite victorious indeed.

Dave Christmas of the disputes committee, who attended the proceedings and had in fact obtained a sworn affidavit to present in court, said he was very pleased that it was never needed. He believed that the sacked workers and the unions had been vindicated by the Law Courts.

There's been small support from the Parliamentary Labour Party. Michael Meacher came down to Roehampton on March 2nd to visit the sacked workers, but only stayed for five minutes.

The effect on disabled patients must be disastrous but information is being suppressed nationally. In Wandsworth, a local social worker has disclosed that there are several cases of people awaiting limbs who are now severely depressed over the situation. One patient is in hospital and attempted suicide recently. Names obviously can't be revealed, but members of the local Labour Group will press for numbers to be made public.

Kelly's in Dundee, another Hanger's branch, has been visited by Roehampton strikers and they are finally agreeing to cut down on overtime work.

The Women's Support Group met recently and several events are planned. There will be a jumble sale on March 21st (the last one raised £450!) and a May Day social for the sacked workers and their families. The women will visit local Tory MP, David Mellor, in his surgery on March 14th and plan to participate with their families in the Hands Across Britain event.

Meanwhile, Company Director Dr Hiddlestone has said categorically that there will be no more offers made to the sacked workers.

Please send messages of support and/or financial support for the sacked workers and their families to TASS, c/o Steve Blease, 520 London Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 4VQ.



NHS TENDERING

Fighting the new monopolies

The Tories have withdrawn the threat of immediate legislation to force councils to privatise their services; but the pressure to privatise remains, as Councils face budget crises — and the Tory lesgislation is postponed, not cancelled.

In the second part of a feature on privatisation of NHS services, JOHN LISTER looks at the reality of "competitive" tendering for the companies involved, and some of the struggles against it.

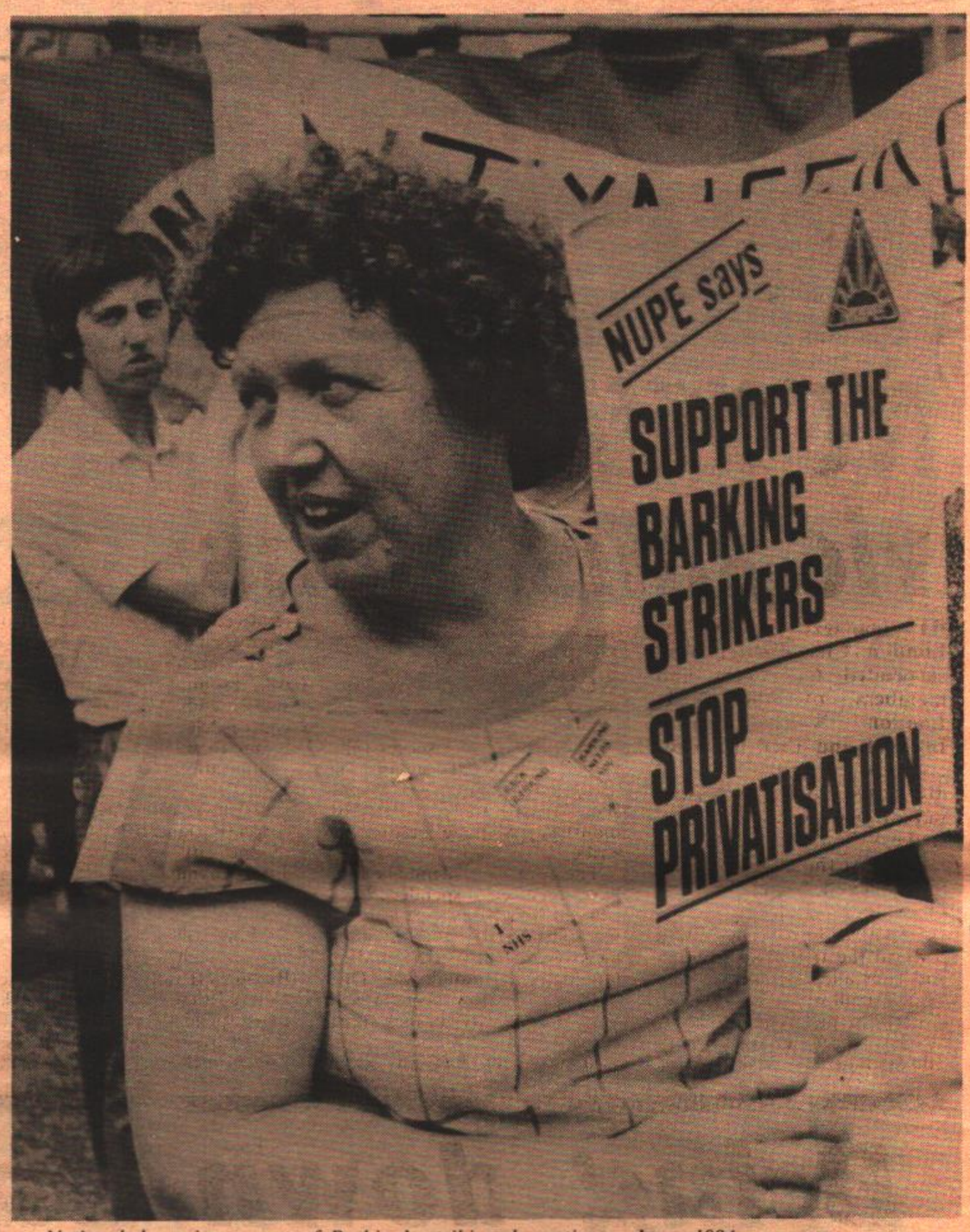


PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

National demo in support of Barking's striking domestics — June, 1984.

Gloomy contractors hit the skids

Matters have changed dramatically since the heady days of Spring 1985 when *Reflections* (newsletter of the private contractors' organisation, the CCMA) was boldly headlined "We Are Winning" and went on to assert:

"*We are currently winning over 75% of the competitive tenders in the NHS, which is well above our previous expectations. And there is no indication that this ratio will decline.*"

But in the last year, more and more CCMA member firms have run into financial problems, and others have begun to withdraw from tendering. A mere half-dozen of the CCMA's 46 founder companies have between them cornered the lion's share of all NHS contracts awarded.

Two of the original fancied front-runners — Crothalls and OCS — suffered badly as a result of discrediting strikes at Barking and Addenbrookes Hospitals, followed by further embarrassing revelations about their standards of cleaning.

OCS has now withdrawn from NHS tendering, while Crothalls lost their Maidstone DHA contract, failed to win renewal of their prestige New East Surrey Hospital contract, faced fines, penalties, and angry NHS management in Croydon, Riverside, East Birmingham and South Warwickshire; and lost out to a much dearer in-house tender in West Suffolk. Losses on Crothalls' NHS operations were a major factor in an overall deficit notched up by the parent company, Pritchards.

As a result, Pritchard/Crothall has now been taken over by the Hawley Group, which has also bought up the Home Counties Cleaning Group. Hawley entered NHS cleaning in 1983, setting up a subsidiary, Mediclean, specifically to take advantage of the government's privatisation programme.

In early tendering, Mediclean established itself as the market leader, managing to scoop the lion's share of private contracts, including a number of large London hospitals (St Helier, Hammersmith, St George's, St James's, and Ealing).

Meanwhile, the less profitable Brengreen Group, which owns Exclusive (another NHS contract cleaning operation) has been swallowed up by the BET combine which already owned Initial and ICC.

Hawley and BET — both multinational corporations — now dominate public sector contract cleaning in Britain. Others, like Reckitts, Blue Arrow, and Sunlight, along with catering market leaders Spinneys, have pulled out of tendering. In only three years, "competitive tendering" has been reduced to a near-monopoly carve-up.

Patients pay the price

While standards of basic hygiene collapse in hospital wards, and patients are denied the friendly attention and extra care traditionally given by NHS domestics, the experienced NHS ancillary workforce is being broken up under the hammer blows of wage cuts, cruel unpaid increases in work effort, redundancies, and a wholesale demolition of the conditions painfully established by health unions over the years.

Both under private firms, who rely upon the exploitation of part-time staff, 75% of whom work less than the 16 hours a week which would offer them legal protection, sickness, holiday, and pension benefits; and under new "in-house tenders" which slash hours, jobs, and bonuses, and increase workload, staff turnover is increasing to the levels of fast-food joints.

It is important to recognise that these low-paid jobs are traditionally held by women, and in many areas these are overwhelmingly women from ethnic minorities. Reduced job opportunities and heavy cuts in wage levels for fewer hours of work will have a severe impact upon these women.

Clearly this does not disturb managements such as those at NE Thames, whose Strategic Plan cynically points out that:

"*The number of the unemployed appears set to remain high for some years to come, especially amongst the unskilled. A shortage of ancillary staff is therefore most unlikely.*"

The NHS experience will be used by the Tories and the employers in their attempts to tighten the noose on local government services.

Had the early strikes against NHS privatisation — especially the 18-month struggle by the Barking Hospital women (which NUPE's Rodney Bickerstaffe once rashly described as "Our Cortonwood") — been given the kind of national support that was needed (and called for by NUPE's 1984 Conference), the picture might have been very different. Even with limited support, Crothall and OCS found it impossible to recover from the impact of the tenacious strikes at Barking and Addenbrookes Hospitals.

The women who struck for months at Scarsdale Hospital and argued that the ICC tender was unworkable have been vindicated, and the firm removed after one yar; the women who staged a strike against competitive tendering at Oxford's Littlemore Hospital succeeded in defending their jobs and services. The rolling strike promoted by local leaders of both NUPE and COHSE in Sunderland forced the local health authority to halt its tendering programme.

In contrast, wherever privatisation has *not* been fought, it has rolled in, crushing jobs, conditions, and union organisation as well as patient care. 34,000 full-time jobs lost since 1983 amounts to probably double that number of part-timers out of work.

"In-house" tenders, compiled in many cases with union collaboration, have also take a savage toll of jobs, and can be just as destructive for union organisation — producing such rapid turnover of demoralised part time staff that there is no time to recruit them to a union before they leave!

Councils have to be forced to take a stand against this kind of thing in local government. This means that unions have to prepare for action: learn the lessons of the NHS setbacks, and this time come out fighting on all fronts!

Ridley retreats from tender spot

Laws to force local councils to put a wide range of services out to competitive tender have been shelved by Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley until after the next election.

Ridley claimed technical delays in drafting the legislation as the reason for his decision to hold back on the shake-up, which could axe tens of thousands of jobs in services presently costing £2.5 billion each year.

But it is known that many Tory councils are far from enthusiastic about the proposals.

Similar requirements have led to a series of disasters and an overall drop in standards when applied to NHS ancillary services.

The local government legislation was designed to enforce a more rigid system of tendering upon elected councils than has so far been imposed upon over 200 non-elected health authorities.

While health ministers have cajoled and arm-twisted their appointees into carrying through competitive tendering, a steadily declining proportion of the NHS contracts have gone to private firms — many of them subsequently producing embarrassing scandals.

By Harry Sloan

The private contractors have squealed long and loud that they have been let down by the government, and want the goalposts moved *again* in their favour.

The local government legislation sought to achieve this by compelling councils to accept the lowest tender — and by artificially tipping the odds against any tender from the existing "in-house" staff.

But while it offered rich pickings to the two main monopoly firms now tendering for public sector cleaning contracts this form of "cowboys charter" offered little attraction for local councillors. Unlike the stooges who sit on health authorities, councillors are periodically forced to stand for election and have to account for the level and quality of service they provide.

Ridley's postponement of the legislation is no thanks to the feeble union campaigns that had barely got off the ground — and should not lead to any relaxation among the public sector unions.

It is likely in the short run to redouble the efforts to bring private firms into the remaining NHS contracts. It will also lead to even more sustained lobbying of Tory councillors, in preparation for a renewed onslaught if Thatcher wins re-election.

Youth Briefing: LPYS

Black Sections stand for YS NEC place

Like last year the Black Sections are standing a candidate for the YS's NEC position. We reprint here then initial statement of their candidate, STEVE JOMOA.

I'm standing to inject into a sterile YS leadership an infusion of mass campaigning, radical policies rooted in the most militant section of the working class, black youth.

Black youth have clearly demonstrated their anger against the oppressive capitalist state. From the uprisings in Tottenham we have seen them come under the brutal force of the state, facing heavy sentences, in some cases 8 years for throwing stones. These issue the YS should take up now. (Last year they didn't. London YS conference voted down resolutions for black self-organisation and support for self-defence campaigns.)

Black youth in struggle identify with the rising militancy in Azania. Our policy on Azania is anti-imperialist, revolving around the national question, the fight for land and freedom. We should support all liberation struggles and independent trade unions in Azania. It will be the black masses who liberate themselves. It is not for Britain to decide how, when or where.

The same applies to Ireland. We are for immediate British withdrawal and self-determination for the Irish. There is a parallel between Irish and black people's struggles. The YS leadership doesn't support such liberation struggles whether in Central America, Azania, Ireland, or Palestine.

Race attacks on our community have increased, often resulting in injury or murder. Trevor Ferguson, for example, was a black youth blinded by 20 white youths in Newham. Newham Black Sections supported the picket of Newham police station and gave active solidarity to the campaign. Where was the YS leadership?

Police are an aggressive, paramilitary force. They use seige-like tactics, invading black communities like the Broadwater Farm estate. "Sus " is being reintroduced through the back door. Black youth, already hammered by unemployment, are harassed by stop and search tactics. We call for the democratic control of the police and elimination of the fascist element.

Finally, the "Black and Asian Advisory Committee", BAAC. A neo-colonialist body, white race experts advise on issues concerning black people. Linda Douglas, the YS NEC representative, should resign her seat on the BAAC immediately. It is purely tokenistic and an example of the divide and rule tactics of Labour's right-wing leadership.

Black Sections represent a demand for political power coming out of our community's struggles. Black people have organised defence campaigns and demonstrations for years. Black Sections are about developing a national framework for these struggles so that the experiences and skills can be fed in to benefit the whole movement.

YOUTH BRIEFING

For details of Youth Briefing meetings contact Fran Rayner, Flat 7, 35 Maresfield Gdns, London NW3 (01-431 0357)

STUDENT BRIEFING

For details of Student Briefing meetings contact Patrick Baker, 6, Clissold Court, Greenway Close, Green Lanes, Stoke Newington, London N4. (01-802 9097)

Briefing Youth
RAFFLE
Prizes include:
Bottle of whisky
Trotsky photograph book
Tickets 20p
from Fran Rayner
(01 431 0357)
and at *Briefing* events
Draw at LPYS conference

YS Regional Conference round-up

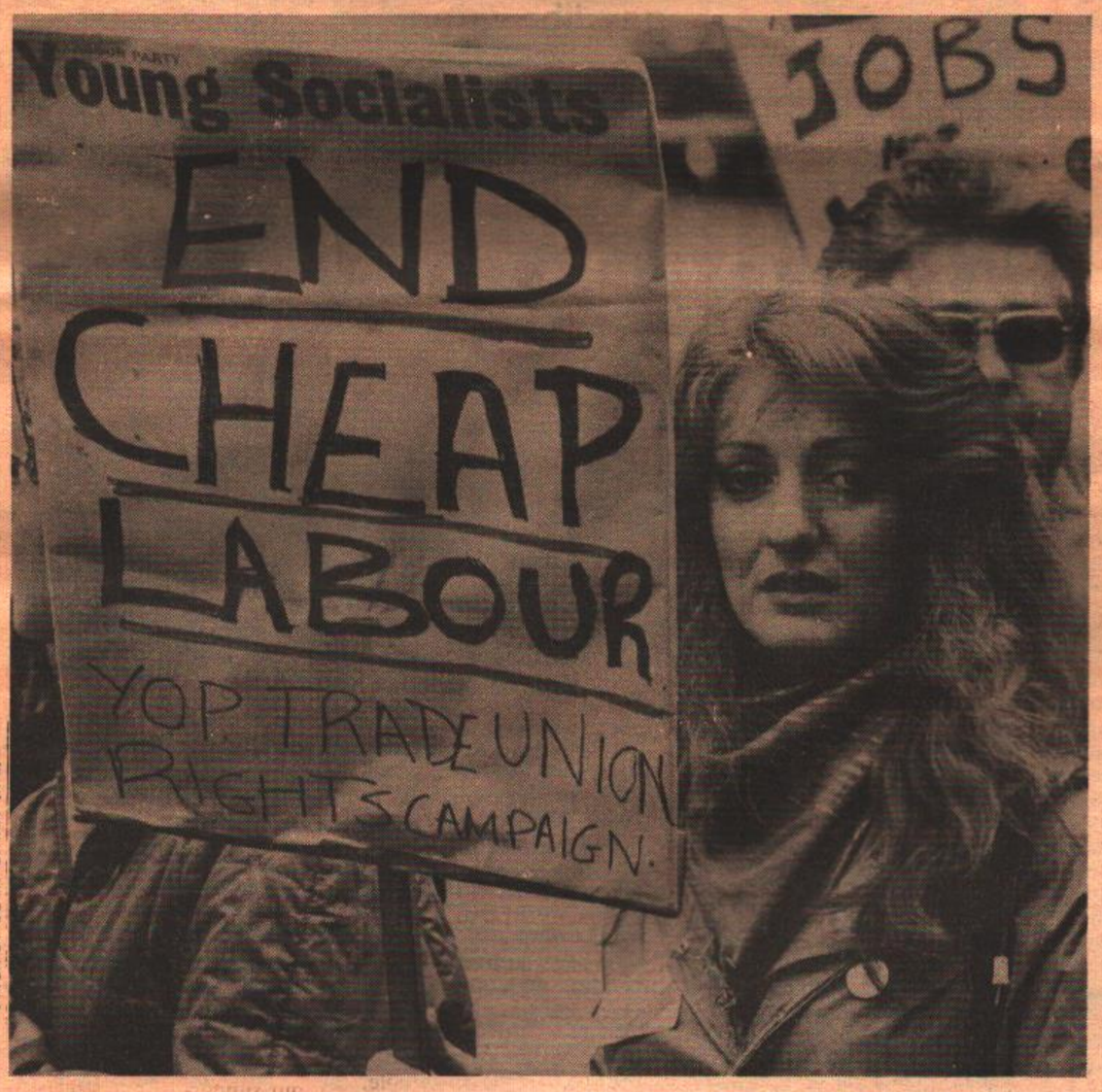


PHOTO: John Smith (IFL)

1982 "Trade union rights for YOPS' march: since then, the LPYS has shrunk.

West Midlands Region

The YS leadership seemed pleased that this Conference, under attack before it had even begun, was cut back to a one day event.

It meant they could go and canvass for a nice Euro MP instead of talking about boring things like the witch-hunt.

This major discussion was rushed through in the afternoon, because they'd spent the *entire* morning on South Africa — an important discussion, but not necessarily advanced by an extended contribution on the leadership's line by a speaker form SOLSAY (Socialist Links with South African Youth, which I'd never heard of before).

When Sparkbrook YS, sponsoring a South African resolution, refused to accept an amendment which would have counterposed work in the YS to work in the AAM, the Regional Committee called for a vote against the resolutions — hardly the way to build socialist links.

Most worthy of note are the things that didn't happen —

By Chloe Hood
Sparkbrook LPYS

no discussion on women's issues, black people or lesbian and gay rights. The one resolution on women, under the heading of Economic policy, fell because no one turned up to move it.

Mark Meredith, moving an anti-witch-hunt resolution from Ladywood YS (controlled by the leadership), said "Comrades (sic), the first thing we have to recognise about the Sawyer proposals is that in some ways they're very progressive, even though it's a blatant witch-hunt." The fact that it's a *progressive* witch-hunt made us all feel much better...

Under his leadership the regional YS has been reduced to a conference of 50 people, 20 of whom were delegates. He was elected unopposed to the YS National Committee.

Following the Conference, there was an evening social. I can't tell you about it, because I decided I'd like to have a good time. I stayed at home and watched the telly.

Eastern Region

In Yarmouth (miles from anywhere) *Briefing* supporters were the main opposition to the YS leadership.

The central issue before conference — the Sawyer proposals — was the subject of a fringe meeting on the Saturday night, at which *Youth Briefing* had a speaker.

Youth Fightback's speaker left before the fringe meeting began, so we could not discuss Youth Fightback's position ("Drive *Militant* into the sea" — which isn't very helpful in fighting a witch-hunt!). However, we were able to discuss with *Militant*, and to hear the views of other people too.

Militant argued that the LPYS should take part in the NEC consultation process, accepting, with some modifications, all the rule changes except the reduction of the age limit to 21.

Thus they accept that the NEC has the right to impose restructuring on the LPYS.

By Diana Paton
Watford Central LPYS

They refer to "the opportunity" for the LPYS to get what it has been wanting for years (e.g. involvement of Trade Union youth), missing the point that the proposals as whole are an attack on the YS. The statement from the regional youth committee did not even say that the proposals are an attack.

The debate on youth organisation was mainly taken up with replying to the points *Briefing* made. The *Militant* obviously took these points seriously, trying to answer us and not just insult us (although we were told we are ostriches for opposing the consultation process!).

Even if *Militant* won the vote at the end of the day, *Briefing youth* managed to convince many of the people there of the importance of building a broad-based campaign to defend the YS and fight the witch-hunt.

Southern Region

The Sawyer proposals dominated this year's Southern Region LPYS conference.

The *Militant* leadership of the LPYS put a lot of effort into ensuring that LPYS branches supporting their line attended the conference.

Despite a regional drop from 57 LPYS brances to 46, the number of branches voting at the conference went up from 24 to 31. There were fewer opposition branches this year and no witch-hunting branches at all.

There were a number of guest speakers including Eric Heffer, Dennis Skinner, two sacked NGA workers and a striker from Wheeler's restaurant. The conference

By Jon Green

debated a wide range of issues, but most time was given over to the Sawyer proposals.

This part of the conference was stage-managed as a morale boost to the rank and file.

A speech from the Vice Chair of the LPYS, was followed by a tape of the youth debate at Labour Party conference. Then the proposals were discussed with some of the best speeches of the weekend defending the record of the LPYS.

The debate was inspiring, but there was a big contradiction in what the delegates said and what the LPYS is actually doing to defeat the proposals.

The statement passed by the conference says "we welcome the discussion currently underway in the Party and the wider labour movement on improving youth organisations." But, as many delegates pointed out, the purpose of the Sawyer proposals is to "tame the youth movement."

The problem is that *Militant* want to take part in the consultation process set up by Sawyer. But the consultation process is the mechanism being used by the leadership of the Labour Party to smash the LPYS as it now is, and should be rejected by the LPYS and all those opposed to witch-hunts.

The LPYS must fight the Sawyer proposals if it wants to keep its autonomy.

Soci what

The dayschool aims to be a campaigning and organising forum.

Young people need to get together to discuss the vicious and far-reaching attacks of recent months on abortion rights, the kind of sex education taught in schools and Labour council initiatives on lesbian and gay rights.

We want to understand what we're up against so we can fight back against it.

More fundamentally, we want to discuss what sexuality has to do with the workings of power in capitalist society, by including workshops on women at work and on socialist feminism. We want to know what kind of socialist feminism young women are creating.

Historically, what has always distinguished socialist feminism is a totalising view of capitalist society. Socialist feminists like Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai have been concerned with questions of imperialism, fascism and revolution itself.

At first sight it might seem as if young women today are forced to take a more fragmented view of society. Their political experience has



Gay pride demo, 1977: this an

★ Fight the witch-hunt! ★

alist feminism — t's it to us?

By Fran Rayner
Youth Briefing

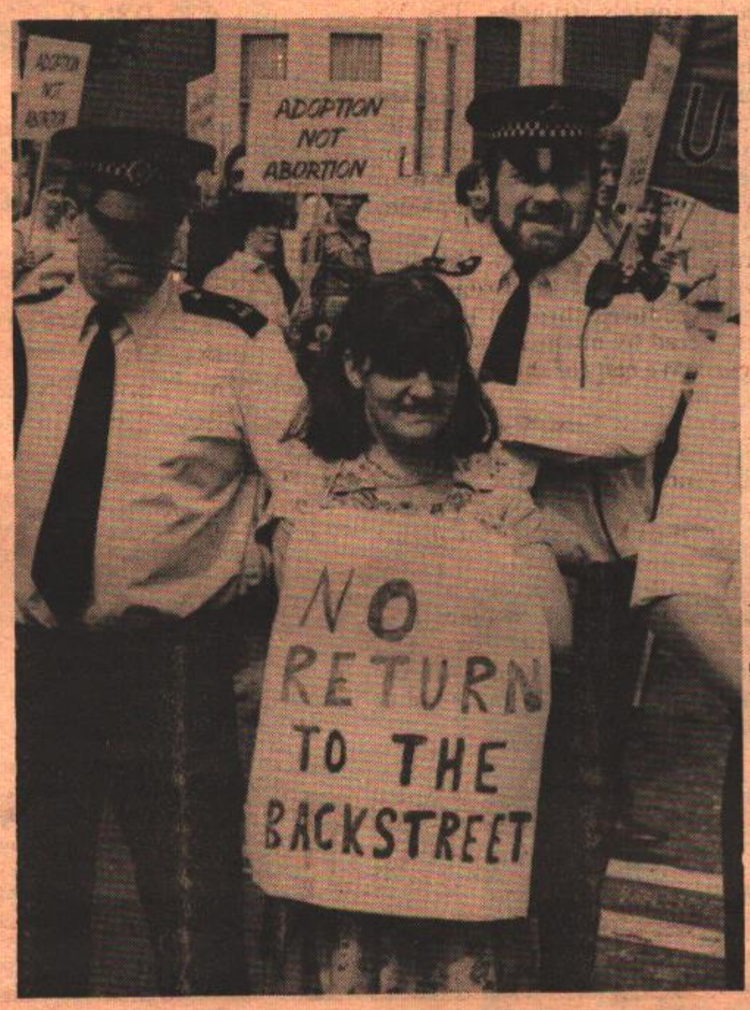


PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

One of the counter-demonstrators at a 1983 SPUC march: "If that cop behind me doesn't stop eyeing me up, I'm going to turn round and knee him in the groin..."

been during a slump, during a period when the left is small.

Their experience of work is of part-time, temporary, low- "training" schemes or unemployment. Young women are growing up with their sexuality strictly controlled.

Yet socialist feminism can still provide us with that universal view of our society. We have always believed that questions of abortion and violence against women are social questions rather than individual ones. We have an analysis of the family which not only tries to explain how domestic violence happens, but also how the role young women play in the family conditions the type of jobs which they are crowded into.

Our complaints against the pitiful sex education taught in schools are part of complaints against the class expectations of the education system.

We want the socialist feminist movement to respond to the particular problems of young women in its outlook and organisation, but we firmly believe that socialist feminism is a key tool in our contemporary political practice.

YOUTH BRIEFING

DAYSCHOOL on SEXUALITY March 21st Polytechnic of Central London

(Marylebone Road site, Baker St opposite Baker St tube station)

Following the success of the last dayschool held by *Briefing Youth* on international issues, we are organising a further dayschool to discuss various issues relating to women's liberation and lesbian and gay liberation.

Further details from Fran Rayner, Flat 7, 35 Maresfield Gdns, London NW3. (01-431 0357)

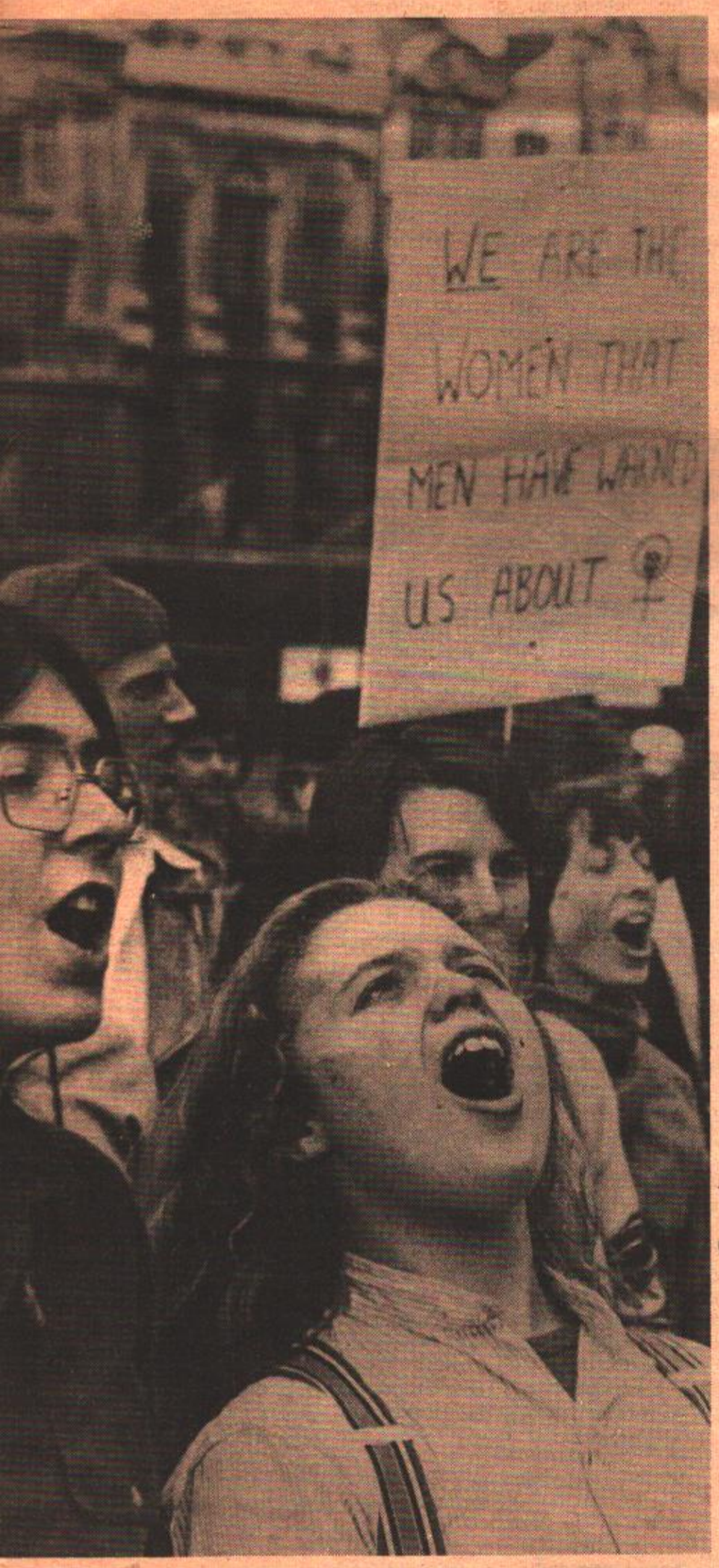


PHOTO: John Sturrock (Report)

ual march has been the main focus for lesbian and gay visibility.

Developing positive images

JANE CONNOR, for *Youth Briefing*, spoke to Maureen, who works on Haringey Council's Lesbian and Gay Youth Project.

***Jane:* Can you tell me briefly about the Project and its aims?**
Maureen: The Project is funded by Haringey Council and was set up in November. We aim to identify the needs of young lesbians and gay men and to make contact with them — that's the hard part, as there's nowhere in the Borough for lesbian and gay youth to meet.

As it's a development project, we're very pushed for time.

***Jane:* What kind of pressures do you come under as an out lesbian youth worker — and as a young lesbian yourself?**
Maureen: Well, not everybody who works for the Council is exactly committed to the aims of the project. When I'm introduced to other workers, it's always "This is Maureen, she's a lesbian outreach worker."

People's faces fall to the floor and they don't say anything, just sit and nod their heads. I think people try to make me invisible.

Now there are two other workers — a Black lesbian and a Greek Cypriot man, so we're even more threatening because it raises the issue of race as well. As a gay man, Kyriacos has been targetted by sections of the community as a so-called AIDS carrier, and he's had the hardest time.

***Jane:* How do you think the Project relates to Haringey Council's "Positive Images" initiative?**
Maureen: It's such a "hot topic" here at the moment that for those young people to come out and to contact us is very hard.

At the moment we're setting up a lesbian and gay youth event, because we feel that it's the best way to open the door to these young people and find out their needs. We are having to be a bit discreet about where it is and when it is because of the backlash from the Parents' Rights Group and the New Patriotic Movement.

We're constantly worried by all the shit that's flying around, and we don't want the event disrupted. It's going to be an evening event, with theatre, music, discussions. We hope it's a way of breaking down the isolation that young lesbians and gays experience.

DEMONSTRATE!
Sat May 2
Details from Positive Images or Haringey Black Action, c/o Reading Matters, Lymington Ave, London N22.
POSITIVE IMAGES and Haringey Black Action

***Jane:* Do you think that within the Council there's any conflict of priorities? Clearly there are some Councillors who are pushing the issue of race — saying that because Black people in Haringey are the most oppressed, they should get most resources. How do you think we can challenge those ideas?**
Maureen: It is being challenged by the setting up of groups like Haringey Black Action, Positive Images, and Lesbians and Gays in Education. These groups show that lesbians and gays come from all backgounds, cultures, histories.

It's a long fight and Haringey still has a long way to go in developing its equal opportunities policies, particularly for young people.

ILEA has a long history — though not long enough — of lesbian and gay youth work. For instance, ILEA funds 13 lesbian and gay youth groups and is now producing a very comprehensive fact pack. It has lesbian and gay youth workers — that's the kind of thing we'd like to see in Haringey. Information isn't available in our youth clubs and community centres so lesbian and gay youth remain frighteningly isolated.

One of the main aims of the Project is to make sure that relevant information *is* available, and that there is provision for lesbian and gay youth, much more than the one night at one youth club that's currently on offer.

We need "positive images" in the youth clubs to confront the homphobia and AIDS hysteria that exists.

***Jane:* What is "Positive Images" as a campaign planning to do next?**
Maureen: We need a show of our support on the streets to counteract the PRG and New Patriotic Movment so we're organising a rally and demonstration on May 2nd jointly with Haringey Black Action. We're also holding a public meeting on March 16th in Wood Green.

***Jane:* What next for the Project?**
Maureen: We're looking to the Council to continue funding the Project, which I'm pretty optimistic about, to set up a base where young people can go and get advice, hold meetings, set up our own groups. We can't let positive images just start and end in the schools.

If you are a young lesbian or gay man and want more detail abut the lesbian and gay youth event, contact Maureen, Coleen, or Kyriacos on 881 300 ext. 3106.
"Positive Images" can be contacted c/o Reading Matters, Lymington Avenue, Wood Green, London N22.

Building Briefing

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Letters

We welcome letters on any subject — whether in reply to any of our articles or starting something new.
Write to *Labour Briefing*, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.

Threats to football

Dear *Briefing*,

Whilst watching the recent live game between Wimbledon and Everton (described by that obnoxious commentator, John Motson, as "the Bank of England visits the corner shop"), I thought it would be a good idea to compare Wimbeldon's problems with their "owner", Sam Hamman, and our experience fighting the wilder excesses of Robert Maxwell at Oxford United.

Apart from anything else, I thought it was "illegal" for one person/company to have a controlling interest in more than one Football League club. Obviously we have been overtaken by events in South London and I expect you've invited the London Football Supporters' Association to contribute.

It is true that Oxford United wouldn't be in the First Division without Robert Maxwell but he's only interested in personal publicity and re-developing the Manor Ground. Before the "Thames Valley Royals" fiasco, Maxwell manipulated the fans into helping him blackmail the City Council (Andrew Smith called his bluff) and he still periodically threatens to close the club or leave Oxford. The meteoric rise of Wimbledon F.C. (they were in the Southern League ten years ago) has left them open to even greater capitalist exploitation and taken the footballers away from the community.

Maxwell's former manager, Jim Smith, and his new employers, Queen's Park Rangers, have been taken over by Marler Estates (whose influence spreads a lot further than South London). Fulham F.C., whose ground, Craven Cottage (good views of the Varsity Boat Race!), is also a prime development site, may disappear next season. Gordon Taylor, secretary of the Professional Footballers' Association, has described it as "asset strippers vs the rest" and called on Local Authorities to support their clubs (at one stage we tried to persuade the City Council to buy Oxford United). The sympathetic words of Hammersmith & Fulham council must be turned into community action. After all, it's the fans who made the clubs — don't let them die!

Andy Gibbons
Oxford

Whose anonymity?

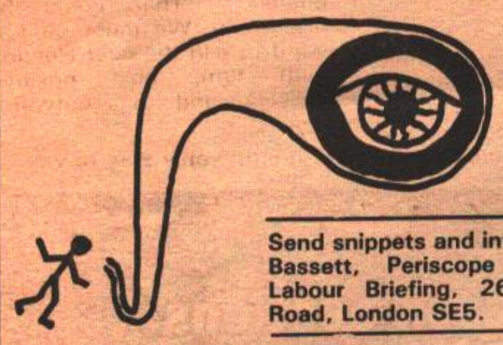
Dear Mr or Ms,

Your article on rape on page 3 of your Feb 11-24th edition quite rightly asks for "complete anonymity for rape victims". Alongside it you print a photo of a person holding a banner naming a person who from the context is either the Ealing victim or another one.

Could you please justify your conduct? Or are you not keeping to the code you yourselves advocate?

Yours sincerely,
Vivian Cook
Colchester, Essex

Periscope



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

Mean time for sectarians

Sectarian leftists all over the country wil be staring in frustration at computer calculations of the electoral swing in Greenwich. It is not **Deirdre Wood's** defeat that will disappoint them so much as the massacre of **Kate Marshall**.

Ears had pricked up in many a headbanging sect after the RCP won a surprising 600 votes in the **Knowsley North** by-election.

Could this small beginning really herald the start of the long-awaited mass break from the politics of social democracy?

No. The RCP vote was simply an angry backlash against Kinnock's hamfisted imposition of Spitting Image reject **George Howarth** as candidate.

Sectarian dreams have been ruptured like cut-price condoms in the Greenwich by-election, where the laws of political gravity reasserted themselves.

Without Kinnock's help, the RCP candidate, General Secretary **Kate Marshall**, fared poorly. Her 91 votes — about the number that any named donkey might attract among incompetent voters — placed her bottom of the poll, trailing some 25% behind the **Monster Raving Loony "Rainbow Alliance"** candidate.

Will ultra-leftists still determined to avoid any real fight within the actual workers' movement now decide to give the elbow to those feeble imitators, the RCP, and form a common front with the *real* Monster Raving Loonies?

Missionary Position

"Don't mess with the missionary man," is sound advice from the current **Eurythmics** hit single.

This warning should have come sooner for the Oxford woman student who was forced to battle through successive courts to uphold her right to an abortion, after being unfortunate enough to have sex with a closest nut. Obviously not a history student, he hadn't realised that the notion that women were the property of their menfolk, to do with as they pleased, had died out.

As a result of this case, yet another embarrassing queston must be added to the catalogue of interrogation necessary before hanky-panky can safely take place in the Anxious Eighties.

In addition to the awkward, preliminary enquiries in regard to herpes, AIDS, chairmanship of the Tory Party, and stocks of condoms, a more detailed theological probing is now clearly necessary — to eliminate the risks carried by the more virulent varieties of sky-pilots and Bible-bashers.

Even those carrying a current issue of *Briefing*, open at the Periscope column, cannot be taken as necessarily bona fide "right-on" partners, since the paper may have been borrowed or even stolen as a deliberate cover by knowledgeable chauvinists.

For readers to weary to carry out the exhaustive pre-sex checks now required, the temptation to use a condom *instead of* a male partner may well prove irresistable.

As one former lay activist told *Briefing*:

"The advantage of masturbation is that you don't have to talk to anyone — or fight any injunctions — afterwards."

Currie-ing favour?

One journal for Yuppie wankers who don't mind *who* they talk to before *or* afterwards is *(Armchair) Marxism Today*, never accused of excessive class consciousness.

The latest issue proudly boasts an interview with **Edwina "Wholemeal" Currie**. She was pleased to take advantage of this rare opportunity to obtain media coverage for her views!

Currie was quizzed by pseudo-feminist hack Bea Campbell, perhaps as a prelude to the latter's imminent leap from the Communist to the Tory Party, thus outdistancing ex-CP and current SDP careerist Sue Slipman.

We have been unable to confirm whether equally cosy armchair chats with **President Botha, Ayatollah Khomeini** and other friends of the workers' movement (and of women's rights) such as ex-president **Marcos, Ted Rogers** and **Dusty Bin**, are yet in the pipeline for *Marxism Today's* less than discerning readers.

Heavens above!

From our ecclesiastical correspondent, Neil Down:
Thank Christ for that!

Intensive lobbying by the Women's Action Committee at the **General Synod** has finally brought a vote in favour of the ordination of women priests.

At last, after all these years, the Church has decided to adopt a twentieth century approach to preaching its medieval dogma.

But arguing for sex equality with people who really *believe* that wafer biscuits are the flesh of a long-dead Jewish corpse remains an unrewarding task.

Even now the first women priests will not take office until 1991 at the earliest — representing a "gain" for women's rights about equal to the appointment of black policemen in the fight against racism.

As with all doctrinal fights, this one was marked by repeated threats of a split in the dwindling ranks of the faithful.

As so often, it was the rabid reactionary right — the Church equivalent of the SDP — that was threatening the split, while quaintly claiming in the words of the **Archdeacon of Cheltenham** that "The thought of a schism makes me sick at heart."

The **Bishop of London** went further, effectively comparing the ordination of women to a dose of AIDS:

"It will be in the Church' bloodstream, and there will be no question of it being an experiment."

Former Tory Chair **John Gummer** was as sick as a parrot. He may have been prepared to work under a woman Prime Minister, but he draws the line at receiving communion from a woman priest. "That takes the biscuit," he told Periscope; "I am incensed."

RCP replies

Is *DC*, your Periscope correspondent (*Briefing*, no. 38), applying for diplomatic anonymity?

Kate Marshall, the RCP's candidate in Greenwich, is married. She was also the only candidate who used her campaign to build the Wombourne 12 demo which I believe you support.

Unlike Deirdre, Kate didn't have to tear up all her already bland publicity — "working for Greenwich" — to accommodate the vacuous "Deirdre Wood understands". Kate didn't have to change her hairstyle and clothes or pose for photographs on Observatory Hill, children in tow, doing an imitation of Ms Julie Andrews in "The Sound of Music".

More seriously the idea of subjecting a candidate to the humiliation of explaining her family affairs to the gutter press is outrageous. Was the thought of a ghoulish sympathy vote more appealing than telling the *News of the World* to get lost?

But then it's Neil's party, and he'll do what he wants to. Will the real reactionary still get your support?

Alan Harding
RCP

Self-defence?

With hestitant moves towards renewed detente, why should US television choose this moment to screen *Amerika*, its anti-Soviet mini-series featuring catatonic superbore Kris Kristofferson?

Currently sitting on the Board of Directors of ABC, the TV network which produced *Amerika* are:

- William Spencer, also a director of United Technologies ($3.9 billions in military contracts, 1985);
- M. Cabell Woodward, also vice chair of ITT ($1.5 billion);
- Frank Cary, also an IBM director ($1.8 billion);
- Alan Greenspan, whose Alcoa company produces much of the aluminium used in Pentagon hardware.

Legal counsel and major shareholder for Capital Cities, ABC's owners, is William Casey, recently retired CIA director.

A fairly cut and dried case of ideology reflecting class interest.

Don't listen to *Briefing*!

What *should* you do if you are a Labour Party member? Don't listen to us, for a start.

What authoritative source says so? None other than Deptford's absentee MP, John Silkin. In his annual report to Deptford CLP, he says membership of the Party means "thinking things through and discussing matters deeply, not taking your line from *Briefing*, *City Limits* or *Militant* or whatever magazine is in vogue."

What a patronising attitude — does he really think that all his Party members do is go along and vote for things without thinking them through? We were going to print his attendance record at General Committee meetings, but we remembered what happened to *Tribune*.

Since we don't want a costly legal battle, we'll just print his idea of who an MP should be accountable to — "above all to his or her conscience." Nice one, John!

D.C.

For bold, socialist policies!

I was born in Greenwich and brought up in Bermondsey. Both now have pseudo-Tory MPs under an Alliance banner. That sickens me.

We will never win by-elections if we fight defensive campaigns. What are we frightened of?

By John Wilton
Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidate
Birmingham Edgbaston Constituency

What was obvious at Greenwich that someone had decided on a "damage limitation" camapign, responding to the notion that the "wrong" candidate had been selected.

In fact the candidate was a good candidate. The problem was that because of a fear held by some people in the Party a defensive campaign was fought and the issues were never put across in a positive way, in order to expose the Alliance and Tory positions.

Of course many people in the higher reaches of the Party expressed support for the candidate. Unfortunately these same people did not have the courage of their convictions.

Who decided to call the by-election on February 26th, instead of the same day as the Truro by-election? In a panic over the selection of the candidate in Greenwich, it was decided, presumably by the leader of the Party's office, that a short campaign would be better.

But the Alliance would not have been half as effective if the two by-elections had been on the same day. Their resources would have been stretched, and they would have had to concentrate their main effort on holding Truro.

The media-induced fear over the selection of Deirdre Wood prompted a gross panic misjudgement by those responsible for the timing of the by-election. In effect, despite their protestations, they showed that they already accepted such attacks as were subsequently made on the candidate as legitimate.

There are people in this Party whose main criterion is whether or not the media say the public will accept certain policies and certain candidates. Consequently we accept the label "hard left" as being something akin to the AIDS plague. The media, the Tories, the Alliance, and the Establishment have, of couse, a vested interest in portraying the "hard left" as vote losers.

"Hard Left"

Tactical voting by the Conservatives in Greenwich though was not to stop the "hard left" candidate, it was to stop the Labour Party. Would the Tories who voted SDP to stop us winning not still have done so if a different "soft left" or even a right wing candidate had been selected? Those Conservatives have no sympathy for the Labour Party, all they wanted to do was to stop the Labour Party winning.

We saw such tactical voting in Newcastle-Under-Lyme nearly defeat the Labour candidate, who could hardly be called "hard left".

The Alliance tactical vote bandwagon will roll whoever the Labour candidate is, and from whatever wing of the Party they are, especially if we fight a defensive campaign, the Alliance candidate is in anyway credible, and the Tory candidate is abysmal.

We will not win the electorate over by arguing that we are not really what the press label us, and that we are all really "cuddly". We have to win the argument by pointing out that "hard left" means being willing to attack privilege, means wanting jobs for those who need them, means wanting decent housing, decent education for all, and a decent Health Service.

We have to convince people that "hard left" means wanting a fair and equal society for everyone, a society without any discrimination, racial, sexual or otherwise. This is the sort of campaign Tony Benn ran in Chesterfield — **and won convincingly**.

If you start any campaign in effect apologising for your candidate by manoeuvring behind the scenes to achieve some kind of "damage limitation", you merely undermine your campaign from the start.

I doubt if those in control of the Party machine can accept this argument, especially with their eyes permanently fixed on the media's reaction, and their judgement influenced by the media's views.

However, I suggest at the very least it is a lesson the "hard left" has to learn. If we are ever going to change public opinion and win by-elections and elections with so-called "hard left" candidates, we have to argue for our beliefs, policies and principles and convince the public that it is we who have their best interests at heart. Until we start doing this positively, and stop apologising, we will never change anything.



PHOTO: Jez Coulson (IFL)

Labour Party press conference, Greenwich. Left to right: Frank Dobson MP, Deirdre Wood (candidate), Giles Radice MP.

Stop apologising!

This is an extract from a speech by Eric Heffer at a Campaign public meeting in Bristol on February 27th.

There can be no disguising the fact that the loss of Greenwich is a setback for Labour.

Labour should have won, and therefore there are lessons to be learned.

We must have clear distinctive socialist policies. If we seek to appear little different from the SDP then it is they who gain, not Labour.

Dr Owen has said that Labour suffers from its deep ideological nature. He is wrong. It is precisely clear bold socialist policies that are needed, which in real terms are the only ones which can begin to deal with Britain's crisis due to the present economic system, aggravated by Thatcher's policies.

If Labour appears to be back-tracking and is not forthright, clear and bold, then voters begin to believe that we are purely opportunist rather than determined to change things on their behalf.

It is not left wing candidates that lose elections. When Tony Benn fought Chesterfield, it was said then that a left wing candidate would lose, yet Tony put up Labour's vote, winning back votes lost in the 1983 General Election.

What does Greenwich mean for Labour?

- The campaign, suggesting that the Party is riddled with so-called "hard left loonies" was a gift to a hostile press and to our political opponents. It has caused uncertainty amongst the Labour electorate. What is really required is unity around policies to overcome what Thatcher has done.
- We cannot win by TV packaging and by being afraid of our shadows and with our candidates put on the defensive. Our candidates need to be free to get out amongst the people, to be seen on the streets with them speaking and canvassing and we must stop being mesmerised by the TV and the press. Our candidates are inhibited if they are packaged like soap powder. They should express themselves amongst the people without so-called "minders".

In simple terms, Labour must say what it stands for and what we intend to do.

We must expose and attack the vicious nature of this capitalist, selfish, Thatcherite society and say clearly how we intend to change it. Labour must not be ashamed of its socialist past and policies. It was clear socialist policies which gave us victories in 1945, 1964 and 1974.

We must not turn in on ourselves. That could be disastrous. We must go forward to win the next election with firm, bold positive policies and be outward-looking.

It is the only way to win.

Birmingham Witch-hunt

Support Selly Oak

Once again, the Labour Party NEC, has shown itself more interested in causing time-wasting and division within the Party than concentrating its fire on the Tories and the Alliance.

It ruled that I was not a member of Selly Oak CLP at its January meeting.

In 1983 several socialists, including myself, were excluded from Yardley CLP, Birmingham, even though we were longstanding members transferring from other CLPS.

The argument at the time was that there is no such thing as automatic transfer rights when you move house — you join a constituency rather than the party as a whole. Therefore Yardley were within their rights to accept or reject whom they wanted.

We understand that a regional enquiry, set up after the five of us appealed to the NEC, unanimously rejected the charges and recommended that our membership be accepted. I say "understand" because although we saw a leaked copy of the report, and our version of events has been confirmed independently, the crucial regional report never got to the NEC.

By Bob Whitehead (in a personal capacity)

After a 9 month delay, the NEC rediscussed the matter,and in the absence of the report narrowly ruled against our membership of Yardley.

Four of the original five are still living in, and still excluded from, Yardley CLP. But, for the last two years I have been living in nearby Selly Oak. This constituency took me into membership and I have acted as a branch secretary, branch EC member, GC delegate, CLP EC member, Political Education Officer for my branch and... a delegate to the Birmingham District Labour Party.

At my first DLP meeting nearly a year ago, Yardley delegates complained about my presence, and when they got no joy, complained to the NEC.

The NEC said that to put the situation in order, Selly Oak merely had to write requesting my membership be endorsed. In the current context of witch-hunts and expulsions Selly Oak were loath to do this, and anyway, if Yardley can accept who it wants, why not Selly Oak?

The right wing in Birmingham organised a boycott of four CLPs from the DLP, declaring the left-dominated DLP "unconstitutional".

A national official was dispatched to Birmingham, and discussed informally with the officers of Selly Oak CLP. She left saying that if Selly Oak and myself wrote to the NEC requesting endorsement of my membership at the December meeting, she was sure that it would be dealt with "favourably".

Despite my doubts, this procedure was followed, as it seemed that an important victory was within our grasp. Lo and behold, it never got discussed at the December NEC; but the January NEC... voted heavily against my membership! (What would "unfavourable" treatment have been like?)

Selly Oak is extremely upset by the constantly shifting grounds for my exclusion, by the lack of charges or fresh evidence, and by the lack of justice and democracy in resolving this dispute. It has now resolved to declare its wish to have me as a member and the GC has set up a campaign body which will accept delegates from other CLPs to campaign for my membership rights to be properly endorsed.

The CLP has sent a letter to other Birmingham CLPs defending my record as an officer and a member and defending absolutely my right to support *Labour Briefing* — although it does not agree with my views!

Will Selly Oak stick to its guns? The signs are good, but our chances of success also depend on support from other CLPs in the area and all socialists in the Party.

Labour Party Black Sections statement

Police attacks on the Black Community

The Labour Party Black Section is appalled at the sharp increase in police violence against the Black community.

The list of maimings and killings has been added to in the case of Trevor Monerville and with the death of Clinton McCurbin in Wolverhampton. Raids on our community, like the ones in Brixton, Handsworth and St Pauls, based on the racist pretext of "looking for drugs", are an attempt to criminalise Black People.

We are committed to throwing our full weight behind the campaigns for justice in the face of these police attacks. If the state and its bully boys in blue are incapable or unwilling to protect us then we must defend ourselves by whatever means necessary.

The police have proved that they are not even accountable to their Tory masters. We reaffirm our demand that they must be placed under the democratic control of the whole community.

For more information, contact: Chris Khamis, LPBS West Midlands Organiser, 021 551 7636, or Steve Jomoa, National Youth Organiser, 01 577 5057.

Birmingham Labour Briefing

THE "LEFT" IN BIRMINGHAM

Time to set the agenda

Birmingham has always been a bastion of old right-wing Labourism.

The left may have made progress in comparably large cities like Sheffield and Manchester, but in Birmingham the City Council Labour Group is still in the grip of the right wing.

In the past year that right wing control has openly floutted party democracy. On many occasions it has ignored and over-ruled the policy of Birmingham District Labour Party. So, despite DLP opposition, we are to have a £130m Convention Centre, and we have had a £400,000 loss making Road Race and a £2¼m (officially! — unofficially it is probably a lot more) Olympic bid.

These prestige projects have been embarked upon at the expense of the social needs of the people in Birmingham. Even the local election manifesto last May was drawn up and launched by the right on the Labour group without any agreement with the District Party.

At the end of last year the left in Birmingham showed signs of attempting to fight back. An attempt was made to organise around a group of Birmingham Labour Councillors on the left. They came together to work for more democracy within the Labour group and for the full implementation of Birmingham Labour Party policy. This left group — given the title Summerfield Group — was subsequently extended into the wider Party.

The formation of the Summerfield Group met a hostile response from the local press. Right wing Councillors, including the Council leader, were daily bleating in the papers about unity and democracy in General Election year. (I suppose it is a step forward that they acknowledge the existence of the word democracy, even if they do not know what it means.

Besides running to the press the right wing reacted in its usual traditional vicious manner by removing a black councillor, who was instrumental in the formation of the Summerfield Group, from Vice Chair of the Equal Opportunities Committee.

But problems were to occur within sections of the left in Birmingham. The right wing Labour councillors were allowed to continue to set the agenda and take the initiative; leaving the left to react to their actions and accusations.

For example, what was supposed to be the initial launch meeting of the wider Summerfield Group was unfortunately cancelled at the last minute amid much confusion. Apparently the then Convenor cancelled the launch arbitrarily as he believed it was not a good time to hold it given the weight of adverse (right wing Labour councillor inspired) press and media publicity.

By John Wilton
Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidate
Birmingham Edgbaston Constituency

The official launch of the Summerfield Group was eventually held on January 17th. By then the right had organised another little trick, taken the offensive, and exposed some of the "cold feet" of the soft left (which they promptly shot themselves in!)

At a meeting of the Labour Group a few days before the launch, the right wing proposed to remove Labour councillors who supported Summerfield from Chairs of Committees. After much debate, and an initial 31-31 tied vote, Dick Knowles, Council leader, stated that the Summerfield supporters should not be removed as Chairs provided they signed a "loyalty oath" type pledge to the Labour group, proclaiming unity and denouncing Summerfield. Unfortunately five Labour councillors who were supporters of Summerfield signed the pledge, and did not attend the official Summerfield launch meeting.

One of the principles of the Summerfield Group, is the pursuit of accountability. If Summerfield is to function as a caucus it must itself demonstrate internal accountability. Two questions therefore have to be asked. First, who decided the first launch should be cancelled because of adverse publicity? Secondly, and much more importantly, who decided the five councillors should sign the loyalty pledge? Have we already got a group within a group? The five should, in my opinion, have attended the offical launch: not so they could be attacked for their actions in signing (though I believe they were wrong to do so) but so that they could be open to, and hear, the arguments from their comrades, both for and against signing.

I know people will say they were right to sign for all sorts of tactical reasons. However,I feel they are wrong. To put it bluntly they do not know their own strength.

Changing Birmingham City Council is about getting existing policy implemented, developing new socialist policy, getting that adopted and implemented *and* getting representatives elected who will be accountable to the District Party and carry out Party policy.

The first two are pointless without the third. Without accountable representatives we are wasting our time.

The initial Labour Group vote on the removal of the Summerfield supporters from Chairs of Committees was tied at 31 to 31. This, I would suggest, is an indication of changes occurring within the Group. Some people on the "soft-left" are having their eyes opened as they experience the venom of the right wing. They are seeing for themselves that you cannot persuade and convince some people — they are beyond persuasion.

As someone stated at the Summerfield launch, those people on the "soft left" under attack from the right wing need our sympathy and our help.

Yes, I agree, they do. We need to help them learn from their own experience who their friends are, and when they should not let those friends down. If you sit on the fence too long hoping to persuade people on the right, you merely end up with marks on your bum, from the fence posts and from it being kicked by the right.

One of the arguments at the Summerfield launch was that signing Dick Knowles' loyalty pledge was a tactical retreat. According to my dictionary retreat means "go back, or relinquish a position". This is a bit like saying Labour's defeat in 1979 was a tactical retreat — we gave Thatcher what she wanted.

Victories are never won, or change achieved, by tactical retreats. Tactical retreats usually mean diluting your objectives. Remove the compromise "tactical retreat" policy, and those on the fence have to choose — right or left.



Phil Murphy (centre): removed as Vice Chair of the Equal Opportunities Committee by the Right.

The left has to call Knowles' bluff and stand firm. The pledges must be torn up. The left is in the ascendency in Birmingham, not the old failed right wing. We are being proved right about policy commitments being chucked out of the window (nationally and locally).

The right are scared of us. They are scared of us "rocking the boat"; scared of us standing together — which is why they have used the press to frighten us with electoral blackmail. It is why they have used tactics like pledges to attempt to divide us.

Yes, we have to sympathise with and help those whom the press label the soft left. But we have to show them that we can win by standing firm on our principles. Every time people on the left take decisions without being accountable, like calling off meetings or signing loyalty pledges, they concede the initiative and the agenda to the right wing. We need to fight on our agenda.

The strength of the left in Birmingham is not in the Labour Group, it is in the branches and constituencies, and in the District Party among rank and file members. So removing people from Committee Chairs, which they only hold with the acquiescence of the right, will not weaken the strength of the left.

Instead of making concessions like signing pledges to keep Chairs of Committees, the left should be using these actions by the right wing to illustrate to those who have any doubts on the soft left the strategy required to change the Labour Group. The strength of the left is not in persuasion of the right, or in attempting to draw concessions from them in the Labour Group, like token Chairs of Committees. Our strength is in policy development, combined with organising to replace failed personnel in the Labour Group with accountable representatives.

The Summerfield Group in Brimingham needs to push policy development and push socialist policies, but at the same time not concede the agenda to, or be diverted by, the tactics of the right wing in the Labour Group. All members of the left need to be aware of this. This means people representing the left remembering where their cormades and political friends are, and being accountable to them. It means not signing pledges in the Labour Group.

It means groups on the left like Summerfield not being hung-up, hindered, or facing political hiccups (called tactical retreats) caused by its own supporters in the Labour Group giving the right wing in that group a stick to beat the left with by allowing their divisive tactics to succeeed. If that happens too often it has to be asked if the representatives of the left are the right people for the job.

Overall it means getting committed, accountable representatives in place in overall control of the Labour group in Birmingham in order to implement a whole range of socialist policies that change people's lives in Birmingham. It also requires a committed rank and file grouping like Summerfield which can give the strength of argument required to those accountable representatives to help them withstand the malicious onslaught of the right.

Scottish Labour Briefing

Labour and the Scottish Assembly

The *Glasgow Herald* call it the "Doomsday" scenario.

If the next general election sees Labour increasing its majority of seats in Scotland for the third time runing, yet still cannot form a government in Westminster, for how much longer can it command the allegiance of the Scottish working class?

For many people in Scotland, this is Labour's last chance. If they can't get into power, why waste a vote on them?

By J. Niblock
Glasgow Central CLP

The SNP election slogan — "It's time to play the Scottish card" — is essentially aimed at the post-election situation, when they expect to grow rapidly at the expense of the Labour Party.

The SNP base their politics on the assumption that Labour will not be able to reflect or defend the interests and needs of the Scottish working class. Looking back over the last eight years, it seems a sound assumption. Scottish Labour MPs have been brushed repeatedly aside by Thatcher, Younger and Rifkind, despite the continuing erosion of Tory support in Scotland.

A third Thatcher victory followed by further ineffectual Labour lobbying will turn much of the Scottish workng class towards the SNP, and thereby undermine Labour's chances of ever being the majority party at Westminster.

Kinnock was asked on Scottish television if Labour should forge ahead with the Assembly campaign, even if the Tories win the election. His answer was *no* — an Assembly must await a future Labour government.

This advice will be disastrous for the Labour Party not only in Scotland, but throughout Britain.

For Labour to represent the interests of the Scottish working class it must take the lead in campaigning for a Scottish Assembly, regardless of the outcome of the next election.

Labour Briefing Day School

Socialism and Nationalism

Speakers include:
Denis Canavan, MP
Marion Davies
George Kerevan
Gunter Minnerup
Jim Young

Saturday April 4th
10am-6pm
City Halls, Albion Street, Glasgow
Workshops Creche
£3 waged, £1 unwaged
Contact Gordon Morgan, 39 Regent Park Square, Glasgow G41

The majority of Scottish people want an Assembly. All Scottish parties except the Tories support an Assembly.
★How can we ensure an Assembly is established after the Election?
★How should the labour movement organise to lead the Assembly Campaign?
★What should be the attitude of Socialists towards the National Question?
With the approach of an Election the above questions are urgently posed. The Labour Briefing Day School will provide activists with a forum for debate.

Gorbachev opts for old power balance

Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev's announcement that the Soviet Government is ready to accept the "zero option" on medium range missiles in Europe represents an attempt to return to the old notion of equal security for the two super-powers.

By Oliver MacDonald

For most of the post-war period, the Soviets were able to feel secure that they could protect Soviet territory from the worst effects of a war in Europe.

Their military planning involved the idea that in response to a nuclear strike from the US against the USSR, the Soviet Warsaw Pact could retaliate by overrunning Western Europe. Their notion of equal security for the two super-powers meant that they would maintain dominance in European forces, while the USA would not be directly threatened on the American continent by Soviet missiles.

Against this background, the Soviet modernisation of their medium range missiles in Europe in the 1970s — the introduction of the SS20s — was seen by the Soviet military (and NATO military commanders at the time) as a routine affair without impact on the strategic balance.

The arrival of Cruise and especially of Pershing missiles in Western Europe presented a direct challenge to the concept of "equal security" by presenting a stragetic threat to Soviet territory from Western Europe. This was unaccceptable to the Soviet leadership and provoked the greatest tension between the superpowers for a couple of decades.

But under Gromyko, the Soviets were equally not prepared to accept the illegitimacy of the SS20 deployment for that could deny their "legal" right to dominance in the European theatre.

The Gorbachev initiative shows he is more concerned with Soviet security than with face. The question now is whether the NATO military leadership in Europe is willing to abandon the real purpose of Cruise and Pershing which was not to balance the SS-20s but to pose a military threat directly to the USSR from Western Europe along with Airland Battle tactics and FOFA.

The German state leadership, particularly on the Right, will also be upset because it had hoped to pursue a more muscular policy towards the East behind the Cruise-Pershing shield. The main beneficiaries of the deal in power-politics terms will be the French and British states, provided they can push through their nuclear rearmament programmes, especially Trident.

For the peoples of both halves of the continent the zero option will be a real gain, on two conditions: the first is that an agreement leads to a return to detente across the continent; the second is that the campaign against Star Wars is stepped up, for the testing and deployment of Star Wars would negate any gains from a European agreement.

Defeat?

For those who see the debate between multilateralists and unilateralists as one about the best tactics for making disarmament deals with the Soviets, an agreement on the zero option might seem like a "defeat" for unilateralism. This is a cheap debating point. The unilateralist case is a above all one of principle: the West's nuclear arsenal is not there to deter a non-existent Soviet military threat. It is there to terrorise the peoples of the world and threaten the USSR.

General Roger's replacement as NATO Commander-in-Chief spelt this point out the other day, when he said that the Soviet threat is not of military invasion but of political subversion. In a warped way, this is right, or should be: a genuine political democratisation in the USSR would demonstrate to working people in Western Europe that there is a better type of state and society than capitalism. The Reaganites' Star Wars drive and their entire policy towards the USSR has been geared to sabotaging such change in the USSR.

When Thatcher goes to Moscow she should be harassed by the Labour Party to come out unequivocally against Star Wars to take a definite stand in favour of detente. And she should be forced to come clean on her readiness to negotiate Trident away with Gorbachev.



PHOTO: Derek Spiers (IFL/Report)

British Army on the streets of Belfast

Troops Out!

Labour Committee on Ireland
Annual General Meeting
April 4th-5th
Manchester Town Hall

Contact the Labour Committee on Ireland and Labour Women for Ireland at:
BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX

National CND Demonstration April 25 1987

Details to be announced

Socialist Policies for a Labour victory!

Conference organised by Labour Briefing
Sat/Sun March 28th/29th
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, Secretary Labour Party Black Sections; John Palmer, Socialist Society; Joan Twelves, Lambeth Chief Whip.

Workshops on International Policy, Economic Strategy and Social Policy.
International workshops include: ●getting Britain out of Ireland (Nadine Finch); ●NATO/Warsaw Pact & Non-alignment (J. Corbyn); ●Racism & British imperialism (A. Patel & J. Boumelha); ●Breaking links with Apartheid.

Films, food, creche, social — registration from 10.30 each day.

Cost £2.50 for weekend, £1.50 per day (half price unwaged).

Register now! Write to Briefing, 51 Musgrove Road, London SE14.

An independent voice of South African labour

For 13 years, despite intense harassment from the apartheid regime, the *South Africa Labour Bulletin* has championed the cause of the non-racial trade union movement.

With the independent Labour Monitoring Group, it has provided both a record of activity and a forum for discussion for the revival of working class action.

STEVE POTTER spoke to JON LEWIS, one of *SALB's* editors and a participant in the LMG, during his recent visit to Britain.

The birth of SALB coincided with the revival of trade union action in South Africa after the long years of repression in the 1960s.

The first issue appeared in 1974 immediately after the big wave of strikes in the Durban area when tens of thousands of black workers came out in support of wage demands.

The organisations formed out of that movement combined with those in South Natal formed the Institute for Industrial Education. Part of the function of that body was to bring out *SALB* on a regular basis.

How has the bulletin coped with the recent repression?

Jon stressed: "We believed that it was important that the journal continued to be published legally, in order to continue the kind of work it does. Under the emergency regulations one is not allowed to comment on the conduct of the security forces, for example. But we have continued to record the struggles of the labour movement as in the past."

The South Africa Labour Bulletin is produced eight times a year. For details of subscriptions, etc., write to:
PO Box 31073,
Braamfontein 2017, South Africa
phone: (011) 339 8133
The Labour Monitoring Group can be contacted at the same address.

While the journal has managed to stay in publication its staff have been harassed. "In the Eastern Cape, Andre Roux has been detained. Andre is an active member of the United Democratic Front there. More recently one of our Johannesburg editors, Phil Bonner, has been expelled from the country. Another editor has gone into hiding."

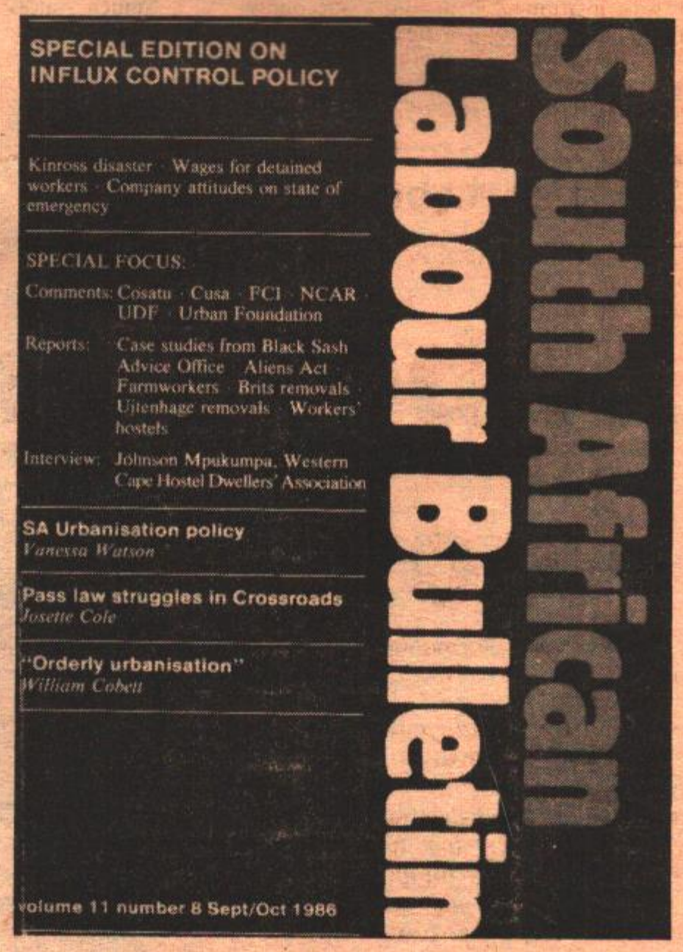
The Labour Monitoring Group has also played a role in the response to the emergency. It was started in 1984 just before the Transvaal stay-away (general strike).

Jon explains, "The stay-away marked a major landmark in terms of trade union politicisation, particularly in terms of alliances with forces like students. It was the most major trade union action since the 1950s. We wanted to really try and see what was going on. The Transvaal of course is where three quarters of industry is.

"It was a major undertaking. We wanted to make sure that whatever did happen was recorded. We collected a group of people together and simply phoned up all the factories. In the process we were able to record the figures for the stay-away. We also were able to talk to the organisations that prepared the action.

"We collected the pamphlets and documents so that we had a record of the moves that led up to the strikes. We were also able to show that in those communities where trade union and student organisation were the strongest, the stay-away achieved almost 100% success. We have done the same with most trade union action since.

"Since the Emergency the role of the LMG has changed somewhat. We decided to keep a list of all detained trade unionists and we hope this has been useful in building solidarity. We have also kept a record of workers' responses to the emergency. A survey of how companies were treating the families of those detained (were they continuing to pay wages?) was another important action since the unions themselves still do not have the resources to carry out this work."



The work carried out by the Bulletin and the LMG has been a part of the revival of working class activity in the last decade. For those outside South Africa it remains one of the best sources of information and debate. It deserves our support.

Brighton Power Station

Red and Green

Test case for CEGB

The closure of an ageing coalfired power station on the edge of Brighton is hardly likely to inspire national interest.

Yet the local campaign to save Brighton B (also known as Shoreham Power Station) has put the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) on the defensive and attracted the support of Shadow Energy Minister Stan Orme.

Over the last decade the CEGB has closed some 200 similar stations — always arguing that refurbishment is too expensive and unnecessary.

A more likely explanation is that this policy is a deliberate strategy to make nuclear power essential to guaranteeing electricity supply.

Closing stations like Shoreham has left us dependent on existing nuclear reactors and nuclear electricity imported from France.

Having pursued this destructive policy the CEGB are now bleating on about an expected shortage of supply in the mid-1970s. Their solution, of course, is a new programme of nuclear reactors, starting with a PWR at Sizewell.

Ironically, however, the CEGB may be caught short by its own policies. There is little chance of the Sizewell PWR or any other newly built power plant being ready in time to meet the predicted rise in demand. The CEGB hopes to fall back on increased output from the AGR plants, on keeping the ageing Magnox nucler reactors running and on greater use of existing oil fired plant.

All of these options are fraught with problems — unreliable AGRs have an appalling record when it comes to producing electricity; the price of oil is expected to rise rapidly again during the next decade; the Magnox reactors are old and

By Andy Porter SERA

dangerous and should be closed down.

In this context Shoreham Power Station is a vital resource — 300 megawatts of generating capacity immediately available for another decade for the cost of a refurbishment that will be less than £20 million. Sizewell will eventually provide four times the capacity, but at *100 times* the cost — not to mention the danger.

In the long run Shoreham is suited to conversion to combined heat and power, modernisation and fitting out with the desulphurisation technology that eliminates over 90% of acid rain-producing sulphur emissions. The CEGB, however, seem intent on demolishing the site and paying the Port Authority to take it off their hands.

Regional management don't even have to get into the nuclear power debate; decades of pro-nuclear policies have created an institutional structure that aids nuclear power as a matter of course. The head of the CEGB — Lord Walter Marshall — was put there by Thatcher to promote the PWR and nuclear power in general.

The impact of Marshall's nuclear empire on the Brighton area will be the immediate loss of 300 jobs at the power station, plus an estimated 1,000 knock-on jobs in the local economy. Coal for the station comes from the North East and an estimated 600 mining jobs could be lost.

The devastation of Britain's economy over the last decade has been achieved through thousands of "minor" decisions like this one. The irony is that it is the "loony" left and the "utopian" greens that have the sensible alternatives.

Rational planning based on environmental, economic and human factors would keep Shoreham Power Station open. Imaginative use of existing technology would create jobs, consume energy, and establish a more decentralised and democratic energy economy.

In Brighton a campaign linking trade unionists, environmentalists and the Labour Party has at least put the CEGB decision up for scrutiny. The CEGB are pursuing similar policies in your area. They are one of the more powerful and reactionary institutions in the country. Why not take them on before it's too late?

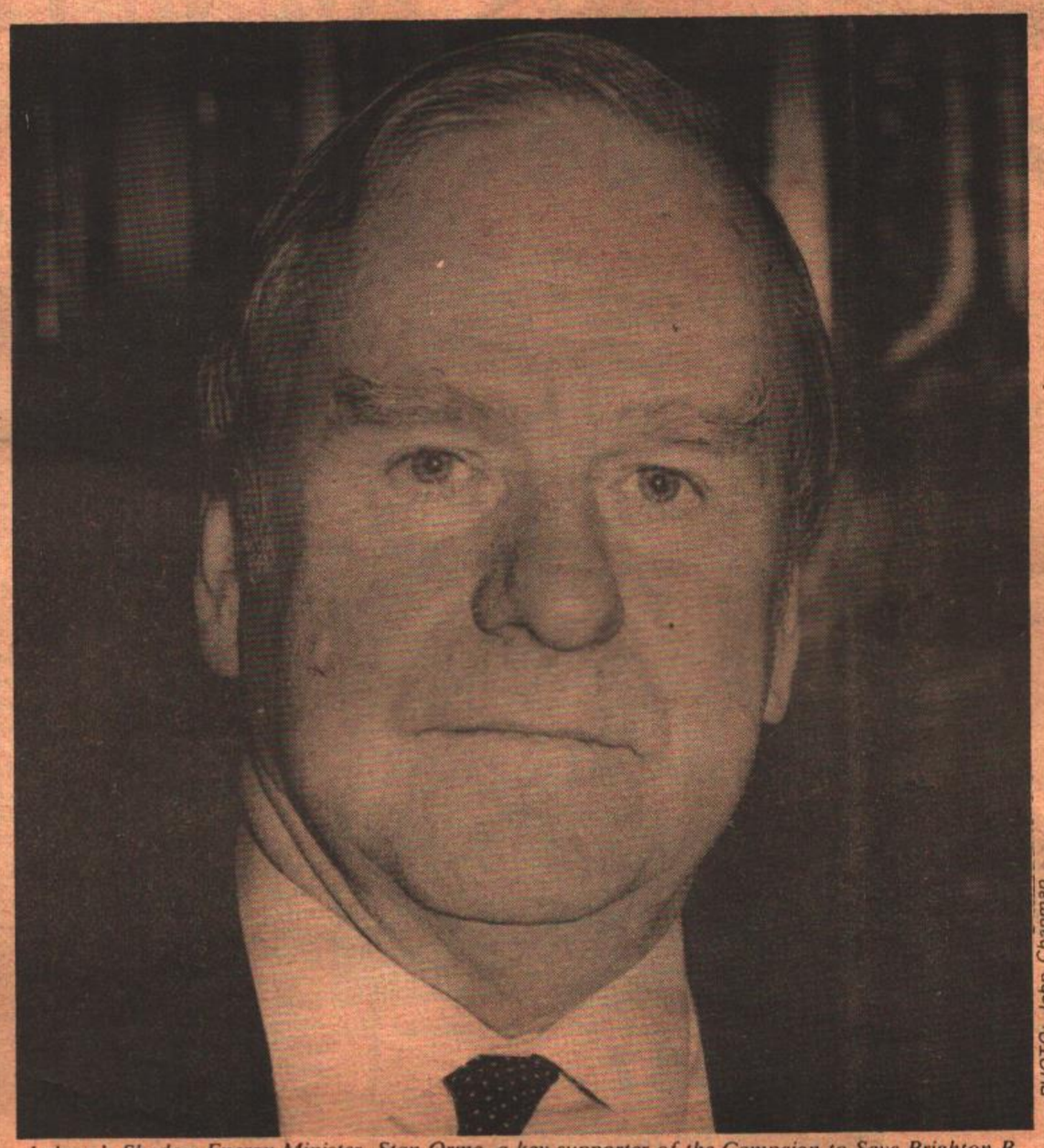


PHOTO: John Chapman

Labour's Shadow Energy Minister, Stan Orme, a key supporter of the Campaign to Save Brighton B. How far will he resist the pro-nuclear lobby?

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LABOUR BRIEFING

WOMEN: DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE!

The right of women to control their own bodies — a woman's right to choose — was successfully defended at the end of February when the Oxford student who tried to stop his ex-lover from gaving an abortion was defeated in the High Courts.

Effectively the case was a back-door attempt to change the law on time limits for abortion from the present 28 to 18 weeks; backed by supporters of SPUC and LIFE, the anti-abortion campaigns.

But one defeat doesn't mean we've seen the end of their attacks on time limits. SPUC are claiming widespread support for their campaign against abortion, including university campus groups both at Oxford and Kent.

But the case has importance beyond the central issue of abortion. It is part of a general right-wing offensive against women's rights, against gains made during the heyday of the women's movement in the 1970s.

These gains are now under threat from a government determined to replace feminist ideas of women's liberation and sexual freedom with the reactionary idea that a woman's place is in the home. The recognition that marriage was about possession and feminists wanted none of it is now being undermined by the right.

The fear of the spread of AIDS is also being used to support a "return to the old morality". Now that it has at last been recognised as not only a gay disease, young men and women are being urged... not to practise safe sex — but to refrain from sex altogether! Safe sex means one partner for life!

By Jane Kelly Peckham CLP

Young women are special targets of the campaign against "promiscuity". Arguments like "women prefer sex within a long term relationship" are being used to encourage women to remain celibate until "Mr Right" turns up. ("Ms Right" doesn't get a mention...)

The pro-family, pro-celibacy lobby, the anti-abortionists, those against lesbian and gay rights are all part of, or fuel for, a new right offensive against all the gains we've won. As such, whether it's fighting the Tories now or making sure a Labour government supports our demands, the left must defend the gains made, and fight to further them.



PHOTOS: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!