LABOUR
BRIEFING
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40p

NO RETREAT ON CRUISE!

by
Joy Hurcombe
Chair, Labour CND
(personal capacity)

The Labour Party's policies to get rid of Cruise and Trident have been agreed at Party Conference after Conference.

Overwhelming majority votes have confirmed the commitment of all sections of the Party to the demand that the next Labour government would remove all nuclear weapons, British and American, and close all US nuclear bases.

Yet time and again, these policies have been attacked by the leaders of the Party.

We expect the Tories and the Alliance to attack them, to lie and deceive the people; but we were ready to argue for these unconditional, unilateral measures, which were well-considered and which showed our ability to take independent actions.

We knew that getting rid of Cruise missiles and Trident would need firm leadership in the face of US opposition. Yet we thought that our leaders would respect our views, democratically decided by the Party and voted for by the electorate. In the run up to the election we looked for clear statements from our leaders putting the policies to the people.

What do we find? Well, of course, we expect Callaghan to attack the Party. This time his view that we should keep Trident was well to the right of David Owen and in line with Thatcher. His timing probably had a lot to do with the publication of his memoirs.

But whereas Callaghan's comments were not helpful Neil Kinnock's attack on March 18th on the policy on Cruise missiles was downright disruptive. If you missed it, he now says that the next Labour government will delay removing Cruise while the superpowers are holding talks. In a masterpiece of logic and consistency, he says if the talks take too long, or if they fail, Cruise missiles will be removed anyway.

No one person, leader or spokesperson, can overturn the will of Conference. We are not a multilateral party. We welcome the talks, and wish them well, but our rejection of nuclear weapons was never tied to talks. We do not grovel to either superpower. Our rejection of Cruise will speed up the negotiations, not distract from them.

By weakening Party policy, Kinnock has put the interests of the USA before the overriding need for this country to make a radical step forward for a peaceful world.

We are once again a poodle of Reagan, a client state with no independent foreign policy. Was it the pressure of US business interests in this country that forced Kinnock's hand? Or was it pressure from the right in the Party to ditch unilateralism before the election?

The apparent acceptance of changes in the disarmament policy in the publicity material "A Modern Britain in a Modern World" has made the latest attacks possible.

We must not let them get away with this, a fundamental attack on unilateral nuclear disarmament. We voted that Cruise will go, talks or no talks. If we rely on talks Cruise may never be sent back.

This time we must not be silent. Kinnock is wrong. The policies must not be fudged again – because that is why we lost the last time round.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Campaigning at Molesworth: No to Cruise!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Home News



Photo: David Hoffman

Dolly Kiffen on Old Bailey picket during Broadwater Farm trials

Police take revenge

The community in Tottenham is outraged and disgusted at the verdict which it regards along with the sentences passed as a despicable way to treat our youth.

They were picked up on no evidence to satisfy the police desire for revenge for the death of PC Blakelock.

This is in stark contrast to the police response to their murder of Mrs Cynthia Jarrett in her home the day before the Tottenham uprising.

PC Randall, who led the assault on Mrs Jarrett, has not been suspended or tried. On the contrary, he has been promoted.

The way the police treated the community immediately after the uprising was not only disgusting but unforgiveable. They treated with ridicule community demands for an investigation of the murder of Mrs Jarrett.

Equally outrageous, they denied the right of the community to demonstrate outside the police station on the evening of October 6th 1985. Instead, the police deliberately moved in and sealed off the Broadwater Farm Estate. They sought a battle which they comprehensively lost.

In their quest for vengeance afterwards, they went on to intimidate the community, conducting widespread raids, breaking down doors, threatening people with firearms, and arresting hundreds of innocent youths in an attempt to frame some of them for the murder of Blakelock.

Many were beaten up in police stations, and forced — with no legal advice — to sign false confessions. The acquittal of the three juveniles charged with murder proves our point.

They were interrogated to the point where their fantasy statements — notably about placing Blakelock's head on a pole — were opportunistically picked up by the media to literally instruct Judge Hodgson and the jury to convict innocent youths.

Clearly the police and the media were out to make somebody pay. This verdict can only destroy any seed of faith in British justice held by the Tottenham community and amongst Black people throughout Britain.

British justice is now on a par with that of South Africa. Anyone at court after the verdict was announced must have witnessed the way the defendants' relatives were terrorised by the police.

The Broadwater Farm Defence Committee will continue to fight. We cannot accept the court's decision. We will continue to press for justice to be done. State revenge is no justice.

Further information on forthcoming events: phone 885 3752, or 808 1667.



Maternity Emergency!

It is just 10 years since the first maternity rights for working women were introduced: the right to maternity pay and leave, and protection against unfair dismissal on grounds of pregnancy.

These rights are now under attack from the Tory government. Since 1979 hardly a year has gone by without some erosion in job protection and financial support around childbirth.

By Jane Prust
Deptford CLP

Maternity allowance, the major maternity benefit for working women has been steadily eroded. In 1980 a 5% cut was imposed in lieu of taxation reducing the weekly payment by £1.35. Earnings related supplements to maternity allowance were abolished in January 1982, and child dependency additions were abolished in November 1984.

More extensive cuts in maternity benefits are now in the pipeline. The Social Security Act 1986 cuts all benefits for pregnancy. It will:

- abolish the £25 maternity grant and replace it by a means tested payment;
- transfer payment of maternity allowance to the employer and restrict payment to women who are in work and paying National Insurance shortly before they claim;
- abolish free milk and vitamins for pregnant women and children in families on low wages.

One in five mothers will lose the maternity allowance — a potential loss of £530 each. Free milk and vitamins are already available only to families on the lowest incomes, but the government proposes to reduce provision still more.

From April 1987 maternity benefits will be available only to a minority of mothers. Many women will receive *no help at all* to meet the costs of a new baby. The women most affected on this will be working class women on low incomes, who rely on maternity benefits to help them with the costs of having a baby.

These changes represent the most substantial reductions in mothers' rights that Britain has ever witnessed.

Maternity Emergency is a new campaign launched by Maternity Alliance in defence of Britain's maternity rights. A mass rally has been called at the Central Hall, Westminster, on Monday April 6th, the day the maternity grant is to be abolished.

You can help by putting a resolution through your Labour Party branch, Trade Union branch, etc., and by coming to the rally on April 6th.

For further information contact: Maternity Emergency, c/o Maternity Emergency Alliance, 59-61 Camden High Street, London NW1 7JL.

Safety suffers for profit

The recent Zeebrugge Ferry disaster showed once again that where public services are run for the profit motive, then safety will suffer.

Apart from the obvious measure of shutting bow doors before leaving port, serious questions need to be asked about the structure of these ferries, which according to experts can be improved substantially — but at some cost to the ferry operators.

The ferry operators themselves, however, are if anything going in the exact opposite direction to what the outcome of this disaster would demand. Townsend Thoressen, owners of the stricken ferry, have in fact ordered two ships from West Germany more than twice the size of the one in the disaster, and with no changes in design. The consequences of another disaster like the one at Zeebrugge can only be imagined with great concern.

By Alan Holder

The main reason why the ferry operators have allowed safety to lapse (that's if it was ever tight) and have started building larger ferries is the impending competition from the Channel tunnel which wil be completed in the early 1990s.

The tunnel is a major threat to cross-channel ferry services and without increasing the size of their ferries, the operators can't hope to compete due to economies of scale.

The tunnel also represents a major threat to seamen's jobs, which ironically enough would be threatened even further if the greater safety measures were introduced.

Many of the measures would mean longer loading times for freight and cars at ports which can only lead to a further loss of trade to the tunnel: so what's the answer?

The only answer is a socialist answer. Both the cross-channel ferry services and the channel tunnel should be brought under workers' control as part of a national integrated transport network. This will increase jobs, make the services accountable and above all safe!

The anti-deportation movement in Britain

Here to stay and fight!

On February 17th, 58 Sri Lankan Tamils seeking political asylum in Britain faced deportation.

In a last ditch attempt to avoid persecution, 12 of the Tamils stripped to their underwear and continued their protest on the plane until news of a high court injunction came through, allowing them to stay while an application for a Judicial Review was made.

The Tamils' plight made front page news and for a week the issues concerning deportations and immigration law were highlighted. Press coverage illustrated both the racism of the media and the Home Office. The *Daily Mail* described the Tamils as "human flotsam" and urged that legislation should be changed to allow for the immediate expulsion of anyone that immigration officers deemed illegal or undesirable.

The government, who strongly supported the Home Office view that the Tamils were bogus refugees, have now backed down further. The Judicial Review, due on March 5th, has been called off, and the Tamils referred to the United Kingdom Immigration Advisory Service so that fresh decisions may be made concerning their future, in the light of relevant facts and any representations that UKIAS may make.

UKIAS has already obtained statements from most of the Tamils which contain information about brutality and torture administered by the Sri Lankan military. Some also have scars which they state were inflicted by the troops. This information and an account of the behaviour of immigration officers would have been given during the Judicial Review — so the government had every reason to fear criticism!

The Tamils have been shunted between hotels and detention centres and families split up, which has frustrated the efforts of those trying to help them. Representatives of UKIAS arriving at Latchmere House detention centre on February 17th to take statements from Tamils found that they had been bussed down to Heathrow again for deportation.

The government have retaliated for their partial defeat with a plan to introduce fines of up to £1,000 for airlines and shipping companies transporting people seeking asylum in Britain without visas or passports. The rights of refugees to seek help from MPs, advisory services and to appeal to the courts are also to be restricted.

The Tamils' fight to stay, backed by UKIAS and Labour MPs, is a significant part of the wider growing resistance in Britain to the injustice and racism of immigration controls. Links are being made between individual campaigns, giving increased solidarity to the anti-deportation movement.

The Marion Gaima Campaign in Hackney is stepping up action by calling a public meeting. Marion Gaima and delegates from the Hackney Anti-deportation campaign have visited Viraj Mendis in sanctuary and staged a 24 hour vigil at Manchester Airport.

Viraj, a black communist, has been in sanctuary in a church in Manchester since he was threatened with deportation to Sri Lanka in mid December 1986. The work of the Viraj Mendis campaign has inspired others.

On February 6th Rajwinder Singh, who has a mental disability, went into sanctuary in a temple in Bradford. In early January the "Bring Back Victoria Williams Campaign" was launched in West London, with many activists linking together to help David Williams fight for the return of his wife Victoria stranded in Ghana with no money and no familiy since she was deported in May last year.

By Kate Adams
Hackney North CLP

For the movement to continue to gain strength co-ordinated resistance to deportations is necessary. The Viraj Mendis Campaign has organised a conference for April 11th and 12th which will take place in the church in Manchester, the place of sanctuary and central focus of Viraj's resistance.

The Conference aims to win Viraj's right to stay and to start to pressure MPs and prospective parliamentary candidates to take sides and pledge themselves to support an amnesty for all those under threat of deportation, and to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 Nationality Act.

The issue of opposition to the racism of Immigration controls is a challenge to the left which must be taken seriously in the Labour Party. The NEC has voted to support VMDC, but it is crucial that in this General Election Year the Labour Party be seen to do more, giving our consistent backing and active assistance to all anti-deportation struggles. It is our future they are fighting for.

Contact VMDC at North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Manchester M15AL
For details of the Conference ring 061 234 3168

Editorial

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

No Cruise! And no NATO!

The prospect of a deal on intermediate range nuclear weapons, the so-called zero option, seems closer than ever before. Such a deal as would be welcome as a step towards the removal of weapons from Europe and eventual nuclear disarmament. The majority of the populations, both East and West, would view any such developments very positively. Moreover, any gain such as the zero option allows the anti-nuclear movement to make further demands.

But we should not raise our hopes too rapidly. First, no deal has yet been struck and there remain powerful forces on both sides opposed to any agreement; nor presumably would such a deal include European weapons such as the force de frappe in France and Trident here. Secondly it may be the way Reagan tries to save his domestic skin. Just as Nixon saw international diplomacy as a diversion from his domestic troubles, so Reagan may be hoping that an arms deal will revive his image as a "statesman". It will, he believes, vindicate him in "playing tough with the Soviets".

A similar message is being repeated on this side of the Atlantic by Thatcher and Owen. For them deterrance has been proved to work. "Our" nuclear strength has forced "them" to back down — and Star Wars has been saved into the bargain.

But is this really what is happening? Looking at it another way shows Gorbachov's offer as a timely intervention into the Atlantic Alliance, a propaganda coup. Reagan is reeling under the Irangate revelations, many of his advisors are resigning or being sacked, it is admitted that he was not adequately briefed for the Rejkjavik summit. Rather than Reagan being the elder statesman, demanding that Star Wars is not negotiable, Gorbachov in accepting it presents himself as peacemaker. This pushes in further the wedge between America and Europe.

All this seems at first sight bad news for Labour's defence policy, already looking shaky after Callaghan's repeat performance in the Commons. It may be difficult to answer those critics who say this offer proves the efficacy of deterrance within the terms of present Labour policy. But there is an answer.

First we can point to the pressure that the mass movement for disarmament both in America and Europe has had on all governments. While not at its most active at present, huge demonstrations on the streets of many capital cities, women's camps at Greenham and elsewhere against the siting of Cruise have had their influence.

Secondly, we can argue that the very notion that we have something to deter against is a lie. Every advance in the arms race, from strategic bombers to SDI, has been initiated by the Americans. This escalation has been used by imperialism to block anti-capitalist movements throughout the world and to mount a stranglehold on the Soviet Union.

Of course sections of Soviet society also have an interest in the Cold War, including the military. And the bureaucracy as a whole can use the spectre of American aggression to impose discipline and maintain its dominance. Yet in a planned economy more on arms means less elsewhere.

Military expenditure lessens the ability of Soviet leaders to respond to the material aspirations of the Soviet people. Quite simply, Gorbachov needs an arms deal to allow him to push through his economic modernisation.

The problem for Kinnock is that to counter Thatcher he must expose the myth of the "Soviet threat" and show that the real danger to peace comes from the imperialist alliance. To defeat the deterrance argument means to reveal that NATO has no defensive role, to reveal its real aggressive function. An anti-nuclear, pro-NATO policy is therefore hamstrung. It cannot accept the imperialist account of arms negotiations, yet it is incapable of proposing an anti-imperialist alternative.

At least the imperialists have the benefit of consistency and they have lost no time in taking advantage of Kinnock discomfiture. Not only the Thatchers and Owens, but also the Callaghans and Gilberts have done so. The right of the Labour Party understands that curent Party policy is contradictory and therefore unstable. Callaghan may have embarrrassed the leadership and his more subtle right wing colleagues by exposing the contradictions of the policy. But he has also spoken a simple truth. We cannot save unilateralism without dumping NATO.

Briefing Conference

Socialist Policies for a Labour Victory

Lambeth Town Hall
March 28th-29th

Saturday

Registration 10.30am
Opening Plenary
11am-1pm
Eric Heffer, Mildred Gordon, Narendra Makanji, Sinn Fein, Positive Images, Stevi Jackson, Jane Prust.

International Affairs
2-4pm
Workshops:
1. Getting Britain out of Ireland; *Nadine Finch, Sinn Fein*
2. NATO, the Warsaw Pact and Non-alignment; *Oliver MacDonald*
3. Breaking links with Apartheid; *Sian Moore*
4. Racism and British Imperialism; *Anita Patel*

Economic Strategy
4-6pm
Workshops:
1. Taking over the City; *Jeanette Findlay*
2. What kind of nationalisation? *Phil Hearse*
3. Fighting privatisation; *Geoff Martin, Dave Benlow*
4. Fighting for our economic policy; *Alan Thornett*
5. What kind of economic growth? *Andy Porter*
6. Crisis in Education; *STA speaker*

Evening Social
8pm, Camden Workers Social Club, Athlone St, NW5. Kentish Town tube.

Sunday
Registration 10.30am,
Social Policy
11am-1pm
1. Devolution and the national question; *Roland Sheret*
2. Restoring local democracy; *Joan Twelves*
3. The Tories' police state; *Martha Osamoor and Phil Murphy*
4. Tory attacks on the unions; *Liz Short and Tony Richardson*
5. "New morality" and the rights of the oppressed; *Terry Conway and Stevi Jackson*
6. Combatting the media; *Ken Loach, Julienne Dickey*

Closing Plenary 2-4pm
Speakers include:
Joy Hurcombe, John Palmer, Sharon Atkin, Graham Bash, Jeremy Corbyn, Hangers speaker

Food available both days
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Trade Union Briefing

Union News in Brief

Caterpillar

John Brannan, leader of the Caterpillar occupation, addressed a packed meeting of the Campaign Group at the Scottish Labour Party Conference in Perth.

He described how Kinnock's visit to the plant earlier that day had given a major boost to the morale of the workers "who are prepared to continue the occupation if need be until the next election."

He explained the links that have been forged with the other European plants and how they had agreed that if the management tried to evict the workers from the Uddingston plant the factories in France, Belgium and England would immediately go on strike.

The "Pink Panther" tractor built by the workers at the beginning of the occupation now sits in the main square in the centre of Glasgow opposite the Council Chambers. It was to have been handed over to the Scottish section of War on Want at a ceremony in early March, attended by the Nicaraguan ambassador, and then transfered to Nicaragua.

However, the company moved in with a court injunction to prevent this, saying no one could move the tractor as the company owns the parts. The workers claim 80% of the value is their labour time, and so there it sits in George Square, possibly more of an embarrassment to the Caterpillar management than had it gone to Nicaragua.

The latest threatening letter sent by recorded delivery to all the workers says:

"I must inform you that unless normal working is resumed by Monday March 23rd, at the latest, the company will abandon all attempts to have an orderly phased closure.

In that event, your employment would be terminated effectively on May 11th, and you would be mailed a cheque containing pay in lieu of notice plus any legal redundancy pay under your contract.

If all industrial action, including the illegal occupation, is ended and normal working resumed by March 23rd at the latest, the company will resume limited production operations at the plant for some months; guarantee no compulsory redundancies before July 16th; and negotiate redundancy pay in excess of legal entitlements."

Just how much in excess this payent will be is not clear, but it obviously poses a threat to the unity of the workers as management try to buy-out the dispute. A similar move came recently at the Golden Wonder Crisp factory in Scotland where a mass meeting rejected stewards' advice to fight the plant closure in the expectation of higher redundancy pay.

NUPE moves the goalposts

The NUPE bureaucracy is continuing its flight to the right. This time the NEC has decided to change the method of its election from "branch ballot" to individual ballot, in line with the Tories' 1984 Act, although at the same time it protests its "principled opposition to interference by government in the internal affairs of trade unions."

The current practice of branch ballot is hardly democratic with the winner of a vote at a branch meeting receiving a number of votes based on the total membership of that branch. In a union which has many shift and part time workers the system makes it difficult for union activists to vote, let alone the membership at large, many of whom have domestic commitments. The NEC's action does not change the overall position, just the appearance.

Not only is the NEC's action unconstitutional — only a rules revision conference or a ballot of branches can change the rule book — but also the new procedure has been rigged to make it even less democratic than the previous system.

All candidates can circulate an election address of 500 words, as before, but now they are banned from circulating any campaign material, from speaking to election meetings and spending any money on their candidature. Neither can any branch or member do anything.

At least under the old system someone was allowed to tell you who a candidate was — or more importantly what they stood for!

Interestingly there seems to be no mention of dissuading people from voting for a certain candidate. The bureaucracy may want the option of a witch hunt as well.

The purpose of this manoeuvre is clear. The NEC hope that the membership faced with a new system and one 500 word statement will vote for the Great and the Good, those who have been on the Divisional Councils, the National Committees and above all the NEC the longest.

After all the bureaucracy can't afford to have the union discussing politics in an election year, and besides what happens if one of those left wingers win? Or anybody wins!... It's better to stick with the old ways!

Hangers

Disputes committee members find it amusing that they are suspected of planting a bugging device in J.E Hangers' boardroom. Some would rather suspect senior BTR management or the DHSS!

The six months anniversary of the lock-out saw a local demonstration and an official event outside BTR's headquarters in Vincent Square. Speakers, including MPs Alf Dubs and John Fraser, the Anti-Apartheid movement, Peter Hain and union officials were recorded and photographed by management.

At least 1,000 patients have complained officially. It is the DHSS's fault they are not receiving immediate attention.

The local community still supports the strikers. Putney YS have now raised £1,000, including £200 from Roehampton estates in the past five days.

The disputes committee will be at the Regional Labour Party Conference, and at the *Briefing* conference on March 28/29: come and say hello, and give us your support!

Send messages of support and donations to TASS, c/o Steve Blease, 520 London Road, Micham, Surrey. CR4 4VQ.

Kathy Pick, Wandsworth councillor, Putney CLP

More sell-outs on the way in SOGAT

A blank cheque for speed-up, job-slashing and new technology, with a built-in get-out clause for employers who can't afford to pay the nationally-agreed increase, are just two of the delights on offer to thousands of SOGAT members covered by the General Printing Agreement with the British Printing Industries Federation.

This year's deal, recommended for acceptance by SOGAT's Executive and by Brenda Dean, offers weekly pay increases ranging from £6.06 for most of the union's women workers up to £6.85 for craft workers.

But the BPIF have stipulated that "where a critical situation exists (in a member firm) as a result of this Agreement, the companies concerned should notify their employees, the unions and the Regional office of the BPIF... so that direct discussions can take place on means of alleviating the problems involved."

In other words employers pleading bankruptcy will wriggle out of paying the new national scales: no employer will pay up who doesn't want to.

But there is no such ambiguity about the SOGAT leaders' commitment to open-ended speed-up of production:

"It is agreed that management and chapel representatives will *co-operate fully* in identifying, discussing and implementing **any changes necessary** to achieve increased output and lower unit costs through the most effective use of people, materials and machines."

By Harry Sloan

Any SOGAT chapels baulking at this categoric commitment to speed-up their own members will come under combined pressure from management and their own officials:

"Co-operation between managements and chapels will be encouraged (!) and supported at Regional, Section and National levels of the BPIF and Branch, Regional and National levels of SOGAT."

Free hand

Inevitably linked to this, in the aftermath of the Wapping betrayal, is the question of new technology. Again SOGAT negotiations have given management a free hand:

"Increases in efficiency and the reduction of unit costs can only be achieved through efforts being made at individual company level, **including the introduction of new technology to its full potential**. (!) The parties encourage regular discussions on means of improving all aspects of performance."

In other words, SOGAT and BPIF officials will periodically meet over drinks to swap yarns over the jobs axed under this deal and under previous clauses relating to "efficiency, productivity, and flexibility of labour".

While SOGAT has grovelled to every demand of the employers, they have got back virtually nothing in terms of their claim for improved conditions and agreements.

No concessions were made on SOGAT demands for a national sick-pay scheme, paternity/maternity/bereavement leave, or full adult rate at 18 years of age.



PHOTO: Andrew Wiard (Report)

SOGAT banners on the Wapping anniversary demo

The employers have generously agreed however that "a driver who makes an authorised overnight stop shall be reimbursed for reasonable lodging and meal expenses." (!)

SOGAT leaders accept without question that:

"Costs must be recovered through increased efficiency; and that the industry's manpower, plant and equipment must be deployed fully and effectively... to improve profitability."

The conflicting interests of SOGAT *members*, in defending their jobs, maximising their wages, and improving conditions, don't figure in the agreement: but then they would come as quite a shock to Brenda Dean and her sell-out team in the SOGAT leadership.

Austin Rover/Leyland: workers hit back

Privatisation is the key issue

The Tories are keeping quiet about their real strategy for British Leyland, while they set about implementing it piece by piece.

At the centre of the plan is privatisation.

The company has been putting aspects of the work in its plants out to private tender for a long time. Sweepers and toilet cleaners were the first of them: the latest plans include contracting out the bailing of scrap metal at the Cowley Body Plant, and trim shop work at the same plant.

Meanwhile, whole sections of the original corporation have been sold off. Jaguars was the first to go, and SU Butec has gone up for grabs, with Unipart the latest on offer. The sale of these alone puts a question mark over the viability of the company.

Now comes the agreement to sell the majority of the truck side to DAF. The deal includes closure of the foundry, and closure of the Scammel plant at Watford.

The Tories have also been hawking around the skeleton of the rest — the Austin Rover Group.

They almost concluded an agreement to sell it to Ford, — a deal which would have brought wholesale closures. Under a storm of hostility, the government backed off: since then, they have tried to interest Honda in becoming a major shareholder.

By Tony Johnson

At the same time management have been running down the model range, so that apart from the ageing Metro and the Montego, there will soon be only so-called "joint" models with Honda — effectively just modifications of Honda models — on the list.

The fact that the Tories only want to sell off BL is confirmed by the admission in Parliament that they made the government reveal to Ford all their forward plans and costings. Ford were then able to use these figures and Metro costings to introduce discounts and win a greater share of the market.

What have the unions and Labour Party done? Over the DAF sale, both the unions and Labour leaders quibbled as to whether the shareholding should be 60-40 or 50-50: this is an unmistakable sign that they have no intention of renationalising the firm.

The trade union bank "Unity Trust" actually offered to help finance a management buy-out (privatisation by another name) at Land Rover.

At local level there has been only verbal opposition to the sell-offs. At Unipart, the Senior Steward at Cowley told a mass meeting that he was himself buying nearly £200 of shares, and that they should do the same!

There has been little opposition to contracting-out of work — even to non-union firms. In several plants — like Unipart, Swindon Body Plant and SU Butec, the company has been allowed to introduce production labour on short-term contracts.

Fearful of "rocking the boat", union leaders pushed through a pay deal last November which gives only 5% with strings — over 2 years!

Encouraged by these retreats the company has become so arrogant that the bonus in all the main plants has dropped to wipe out almost the whole pay increase: in Cowley, wages are now only 50p above the level before the review, while Swindon are *down* £5! This was the deal about which TGWU negotiator Mick Murphy said he was "over the moon".

Force

The company is also trying to force in a new shift system involving four 9.75 hour shifts, with no premium payments.

With conditions under attack, there is also tremendous speed-up taking place. At Cowley Body plant management have tried to force skilled workers onto production work.

The shop floor response has been different from their official leaders. A 5-1 vote for strike action by skilled workers at Cowley forced management to retreat. A mass meeting at Swindon voted against acceptance of the new shift system.

At Cowley Body Plant, Rover 800(XX) workers have been banning overtime for 6 weeks over the bonus cuts. Others have promised to join the action if their bonuses sink below £20 again. This militancy comes despite a decision from a full meeting of Body Plant shop stewards to urge the overtime ban be called off.

strikes

At Longbridge, too, there have been strikes over bonus payments. 200 stopped work recently when management sacked a worker without going through procedure: but the unions' works council persuaded them to return to work.

What is needed now is for the simmering militancy and frustration on the shop floor to be united and given class conscious leadership. This must be linked to a fight for a socialist solution to the crisis of the motor industry.

Instead of the company's books being opened to Ford management, they must be opened up to shop floor committees, as part of the fight for workers' control of a nationalised car industry.

NUM fight back to defend jobs

Six day week? No thanks!

The appalling decision of the South Wales Executive to endorse 6-day coal production at the proposed super pit MARGAM in the hope of gaining 800 possible mining jobs amounts to a betrayal of the membership and National Union.

This betrayal and blinkered go-it-alone policy is even worse than the scab sabotage tactics of the N. Nottinghamshire UDM leadership in the 1984-85 strike.

The year long strike was precisely a battle against pit closures and jobs losses.

More jobs and pits will be lost, and a speed up of the closure programme is not too hard to imagine if you consider the wider implications of 6 day coal production. The mining industry does not have an expanding market for coal.

At best the market is static and it is probably reducing, due to the increased competition from Nuclear Power (recent Sizewell report), imports and expanded open-cast coal production in Britain.

If 6-day production becomes the norm for superpits, then the Selby coalfield's predicted production of up to 13 million tonnes per annum from less than 4,000 miners, linked to another super pit such as Kellingly's 1 million tonnes, could soon produce an achievable joint target of 17 million tonnes per annum.

By D. Parkes
NUM Yorkshire Area rank and file

Where is this additional coal going to be sold in a fixed market? How can smaller seamed mines, starved of investment, compete with potential Output per Man Shift (OMS) reaching 10 tonnes at these super pits! Average OMS today is between 3 to 4 tonnes.

If there is no room in the market, then obviously the smaller seamed mines, less able to compete, will be closed, with resultant jobs losses.

I urge all miners who are aware of their own pit's geology to bear in mind where these pits for closure are. They may be **yours**; one of them is definitely **mine**!

The Coal Board's 6 day week, planned for S. Wales, is also linked to a 9½ hour shift pattern. What time would you start and finish on a Saturday afternoon?

Resistance

These proposed changes must receive the maximum resistance from the membership, giving support for National Union policy as decided at annual conference.

It is Union policy to fight for improved working conditions, a 4 day week, and 6 hour shift for no loss of pay.

A report by members of Bradford University Energy Group, headed by Jonathan Winterton, clearly proved that the Union policy can be paid for out of the profits reaped from increased production that New Technology would inevitablly generate. Winterton's report was presented to the NUM Executive in early 1985 and was also used as the base for a Channel 4 Diverse Reports documentary.

The National Executive decision on Thursday March 12th to call a National Delegate Conference should be applauded.

Whatever decision is reached by the Conference must be ratified at pithead branch meetings, where the facts can be put and discussed by the membership, and a democratic vote recorded. A show of hands at branch meetings, after the membership have discussed out the full implications, is by far the most democratic way of testing the feelings of the National membership.

Calls for a secret national ballot should be dismissed, because, as was clearly shown in the 84/85 dispute, the Coal Board will use every dirty media trick in the book to try and sway the ballot.

The National Union does not have the resources available for it to combat the filth that will be pumped out by the media, or to campaign adequately against the blatant lies encompassed in resolutions put forward by the S. Wales Executive members.

If it is not right for a miner in a long life pit to vote to close pits in Wales and put Welsh miners out of a job, how can it be right for Union bureaucrats to decide that the miners who pay their wages must work a longer day and a longer week?

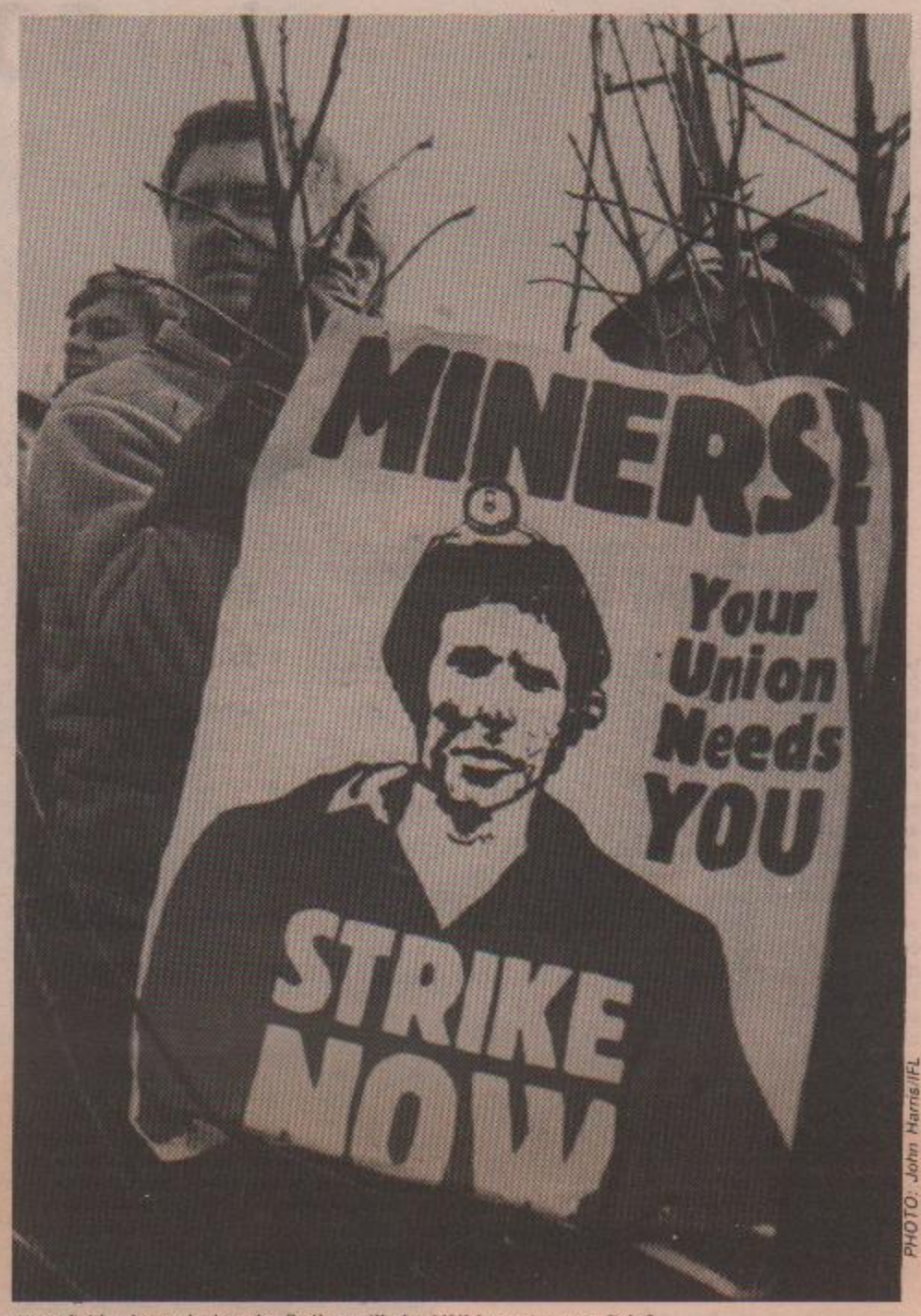


PHOTO: John Harris/IFL

Mansfield miners during the Strike; will the NUM continue to fight?

What's behind the proposals?

The Coal Board are piling on the pressure. So far the Board's approach has been furtive to force in drastic changes in working practices colliery by colliery. Now they are showing their hand forcefully on Margam, by demanding acceptance of continental shifts.

What's at stake?

● Productivity

"A productivity target of 10% yearly increase should be within our reach."
—Sir Robert Haslam to the Coal Industry Society, March 2nd, 1987

The Board want an overall Output per Man Shift (OMS) of 6 tonnes, up from an average of 3.25 tonnes at present! This productivity increase is to be delivered by forcing through The Wheeler Plan — heavy duty face equipment, 6-day coaling, 8 or 9 hour shifts, changed roles for craftsmen, deputies and other grades, new incentive schemes and deregulation of health and safety.

● Jobs

"The natural wastage on that (the total workforce) is something like, I would guess, 12,000 a year, maybe more."
—Sir Robert Haslam to the Commons Energy Committee, November 5th, 1986

The effect of the Wheeler Plan on jobs would be savage. Up to 50,000 jobs would be lost — 12,000 a year over four years. The deep mine output of 90 million tonnes would be produced by only 70,000 men. Even if demand for coal picked up, the extra production would be taken from hi-tech superpits like Selby, which require few miners.

In Yorkshire, militants opposed to the new scheme have begun to set out a detailed explanation of the issues at stake. This leaflet published by Dearne Valley NUM spells matters out most clearly.



PHOTO: John Chapman

● Pits

Increased output from hi-tech pits and mine complexes would be used to close lower tech pits and merge others.

● Working conditions and safety

"We realise that to bring about the kind of changes Mr Wheeler is outlining, there would have to be quite radical changes in legislation."
—Sir Robert Haslam to Energy Committee

"Out-moded restraints, such as the 1908 Hours of Work Act and the 40 year old, five day week agreement, must be removed."
—Sir Robert Haslam to Coal Industry Society

It took a century of bitter struggle to win the 1908 Act and another 40 years to win the 5-Day Week Agreement. These hard-won gains provide a very real protection to miners and their families.

The Board have been putting pressure on the Health and Safety Executive. It came as no surprise that the HSE is now trying to replace the 1954 Mines and Quarries legislation. The HSE has drafted a series of vague regulations and non-statutory Codes of Practice to replace our safety regulations. The NUM, NACODS and the TUC are blocking this attempt to downgrade safety in the pits.

● The First Targets

The Margam Drift Mine must be sunk. But it won't be producing for 5 years. **The first targets for 6-day coaling and 8-9 nour shifts are the high investment pits in every coalfield and pits awaiting major investment.**

Haslam has already told Selby miners they must work 6 days. Miners in the coastal pits of the North East have been told to accept 9 hour shifts **now**.

The Wheeler Plan makes it crystal clear — six day coaling and longer shifts must be introduced **in all collieries**.

The Board are desperate to get the 1908 Act amended. They are demanding a commitment to a CONCEPT at Margam. **Such a commitment would make it possible for The Board to ask the Tories to amend the Act. The Board are bargaining 780 jobs at Margam for 50,000 that would be lost in every coalfield, including South Wales.**

● NEC

The National Executive Committee said the South Wales Area must organise Margam. It also agreed that the condition on hours and the working week must be subject to national negotiations. One Area Union cannot negotiate these issues for all miners.

Faced with these tremendous pressures, we must:

● Maintain our unity
● Defend the hard-won gains of the past
● Demand national negotiations
● Demand that real benefits come to miners from the new technology
—a shorter working week
—a shorter working life
—better conditions
—improved safety.

National Miners' Broad Left
2nd National Conference
FIGHT MARGAM
BLACKMAIL!
Saturday March 28th
10.30am prompt
Lecture Hall, New Library, Chesterfield
One industry - one union!
Open to all members of TUC affiliated mining unions
For a four day week - but not on these terms!

Credentials can be obtained in advance from the Broad Left National Secretary, 41, Neath Road, Maesteg, Mid Glamorgan; cost £2.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Shadow cabinet: policies for women?...

London's Left after Hewitt

Following the result of the Greenwich by-election and the deliberate leaking of Patricia Hewitt's letter to Frank Dobson MP regarding the "London effect", it is time for the left as a whole to examine this dangerous attempt to divide us.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

It would be completely wrong to abandon the equalities polices that are now the object of so much Fleet Street hate. These polices have been popular before, and if properly presented and argued for, can be popular again.

The real issue is *what is behind the smears?*

The motives of right wing journalists are simple enough: they want to see Mrs Thatcher in Downing Street for a third term, and believe the best way to ensure this is to mount an offensive against Labour Councils in London, concentrating on matters such as assistance to lesbians anc gays, where prejudice is being fanned by the growing hysteria round AIDS.

But a second group of people has a vested interest in undermining the London left. They are to be found in the right wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party, many of whom believe that the General Election is already lost, and who are preparing the ground for an attempt to instal a more "acceptable" Gaitskellite leader and policies on the back of a campaign to blame "loony left" Councils for a third election defeat.

This is why the Hewitt letter was leaked; and, if the party's standing in the polls continues to deteriorate, we can expect to hear more of the same.

In response, the left needs to examine carefully its long-term interests and objectives.

I take it that we want to see genuine equality in society; and, fundamentally, the rebuilding of a left alliance to challenge the right inside the Party.

This cannot take place if we allow a situation to develop where most of the non-London left *believe* that London is "in orbit". There can be no rebuilding of the alliance on that basis. If we are to rebuild anything at all from the devastation that Thatcher and Kinnock in their separate ways have imposed, then we must go back to class politics and reassert the importance of a socialist economic analysis of British capitalism in the 1980s.

This means *not* writing off the working class as instinctively racist and reactionary on issues of equalities, as is sometimes done today.

It also means persuading comrades outside London that the social and economic problems in London are truly of epic proportions: some northern MPs berate the London Labour Party for its alleged excesses whilst maintaining that the "real people" they represent are far worse off.



Kinnock's electoral face: the bobby's friend...

- Inner London local authorities *have lost nearly £200m in Block Grant* since 1979;
- *Ten London Boroughs are the most deprived in the country*, according to the Department of the Environment's official index;
- *More than 1.3 million people in London are wholly dependent on means-tested supplementary benefits;*
- *500,000 Londoners are working full-time for less than £100 per week;*
- *London lost 52% of its manufacturing jobs between 1961 and 1981*, compared with a 27% fall for Britain as a whole;
- *There are more unemployed claimants in London than constitute the entire population of Bristol*, making it the largest concentration of unemployed in Western Europe;
- *The Inner London unemployment rate is now higher than that of Assisted Areas.*
- *The male unemployment rate in Hackney is 28% and in Tower Hamlets 27%* and 43% of the unemployed in Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Islington, Newham, Lambeth and Southwark have been on the dole for at least twelve months.
- *50,000 people a year are registering as being homeless* and Camden now has over 1,200 households in bed and breakfast accommodation;
- *There are 243,000 households on Council waiting lists in London* — with only 4,600 council and housing association homes being built;
- *More than 200,000 homes in London are unfit for human habitation;*
- *280,000 people in London* — equivalent to the population of Leicester — *have serious drinking problems;*
- *900,000 Londoners over retirement age are poor;*
- *London has a higher proportion of one parent families, and proportionately more children in care, than any other part of Britain;*
- *Racism is rife:* people of Asian origin are 50 times more likely, and those of Afro-Caribbean origin 36 times more likely, to be the victims of a racial attack than those who are white.

These simple facts, all gleaned from official statistics, demonstrate beyond doubt that London's working class is deeply oppressed and exploited. Salubrious areas of Park Lane, Jermyn Street and Regent's Park are not representative of the city as a whole!

Given the appalling scale of London's deprivation, we cannot avoid our own responsibilities. We have got to recognise that the record of some of our own local authorities and GLC-successor bodies leaves a great deal to be desired:

- Some London authorities are not genuinely under political control by Labour Groups. Bureaucraies do their own thing and departmentalism is rife.
- Second, some left wing politicians believe that there is an automatic connection between the passing of a resolution in Group or Council and the implementation of that policy on the ground. Would it were so! There is a complicated chain of events intervening, as any casual viewing of "Yes Minister" will reveal.
- Some of the services provided by local authorities are truly appalling. Housing repairs that don't get done; streets choked with litter; convoluted and brain-deadening procedures — all contribute to an image of London Labour in power that is negative, boring and not user-friendly.

Too few Councils are making a serious effort to overcome the dreadful legacy of the past. But socialists are judged *by what they do* as well as by what they say: we must redouble efforts to remake the local authorities in London in our own image. It is *not* just a question of resources; it is also a question of skill, organisation and commitment too.

Our credibility in the working class is low. On the big, predominantly white council estates, and in the tower blocks and maisonettes there is genuine despair and alienation. We have to show that we have answers to their problems — and not write such people off as racist reactionaries.

It is at present very easy for the right wing press and the SDP to exploit these structural weaknesses. Labour in London can mobilise enormous physical and financial resources, even now, to these problems — without in any way minimising our commitment to equality.

The Tories abolished the GLC because it was a political threat to their monetarist philosophy. London authorities are now on the line because of an unjustified press camapign. It would be disastrous if we did not learn the lessons of the past and allowed the Tories to question the existence of the Boroughs' present powers.

The Left in London must go on the offensive now against the right wing attempts to isolate it. But the left as a whole must also recognise the attacks on us in London as an attempt to isolate, divide and discredit us.

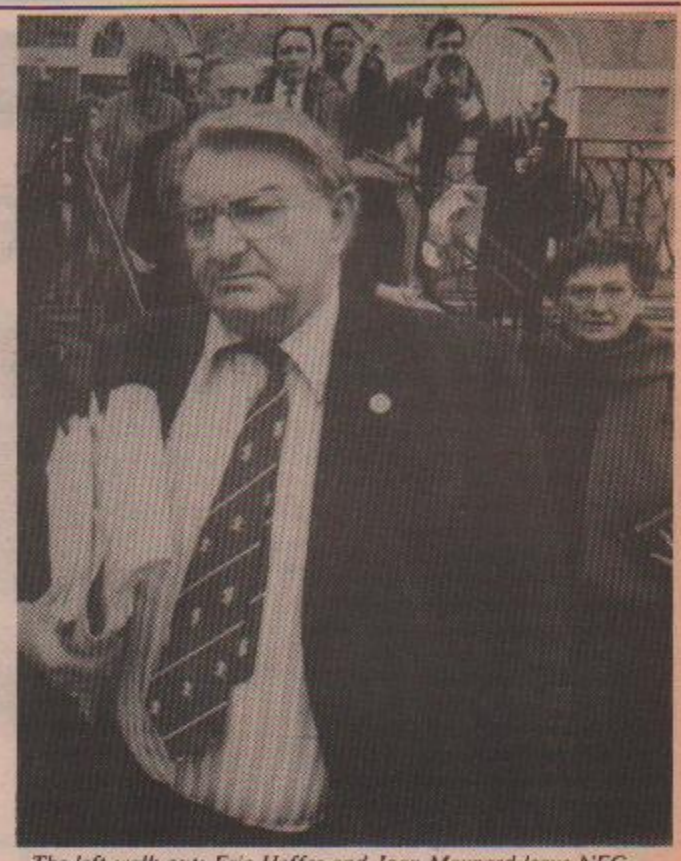


PHOTO: John Chapman

The left walk out: Eric Heffer and Joan Maynard leave NEC discussion on expulsions.

LWAC campaigns to disenfranchise Women's Sections

The Labour Party review of the women's organisation will see the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC) campaigning, amongst other things, for a proposal to reduce the representation of constituency women at Women's Conference.

By a Briefing Women correspondent

At present, each women's section and women's council, on whatever basis it is formed, is entitled to send two delegates to the National Conference of Labour Women.

The last LWAC AGM agreed:

"that delegates from women's sections and women's councils be based on two delegates for 500 women members of the CLP or part thereof and a further delegate for each additional 500 or part thereof."

This proposal suggests that delegates should be *limited* to two per constituency, to be elected jointly by its women's organisations or by women members of the constituency as a whole.

The proposal has been incorporated into one of LWAC's model amendments for women's conference in May, along with a suggestion that if a women's council covers more than one constituency, it should be able to send one delegate per constituency.

Unlike the rest of LWAC's proposals for the review, this one has hardly been discussed at all and many of those present at the AGM were apparently unaware of its implications.

If this were to be accepted by the Party it would disenfranchise most of the women's sections who now send delegates to the National Conference of Labour Women, and drastically reduce the numbers of women attending.

It is argued that this would be more democratic since it would stop small unrepresentative women's sections from sending delegates and give every constituency equal rights of representation.

But is it necessarily more democratic to give constituencies with no active women's organisations the same right of representation as one with several hard-working, campaigning women's sections?

Will this help us build a stronger women's organisation, as it is claimed, or will it weaken grass roots organisation? Do we want to reduce participation in the National Conference of Labour Women? Is this democratic or just bureaucratic?

LWAC executive be warned, there are mutinous murmurings in the ranks.



PHOTO: John Chapman

The left before Hewitt?

Black Sections AGM

Launching the Black Agenda



PHOTO: John Chapman

Black Sections banner on Justice for Black people demo

The Labour Party Black Section launched its election offensive at its fourth annual Conference in Nottingham on March 14th-15th.

The Black Agenda consists of the major issues of jobs, immigration laws, education, policing and anti-imperialism; all political parties will have to respond to these issues and the minimum demands being made by Black socialists.

The Black electorate cannot be taken for granted and will refuse to write the Labour Party a blank cheque. In every constituency, Labour will have to win the hearts and minds — and votes — of the Black communities.

By Narendra Makanji
Vice Chair, Labour Party Black Sections

The main debate of the day concerning Parliament was opened by Mike Wongsam from Manchester Labour Party Blck Section.

"The opening of a previously untried field of struggle has meant ramifications for us," he said. *"Experiences teaches us that it is not sufficient to have good policies and a strong organisation at the base if we are to add the parliamentary struggle to our armoury. We need to put in place structures whereby parliamentary activity is under the democratic control of our collective structures."*

Wongsam acknowledged the presures that PPCs and MPs would face and called on all Black Sections supporters to escalate political activity as a whole.

Accountability is also about supporting Black candidates (and MPs) continuously. The debate was concluded by delegates voting to establish a Parliamentary Black Section which would have two delegates on the LPBS National Committee. .

The debate on "Immigration and Nationality" was opened by Cllr Sanjiv Vedi of Hounslow BS. Cllr Vedi warned the Conference about *"the concerted effort towards repatriation"* being made by the supporters of the Tory government. Black people have had their rights reduced, suffered degrading treatment dished out by immigration officers, subjected to virginity tests, experienced police raids at home and work, kept waiting to be "allowed" in — and, then, labelled as a problem!

The Conference passed a resolution opposing the imposition of visas on visitors from six Black nations and agreed to campaign for the complete eradication of all Immigration laws.

On education, the LPBS noted the organised and orchestrated opposition to racial equality in education. This opposition has taken the form of speeches from Tory Party leaders, articles in the press and publications from the right wing ideological organisations.

This onslaught has conferred respectabilty to racism and authorities such as Brent, Bradford and ILEA have been targetted for attack. The effect has been the increase in racist attacks on Black students and pupils — including the murder of a schoolboy in Manchester. The Conference called for a campaign to:

- make racism a dismissable offence — for pupils and staff;
- achieve full and equal participation by Black parents;
- combat "under-achievement" due to racist teaching with an immediate allocation of £5m to each educational authority;
- recognise community languages as a birthright and be taught at all levels beginning in nursery schools.

The debate on policing was opened by Cllr Julian Lewis of Vauxhall LPBS who called on the government to make the police put their own house in order before expecting greater co-operation from Black people. *"Given the deeply rooted racism,"* he said, *"we do not believe the police force is a job fit for Black people."* The Conference called for:

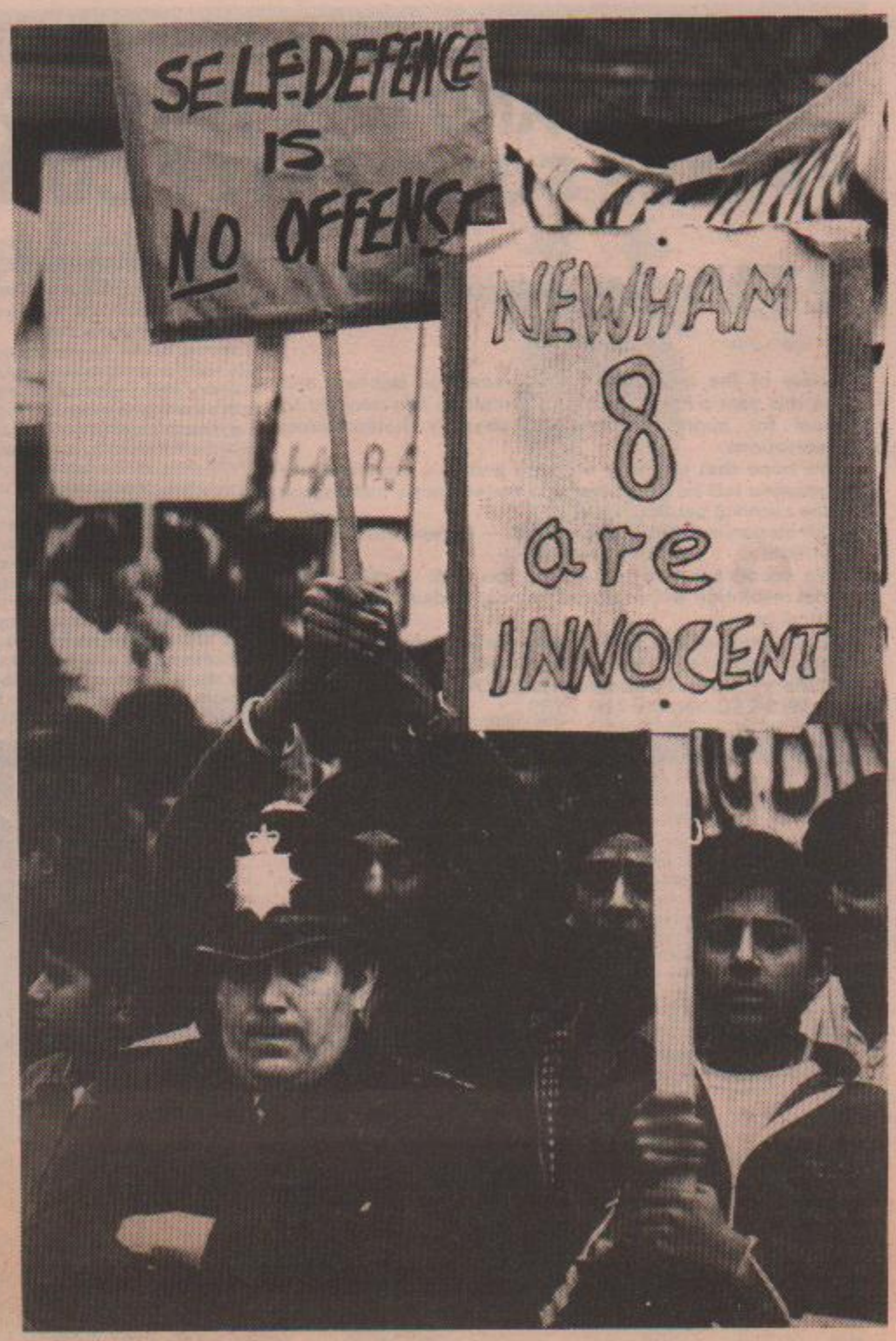


PHOTO: Andrew Ward/Report

Newham 8 demo

- a ban on the use of plastic bullets, CS gas, firearms and other life-endangering equipment;
- the repeal of 1984 Police Act, the Public Order Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Conference also called for an inquiry into the mysterious deaths of a young soldier and of two Black computer programmers working on the Star Wars project. (A third scientist is reported to have disappeared)

Birmingham BS resolution called for a campaign to encourage more Black people to vote Labour and to keep up the pressure to make anti-racism an issue in the election. Introducing the resolution, Altow Burnett of Birmingham BS explained about the three Cs of Black politics, Consciousness, Confidence and Commitment. He also promised major changes in Birmingham politics in the coming months.

The National Committee's Annual Report stated categorically *"We are about power, not sterile oppositionism. Ours is not to sit on the sidelines and whimper. We reject the old godfather politics. We have to to get stuck into the task of self-organising and fighting for democratic rights."* The Black political agenda has been set.

A story of chaos and confusion

RIDLEY IN WONDERLAND

Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley has invented a Wonderland world in which he changes the rules for local councils almost on a daily basis. Drink the potion, and grants get bigger; drink another, and they get smaller.

The latest tea-party involved the Greenwich court case.

By Reg Race
Tottenham CLP

The issues in the Greenwich case were the distribution of Block Grant to London Boroughs to "compensate" for abolition of the GLC, and the complaints of Boroughs such as Bromley, that the distribution of grant generally gave too much cash to inner London and too little to outer London.

Ridley had agreed with Bromley's case and proposed changes in the distribution of grant which would have lost cash for Boroughs such as Greenwich. This decision would have meant a chaotic situation for Boroughs that had lawfully made rates assuming the receipt of cash that now would not be arriving.

Greenwich appealed to the Divisional Court and won their case. Section One of the Rate Support Grants Act 1986 had validated all past determinations of RSG by Ministers made on or before January 21st 1986. This was introduced by Ridley to avoid challenges from Boroughs — now it provided the basis for Greenwich to stop Ridley changing his mind.

Boroughs will now be entitled to make rates on the decision in favour of Greenwich.

Boroughs adversely affected by the Divisional Court decision who have made a rate for 1987-88 on the basis of cash that cannot now be honoured because of the court decision are entitled to ask the High Court to quash the rate on the grounds that the budget was based on erroneous information.

The timetable for RSG announcements normally follows a clear pattern; a provisional announcement in July, with a final settlement following in December, giving ample time for authorities to construct their budgets.

This year, however the process has been marked by more than usual levels of muddle and confusion, with numerous changes to RSG sums made by the DoE since July 16th.

These changes have imposed great difficulties on members and officers of all local authorities, necessitating thousands of changes in budget documents at exceptionally short notice.

Meanwhile the latest **Local Government Fiance Bill**, whose basic purpose is to retrospectively validate the calculation and distribution of £68,000 million of RSG, has been through nearly all its Commons and Lords stages. Amendments moved in the Lords to limit the "judgeproofing" elements of Clauses 4(6) and 6(4) failed to be passed, on two occasions, by majorities of only 4 and 2.

The Rate Support Grants Bill is about to go to the Lords. It purports to end "flowback", at a cost to local government of some £400m in 1987-88, and allows Ministers to rejig Block Grant entitlements according to the circumstances of individual authorities or "descriptions" of authorities. The Bill also validates retrospectively past illegal discrimination between inner and outer London Boroughs.

The Local Government bill has received its Second Reading in the Commons, and went in to Committee on March 12th. Its main provisions are controls on deferred purchase and assistance by local authorities to housing associations and others, which are made subject to complicated consent procedures. It is clear that the Bill is badly drafted and that the Department itself does not understand the implications of its own legislation.



PHOTO: John Chapman

The Court has changed sides since Lambeth appealed!

LESBIAN AND GAY PRIDE CARNIVAL PARADE SOLIDARITY CONTINGENT

27th June 1987

In view of the mounting hostility towards lesbians and gays this year's Pride Steering Committee has decided to appeal for support from predominantly heterosexual organisations.

We hope that as many working people's organisations as possible will be represented in the solidarity contingent of the carnival parade.

Our slogan is *Equal Rights for All — Defend Lesbian and Gay Rights*.

We encourage you to take up the task of raising our model resolution within trades unions, trades councils and political parties.

If you would like further information concerning the work of the Pride Committee's solidarity work, please contact Mary Harper, 11 Rushton House, Albion Avenue, London SW8 2SE, tel. 01 720 7139.

Model Resolution:

This ..... rejects the attempts of the gutter press, bigots and right wing politicians to make use of the fear of AIDS to whip up hostility against gay men.

We are deeply concerned that the denial of rights to lesbians and gay men, and the increasingly common calls for greater repression are now being justified as legitimate "public health" measures.

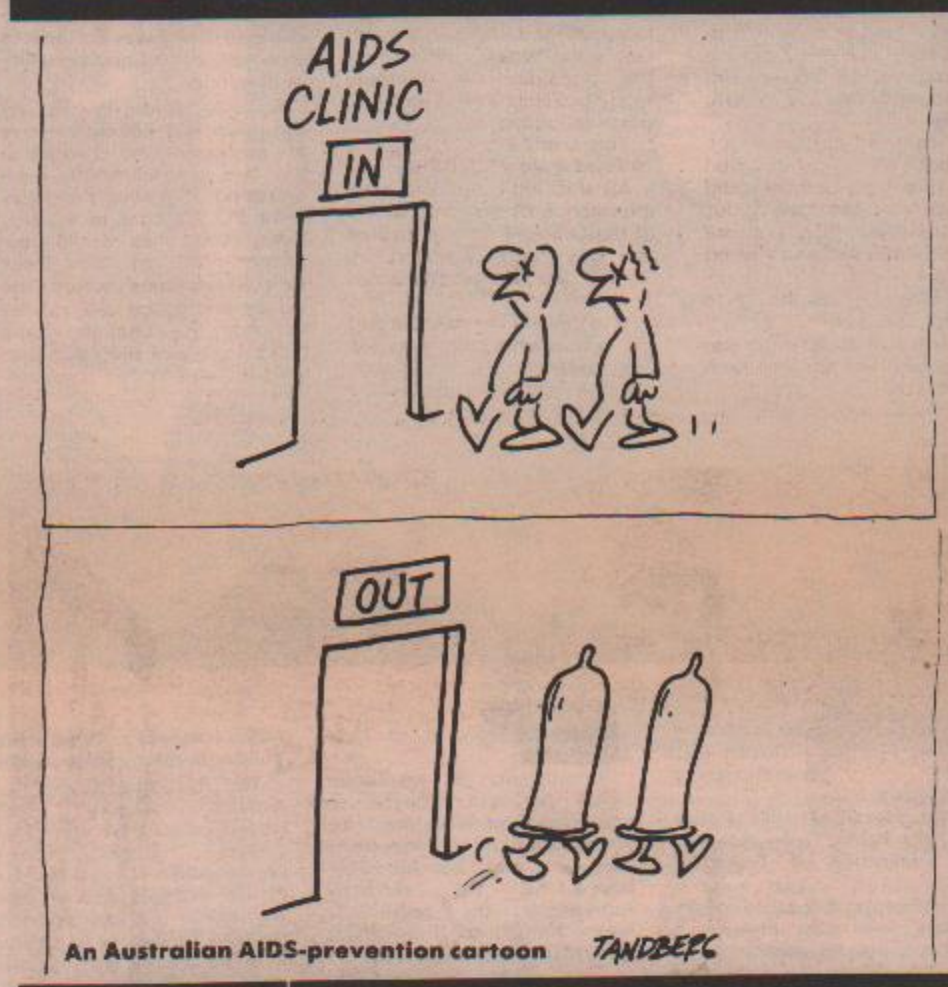
In view of the mounting violence, discrimination and hatred being directed against lesbians and gays we believe that it is imperative for this ..... to stand up and be counted.

We support the initiative of the Lesbian and Gay Pride Weeks Committee in working for the most widespread attendance of working people's organisations at the Pride Carnival parade.

We support the organisers' standpoint of *Equality for All — Defend Lesbian and Gay Rights* and we resolve to send our banner and as many of our members as possible to march in solidarity behind the lesbian and gay organisations in London on June 27th, 1987.

Please add a clause pledging a donation, if the standing orders of your organisation permit this.

Please return a copy of the resolution you passed — including any amendments made to the model, and numbers of votes for, against, and abstaining — to Mary Harper, c/o 11 Rushton House, Albion Avenue, London SW8 2SE.



Condoms, closets and families

If you were to believe the TV's new "pop into (safe) sexual politics" bonanza then you might get the idea that the future for young lesbians and gays is quite bleak — that we have nowhere to go but the closet.

These are the AIDS years, time for "restraint", "responsibility"... condoms and heterosexual monogamy.

The family and the pack of 3 are back in fashion, is the message, just in time to save us from ourselves and the new plague!

We are told that the more sex we have, and the more people we have it with, the bigger the risk that we'll catch AIDS. Yet AIDS is not a punishment

By Alistair Chisholm
Brighton Pavillion CLP

handed out to the brazen and the naughty, it is a disease you may get if the HIV virus gets into your blood. You can make sure that when you have sex you don't get infected. So why are Mr Fowler and his friends trying to turn concern about AIDS into a public relations exercise for the family?

As far as young lesbians and gays are concerned the family is the institution which tries to condition us. We often first become aware of our sexuality as something **wrong** which stops us from fitting into that pattern — the family — which society lays out for us.

It is often very difficult or impossible for young lesbians and gays to come out in or be accepted by their families. We are nearly always seen as on the fringes of society — outside mainstream family life.

The family of course doesn't only try to condition young lesbians and gays, but tries to develop everyone along the lines of its blue-print. The family is the private sphere of life which gets us ready for the public sphere — makes us ready for work, ready to settle down inside society's boundaries.

Suffocating

How does the family affect young lesbians and gays? How can we break the suffocating grip of the family so that society takes on childcare and domestic labour instead of leaving it to the family (i.e. women)? And how can society take over teaching people about their sexuality so that we do not have the family's all-embracing blueprint imposed on us?

We can't just say we're against the family — what can we replace it with? It is important that the left gets to grips with questions like these and has some real answers. And just as importantly we have to be able to take up the fight on these questions and we can't just hope that the problem of the family will go away come socialism.

AIDS and politics of heterose



Young women demonstrating for their right to choose

The main priorities identified by the left in relation to AIDS are:

- **to campaign for the best care for sufferers;**
- **to counter the dangers of homophobia and moralism;**
- **to promote safe sex rather than less sex to prevent the spread of the disease.**

I would not quarrel with these aims, but if we are serious about the last one we need far more discussion of sexual politics than has so far been evident in the left press.

Little has been said about sexuality, about what "safe sex" might mean for our sexual relationships or the different consequences it might have for women and men.

Heterosexuality has been treated as totally unproblematic. The range of male sexual practices which feminists have identified as oppressive to women have been completely ignored. It is particularly important that we rectify this now since young heterosexuals are becoming the main target of public information campaigns — the content of which is often grossly sexist.

Feminist critiques of "normal" heterosexual practice, around since the early '70s, could form a basis for defining safe and non oppressive sex. Most of the left, however has reverted to a pre-feminist libertarian stance on sexuality, as if the women's movement never existed.

Yes, we need to challenge assertions that only life-long heterosexual monogamy can save us from AIDS. We do need to promote safer sex. But we need to think about what we are advocating.

Preaching sexual salvation via the condom — the dominant message from the left — simply will not do. We should be questioning the priority given to penetrative hetero-sex, raising the possibility of alternative forms of sexual activity. Above all we should confront head on those definitions of "normal" sex which oppress women and which define lesbians and gays as abnormal.

We cannot talk about "safe sex" while ignoring gender or women's oppression. Much of the discussion of "safe sex" assumes that sex before AIDS was safe and spontaneous, but now we have to sacrifice spontaneity for safety.

By Stevi Jackson
South Wales Briefing

That "spontaneity" has been achieved by women sacrificing their safety has been completely ignored.

Spontaneous sex, uninterrupted by thoughts about "precautions", depends on women weighing up the relative risks of cancers and thrombosis from the pill or pelvic infection and inflammation from IUDs — let alone those 'minor" side effects like persistent thrush or heavy and painful periods.

Even the drastic step of sterilisation is neither 100% safe nor 100% effective.

Heterosexual sex has never been safe for women. Not only have we have to cope with inadequate contraception, unwanted pregnancies, the physical and mental traumas of abortion, but also with disease.

Cervical cancer is directly linked to the act of heterosexual penetration — it is almost unknown in life-long lesbians and celibates. Other sexually transmitted diseases — particularly chlamydia and gonorrhoea are less easily detected and potentially far more damaging in women than in men.

What is new about AIDS is that in heterosexual relationships both men and women are equally at risk, that men have now to think of their own safety. Over the last two decades the average heterosexual man has become so used to hassle-free sex that he now accepts it as a god given right.

It strikes me that the "on with the condoms and away with all fears and inhibitions" approach is a panic-stricken attempt to cope with the loss of this male

"Break the suffocating grip of the family" ***"What is***

l the of xuality



prerogative. I am not denying the threat AIDS poses for us all, merely pointing out that the slogan "safe sex" sounds somewhat glib to many women.

Male sexuality poses other threats for women, not least the constant threat of violence. Rape, sexual harassment and the widespread use of pornography are not abberations but extentions of "normal" masculine sexual practice and the macho ethic of sexual conquest. Sex, or rather the act of heterosexual coition, fucking, is central to masculinity, a means by which a man *proves* himself a man. This is neither natural nor a symptom of the alienative conditions of capitalism.

Within our patriarchal heritage this one sexual act has long been associated with male power over women and this association persists. (Think of the metaphoric use of the word "fuck" as in "fuck you" or being "fucked over"; of all the terms which men use to describe this act which imply possession, appropriation, aggression and contempt).

Powerless

A man who is unable to perform this act is impotent, which means powerless. He is less than a man. The potency/power of the act in the male mind is revealed when it is used as a threat against stroppy women, often specifically against lesbians: "What she needs is..."

This also helps explain male phobias about gay men. Gay men are despised (they have not proven their manhood in relation to women) *and* feared (through the act of fucking they transform men into women). Underlying this is the heterosexual male's anxiety that he might not, after all, be a real man.

Masculine bragging rituals, pornography, etc., are where men prove to themselves, to women and above all to other men, that they are men. To be a man is not the natural outcome of being male. Masculinity is socially constructed and has to be constantly reaffirmed.

The dominant, "phallocentric", definition of sexuality revolves around this sex/power/masculinity association. It also, of course, ties sex to reproduction and ultimately to family relationships, with their subordination of women.

Of all the forms of sensual contact which lovers could potentially enjoy, the act of heterosexual coition is singled out as what sex is all about, as *the* sex act, as what sex *is*.

So only heterosexuals can have "normal" sex and anything they do other than fucking is either foreplay (leading up to the real thing) or petting (making do with second best). Male orgasmic pleasure is prioritised, since the clitoral stimulation required for female orgasm is an optional extra.

The patriarchal view of sexuality has always been phallocentric, has defined sex in terms of the penis. Safe sex could and should involve challenging this. All the emphasis on condoms, however, is reinforcing it.

I am not denying that many women can and do enjoy penetrative sex, but most find other forms of stimulation more pleasurable. Nor am I suggesting that fucking, in itself, is ideologically unsound, but that it should not be regarded as the essential culminating act of any sexual encounter. Gay men have been talking about deprioritising penetrative sex since AIDS became a threat. Feminists were discussing it long before anyone had heard of AIDS. It is about time the left as a whole took note.

Postscript

It strikes me that, given the amount of discussion on "safe sex" in the mainstream media, the left press is being very coy about it all. Shouldn't we contribute to the information available by publishing our own (hopefully anti-sexist) guides to safe sex? Or is it assumed that our readers are too well informed and well sussed out to need it?

How to stop the retreat on lesbian and gay rights

Support this campaign!



The best way to fight Kinnock's clampdown on Labour's lesbian and gay rights policy is to build the conference of the *Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign* on May 23rd-24th. THERESA CONWAY and JAMIE GOUGH explain why the law is important, and the changes that Labour should be campaigning for.

Most people know that the age of consent for gay men is higher than for heterosexuals.

What is less well known is that the law affects lesbians as much as gay men, and that legal repression is not mainly concerned with sexual acts. In fact, the law has much wider aims:

● The law tries to prevent young people growing up lesbian or gay.

One of the grounds on which young people may be taken "into care" is "moral danger". This is regularly used to take into care young people who are having gay *or* lesbian relationships, with adults *or* with other young people.

It is reinforced by the complete lack of general legal rights for young people. For example, students are expelled from school for coming out as lesbian or gay, with no possibility of legal redress.

The law also tries to keep young people from contact with openly lesbian and gay men, to stop them being "corrupted". Judges regularly discriminate against lesbians, and sometimes gay men, in cases involving custody or access to their children.

Even where lesbians have been allowed to live with their children, they have usually been forced to live apart from their lovers, and to not see them "in front of the children".

A major area of discrimination in employment against lesbians and gay men is in jobs connected with young people.

The law therefore runs in opposition to everything that "positive images" policies in schools are trying to achieve.

● Lesbians and gay men are discriminated against by the law in every important aspect of day-to-day life.

When John Saunders was sacked from his job in a young people's home on being found to be gay, the Employment Appeals Tribunal ruled that such sackings are perfectly lawful providing that the employer has a *genuine prejudice* against lesbians and gay men, even if that prejudice has no basis.

Lesbians and gay men are regularly and lawfully refused use of social facilities and advertising in newspapers. The rights that heterosexual spouses have to inheritance of property or housing tenancies and to citizenship do not apply to same-sex couples.

You are legally discriminated against just for being a lesbian or a gay man.

● Public expressions of lesbian and gay affection or desire are illegal.

Lesbians and gay men have been convicted for holding hands or kissing in the street. Though it is legal for a man to proposition a woman for sexual purposes in public, it is illegal for a man or a woman to proposition a man, or a woman a woman. The law only approves of one active form of sexuality!

Gay men in particular are systematically prosecuted under this law. Lesbians and gay men who are open about their sexuality in public are routinely harassed and beaten up by the police.

The effect of all this is to keep our sexuality hidden.

Political and social organisations of lesbians and gay men is repressed.

Our social organisation, information services and publications are harassed and restricted by the laws concerning "obscenity' and "indecency" and "conspiracy to corrupt public morals".

Recently, the Customs nearly succeeded in closing down Gay's the Word bookshop on the grounds that *anything* related to lesbian and gay sexuality is "indecent".

The law helps to keep us isolated from each other.

All this indicates the vital importance of the programme of the Labour Party on lesbian and gay rights adopted by 78% at the 1986 conference. This is:

● to declare that lesbian and gay relationships and acts are not contrary to the public policy of the law, as they are at present;

● to repeal all criminal laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men, on the basis that "there should be no crimes without victims";

● prohibit discrimination on grounds in any way connected with lesbian and gay sexuality or life-style.

As long as the courts and the police are set up as they are at present, no changes in the law can eliminate legal repression of lesbians and gay men. But changes in the law along these lines would take away many of the most vicious weapons which the judges and police use against us. And this change would make everyday prejudice and violence against us from the rest of society less respectable.



PHOTO: John Chapman

Lesbians and gays support the miners

Sponsor the Legislation for Lesbian and Gay Rights Campaign

The LLGRC is open to all those who agree with its aim — to campaign against legal discrimination against lesbian and gay people. It involves people from a wide range of lesbian and gay groups in different parts of the country. The Campaign is organising a major conference on May 23rd-24th in London. Please sponsor and send urgently needed donations to the campaign at: *Room 221, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP; 01 833 3860.*

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

safe sex?"

End legal discrimination!

Scottish Labour Briefing

For a socialist response to the housing crisis

At the end of February 1987 Glasgow District Council released the results of a housing survey which took two and a half years to complete and looked at one in nineteen of all houses in the city.

The survey was taken with the collaboration of the Scottish Development Department, the Scottish Special Housing Association and Strathclyde University.

The survey came about in part because of the government's refusal of repeated requests to undertake a UK survey of housing — for obvious reasons. The results show even more grounds for socialists to call for such a survey.

According to Baillie James McLean, chair of the council's housing committee, the survey revealed that the plight of Glasgow's housing was worse than the council had thought, particularly in the private rented sector. Here, 15,000 people lived in 6,000 properties without such basic amenities such as a wash hand basin or inside lavatory. The figures demonstrated that as much as 60% of privately rented housing needed substantial repair, a much higher proportion than previously believed.

In the public sector the main problems encountered were condensation and damp. Many of the newer buildings were designed for warmer, drier climates than Scotland, using porous materials which can quickly become water-logged if there are any faults in construction. Many were designed for heating by central heating systems. Apart from the many people who have been disconnected by the utilities over the past decade, many low income families are also forced to rely on sources of heating such as paraffin which gives off water as it is burned.

The report estimates that rectifying this situation in Glasgow alone will need £1.3 billion — £639 million in the private sector and £639 million for the public housing stock. And as Baillie McLean stated "what we are seeing in Glasgow could be repeated in every city in Scotland."

The effect of poor housing is not merely one of morale, though for working people this alone must be considerable. The effect on working class health must be considerable. It makes

By David Fowler
Asst. Secretary, COHSE
929, Larbert
personal capacity

no sense to discharge someone with a chest complaint home to a damp house. People suffering from diseases that affect mobility are virtually marooned in flats and tenements. No one knows the extent to which neuroses and anxiety states are caused by poor housing.

Government policy of discharging the mentally ill and handicapped into "the community" often means they are based in large poorly maintained estates and effectively ghettoized. Working class children have a higher incidence of cot deaths. The tragic list is endless.

Health will be a a major issue in the general election. But this is not merely a question of defending the National Health Service — important though this is. In the nineteenth century the most important breakthrough came with the securing of a clean water supply and the laying of public sewers which eliminated cholera and typhoid. Similarly, the next step to be achieved is not ensuring that everyone eats brown bread as claimed by Edwina Currie, but by ensuring adequate housing for all.

The Tory response to this problem has been cynical. First, they argue that the Rent Acts keep property out of the private rented sector. But how allowing a rent free-for-all would help those who are homeless, on benefits or badly housed is not explained. Presumably a "free" market would lead to a rise in rents; but under the "free market" system this would lead to a glut, and rents would fall, leading to a move away from renting as profits dropped. Even the logic of the Tories' own system doesn't work!

On public housing Tory spokespeople, often speaking from their second homes, point to the numbers of empty council houses, without acknowledging the fact that these are often so poorly maintained due to cuts in authority funds that they are virtually uninhabitable.

One of the leading Glasgow Tories, councillor Bill Aitken of Glasgow District Council, has called for the restoration of public sector grants to the former level of 90%. The labour movement's response to this should be that if public money is to be made available to private owners the work should be undertaken by unionised direct works departments, not by "lump" workers on piece rates.

The response of the Labour Party has been inadequate. District and regional councillors have argued that they have been able to fend off the Tories' attacks whilst complying with the law; yet this survey shows precisely the opposite trend. Jim Craigen, MP for Glasgow Maryhill, has written to Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, urging considerable funds to resolve the situation.

But meantime the Kinnock/Hattersley leadership have already made it plain that cuts will not be restored, let alone extra funds provided, and those councils such as Liverpool or Edinburgh who have used "creative accounting" to mitigate some of the worst effects of underfunding, will be left to sort out their own affairs as best they may!

Obviously, the labour movement cannot sit back and allow this to happen. Furthermore, it is not a matter which should be left to the unions directly involved. What is required is a plan for housing drawn up by the workers in the building trades, public sector unions, local authority workers, health workers and tenants associations. Such a plan should become the policy of all groups and unions involved, and above all of the Labour Party and the next Labour government.

If by some mischance, Kinnock and Hattersley manage to lose the next election on our behalf, and Scotland again returns a majority of Labour MPs, then we have to make sure that we achieve a Scottish Assembly able to take the urgent steps required to remedy this disgraceful state of affairs. The mental and physcial health of the Scottish working class demands it.

Scottish Labour Party Conference

Stage management avoids discussion of crisis

In the 1983 General Election the Labour Party, with 35% of the vote, captured 41 of the 72 parliamentary seats in Scotland.

In the 1986 Regional Elections, Labour's share of the Scottish vote rose to 45%.

Opinion polls consistently show the Labour vote holding at this level, which would mean an increase on the 41 seats at the next General Election.

Dominated

Such considerations dominated the 1987 Scottish Labour Party Conference in Perth. Donald Dewar, the Shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, set the target of winning 50% of the Scottish voters. The prospective parliamentary candidates for seats not held by Labour were given prime speaking time at the Conference, much of which was televised live in Scotland.

Unity was the theme from the platform. The agenda was well managed to keep controversy out. Neil Kinock restricted himself to a Tory-bashing speech and an emphasis on Labour's plan for jobs.

However, the crisis of the Scottish economy and the political scene kept showing through. One AEU delegate had to pack his bags and return home for Fort William after the first day of Conference when he received word of 160 job losses at Wiggins Teape paper mill where he worked.

Large delegations were present at Conference from the occupation at the Caterpillars, Uddingston, plant and from the closure theatened Golden Wonder Crisp factory at Broxburn. Emergency motions were passed pledging support for both struggles.

Political dilemma

The Scottish Assembly debate highlighted the political dilemma of Labour in Scotland — not so much from what was said as from what was not allowed to be said. Denis Canavan MP was not taken during the debate and it was left to a fringe meeting for Denis and others to discuss what should be done if despite Labour's overwhelming support in Scotland a Labour majority at Westminster was not won at the forthcoming General Election.

Choice

The choice could be between a crisis of the Labour Party in Scotland, or a constitutional crisis over the setting up of a Scottish Assembly. The Scottish Executive however, chose to put all their cards on a Labour victory at Westminster and no debate on this question took place on the floor of Conference.

Women's issues were once again not given a high profile, with Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities on the agenda at 4.35pm on Saturday.

The Chair took resolution

By Margaret Stewart
Delegate, Stirling
Women's Council
Rowland Sheret
Delegate, TGWU
both in a personal capacity

111 on the setting up of Equal Opportunities Committees by all Regional and District Councils. There is much debate in Scotland on this issue because many people feel that if an Equal Opportunities Committee is set up this replaces the need for a Women's Committee.

In debate the point was made that Equal Opportunities Committees and Women's Committees should be set up side by side.

Refused

Despite taking resolution 111, the Chair refused to take resolution 112 on strip searching — because it was *not* a composite! This resolution dealt with the humiliating and degrading practice of strip searching of women prisoners. A human rights issue, which deserved to be discussed, was dismissed as unimportant. Challenges against this decision were overruled by the Chair.

Women

Composite resolutions on equality for women in employment and supporting the establishment of a Ministry for Women and for a similar or comparable structure within a Scottish Assembly were fully supported — but none of the resolutions taken were fully debated because of the time limit.

Sunday morning at 9.35am, well before television coverage started, was the time scheduled for resolutions on Party Organisation and Constitutional issues. A composite in defence of the present Young Socialist structure was defeated and instead Conference passed a composite to establish Youth Campaigns.

Defeated

A composite asking for the principle of women electing women to represent them on both the National Executive and the Scottish Executive to be established, and welcoming a full review of the whole Labour Women's organisation, was defeated.

On a show of hands this resolution would have passed, but a card vote was called for and the union block vote, including the TGWU and GMBATU, ensured the resolution was defeated.

It would appear that the unions want the question of their representation clarified first before even agreeing to the basic principle being set up, which was the main theme of the resolution. It seems a pity that the unions took such a shortsighted view as they are assured of full participation in the review.

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.

Our response to Tory attacks on freedom

By Davy Jones
Islington South CLP

The Tories swept to office in 1979 determined that the working class and oppressed would pay for the international economic crisis. An important tool in their onslaught has been a vicious attack on social and democratic rights.

They have tried to silence opposition by restricting personal liberty; tried to divide the working class by reinforcing oppressions and playing on prejudice; and tried to weaken large sections of the working class by undermining the already faltering system of welfare provision.

The rich and the powerful are more deeply entrenched than ever.

A socialist social policy has to be rooted in socialist internationalism and economic policy. The first is impossible without the last two.

The deep roots or racism in British society cannot be challenged without tackling Britain's current and historical imperialist role. Racism is daily reinforced by Britain's role in Ireland, the Malvinas and other former "colonies". Nor can equal opportunities policies ever be effective without tackling the fundamental relations of economic power under capitalism.

Nowhere is the interrelationship of social, economic and international policy more evident than on matters of "defence". Only by changing our priorities, and turning funds from the misnamed "defence" budget towards spending on social need could sufficient funds be found to generate the expansion of welfare spending necessary to meet the needs of the most disadvantaged.

Briefing supports all those measures which weaken the centralised power of the state and the ruling rich it defends, and all those measures which strengthen the labour movement and the oppressed.

That's why we support devolution of power and the establishment of elected tiers of government in Scotland and Wales, and the re-establishment of strategic elected authorities in London and the Metropolitan Counties.

Key sections of the state apparatus are totally unaccountable and out of control. *Briefing* supports abolition of MI5/MI6, the election of judges, and bringing the police under local democratic control. Contrary to popular mythology the hard left's proposals would not lead to "Big Brother" but to an extension of real freedom and choice.

"Freedom" is something which the oppressed groups in society rightly demand. Enormous institutional discrimination still remains to be tackled against women, Black people, lesbians and gays, and people with disabilities.

These are not "minority" issues. They are "majority" issues for society as a whole, *and* for the labour movement. Reactionary laws remain on the statute book and are ruthlessly used by the police force and government agencies — immigration and nationality laws, laws against lesians and gays, laws which allow rape within marriage.

The labour movement has to commit itself not merely to repeating Tory constraints on the trade unions, but also to this whole battery of reactionary and divisive laws which maintain and reinforce oppression. Legislation is needed positively to enshrine the rights of women, Black people, lesbians and gays to real equality; and the labour movement needs to lead a campaign to turn the aims of such legislation into a living reality.

Briefing's conference on March 28/29th will be discussing all these issues. Below we print an article examining one aspect of the Tory attack on our freedoms and the history of the labour movement's response: the question of trade union rights.

The history of anti-union laws

Hands off our union rights!

Originality has never been a feature of Neil Kinnock's political style.

Every one of his policies is an almost farcical re-run of past failures of previous Labour governments.

So when Kinnock commits himself to retain whole sections of the Tory anti-union laws, including compulsory pre-strike ballots, he is simply following historic precedent.

The Wilson government of 1964-70 nailed its colours to the mast of "reforming the unions" — popularising this misleading term even before it was a glint in the eye of Margaret Thatcher or Norman Tebbit.

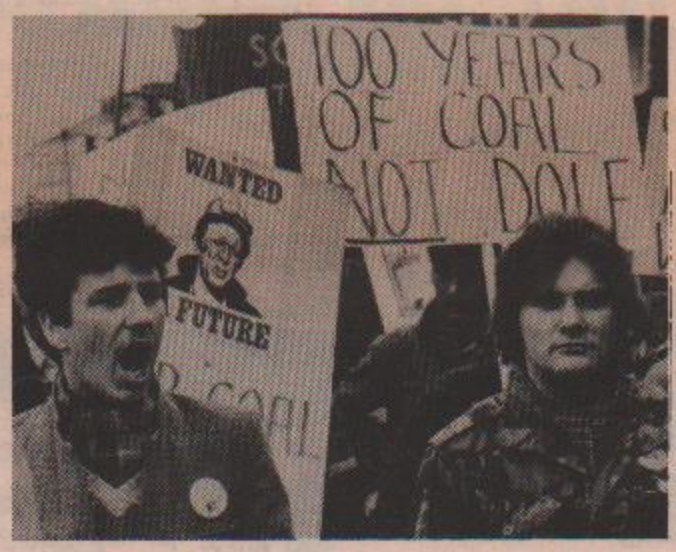


PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni/Report

Miners: stabbed in the back by Kinnock and the TUC leaders

By Harry Sloan

Wilson's Minister of Labour, Barbara Castle, set out to curb the power of the shop stewards' movement: in 1969 her White Paper *In Place of Strife* called for the establishment of a new type of industrial court, the "Industrial Board", with power to order strikers back to work for a 28-day "cooling off period", or force a secret strike ballot.

Castle was against enforcing compulsory ballots in every instance; she argued that they might offer militant members an opportunity to force their leaders into action! She also took steps to avoid embarrassing instances of workers being jailed for non-payment of fines imposed under the new laws — and suggested fines be levied directly from the pay packets of the "guilty" workers!

Union leaders adopted their customary two-faced attitude to these proposals. Publicly they denounced *In Place of Strife*; privately, they, too, longed for ways of controlling the strong and growing shop stewards' movement, and actually *supported* the new legislation.

For this reason it was the unofficial movement, the shop stewards' committees and other bodies, many influenced by the Communist Party and by the Trotskyists of the Socialist Labour League, which mounted the serious opposition to *In Place of Strife*.

The TUC bureaucracy, under presssure from both sides, eventually struck a deal with Wilson and Castle; the government would withdraw the legislation, in exchange for a TUC commmitment to crack down on unofficial strikes — and police their own members.

This was not seen as sufficient by the Tory government of Ted Heath, which came in determined to impose legal shackles on the unions. He forced through the Industrial Relations Act, which incorporated a whole new National Industrial Relations Court, with sweeping powers to order strikers back to work, order secret ballots, impose fines and financial sanctions, and utilise the full powers of any court to imprison workers held in contempt.

However, the strength of the shop floor movement across the unions meant that the jailed Pentonville dockers were set free, in the midst of a massive strike movement, and the authority of the new Court was effectively destroyed, in the summer of 1972. Heath's draconian powers on paper were never fully translated into a favourable balance of forces for the employers in the class struggle. This was a lesson Thatcher has never forgotten.

Nothing daunted, Wilson returned to office in the midst of the 1974 Miners' Strike which had shattered the Heath government — and swiftly embarked on a fresh crusade against union shop floor strength.

A new deal (the "Social Contract") was cobbled together between the Labour govenment and the TUC leaders, designed to hold down wages, after TGWU leader Jack Jones had shown where his loyalties lay — by conniving with British Leyland management in a national witch-hunt to smash up the militant shop stewards' leadership in the Cowley Assembly Plant.

Class collaboration became the order of the day, with once-militant sections of stewards and the Communist Party being drawn into "worker-participation" schemes with management.

Frustration at the failing living standards brought about by the Social Contract finally exploded into the "Winter of Discontent" involving Ford workers, bakers, journalists, lorry drivers, health and local government workers in 1978-79, which broke the flagging authority of the Callaghan government. But even then, union leaders, following the precedent of 1969, did their best to contain the militancy of their members, and signed a "Concordat" with Callaghan imposing "voluntary" restrictions on picketing and public sector disputes.

The shock of the Tory victory in 1979 did not by any means crush the militancy of the working class: the long-dormant steel workers struck solidly in response to their leadership's timid call early in 1980 and stayed out for 3 months — only to be left cynically isolated by the other TUC unions, and served up the first sacrificial offering to the "New Realism".

There is little doubt that the TUC's cowardly refusal to mobilse other threatened sectors — rail, transport and mineworkers — in support of the steel strike helped stiffen the resolve of the Tories, whose first anti-union package was pushed through by James Prior in 1980, shrugging of the half-hearted TUC protests.

The Prior laws had barely been used at all when Tebbit came forward with a new package of restrictions in 1982. The legislation removed trade union legal immunities from damages arising from strikes; "political" strikes, and "secondary" action of any sort — the most basic trade union solidarity — were outlawed.

The TUC held a special Conference of union Executives and adopted what might appear to be a fighting policy, pledging "full support" up to and including illegal strike action, to back unions that fell foul of the new laws.

Thatcher was not impressed: she had the measure of the TUC bureaucrats — and was in no hurry to pick a fight.

The opportunities came soon enough and showed how hollow were the union leaders' statements on solidarity. ASLEF train drivers were knifed by the TUC — threatened with expulsion if they did not concede to Thatcher. NGA leaders fighting for unionisation at Eddie Shah's Warrington plant and against sequestration under the anti-union laws were left high and dry by the TUC — and told to bend the knee to the courts.

The miners had already begun their national strike when a new 1984 package of legislation, requiring pre-strike ballots, came into force. But right wing TUC leaders had been effectively defending this aspect of Tory law for years: they and Kinnock seized upon it as the basis to stab the miners in the back — leaving the NUM to fight alone against their employer, the scabs, the cops, the courts, and the government, lifting not a finger as NUM assets were seized and historic rights destroyed.

Perhaps the crowning irony was when right wing SOGAT leader Brenda Dean — the kind of union leader Wilson and Castle wanted to create with *In Place of Strife* — showed how the system can go wrong; she held ballot after ballot, but kept finding majorities to continue the fight against Murdoch. Finally she resorted to an old-fashioned, high-handed sell-out to kill the Wapping strike.

Thatcher has now enacted a battery of anti-union laws which take the labour movement back nearly 100 years: and the Tories have already unveiled plans for even more legislation to illegalise the closed shop and give the whip hand in the unions over to individual scabs.

But not for the first time the working class is offered as an alternative a Labour government that is embarrassed rather than strengthened by trade unionism, hostile to the shop floor movement, suspicious of any aspect of class struggle, and committed to many of the reactionary notions embodied in the Tory laws.

Kinnock is not going to do union members any great favours — especially if it means offending the Tory press and the employers.

Let's not waste time elaborating a utopian programme we know will not be carried out: let's face facts: if Kinnock would just *not attack* the working class and allow workers to defend themselves it would be a step forward!

Socialists should be fighting to commit the Labour Party to repeal the whole body of Tory union laws since 1979 — and then leave well alone, before the slogan "Scrap the Tory anti-union laws" becomes once again replaced with "Labour hands off our unions"!



PHOTO: John Chapman

Brenda Dean: Wilson and Castle's kind of union leader!

Building Briefing

500 Club Winner

The winner of our 500 Club lucky prize draw this week is — just to prove to us Metropolis-bound *Building Briefing* journalists that there *is* life North of Watford — **Sue Owen** from **Leeds.**

Congratulations to Sue, who's been supporting *Briefing* since we started the 500 Club way back last June, as part of our campaign to launch a fortnightly *Briefing.*

A cheque for £25 is in the post to you.

Don't forget: most other publications have some form of funding above paper sales. We have none, except our 500 Club. So if you support *Briefing*, enjoy reading it and think our politics have a place in the labour movement — dip into your pockets! Fill in the standing order form, and enter the draw. With an election coming, *Briefing's* role is more vital than ever — and £1 a week isn't much to give!

This week, a word about paper sales. We have been very encouraged that although some *Briefing* sellers have decreased their paper order since we started printing twice a month, many have found the new *Briefing* easy to sell, and have kept their orders steady. Many new sellers have started taking the paper, perhaps cautiously at first, and then increased their order as they've seen how easy it is to sell the paper, and how many activists are keen to read it.

It would not really be fair to single out any one seller or group of sellers for exceptional achievement — but the office staff feel it is about time we mentioned Stewart Richardson and the Birmingham *Briefing* sellers. Not content with going fortnightly, Stewart thinks we have gone weekly. He usually picks 100 papers up each week, and then, a few days later, phones us up and asks for more.

The office staff, fed up with sending off additional bundles of *Briefings* to Birmingham, decided to double the order — against Stewart's "better judgement".

Just when we thought we'd fixed them for good, there came a phone call, from a plaintive, apologetic Stewart: in the space of a week, all 200 papers had been sold, and there were some major events coming up in the next few days, so could we possibly....

If anyone can match the record, you too can get a mention!

A final reminder about our Socialist Policies Conference: see page 3 for a detailed agenda, and invite everyone you sell *Briefing* to this week to come along. Don't forget to let us know *in advance* about any children for the creche.

TURN BACK THE GREY TIDE!

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Briefing Women and **International Briefing** can be contacted c/o 26 Crofton Road, London SE5.

Briefing Editorial Board: contact c/o 26, Crofton Road, London SE5.
Next meetings: Friday, March 27th; Thursday, April 2nd; Friday April 10th.
Deadline for articles for issue no. 41: notify EB by Friday, March 27th, articles in by Wednesday April 1st (this is *not* a joke!). We cannot guarantee to print articles received after this date.
Steering Committee:
Next meeting: Sunday, May 3rd. ***Please note change of date.***

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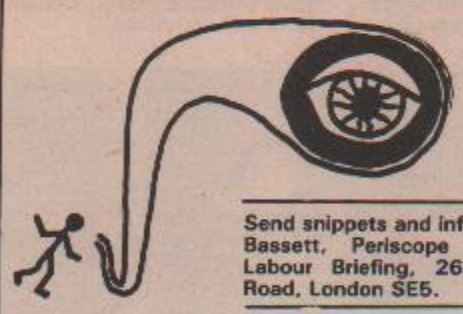
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UCW LEFT GROUPING
Meeting
Saturday April 11th
Liverpool Trade Union Centre
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Liverpool 1
12.30
Speakers include Les Huckfield

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Periscope



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

Misplaced Concern

Don't grin - just bear it

Stiff upper lips are the order of the day at *Lambeth* Town Hall. The women's committee in particular appears to be hostile to any form of levity, and class consciousness is frowned upon.

A plan to stage a mock "Chocolate Willy Awards" to make fun of notable women who have done most to injure the cause of women's liberation — including **Margaret Thatcher, Samantha Fox** and **Edwina Currie** — has been given the thumbs down by the Lambeth committee.

A poker-faced women's committee chair, **Josie Byrne,** told the local press that: "Mrs Thatcher is a woman, and other women should not laugh at her."

And that's an order!

Theoretical Leap in the Dark

By our Ecclesiastical Correspondent, Neil Down:

The usefulness of the gulf between theory and practice has been skilfully exploited by the **Bishop of Norwich, Rt Rev. Peter "Thou Shalt" Nott.**

Homosexuality, in abstract, he declares, is *not* a sin (thank God!).

But not so fast! Homosexual *practices* apparently *are* sinful: according to the good Bishop they run counter to "normal human relationships" (between man, woman, wine and wafer).

Bishop Nott tears into "loose talk and amateur theologising", and is clearly impervious to ordinary logic. But your corespondent, ever eager to raise the level of debate, would venture an awkward question.

If the very *thought* of naughtiness — coveting a neighbour's wife/husband (or ox) — is deemed by the Ten Commandments to be as impermissible as actually *committing* adultery (or bestiality?), how does the good Bishop manage to find the distinction between innocently *wanting* a homosexual relationship and "sinfully" *having* one?

Answers please, on a £5 note, to Periscope.

Dead fortunate

There is nothing like a disaster to sell otherwise unwanted products.

How many of us have yawned through the TV re-runs of best-forgotten films by freshly-dead Hollywood stars? How many folk bought their first-ever John Lennon LPs after he was murdered? Van Gogh, Elvis, and Jim Reeves have all sold much better since they died.

Now this message seems to be getting through to football clubs. Latest among the bevy of stars and politicians to climb on the trendy bandwagon of saving **Fulham FC** is none other than bobble-hatted, rattle-waving MP Nick Raynsford, and all the soccer fanatics of Hammersmith and Fulham Council.

Where were they *last* season, when the manager needed some company on the terraces? If half these notables had been regular attenders at Craven Cottage *before* the club was bought up by property sharks, maybe the story might have been different!

Digital sex

Many years ago, Milo O'Shea had a comedy programme on TV. He spent one 30-minute episode as a married man in Eire, worried about further conception, and trying desperately to get hold of the pill.

When, at last, he acquired a specimen, the episode ended with him swallowing it and heading up the stairs a happy man.

Maybe the current television producers don't remember this. If they did, perhaps they would have been less quick — and less coy — over the last month to demonstrate the "proper", recommended use of the condom... by rolling it over their fingers.

Meanwhile, one question remains unanswered still. Why is it that government and media alike, institutions both best known for their support for the family, are recommending the *constant* use of condoms? "Safe sex" is all very well, but the "side effect" (contraception) of the condom has been quietly forgotten. If we all have safe sex, *how are any of us going to conceive!*

Of course, if we're all wearing our condoms on our fingers, there shouldn't be too much of a problem. Perhaps that's the answer.

CM

Flogging a dead horse?

"Spare the rod, spoil the child" appears to be the philosophy of extreme right wing Tory MP **Harvey Proctor**, but he seems to be proving a considerable embarrassment to his own party.

"We keep as far away from Mr Harvey Proctor as possible," Conservative Central Office told *The Guardian.*

But back in Billericay, a group of loyal supporters were having a whip-round to back their MP:

"He represents a whacking majority of people around here," said one local flagellant.

Defending football for the fans

The attempts by David Bulstrode and Sam Hamman to destroy two of London's football clubs have been met by mass resistance from football supporters which have united the PTA (the players' organisation), the FA and the Football League and has stymied the intentions of the Club owners.

By our Briefing Football correspondent

The campaign will of course continue until the clubs and their home grounds are safe. Those involved in the campaigns are confident that if the momentum is maintained life can be made very difficult for those who take over clubs only to line their own pockets and not to run the clubs for the benefits of club supporters and the community.

The left has much to learn from this campaign. The parallels with other campaigning in which we have been involved are obvious. The issue of the "rationalisation" of an industry is one on which we have fought successive battles — in coal, steel, shipbuilding, etc. "Rationalisation" of the sort attempted in Fulham is an attack on both community facilities and community identity.

From a socialist point of view it was extremely gratifying to see several thousand people, most with no previous experience of campaigning, come out in mass demonstrations against the activities of the worst sort of asset-stripping capitalists. The fact that the club owners were acting on classic capitalist lines — seeking only to maximise profit — was a powerful motivating factor behind football supporters' involvement in the campaign. Over 2,000 attended the recent meeting at Hammersmith Town Hall.

How is the campaign organised and where is it going? Most of the activity and organisation is based at club level through supporters clubs or Action Groups.

- At QPR, where the supporters club is closely associated with the club itself, the Ranger's Action Group is setting up a new independent supporters club.
- Wimbledon Supporters Club have set up their own Save Wimbledon Action Group.
- The Fulham Supporters Club have taken up a new radical stance.
- At Crystal Palace the Palace Action Group, founded in 1981, has been revitalised.

These groups are now co-ordinating their activities, sending members to each others' demonstrations, and attending each others' public meetings. This has been co-ordinated by a Steering Committee known as FLAG, the Football in London Action Group, established by the Football Supporters Association, a non-club based campaigning supporters' group.

To safeguard the future of their clubs, supporters at Palace, Wimbledon and QPR, as well as Fulham, have stated that they now feel that the respective club owners must be removed. They have themselves been working to find potential new owners. So successful have these attempts been that Noades of Palace and Hamman of Wimbledon have both felt the need to issue statements saying that they are not selling.

The supporters are not prepared to accept just any alternative syndicate. Most are of the opinion that any potential new owner must be prepared to fight to retain their clubs in the areas where they are currently playing. They must make a commitment to provide greater access to the decision-making process for supporters. They must be prepared to safeguard the future of the clubs by improving facilities, building up links with the local authorities and communities, and ultimately turning the stadia into community resources.

The campaign has had other victories. Roy Hattersley has made a public statement pledging the next Labour government to a redirection of football betting tax money back into the game. Tom Pendry, chair at the All-party back bench Committee on Football, has agreed to a supporters' representative being on his proposed Football Levy Board which is now to be given the power to veto asset-disposals by clubs.

The campaign has also raised the issue of the role of the Minister of Sport. Should the Minister of Sport be part of the Department of the Environment? Current Minister Richard Tracey admitted during the campaign that he was unable to comment on the mergers because his ministry is part of a larger one witn planning responsibilities.

What is clear is that supporters themselves have organised politically and effectively and are now a force to be reckoned with.

Condom free-for-all masquerades as fun-for-all

The symbolism of phallic power and strength so evident in the first government information ads on TV has continued in most of the media coverage of AIDS.

The worst programmes have been those aimed specifically at the young.

By Stevi Jackson South Wales Briefing

"First AIDS" launched the television campaign on February 27th, by peddling reactionary sexist messages and encouraging young men in the studio audience to boost their macho self-images.

We were told that it was still down to women to ensure that sex was safe, primarily by saying "no" more often. This, we were assured, would make sex more exciting and romantic again by restoring the thrill of the chase (no prizes for guessing who is the hunter and who the prey). Apparently men can't be expected to take responsibility for safe sex since they are "naturally more highly sexed than women".

An "expert" told us categorically that it was in men's interests, reproductively, to be promiscuous in order to spread their genes as widely as possible, while it was in women's interests to save themselves for impregnation by the best available stud.

This, based on a highly contentious perspective known as sociobiology, wa stated as a bald fact. Men, poor things, just can't help themselves. Even in the face of a killer disease they will literally fuck themselves (and us) to death unless we women take responsibility for their actions as well as our own.

The main television emphasis has been on condoms, in particular on improving their image. As I write, I have just watched the first of BBC2's "Facing up to AIDS" series which turned out to be yet another programme telling me what good fun condoms can be.

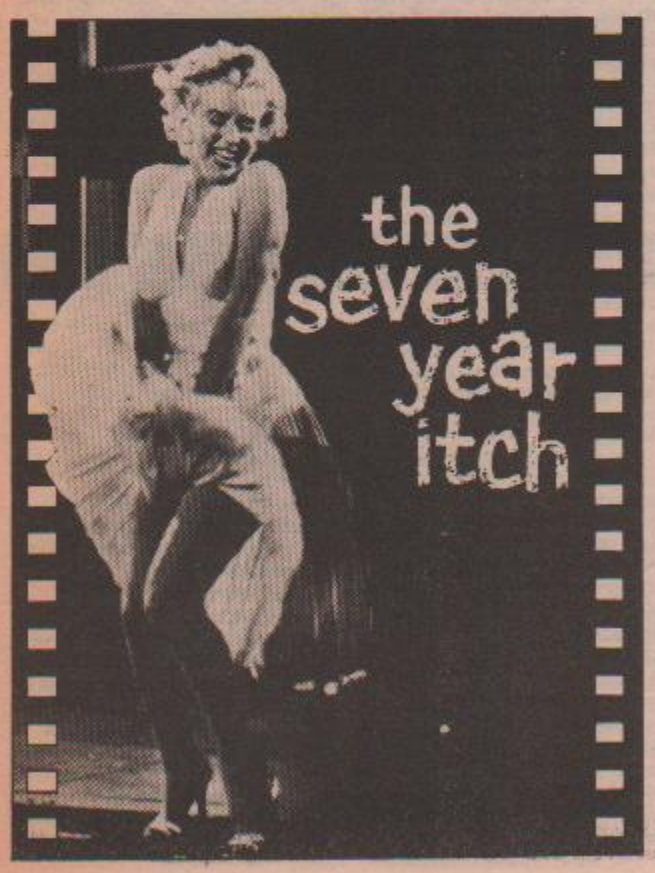
Right at the end of it we were told that "some people" think there are other forms of sex that are enjoyable which don't involve penetration. This was very much an afterthought, though, and it was implied that *all* alternative sexual practices were safe.

One effect of the overemphasis on sexual intercourse is that other sexual practices which might be risky are either not discussed or vague, misleading and contradictory information is given.

Any possibility of non-penetrative sex is still a secondary message. The main concern of the media is still with the condom. It has even been suggested that they would be glamourised as an essential fashion accessory — what the well-dressed penis is wearing this season? (This was First Aids again). What we need is less, not more, emphasis on penises.

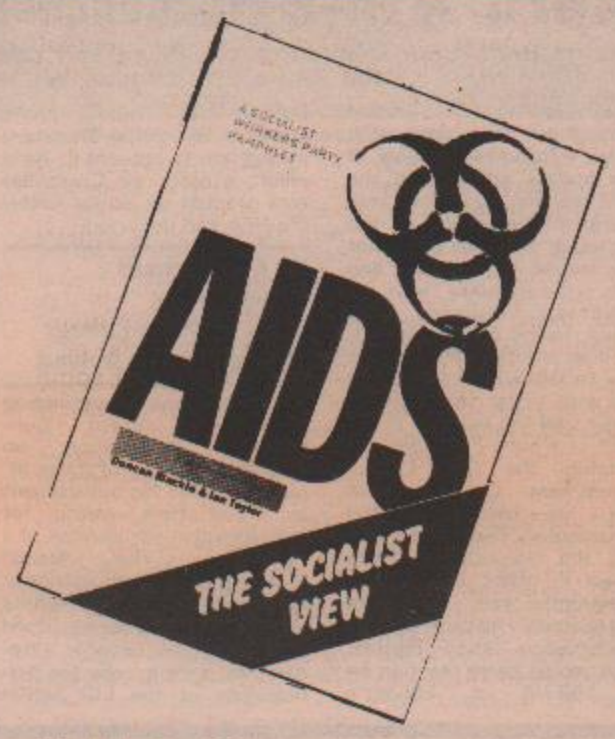


"Never thought of Norman as a trend-setter before..."





Watch out: "romance" is on the horizon...



AIDS: the socialist view

***AIDS: The Socialist View*, by Duncan Blackie and Ian Taylor, 32 page pamphlet, 90p, published by Socialist Workers Party, 1987.**
Available (plus 20p postage) from Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park, London N4 2DE.

By Jane Kelly Peckham CLP

This is a very useful addition to the literature on AIDS, giving a socialist account of the disease, how it was discovered and how it is being used to reinforce Victorian morality through people's genuine fears of the virus.

Perhaps the most interesting part in the pamphlet are the sections showing how capitalism profits from the disease and how medical research has been held back, not only by lack of resources compared, say, to spending on arms, but also by competition between different countries and different research teams.

It argues that socialists have a role to play in combatting the bigotry used by the government and the media and in exposing the hypocrisy of cuts in health spending and fighting for them to be reversed.

The attack on the Gay Liberation Movement (sic) and the women's movement for not organising more effectively against the general acceptance of right wing ideas in society is however misplaced. While sections of the Lesbian and Gay movement, and also the women's movement have moved away from radical politics, this is not uniform.

Many of us are still fighting both in the labour movement and in society at large for our liberation and that of other oppressed groups. It is unfortunate that the SWP feel it important to make such an attack in an otherwise very good pamphlet.

Labour Committee on Ireland AGM

Looking at the year ahead

The Annual Meeting of the Labour Committee on Ireland takes place in Manchester Town Hall on Saturday April 4th and Sunday April 5th.

On Saturday there will be plenary sessions on "Ireland — the General Election and the next Labour Government" in the morning, with Jeremy Corbyn and other invited MPs, and in the afternoon on "Ireland and the Unions" with trade unior speakers from Ireland. Workshops will also be held in the afternoon.

leadership again put principles on one side in their desperate bid for office at any cost?

Sunday will see a number of motions debated. Among organisations invited to the Annual Meeting are:

- the Irish in Britain Representation Group (one motion calls for an IBRG delegate on the LCI National Council, to strengthen our ties with the IBRG);
- the Connolly Association;
- Troops Out Movement;
- the Welsh Language Society — invited by the National Council following their recent invitation to Sinn Fein to visit Wales, a visit sabotaged by the Leader of Plaid Cymru, Dafydd Ellis Thomas, who wrote to the Home Secretary asking him to prevent it. As a result, a Sinn Fein Councillor was arested on arrival under the PTA and deported.

Labour Left Liaison.

A major trade union conference planned by the LCI in the Autumn is the subject of another debate, and a motion calls for fringe meetings at all trade union conferences with a view to getting the McBride principles endorsed by as many trade unions as possible in the run-up to the autumn conference.

Following the success of the Sinn Fein Councillors visit, a representative assembly of councillors is proposed; to discuss matters linking local authorities in Britain with partition of Ireland and its enforcement such as the PTA, plastic bullets and strip searching, and a motion calls for a campaign against the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The coming General Election will, however, loom largest. The Annual Meeting will discuss sending a questionnaire to every candidate in the election; drawing up a model LCI statement for inclusion in election addresses; producing a pamphlet on what Labour should do in the event of obtaining office; and organising a London Rally with Sinn Fein and the IBRG.

Whatever the outcome of the debates, one thing is certain. There will be no National Executive of the LCI telling people to keep quiet about controversial issues until after polling day! Supporters welcome — come as a guest of an LCI member if you haven't joined.

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

Sadly, the LCI Annual Meeting will take place with Labour's fortunes probably at their lowest point since the 1983 election. This may well determine that much of the discussion will take place not only around whether we can push the Party into a withdrawal position after Labour forms a government, but also around what can be done to prevent a reactionary deal with Ulster Unionists by Labour and the Alliance in the event of a hung Parliament.

During the last Labour Government, Callaghan and Foot, on behalf of the Parliamentary Party, did a deal with the Unionists to keep Labour in office for another catastrophic year, and there was scarcely any protest from Constituency Labour Parties. What would Party reaction be in 1987/8 if Labour's

By Cllr Richard Chessum
Press Officer, Labour Committee on Ireland

At the Labour Co-ordinating Committees recent Consultative Conference on Ireland, a majority of those attending voted for a document by Peter Hain calling for withdrawal in the lifetime of a Parliament. The Annual Meeting is asked to approach those with this position with a view to joint initiatives based on ending the Loyalist veto. Another motion calls for participation of the LCI within



PHOTO: Derek Spiers/Report

The British military occupation of the 6 counties continues: 1969-? Troops out now!

Drop the charges!

Attack on press freedom in Israel

The Alternative Information Centre (AIC) in West Jerusalem is the latest target of the Israeli state's "Iron Fist" policy of repression.

On February 16th 1987 the AIC was raided by police, documents confiscated, equipment seized and its journalists, both Palestinian and Israeli, arrested.

Some of the AIC collective members were released after a few hours of interrogation. Three others, Ghadda Abu Jaber, Ronnie Heiman and Michael Lowry were released on bail after 48 hours.

The AIC's director, Michel Warschavsky, has also now been bailed.

This is the first time since 1967 that the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance has been used to close a Jewish Israeli-run news agency. Israel's Police Inspector General Kraus issued the order for the AIC's closure for 6 months under the 1980 Amendment (nicknamed the "Tamir Law") of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (PTO) 1948.

One of the charges against the AIC is that it "...acted on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) terrorist organisation..." *Closure and Seizure Order*, Feb. 16th).

By Ros Young
Islington South CLP

Michel Warschavsky faces extremely serious charges under the PTO and emergency defence regulations (a legacy of the British mandate in Palestine), including acting on behalf of the PLO and rendering services to the PFLP. Nine hundred pages of prosecution text have been prepared against him — all in Arabic, which he doesn't read. (It appears that the Israeli state only recognises Arabic as an official language of the state when it suits them. Palestinian prisoners who don't understand Hebrew are presented with prosecution evidence against them in Hebrew!)

It will take some time before his defence lawyer, Attorney Lea Tsemel, is able to have the full text translated and it is predicted that his trial will go on for months.

He denies the charges against him and it appears that his main "crime", and those of the other AIC journalists, is to have published information that the Israeli state would prefer remain hidden.

The AIC was founded in January 1985 to produce a regular newsletter, *News from Within*, to provide services to Israeli, Palestinian and foreign journalists, typesetting and translating facilities and as an information centre "to provide accurate and up to date information on human rights violations in the occupied territories and on social and political issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (*News from Within*, February 24th, 1987).

The AIC is registered with the Ministry of Interior and all its publications were submitted to the censor in accordance with Israeli censorship regulations (hence all the blank spaces in *News from Within* on many occasions).

For the Israeli authorities to now claim that the centre and its director are a threat to the security of the state is laughable and a miserable excuse to silence any independent information on Israeli repression in the occupied territories and in Lebanon.

More recently, *News from Within* has been reporting on the economic and military co-operation between Israel and South Africa, the case of Mordechai Vanunu and the activities of Israel's internal security police, the Shin Bet.

Moshe Lador, representative of the state attorney, gave an example of how AIC was helping "hostile organisations" by "preparing and distributing instruction material related to the interrogation methods of the Shin Bet which teaches potential detainees how to behave when they are arrested and thereby harms the activities of the security services..." (*Hadashot*, February 19th, 1987).

The closure of the centre and arrest of Michel have produced an outcry in Israel amongst journalists, civil rights organisations and some members of the Israeli Knesset (including Muhammed Miari and Matti Peled, who have demanded a Knesset debate on the police harassment of the centre). Alas, many of those who are now protesting were conspicuous by their silence through all the years of repression against the Palestinian press. Some perhaps are now realising that they may well be next and that to be Israeli is no longer a guarantee of freedom from state repression.

According to Gideon Spiro "whoever thought that it was possible to continue forever in a situation of a military dictatorship for Arabs and a democracy for Jews this week received another blunt reminder that it won't work," (*Al Hamishmar*, February 20th, 1987).

It is no coincidence that the authorities have hit out at the AIC journalists who have campaigned against the attacks on the Palestinian press. The AIC is the latest target in a long line of closures of publications and detention of journalists.

Since 1981 the following Palestinian newspapers have been permanently closed down: *Al Shira* (1981); *Al Wahdeh* (1983); *Al Darb* (1985); Al Manar press office (1986); *Al Mithaq* (1986); and *Al Ahd* (1986).

Al Fajr, *Al Quds* and *Al Sha'ab* have been temporarily closed on many occasions, and Palestinian journalists have been detained, deported and even murdered. Akram Hanniye, editor in chief of *Al Sha'ab* was deported at the end of 1986.

The AIC issued a statement after their closure (*News from Within*, February 24th 1987) declaring that "we will now be gagged! We will not sit idly by while our civil rights are systematically violated. And we will not acquiesce to the authorities' attempts to monopolise the flow of information. Our determination to keep open alternative channels of information has not been deterred. *News from Within* will continue to appear" (unfortunately, their subscribers list has been confiscated, so if you were subscriber, let them know).

An international petition is circulating and has so far been signed by many journalists, MPs, labour movement activists and academics from Europe to North and Central America. The "Committee for the Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis" (CFEPI) has been set up in London to help mobilise support.

Briefing supporters are urged to submit resolutions to their trade unions and Labour Parties demanding the opening of the AIC and the dropping of all charges against the AIC and Michel; to collect signatures on the petition; to send messages of support to the AIC and to collect donations to help them cover the costs of the court fees and to replace the stolen equipment.

The AIC provides a valuable service that must continue.

On a more personal note, Michel is a dear friend and comrade of many of us in Briefing. He is well-known for his work in the anti-war movement in Israel, for his opposition to the policies of the Israeli state and his refusal to participate in the war in Lebanon. As a member of the Revolutionary Communist League (Matzpen-Marxisti) he has in the past supported our struggles, distributing information on the miners' strike and on the war in Ireland.

Labour movement support is urgently needed for the AIC to be able to continue its excellent work.

Send letters of support to: Alternative Information Centre Collective, PO Box 165, West Jerusalem, Israel.
Donations can be sent to: *News from Within*, Bank Hapoalim, Acc. 3189, Agence Principale 690, Jerusalem.
Petitions are available from *Briefing*, or the CFEPI, BM 9585, London WC1N 3XX.
A message of support has been received from Noam Chomsky; and the petition has beensigned by Jeremy Corbyn MP, Tariq Ali and Moshe Machover.

COSATU's New Year's message

On December 1st 1985, 870 delegates from all over South Africa met in Durban to found the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

Thirty-three unions with a paid-up membership of 449,679 were represented.

At the inaugural congress, COSATU adopted a number of ambitious resolutions directed at a wide range of issues, laying down the basic principles of workers' democracy, workers' control, anti-sexism and non-racialism within the Congress, and taking up issues such as unemployment, disinvestment, migrant labour and establishing an education programme for all members.

One year later COSATU now claims a paid-up membership of over 650,000 workers. In that first year, 1986, COSATU was faced with a mixture of successes, failures and increased state repression.

Below is an edited version of a declaration from the COSATU Executive Committee, entitled *A message to all members of COSATU: 1987 — the Year of consolidation and decisive action.*

We greet you in the name of the Congress of South African Trade Unions. We greet you in 1987 — the year for the consolidation and decisive action of our movement.

COSATU is just over a year old. Today we are closer to the day when we — the workers and youth of our land — must free ourselves from poverty, hunger, exploitation and racism. But a long and bitter struggle still awaits us.

We are being attacked on all sides — the bosses, their government and their allies are panicking. They are confused — and in their crisis they can see we are getting stronger.

They want to stop us from advancing. That's why they have imposed a State of emergency. They have detained thousands of our comrades — among them Moses Mayekiso, Lizzie Phike, Enoch Godongwana, Noel Williams, Matthews Olifant and Amos Masondo.

They have tried to crush workers who dare to struggle for what they deserve — at GM and OK Bazaars and BTR and Goldfields and Impala. We all know the situation is serious. We all know we need the maximum unity if we are to defend ourselves and move forward in our struggle. We all know we need to learn from our mistakes and setbacks if we are to consolidate our gains, strengthen our organisation and move forward in 1987.

Comrades: this year we have to overcome our problems. This year we have to build the greatest possible mass united action under the leadership of the working class. How can we do this?

One Industry — One Union — Now!
We have to make sure all our structures — at the local, regional and national level — are consolidated and working properly. To do this effectively we need one union, one industry.

Build and Strengthen Shop Stewards Councils
All our structures must be strengthened, especially our local shop steward councils. They are one of the pillars on which COSATU stands. Make sure your views are represented by your shop stewards on the local COSATU shop stewards council in your area.

Build Worker Solidarity Action
At our launching Congress we said *"An injury to one is an injury to all"* will be our guiding light and we adopted powerful resolutions to guide us in the struggle ahead. We have made some progress — but not nearly enough.

Too often we have stood back and watched while our comrades struggled alone against the bosses or the government — like at GM or Crossroads or Impala or OK Bazaars. Too often have we stood back and watched while our comrades were detained — even though we have resolved to fight every attack on our organisation with united action. And when we did take decisions for strong action — like the July 14th action against the Emergency or the December 1st action against the killings of our MAWU comrades — some problems and divisions in our movement weakened our protest.

This is bad comrades. We must build our structures, our unity and our ability to mobilise more strongly and seriously — so that we can take action on what we decide, instead of just having resolutions on paper.

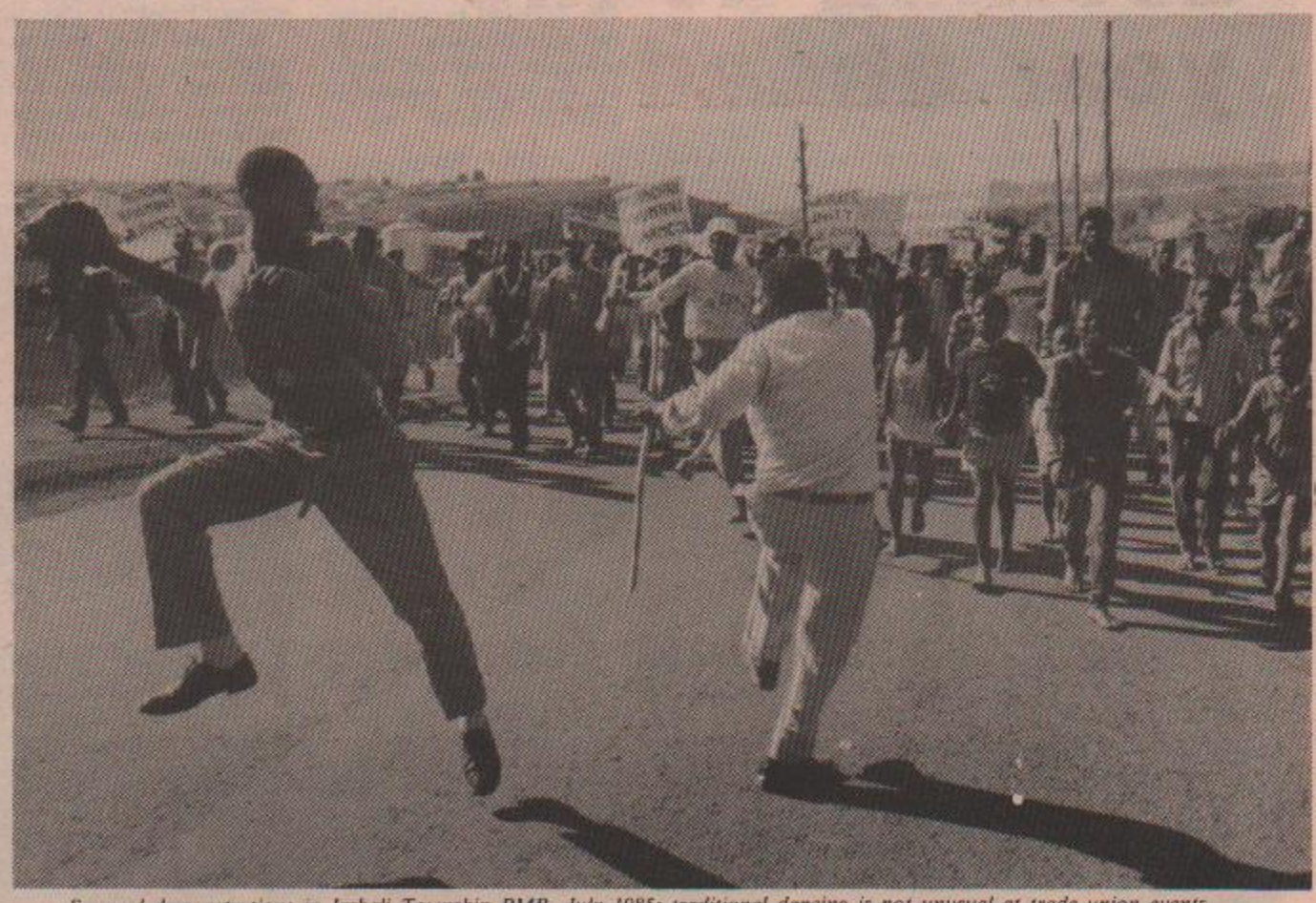


PHOTO: Billy Paddock

Sarmcol demonstrations in Imbali Township PMB, July 1985: traditional dancing is not unusual at trade union events.

We must not forget that the base of our power is in the workplaces. We must ensure that every workplace has strong, democratic structures and active members. And we must not allow our differences to undermine our unity in action. Differences we will always have. They are necessary in every democratic organisation, to find the best ideas for the strongest way forward. That is what worker democracy means. But is also means that once we have made a decision, we are all loyal to that decision — and we do our very best to carry it out in a disciplined and comradely way.

Campaigns
This year we will be working to turn our powerful resolutions into action. The campaign for a living wage for all workers, for the organisation of the unemployed under the banner of COSATU and for national united action under the leadership of the working class are crucial.

Already, all over the country, workers are building these campaigns in action. The heroic OK workers have been on strike for a living wage for weeks now. COSATU workers have blacked supplies to OK in solidarity with the workers. The youth and all progressive organisations have increasingly been drawn into solidarity action with the workers.

Build the living wage campaign
Our campaign will strike at the heart of the profit system. What we want is what we need to live decently. If the bosses' capitalist system can't provide us with what we need, then we don't need the bosses' system. We want the wealth we created to come back to us, so we can all have decent lives.

Build Mass United Action
Mass united action is our strongest weapon. As we move forward we must draw behind us support and solidarity from the millions of workers, youth and progressive democratic organisations outside our ranks. In this way we will build a campaign of united action under the leadership of workers, and around our demands.

This year we must make sure that our May Day and June 16th campaigns are much bigger than last year so that they truly are *our* national holidays.

We can expect the strongest resistance to our struggle for national united action from the bosses and the government. In their desperation they will try even harder than before to attack our movement.

They will try to create vigilante gangs, especially from the unemployed, to divide and intimidate us. They will try and encourage tribalism, racism, factions and division wherever they can to undermine our unity. We must not let them.

Women workers come first
In our movement women workers have a special place because they carry the heaviest load of all. It is the duty of every COSATU worker to make sure that the demands, participation and struggle of women workers are strengthened a thousand times over. If our liberation does not succeed in creating free people, equal to each other in every way, then we would not be liberated.

Our struggles for maternity rights; equal pay for work of equal value; childcare facilities that meet workers' needs; against sexual harassment and harmful work must have the highest priority in all our struggles today.

One Federation — One Country — Now!
Comrades — we are at a crossroads. We see a year of more struggle, more hardship and more suffering — and more hope. Now is the time. If we are to live, then we must go forward together against the bosses' system of profit and greed. We can see how far we have come. COSATU is the home for every worker in South Africa — employed and unemployed. There should now be no obstacle for all democratic unions to come together with us and form one federation in one country.

Our Tasks
We are committed to the leadership of the working class in the struggle. This year we must show what this means by consolidating and uniting our organisation, COSATU, in decisive united action with other progressive organisations under the leadership of organised workers.

To do this we will need the widest possible democratic debate, through all our structures, on our weaknesses and our strengths, so that we can come to our National Congress in July with the program for the workers' way forward.

Taken from *South African Labour Bulletin*, Jan/Feb 1987.

The Snow White elections

In May there is going to be a general election in the apartheid Republic of South Africa.

Botha is going to the country (sic) to get a mandate for his policy of cosmetic reforms.

Only 18% of South Africa's population will be entitled to vote in this election — the white minority. The remaining 82%, the Black majority, will have no say, electorally, in the choice of government of the republic.

Even that section of the Black community classified as "Coloured" and "Asian" by apartheid's racist laws, who were given their own legislative chambers in South Africa's tri-cameral parliament, will not be voting in the May election.

There is a very good reason why Botha has not called for the inclusion of the "Coloured" and Indian voters in this election. He remembers only too well the farce of the first election to the "Coloured" and "Indian" chambers, in August 1984.

By Charlie van Gelderen Brent South CLP

The two main political parties, the Progressive Independent Party (PIP) and the National Federal Party (NFP) together won only 12% of votes cast. Of the number of eligible voters, only 16.2% actually took part in these elections. It was a decisive rejection of Botha's constitutional reforms.

When Botha called the elections, he feared those to his right — the conservative Party (CP), Herstigte National Party (HNP) and the openly fascist Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB) — might encroach on the National Party's monopoly of Afrikaner loyalty and political power. As the election campaign got underway, there have also been rumblings and breakaways from his "left".

The most newsworthy of these was the dramatic arrival on the hustings of the former South African ambassador to London, Denis Worral. He has linked up with the former National Party MP, Wynand Malan and won the support of a bunch of "verligte" (enlightened) academics.

This "left" revolt has stirred hope amongst sections of big business in South Africa who find some aspects of apartheid limit the advance of private enterprise; and the imperialist powers who see in this some hope for the peaceful transition to a post-apartheid society which would not threaten their interests.

While the new "verligtes" talk a great deal about "power-sharing" they are careful not to commit themselves to the formula of "one person, one vote". It should not be forgotten that Denis Worral was one of the chief architects of the racist tri-cameral constitution.

The election manifesto of the three candidates standing on the "verligte" programme calls for a bill of rights to protect individual and group rights and refers to Buthelezi's Natal Indaba as a model. **This not only guarantees the maintenance of capitalism, but also retains privileged positions for the white minority on the Lancaster House model.**

But of course while the black majority are excluded from the May parliamentary elections, they are very much present in the wider context of South African politics.

This was given clear expression at the recent annual conference of South Africa's biggest trade union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). In his address to the Conference, COSATU General Secretary Jay Naidoo said that workers must create a society where there is no poverty and unemployment. ***"The way to do this is to make the politics of the working class the politics of the majority."***

In the all-white May elections, the petty politicians may believe that the future of South Africa is in their hands. But in the mines, factories, schools and colleges, on the farms and in the townships, there is a growing politicisation and awareness that the destiny, not only of the republic but the whole of sub-Saharan Africa, is in the hands of the working class and its allies. To think that South Africa's problems can be solved without the active participation of the real leaders of the people, including those in prison and in exile, and without the participation of the people themselves in the process is to live in a dream world.



PHOTO: Morris Zwi/Reflex

Debate

Right to choose faces further attack



PHOTO: John Chapman

The decision to authorise the sterilisation of a seventeen year old ward of court this month is another attack on a woman's right to choose.

It moves away from the judgement made twelve years ago by Judge Rose Heilbron which prevented the sterilisation of an eleven year old girl.

She argued that such an operation involved the "deprivation of a basic human right — namely the right of a woman to reproduce." The two cases

By Jane Kelly
Peckham CLP

have a number of similarities: both were minors in the eyes of the law; both were capable of child bearing and both were mentally handicapped.

The reversal of the previous judgement is partly the result of diminishing resources for social welfare in Thatcher's Britain. It has been made now, near to the young woman's eighteenth birthday, because there will not be enough social workers available to care for her in the community, and when she is eighteen she will no longer remain within the jurisdiction of the courts.

It is a bad judgement because it opens the way for the courts to decide who is and who is not fit to reproduce. There is a long and racist history of the use of sterilisation to prevent those whom the state regards as "unfit" from having children.

The Eugenics movement here and in the United States used such arguments to stop Black women from reproducing. By 1932 twenty-six states in America had the legal right to the compulsory sterilisation of the "unfit".

Nor have such practices disappeared in Britain. In many areas it is *easier* for Black and working class women to obtain an abortion than better-off white women; in some areas such women are pressurised into accepting sterilisation along with abortion, including very young women. In some health authorities amneocentesis is dependent upon agreeing to an abortion if the foetus is discovered to be deformed.

In this present case the legally available alternatives of contraception plus abortion should have been proposed. Allowing the courts to decide who is allowed to have children is the beginning of a very dangerous path to population control and goes against the fundamental right of a woman's choice.

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LABOUR BRIEFING

THE FORGOTTEN MILLIONS

Surprise, surprise! The more you earn, the more Chancellor Lawson has given you in his electioneering budget.

There is no change of direction from the basic Thatcher strategy which proved so devastatingly effective in 1983: appeal to the smug complacency, greed and selfishness of the prosperous sector of the electorate — and leave Neil Kinnock to cheese off, turn off or ignore the rest.

By Harry Sloan

Lawson's 2p off income tax means nothing to the unemployed, pensioners or the millions of part-time and low paid workers — many of them slaving in the "1 million new jobs" he boasts have been created.

His measures to bring down interest rates — and thus mortgate rates — will help those buying their own homes, but do nothing to help council tenants or countless thousands of homeless.

The wedge between the prosperous and the poverty-stricken has been driven steadily deeper since 1979.

Prior to Lawson's latest budget announcements, the bulk of tax concessions had been focussed on the best-paid, while pre-tax pay for the bottom 10% of wage earners went up only 3.7% compared to 11.7% increases for the middle grouping, and 22.3% extra for the top 10%.



Evictions from the Pullens estate: the homeless will take no comfort from the budget.

PHOTO: Gerard Livett/Frame

Whilst numbers unemployed have risen since 1979 by nearly 50% to 3.2 million, social security spending after inflation has increased by only 40% — spelling out a tale of misery for those dependent upon benefits.

Lawson makes no secret of the fact that he does not care about claimants: Kinnock — his eyes on the uncertain prospects of landing the socially conscious "yuppie" vote — ignores them too.

The budget has offered another golden opening for a real tub-thumping, class conscious response from the labour movement. And it has shown yet again that the labour movement has no leaders capable of taking such an opportunity.

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!