NORTH WALES & CHESHIRE LABOUR

BRIEFING

June 1985

PRISONERS OF WAR?

by Ian Salisbury (Delyn CLP)



Last November two miners set out to make a protest against those who sought to decimate their industry and communities.

Today Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland must both face up to serving life sentences, both unfairly convicted of the murder of a taxi driver carrying a scab across the picket line.

collusion

A lesser plea of manslaughter was rejected for the more politically favoured verdict of murder which carries an automatic life sentence. This is more evidence of collusion between parliament and the law in a further attempt to suppress the working classes and those who wish to stand up for their rights.

solidarity

However, in a defiant show of solidarity with the jailed men the entire workforce of Taff Merthyr Colliery walked out on strike. They were joined by 92 men from the Oakdale pit in Gwent.

They are joined together along with the N.U.M. leadership to protest and organise events in an effort to see justice done. In a speech at a weekend rally, N.U.M. General Secretary Peter Heathfield said that the jailed men were victims of legislation designed to tell working people, "It is your lot if you choose to rebel against the establishment." A petition has been started: it must be signed by each and every one of us.

Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland must not be forgotten.

Support must be gathered from the grassroots by passing motions in Union and Labour Party branches and forcing so far moribund leaders into action.

As conferences near serious consideration should be given to sending resolutions in support of Dean and Russell.

Protests should also be made to your local M.P.'s who should be asked to raise this matter in the House of Commons.

Finally we call upon all Labour Party and Trade Union J.P.'s to resign from the Bench in protest at a serious miscarriage of justice.

Remember, it could have been any one of us on that bridge last November.

EDITORIAL

who we are...

This first issue of North Wales and Cheshire Labour Briefing which, even as you read, is probably on sale in at least 7 or 8 different constituencies in the area, represents a daring experiment on the part of a small but dedicated group of collaborators. Unlike the regional Briefings familiar to many Labour Party activists, in areas like London or Merseyside, this magazine cannot be said to have grown spontaneously out of a large and flourishing Left movement in the Party: rather, it represents the frustration and determination of a number of isolated and scattered individuals in our area who see the Party retreating daily before Tory attacks, abandoning its historical role as a political forum for the oppressed, and alienating itself from the very class it claims to represent.

Recent months provide alarming confirmation of this view, adding a special urgency to our task: on the one hand, we have seen many of our local Labour dignitaries apeing Kinnock's stance on th miners' strike - condemning the 'violence' of pickets, defending the police and bemoaning the 'bad effect on the Party': on the other hand, we have had elected Labour (sic) County Councillors refusing even to talk with the striking Nursery Nurses of Clwyd, bringing in scabs and threatening them with the ck.



Wright - believes in 'democracy' for Unions, and witch-hunts for the Labour Party!

pact

There may yet be worse to follow. At the recent Welsh Labour Party Conference, we heard George Wright deliver a blistering attack on Militant supporters, and saw a resolution passed by a 3-1 vote in favour of a generalised witch-hunting campaign to expel them from the Party; this was accompanied by speeches from Kinnock emphasising the disunity between Liberals and SDP-ers in the Alliance, which may be interpreted as a coded message to the Liberals in favour of a future Lib-Lab pact. Another recent statement from Kinnock in connection with the County elections, is all of a piece: singling out Cheshire as a model amongst 'hung' Labour Authorities, and advising the Labour Group there to 'split the Alliance', it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Kinnock wants to extend the Cheshire policy of collaborating with Liberals to its logical conclusion.

It is out of this kind of situation that NW&C Briefing is born. Those who believe that the kind of positions outlined above are a legitimate expression of Labour principles and policy - or represent the kind of compromises Labour must make at present - need read no further.

For our part, we believe Labour to be the Party of the working class and the oppressed - who alone will provide the majority of votes needed to return a future Labour government to power. We reject the cry for 'unity' in the Party at the expense of Socialist principles and policy, and emphatically oppose witch-hunts conducted under this spurious banner. We aim, through our work in the Party to present a clear, coherent alternative to Thatcherism and its retinue of social ills - the misery of the dole queue, the destruction of public services (transport, communications, schools, Health care...), the curtailment of democratic rights and the rising spectre of a police state.

solidarity

As a result, we share a common dissatisfaction with the present parliamentary leadership of the Party, which is pursuing policies - often in defiance of Conference decisions - of collaboration with the ruling class, whether it be industrial management (the stated target of Kinnock's grovelling new 'campaign policy'), Whitehall bureaucrats, financial speculators or world imperialist 'international opinion'. We believe that Kinnock's stance on the miners alone makes him unacceptable as a Leader of the Opposition (what opposition?) let alone a future Prime Minister. We invite contributions from all those who believe in international working-class solidarity , and reject any attempt to set British or Welsh workers in conflict or competition against those in other countries.

organise

One final word of warning. Our view of the Labour movement is <u>not</u> that of a vast army of white, male blue-collar workers struggling to provide for those faceless encumbrances 'the wife and kids'. Recognising that discrimination against women, against lesbians and gays and against racial minorities, not to mention youth and unemployed is as endemic in the Labour Movement as it is in society as a whole, our answer is not to take refuge in pious resolutions, appeals for 'unity in struggle' and promises that a future Socialist government will somehow miraculously bring about the necessary changes in society 'from above'. We support the right of specially oppressed sections of society to organise as they see fit, and consequently support the drive to establish Women's Sections, Black Sections etc. throughout the Party, as part of the wider struggle to overcome discrimination in the Party, and turn the fight for Women's rights and against other forms of special oppression into a central part of the Labour platform.

To return to the point made earlier: this magazine is not a finished product, but an experiment. To survive, a publication of this kind needs the active participation of a large number of people; and, given the task we have set ourselves in covering the whole of N. Wales (not just the North East as this edition might lead you to suppose) we hope that all those reading this will not only consider whether they would like to contribute news, articles, letters, cartoons etc. in future but also whether they are willing to sell copies of <u>Briefing</u> in their own constituency, or know of others in the area who might be willing to do so. Our hope is that <u>Briefing</u> will become a recognised and respected organ of the Left in N.Wales and Cheshire as it has become in other parts of the country.



The miners' strike showed the importance of working-class women organising on their own terms - a lesson for future struggles?

UNITY - at what price?



At the recent Welsh Labour Party Conference, Terry Thomas (Vice-Chair, South Wales NUM) stated that there should be no recriminations brought against those in the Labour Party who had not given full support to the miners' struggle. Nevertheless the standard cry for 'unity in the party' at any price has never been so dangerous for the Labour Movement as it is now.

The time has never been better, with the defeat of the miners' strike, for the Right Wing to justify their politics - they will attempt to capitalise on the defeat by deliberately demoralising workers engaged in class struggle, in order to contain these struggles and ultimately see them defeated. Recent events have not only shown the Right in the Labour Movement quick to respond to these favourable conditions, but also many of those on the 'Left' obediently surrendering to their arguments. In a relatively short time since the end of the strike we have witnessed many of those supposed to be leading the Labour Movement beating a hot-footed retreat down the road of despair and demoralisation.

At the end of March we saw the GLC running away from a confrontation with Thatcher when they voted to accept a legal budget, at a rate which was even lower than Jenkins allowed. They thus set the pace for other rate-capped Authorities to surrender in a similar manner.

In April we watched Moss Evans and Ron Todd give in to a conspiracy by the Right Wing and Tory media to oust Todd from office, when they sanctioned a re-run ballot instead of exposing the nature of the plot and sheer hypocrisy of George Wright's arguments. Many militant workers who have had previous contact with Wright will understand the disastrous consequences a victory for him would have, both on the T&G and in the arena of the TUC.

It is little wonder that, in the conditions created by the miners' defeat as well as the cowardice of some elements of the 'Left', the Right in the Labour Movement have felt able to go on the offensive. This offensive is best epitomised and can be seen at its most dangerous in recent pointers that Kinnock has given. In the course of the last few weeks in particular, he has exposed his willingness to enter into a pact with the Liberals in the next government - something which the Thatcher propaganda machine will no doubt exploit in full in the run-up to the next General Election.

A couple of weeks ago he advised newly-elected County Councillors to attempt to drive wedges between the SDP and Liberals, with the clear intention of attracting the latter over to a policy of mutual collaboration. At Llandudno Kinnock with the aid of his new stooge Larry Whittey simultaneously attacked the SDP as 'closet Tories' and listed the policies which the Labour Party and Liberals supposedly had in common. It is quite clear that Kinnock is preparing to take power at any cost.

Regrettably the Right in the Party have not been slow to follow Kinnock's lead. Already in Cheshire County Council the Labour Group has prepared, in the absence of any serious consultation with the Party, a series of policy guidelines for the next four years, the 'Cheshire Charter'. It is an extraordinary document, clearly intended to be a basis for collaboration with the Liberals in order to control the Council. A far cry from the famous 'Three

Noes ' policy defiantly pursued by Labour Groups in the ratecapped London boroughs (no cuts, no rent rises, no rate rises beyond inflation).

With the Right now completely exposed as the traitors to socialism that they are, now is not the time to heed Terry Thomas' words and cover up our differences. If the Left do not stand firm now, not only will they witness the Labour Party turning into an empty electoral machine with not a socialist principle to its name: we will also be party to a further devastation of the working class by Thatcher, in the absence of any leadership prepared to fight back.

Apart from the magnificent example of the miners, their wives and communities over the past year, what better lead can the Left wish for than the recent militancy of members of the NUR, UCW, NGA and NUPE, who have come out on strike largely in spite of their Union leaderships' attempts at containment? The working class in struggle face difficult conditions since the miners' defeat - it is up to the whole of the Labour Movement to rally round and support them. The Labour Party in particular has nothing to lose but its chains to the Liberals!

Yvonne Conway (Chester CLP)

BRIEFING

All articles and correspondence should be addressed to " NW&C Labour Briefing" c/o 21 Chichester St., Chester. Or phone Cllr Dave Orbison on Flint 61450.

Kick in the Teeth for Courtaulds Workers

The recent announcement from Courtaulds that its factories at Wrexham and Greenfield are to be closed, with the loss of 1,100 jobs, has come as a kick in the teeth to its workers and their families. The reward for their years of labour? - a place in the dole queue, and all the hardship and frustration that unemployment brings. No longer will children be allowed the option of following their parents into employment in the textile industry.

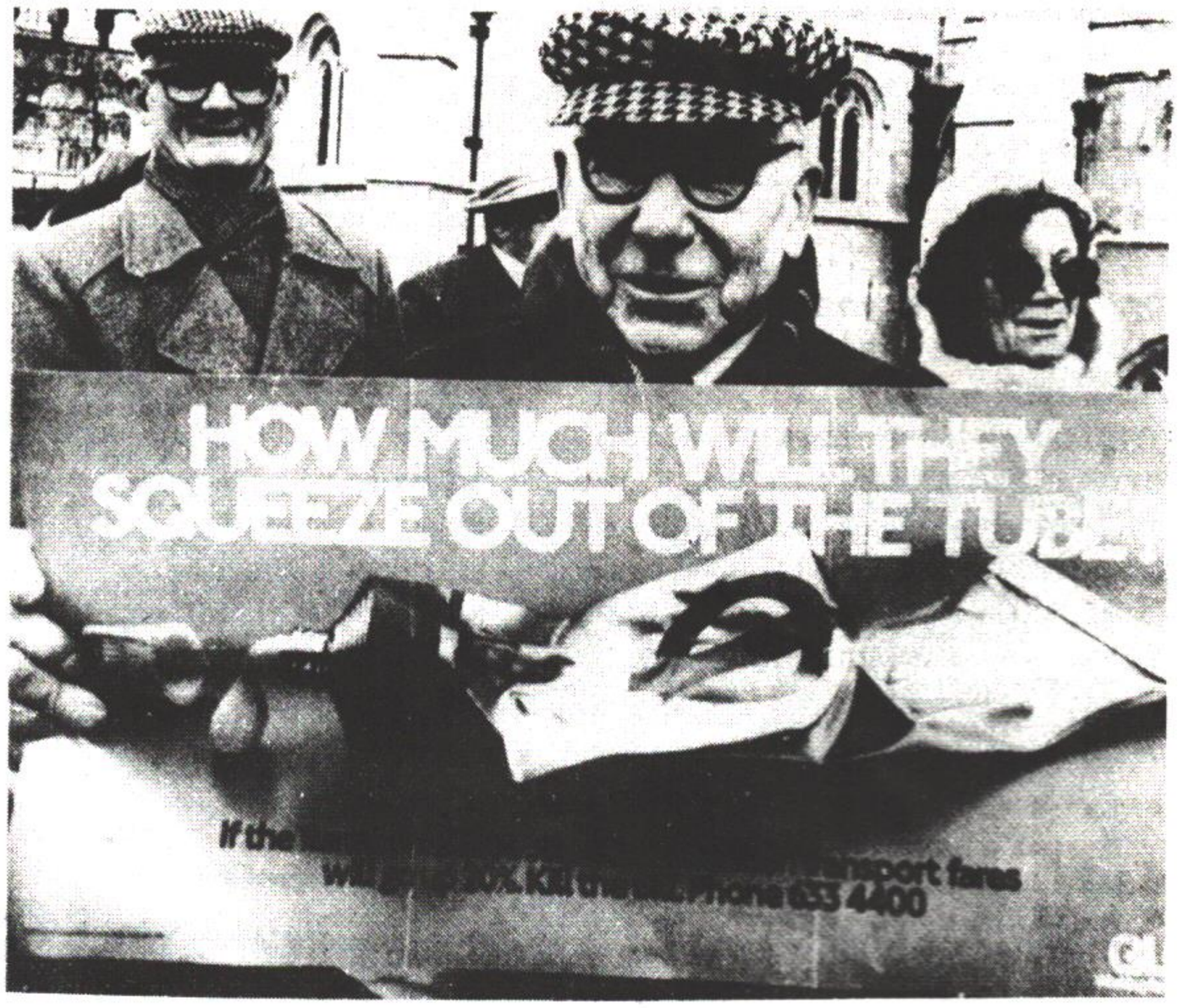
On the other hand Courtaulds are free to continue their ruthless pursuit of profit, wherever in the world the workforces are prime for the cruel form of exploitation Courtaulds serve up. Capitalism depends on such treachery and devastation in order to thrive, forcing workers to take low wages in their next job if they in fact get one.

The way forward is not to let our towns become a cradle for this new form of capitalism, where small private factories are built to replace the large textile mills. Instead we must fight for a major programme of public ownership, to prevent the injustice of the redundancy notice. Workers should be allowed a real say in the decisions made in their industries, as they are the best qualified to do so. Then and only then will we begin to counter the capitalist system, and give workers their just rewards.

Of course, we can't expect the capitalists to wave a white flag all of a sudden. We must harness the combined strength of the people, to say to Courtaulds 'never again'. To achieve our aims we must work for it, struggle for it, organise for it, and in the **end we will achieve it.**

Eirwen & Terry O'Neill

Fight the Transport Bill



The GLC 'Fares Fair' campaign failed because of the GLC's reluctance to involve the rank-and-file of Transport workers.

If Thatcher's first period of office may be characterised by her crusade against losses being made in the public services then her second would be by her endeavour to ensure tht any profits that are to be had should go into the hands of her business cronies. The main concessions given to the working class during this century in the form of public sevices are now being clawed back in a period when their labour is not in such demand given the present economic crisis of British capitalism. Cuts and privatisation are the methods by which the public services are being demolished. Having started with the NHS and British Telecom, and with the NCB, BR and British Airways in mind, the Tories' present target is the Transport services. The Transport Bill aims to privatise and de-regulate the national bus services. The Bill, which has had its 3rd reading in the Commons, will firstly privatise the National Bus Company (thus fragmenting it) and all the municipal operators which are owned by the District Councils, and secondly de-regulate all bus services. It is the second plan which requires some explanation.

At present County Councils co-ordinate the running of bus services in the area, controlling both 'profitable' and 'non-profitable' routes, using 'cross subsidies' to balance the books. Within such control they plan time-tabling, routes and the use of bus stations. The Bill proposes to remove the duty of County Councils to co-ordinate public transport and force them to put subsidised services out to tender. In other words, de-regulation will mean bus services becoming the subject of a profit-making free-for-all, the consequences of which will include the following:

* Non-profitable services such as rural and off-peak services will either not be tendered for by the privateers and will therefore become obsolete, or will become very expensive as they will no longer be subsidised.

* Profitable services will be catered for by several private bus companies whose routes will not be controlled e.g. by timetables or bus stops. Buses will be able to pick up when and where they want. With several companies doing this, chaos and unreliability will ensue, with buses racing for passengers.The passengers, 70% of whom are women, will suffer with such irregular services.

* As companies compete to provide services cheaply, maintenance and safety standards will decrease.

* While some services may be cheaper for a short while, once a company has beaten its rival for control over a route then the fares will rise.

* Concessionary fares will be under threat.

* 17,000 workers at present employed on the buses, in the midst of a competitive free-for-all, will be working for the cowboys who will take on the bus services. If privatisation of ancillary services in the NHS is anything to go by, this would mean reduction in wages and the worsening of working conditions. Just as bus companies would be competing for business, so the workers would be competing for employment to a greater extent than they already do.

response

What then should be the response of the Labour Movement to this latest attack on public services? The present campaign revolves around propaganda work and petitioning , conducted by the TGWU and the Labour Party. It is unashamedly a 'popular front' style of campaigning which is prepared to take on board any ally, including 'wet' Tories. The GLC mounted a similar style of campaign, on a higher profile, in its attempt to keep London Transport under its control. It failed.

Is then the present strategy going to work? The GLC experience, involving a far more energetic campaign, would indicate perhaps not. Where the GLC fell down was in not involving the rank and file of the transport workers. They only approached T&G bureaucrats and did not extend their campaigning to the rank and file, who could have pushed their officials to act. Only industrial actionby the T&G could have forced the government to withdraw. It is clear that privatisation is so central to Tory policy that polite petitions are hardly going to move them. Indeed so keen is Ridley to push the Transport Bill through Parliament, that some normal Parliamentary procedures have, in the Bill's case, been abandoned. Propaganda work is important, however, to win support for any actions that the transport Unions may take - it is not in itself a strategy to win.

A campaign without industrial action would be one without muscle.

No Tories!

As far as the campaign itself goes, those on the Left must also beware of making convenient alliances and must bear in mind the underlying political issues at all times. The privatisation of the bus services is only part of Thatcher's plan to end public services and leave them at the mercy of the 'free enterprise ' of the racketeers. To take on board certain Tory MPs who want to retain their rural seats would be to misunderstand the proposed plan as a single issue. It would be treachery to make alliances on this campaign with those who are prepared to beat the miners viciously into defeat in order to privatise the NCB, and who are quite happy to see the NHS decimated.

Any campaign should not be party to the myth that nationalised services are socialist in themselves. The nationalisation of services is not an aim in itself (the NCB is a nationalised service). The bus service at present is by no means wonderful, either for the consumer or the employee. By keeping it in public hands we in the Labour Party do, however, have a better chance of pressurising those who run it - i.e. our elected representatives who are included in the executive management of transport companies - to do so as we would wish. Also, and more importantly, previous experience of privatisation would indicate that the conditions for Trade Union mlitancy would be enormously difficult for employees of cowboy transport companies.

It is the responsibility of the Left not to let slip the concessions that the working class have won this century. We must campaign against the Transport Bill on the basis of:

* Industrial action of transport workers being central to the strategy - if it is one to win and not an electoral showpiece.
* Refusing to campaign with Tories or Liberals.
* Rejecting cus and poor services.

DEESIDE CND

give peace a chance —CONCERT—

DANCE TO SIX LOCAL GROUPS
PLUS
STARBURST DISCO

friday
Sept 13

Tickets £1.00 each

TIME: 7.00pm - 1.00am

PLACE: CIVIC HALL CONNAH'S QUAY

RAFFLE Bar Extension 12.30pm



The Labour Party, CND & NATO

The Left in CND and in the Labour Party have a common interest and an important fight on our hands.

Many activists would agree with the first statement but wonder at the second.

Didn't Party Conference overwhelmingly pass yet another clear, disarmament-orientated policy decision? Don't we have a Party Leader with a strong record of unilateralism? Isn't the Party associated more than ever with opposition to nuclear weapons?

Most certainly.

However, the direction of the Party and of CND is more and more towards a worrying attitude of 'patriotism with a human face'. In other words there is a strong movement towards proving that a non-nuclear defence strategy is a better defence strategy.

In CND this coincides with an obsessive interest by large elements in wooing disaffected Tories. It was reflected by the non-positions of CND on the South Atlantic war and towards NATO.

In the LP, the NATO question has actually been resolved - we must apparently stay in NATO because we have to show the voters that we are passionately concerned with 'defence'.

Those of us who are passionately concerned with defence of the progressive government in Nicaragua (including probably the majority of those who supported the NEC document) might well ask how socialists can favour a military alliance with the US.

The naive response would be that if the US intervened directly in Central America we would oppose them, and that US, not NATO, troops would be used.

The dominant theory seems to be that socialists in Western Europe should use their influence (when in government) in NATO to counter the excesses of Reaganism. After all, even Denis Healey has spoken of solidarity with 'our comrades' in Nicaragua.

Those who remember Harold Wilson's collaboration with the US in Vietnam should be a little cynical as to the relative weight of 'our comrades' in the Pentagon.

We should remember that nuclear weapons, while representing a qualitative change in arms technology, are in other respects merely a logical development from the kinds of weapons used to devastating effect in countless imperialist wars this century. We must point to the fatal flaw in the 'forty years of peace' argument.

We must realise that the political significance of Western 'nukes' is the effect they have of aiding the Kremlin bureaucracy in suppressing political freedom, and fettering progressive political and economic change in Eastern Europe. Consequently they prolong the division of Europe and particularly that of Germany.

NATO is integral to this, because NATO is the key to US policy in Europe. Therefore withdrawal from NATO must be the policy of both the Party and CND.

At the same time we must have an absolute commitment to build CND and ensure that the next Labour government carries out its commitment to the anti-missile movement.

Evan Pritchard
(Chester CLP)

Defend the Capenhurst Women!

The women protestors arrested last year at Capenhurst for opposing the illegal collaboration beween British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. (BNFL) and the racist regime in South Africa must be defended by the entire movement.

The extraction of uranium by British-owned Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ) from Namibia, is in direct contravention to UN decree no. 1, 1974.

The women's refusal to pay the fines, and decision to give the money to SWAPO is, in international terms, far more legal than any attempt to jail them for non-payment.

But whatever the legality of the issue (a concept dear to the hearts of our movement's leaders), they deserve our full support.

Messages of solidarity and donations to:-

CANUC Ofice,
PO BOX 16,
LONDON NW5 2LW.

- Evan Pritchard
(Chester CLP)

Nuclear Waste

There is enough radiation from a mass of plutonium the size of a grapefruit to kill every person on this plant (providing it could be divided so finely) . An accumulation of over 4 tons has so far been dumped into the Irish sea. "There is no known safe dosage of radiadtion ". Knowing this, it is inconceivable that any sane person could contenplate increasing our nuclear energy programme .Yet,it is planned to litter the country with nuclear power stations. Our energy needs can easily be satisfied by using a policy of investment and expansion in our mining industry...providing it is not decimated as planned by Ian (bag over head) Macgregor!

Nuclear Threat

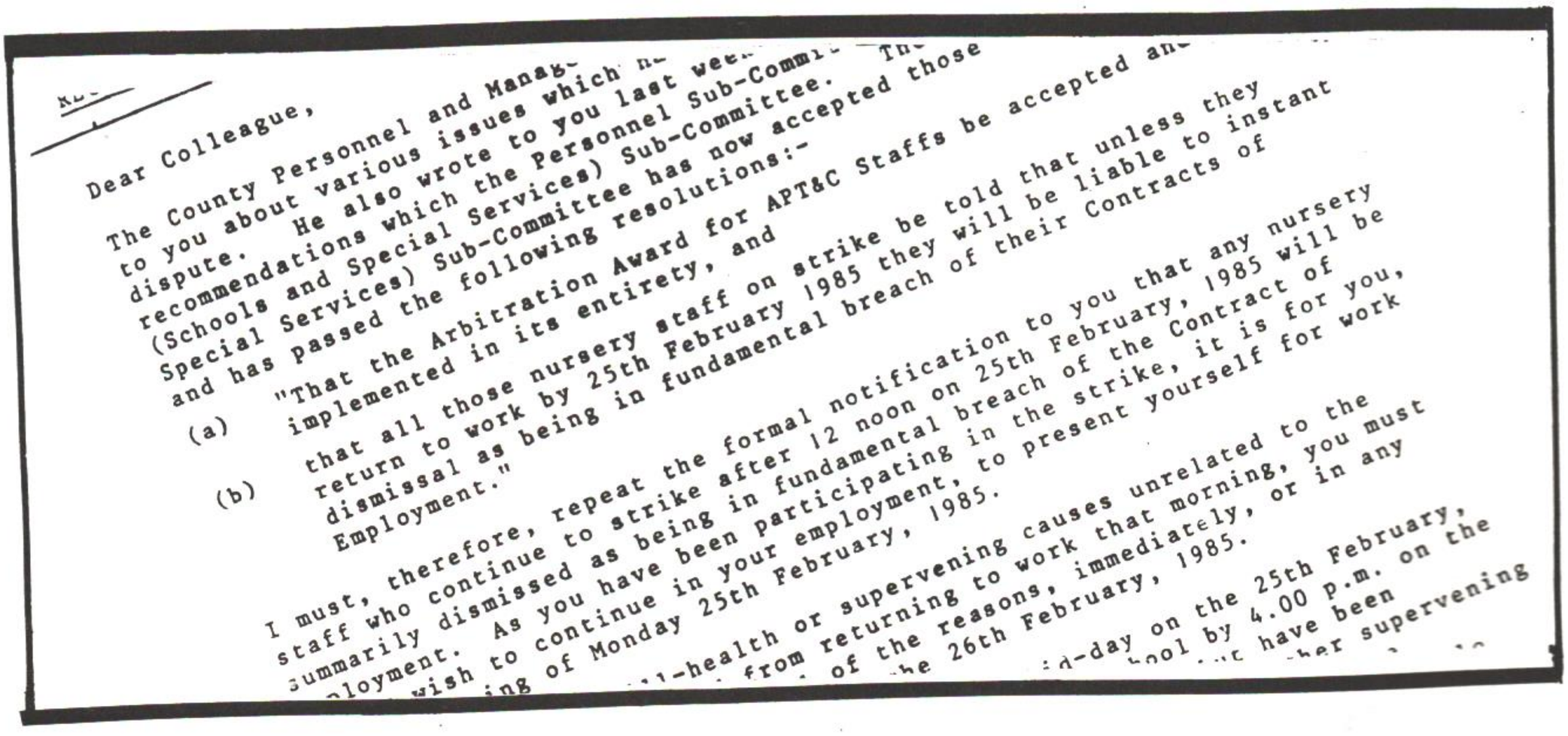
Once again we have witnessed the uncaring Thatcher and her government in action. After failing with political argument, 1,000 soldiers, airmen and M.O.D. police in 400 vehicles, with helmets and riot shields, devastated the peace camp at Molesworth, set up by people who wished to proclaim their opposition to the evils of nuclear weapons.

This action by Heseltine and his thugs marked the start of a sustained and continuing resistance by CND to the siting of American - controlled missiles at Molesworth. No longer can we just sit back as this terrible government plans to spend ten thousand million pounds on Trident missiles at a time of mass unemployment, cut-backs in hospitals and education.

Vic Button
Sealand L.P.

COUNTY ELECTIONS - what the fuss was about...

by Ged Lewis (Chester CLP)



Dear Colleague,

The County Personnel and Manag- ... to you about various issues which ... dispute. He also wrote to you last wee... recommendations which the Personnel Sub-Comm... (Schools and Special Services) Sub-Committee. Th... Special Services) Sub-Committee has now accepted those and has passed the following resolutions:-

(a) "That the Arbitration Award for APT&C Staffs be accepted and implemented in its entirety, and

(b) that all those nursery staff on strike be told that unless they return to work by 25th February 1985 they will be liable to instant dismissal as being in fundamental breach of their Contracts of Employment."

I must, therefore, repeat the formal notification to you that any nursery staff who continue to strike after 12 noon on 25th February, 1985 will be summarily dismissed as being in fundamental breach of the Contract of employment. As you have been participating in the strike, it is for you, if you wish to continue in your employment, to present yourself for work ... ing of Monday 25th February, 1985.

... -health or supervening causes unrelated to the ... from returning to work that morning, you must ... of the reasons, immediately, or in any ... the 26th February, 1985.

... d-day on the 25th February, ... hool by 4.00 p.m. on the ... have been ... her supervening

This letter, sent to all Clwyd Nursery Nurses during their recent strike, shows the previous Labour Group's approach to 'industrial relations'.

As we go to press the expulsion from the Labour Party of one Mr Ainsley Lovelock, formerly County Councillor for Flint - an event described by the local Press as 'near-certain' following his decision to stand against the official Labour candidate in the County elections, and his subsequent defeat - is well on the way. Few Labour supporters in Flint are likely to feel any misplaced sympathy for this man, whose irresponsible action might well, under different circumstances, have led to the return of a Tory councillor by default. Fortunately, although the Labour vote was split (Mr Lovelock having chosen to confuse the electorate by describing himself as 'Labour' both on the doorsteps and the ballot paper), it was still large enough to ensure the return of theofficial Labour candidate - i.e. the one chosen by democratic decision of Party members in Flint. Mr Lovelock now stands condemned by his own actions.

More serious even than this, however, is the fact that in choosing to confuse the electorate, split the vote, and oppose the return of a Labour candidate, Mr Lovelock was seen to have the tacit or explicit support of several other Party officers in the County. It is hard to account otherwise for the reluctance of Party officers to condemn publicly Mr Lovelock's actions at the point where they clearly departed from Party policy. Why is this? The answer, we feel, lies not in personal loyalty of the many friends Mr Lovelock undoubtedly made during his twenty years of office at Shire Hall, but in the fundamental political issues at stake in the County elections - which deserve to be examined in some detail by all those who supported Labour Party candidates in the recent election. More particularly, those resident in Clwyd, Gwynedd or Cheshire whose ward is now represented by a Labour councillor have a right to know - where does their County Councillor stand on the issues which so recently divided Mr Lovelock and his supporters from the majority of Labour supporters in Flint?

priorities

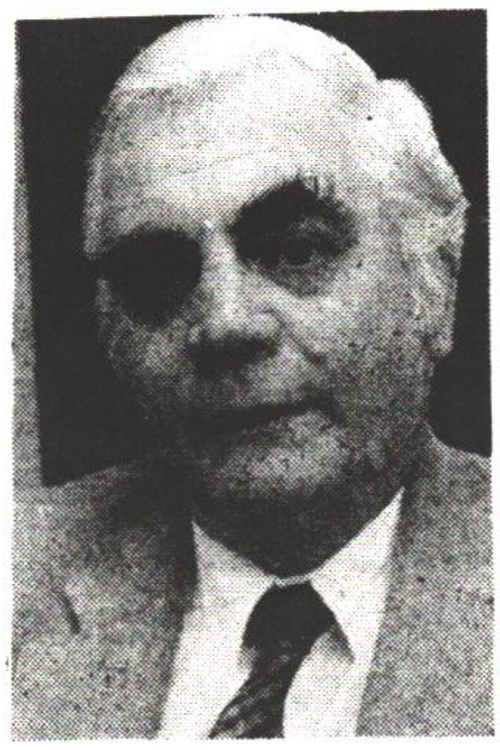
Underneath a barrage of propaganda and evasive speeches from our respective candidates, it is all too clear that the central issue behind the recent County elections was one of priorities.Whereas many Labour councillors, like the Tories and their stooges in the Alliance, see themselves in the role of managers, who once elected are accountable to no-one, the fact is that now more than ever before, the urgent need is for genuinely Socialist Labour Councillors

who are prepared to remain fully accountable to the working class, the organised Labour movement and oppressed sections of society who represent their base of electoral support. Nor is this accountability a mere matter of rhetoric. The recent climbdown of the GLC over ratecapping demonstrates that even Councillors who adopt 'left-wing' rhetoric as a means of furthering their careers are, in these dark times, of no use to the working class when it comes to resisting the terrible onslaughts of the Thatcher government, because they have refused to base themselves on the organised strength of the working class that elected them.

The options are clear for Labour Councillors over the next 4 years: either business as usual, which given the financial position of most Authorities will mean the judicious implementation of cuts, sackings and the general drastic decline of services - or making a stand against the fundamentals of Tory monetarist policy - and against the legislation which has been introduced to back up this policy.

controversy

If you compare this with the situation in Clwyd, for example, it becomes obvious why there has been so much dissatisfaction and controversy over the record of certain Labour County Councillors there. Unlike their counterparts in the 'frontline' Labour Authorities, Labour representatives on Clwyd C.C. have not held, and still do not hold, overall control; therefore there is no question of their being made personally liable for an 'illegal' stand against cuts, since against a united Tory/Alliance/'Independent' opposition such a stand would be voted down. But would they be likely to in any case? Recent experience shows that a number of Clwyd Labour Councillors, far from measuring up to the principled stand taken by their beleaguered counterparts in Merseyside or London, are unwilling even to make a show of defiance against the Tories - preferring instead, when questions of expenditure or wage claims by Council workers are on the agenda, to accept at face value the familiar Tory argument that 'there just isn't the money'.



EXPELLED — Ainsley Lovelock.

The incredible situation which occurred during the nursery nurses' strike, when 'Labour' councillors voted with the Tories to sack striking low-paid workers, is the most obvious example. Councillors like Alf Jones, Ron Drennan or our good friend A. Lovelock, while refusing to provide either the electorate or their own workers with an explanation for this disgraceful behaviour, might (judging on past form) be xpected to use some such argument in their defence if confronted - 'the money isn't there, don't blame us, blame the government...'. Presumably if these people were members of a Labour government, the money would still not be there, but the World Recession would be to blame. What these arguments deliberately conceal is a refusal to come to terms with two basic facts: firstly, that when the Tories argue that there is no money, this should be understood to mean that the wealthy ruling class they represent have no intention of making it available - and secondly, that if this money needed to provide jobs and services is to be fought for, this can only be done on the basis of mobilising the strength of the working class, to whom Labour representatives in local government and Parliament should be providing a resolute and determined leadership.

leadership

Looking at the situation in Clwyd and Cheshire, certain obvious facts spring into view: the first is that neither county has had much of a history, up to now, of determined Socialist leaership in the Party of the kind we are arguing for; the second is that such leadership is becoming an urgent necessity. The budgetary proposals of both Labour Groups show great cause for concern - one need only look as far as Clwyd's plans to axe 153 full time and 162 part time staff over this financial year, or its budgeting on the basis of 3% wage claims - likely to be significantly lower than the rate of inflation. The fact that neither Labour Group holds overall control means

that the temptation to collaborate with Liberals, SDP-ers and others and thus to compromise on issues of crucial importance is constantly present; and whilst the vast majority of Labour Party members and supporters would consider this kind of sell-out beyond the pale, recent history shows that the majority of our councillors think otherwise - witness the much-publicised four-year long romance between the Labour and Liberal groups in Cheshire.

What is to be the respomse of Party members in this situation? Here, once again, we have to face the central problem of accountability. If this noion of accountability is to be transformed into a reality, the necessary machinery must be first of all present. In the Labour Party, this means a genuinely democratic Party structure, including

(a) the right of individuals to join the Party, and if their membership is refused by the Constituency, their right to appea; and to be given an explanation;

(b) regular monthly branch meetings, of which all members are notified, and where they may have a chance to participate in decision-mking;

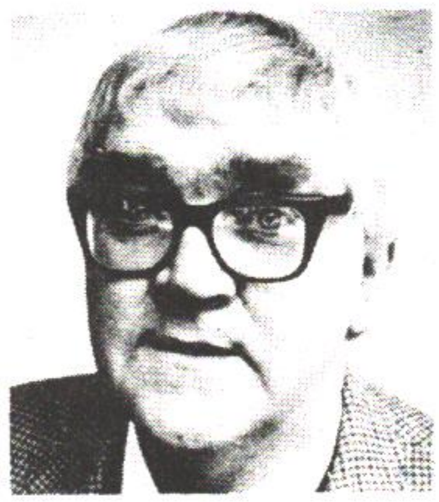
(c) regular election of officers, and selection of parliamentary and other candidates in accordance with the Rules; and

(d) the active participation of members, where appropriate, in LPYS branches, workplace branches, Women's sections, Black sections and other Party bodies.

This kind of situation is so far from being a reality in many areas of N. Wales, that the behaviour of councillors like Ron Drennan, and their re-election to office (in his case unopposed) becomes much easier to understand.

reports

While not seeking to present internal democracy in the Party as an end in itself, Briefing pledges to support any fight for the establishment of this necessary machinery. In particular we would highlight the constitutional requirement of Labour County councillors to present reports to GMC meetings and to consult with their local Party on the work they do. But accountability does not stop there. Only through constant initiatives involving workers and oppressed groups locally, and particularly Trade Unions, can councillors be enabled to speak and act with the authority of a united Labour movementbehind them; and this again should involve the co-operation of Party members, e.g. in arranging public meetings on aspects of local struggles, or fighting in their Union for the necessary action in defence of jobs, services,



Mr Ron Drennan

pay levels, working conditions or public assets. In particular, members of public sector Trade unions must prepare for the struggles ahead by campaigning for their Branch and Area to adopt a policy of strike action as a direct and immediate response to the implementation of cuts or at the first sign of redundancies. They should also point out the failings of national Union leaderships in this respect - there being no substitute, in the grim times to come, for a policy of nationally co-ordinated industrial action - which Union leaders have up to now shied away from.

campaign

Having sais all this, we can, perhaps, appreciate the significance of Mr Lovelock's vicious and contemptible betrayal of the Nursery nurses, and his subsequent reluctance to abandon, in the interests of democracy, his council seat. It is consonant with the attitudes of a whole generation of Party careerists - who up to now have dominated the Parliamentary Party, and whose policies formed the substance of the treacherous Wilson and Callaghan governments. Small wonder, likewise, that Alf Jones and other careerists like him were loth to condemn a fellow member of this profoundly reactionary clique.

But what of the alternative? We do not, in N. Wales or Cheshire, have 'ratecapped' Labour controlled Authorities in the frontline of defence against the consequences of Tory anti-working class laws. But the same arguments still apply. Where the Tories argue for cuts, redundancies, the sale of Council assets, or against wage demands - all with the excuse that 'there isn't the money' - we must clearly argue the opposite, and bring our own local Labour Parties and councillors into the midst of the national campaign in defence of local government.

(Continued on back page)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine

' The Palestine question is one of the most important issues facing the Labour Movement. It has an importance not only for Palestinians, Jews and other people but for the whole question of world peace. The Labour Party's record on this question has shown that it has, in this particular area, always fallen short of a socialist and internationalist position. Moreover, the NEC has consistently failed to implement Conference decisions. The Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine is the only campaign rooted in the Labour Movement whose platform really tackles the important issues in relation to this question. Its activities ought to be supported by every Labour Party member. ' (Jeremy Corbyn MP).

Whereas few Labour Party members would fail to take a strong position in support of the struggle for self-determination of black people in South Africa, for example, the situation in Palestine - which is directly comparable - is still the subject of a great deal of misunderstanding and ignorance. The LMCfP aims to promote wide discussion and greater understanding of these issues in the British Labour Movement, so that the working class movement may be won to support for Palestinian selfdetermination.

If you would like a speaker for your branch, GMC, LPYS, Women's Section or Trade Union branch meeting, or if you would like literature explaining the Palestinian case, write to your nearest local contact Ged Lewis, 21 Chichester St., Chester or contact *The Secretary, BM LMCP, London WC1N 3XX.*

Nicaragua

The situation in Nicaragua clearly underlines the need for solidarity with the oppreseed internationally by the Labour movement, and our recognition of the greatest menace to democracy in the world today - the government of the USA. Having failed to manufacture a 'popular' or 'democratic' overthrow of the 'totalitarian' Sandinista government, the US has introduced an economic blockade aimed at sabotaging the government - elected in the first free elections ever in Nicaragua - and forcing it to carry out policies which may give an excuse for direct intervention.

In Britain we should realise the full extent of our 'own' government's collaboration in this adventure. We have two immediate tasks: firstly to raise funds to provide medical supplies and food to be sent in containers to ports in Nicaragua to break the blockade. Secondly, to expose and fight the slavish support given to Reagan by Thatcher and the Tories.

Activists in this area will be forming a campaign for the purpose of organising solidarity work. For details contact Evan Pritchard c/o 1, Yew Tree Cottages, Pulford, Chester.

Remember - the only true guarantor of democracy is the international Labour movement!



VIEWS ON THE PARTY CONSTITUTION

The Labour Party Constitution, at first glance,should enable Party members to have a say in the running of the Party and in the formulation of Party Policy. However, it would be more accurate to say that the successes enjoyed by the Party's individual membership in these respects have been achieved <u>despite</u> the Party's Constitution.

Thus,it would appear that there is something of a fundemental nature that prevents the Constitution from working as it was intended. The answer isn't very far away, for if you read further through the Party rule book you will come across the many reasons for the problems that face the Party and in particular,the reasons for this small,almost negligible influence that the individual Party members exert.

battle

For example,there appears to be a never ending battle between the wills of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the wishes and policies of Annual Conference. To the majority of activists the reluctance of the PLP to follow Party policy is totally indefensible. We view the decisions of Conference as binding, yet we do this with the knowledge that a significant number,if not the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party view Conference with total indifference.There are some,unfortuneatly,all too many Labour MP's who regard Annual Conference as an embarrassment and some who display total contempt for its policies.

We have a Party structure that places too much emphasis on the Leadership and the Leader's patronage. Leaders,past and present will be seen eagerly seeking the favours and cooperation of Trade Union Leaders and the Media and all too ready to ignore or dismiss the views of the Constituency Labour Parties. The Leader expects that the CLP's should follow his advice out of loyality rather than conviction. The Leader's power is based on patronage,the ability to select his Cabinet,the support of his Shadow Cabinet and the final pen on the Manifesto.

The Annual Conference is the only opportunity for the CLP's to put forward their views with any degree of cohesion and to elect their 7 representaives to the NEC. At Conference the CLP's do battle with the Trade Unions,or more specifically with the Unions' Block Vote. As if that obstacle was not sufficient,the Trade Unions are given a total of 12 seats on the NEC and worse still,are then able to elect the 5 NEC members for the Womens' Section (although the CLP's are allowed to use their derisory vote, just to be fair.).

block vote

Any member who goes to Confernce as a delegate becomes rapidly familiar with the games the Party plays,all within the Rules of course,to weaken,undermine and restrict the effectiveness of the CLP's. There is a growing feeling of resentment by CLP's,it appears that we are invited to Conference purely out of a sense of tokenism. The expulsion of the Militant Editorial board,the refusal to accept Tariq Ali as a member,the refusal to allow the Womens Conference to elect the NEC members,to select resolutions to Annual Conference and set up a rules revision for the Womens' Sections were all contrary to the views of the huge majority within the CLP's. However,the block vote was wielded on all these issues and many,many more the shouts and complaints of the protesting CLP's were as effective as a dissenting voice in Thatcher's Cabinet. At the 1984 Conference the Leadership and Trade Union block vote conspired to defeat support for Black Sections and yet again the Trade Unions influence through the election of a far from radicle Confernce Arrangements Committee prevented a number of subjects from being raised including the issues of Gay Rights and Conference Voting despite these subjects having a greater number of resolutions and amendments than some of the subjects that were actually debated.

Perhaps the event of 1984 that exemplified the influence and power of the Party Leader and the Trade Union block vote to undermine previous Conference decisions was the thinly veiled attempt to rewrite the Parliamentary Selection proceedure which,if it had proved successful,would have given the sitting Member of Parliament a definite advantage over any rivals. Neil Kinnock blazed the Media trail singing the praises of the proposed changes to the selection proceedure (whilst denying he was attempting to exert unfair influence),twisting

as many arms that he could in a dictitorial fashion obviously gained from studying Margaret Thatcher,David Steel and of course,the super democrat,David Owen.

Unfortunately,due to poor organisation,the opportunity to change the reselection proceedure vanished in a series of votes that clearly confused the Right and we were left,more by accident than design,with the status quo.

onslaught

However,the Right have picked themselves up and we are to face a new onslaught. It appears Ken Cure,the AUEW hatchetman of the NEC,not previously known for his original thought and and aptitude towards political philosophy,in his capacity as Chair of the NEC disputes committee has been given a very important asignment.His task is to define Socialism- no doubt this task has been made more difficult as he will be pressured into defining Socialism in such a legal,watertight manner so that the NEC,if they wish,will be able to expell whomsoever they wish (all in the interests of Party unity) without fear of legal proceedings. This promises to be a document worth waiting for.

Having painted a fairly pessimistic picture of the role and effectiveness of the CLP within the Party it may be tempting to resign ourseleves to becoming nothing more than a pressure group within the Party. However,this is by no means the case,there are many tasks we should set ourselves within the Party in an attempt to redress the balance and whilst campaigning for fairer representation.

educate

Firstly,we must realise that unity of purpose is paramount,there are many divisions within Solidarity - the organised Right- but they are united in their determination to remain the power base within the Party and particularly the Parliamentary Labour Party. We must realise that there are many members of the Party who do not realise the wheeling and dealing that takes place amongst the PLP,the Leadership and the Trade Union leaders. We need to educate mebers in the CLP's as to how Conference works,the obstacles that resolutions and delegates face,the importance of choosing a good delegate for conference and the importance of attending CLP meetings. Even in those CLP's which are dominated by the Right,we need to be present and persist with the arguements and resolutions in support of Socialism.We should look closely at the Labour Councillors we select and the running of the County and Ditrict Labour Groups.

unions

Whilst being critical of the Trade Union block vote,the role of the Trade Unions within the Party must continue a fairer distribution between the Trade Unions and CLP's far from weakening the ties should strengthen them,as we would then then have a greater resposibilty towards one another and greater trust. We must also encourage rank and file members of the Party to take an active interest in their union,for many of the criticisms detailed hold not only for the Labour Party but also for very many Trade Unions .

organise

Perhaps most important of all,if this isn't stating the obvious,we need to choose our Parliamentary candidates with care,although the machinary exists to remove MP's that unsatisfactory,it often takes a very strong will to resist the pressures exerted by the Right and the Media, thedeselection of a bad MP is never a from certainty.

Organisation,is the key to success,we should be fair and legitimate and ultimately is the only course of action open to individual members wishing to maximise their effectiveness within the Labour Party Rules and Constitution. Though changes are long overdue,it may be many years before we achieve them and secure a truely democratic Party, a Party that gives its members an effective say in its day to day running and policy formation.

by Cllr. Dave Orbison

(Delyn CLP)

Whose right to choose?

In the 'Evening Leader' of May 20th it is reported that Ann Winterton, Tory MP for Congleton, will be approaching Social Services Secretary Fowler over the case of a young woman of 15 who is to be allowed an abortion 'against her mother's wishes'. The same young woman has been made a Ward of Court - 'a scandal' - and been allowed the Pill - 'an absolute disgrace'.

The individual responsible for this enlightened decision - which all socialists should welcome - is a judge.

The real scandal and disgrace, Ms Winterton, is that such decisions should either be up to the mother or to the male-dominated, bourgeois courts.

It is sad and ironic that opponents of the Gillick ruling should find ourselves for a single instance on the same side as a High Court judge. It is also ironic that the defenders of mothers' rights to interfere with daughters' rights to control reproduction are the same type of people who would curtail their rights to choose whether or not to be mothers in the first place!

Evan Pritchard (Chester CLP)



Youth in struggle

Youth BRIEFING

Historically the Youth sections of European Socialist Parties have tended towards the Left or radical wings of those Parties.

The LPYS is no exception - the present leadership is drawn from the supporters of Militant, the most well-known Left current in the Party.

The Right wing have seen this as a fundamental threat to their position and have launched periodic witch-hunts, which all genuine Left-wingers have resisted. Recent progressive steps by the YS on the issue of Youth Training Schemes - the support for a national school pupils' strike organised by Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign (YTURC) - have given rise to more attacks by the Right Wing. Those who supported the strike have been publicly criticised and attacked both nationally and locally.

Kinnock and the others should bear in mind that the Youth leaving school at the moment and facing YTS exploitation - not to mention those already suffering from the effects of this bogus 'attempt' at dealing with mass unemployment - are not idiots. They certainly aren't voting fodder - most of them are too young!

Calling supporters of the strike 'dafties' and evicting YTURC from Walworth Rd. are not progressive steps to win the Youth vote, nor is any statement suggesting that there is anything progressive about YTS.

In Chester 200 young people expressed their feelings on the day, risking all kinds of victimisation. Yet in the build-up to the strike, while the YS gave its full support, statements in the Press by certain Labour councillors and the Party Secretary showed that they were at pains to dissociate themselves from the action.

The youngsters took their lead from the politics of struggle demonstrated by the NUM - a speaker from this Union got a warm response at a rally of school pupils on the day - not from the politics of adaptation. A School Students' Union is presently being formed among many of the participants as welll as others who were too intimidated to come out.

Evan Pritchard
Chair, Chester LPYS
(personal capacity)

(next issue-"the inadequa of the Militant leadership the left wing alternative")

A service for the people?



A Clwyd Health Authority member shows the Tories how it should be done.
(N.B.-hidden in this picture is a Labour County Councillor. Can YOU spot him?)

NHS: AN END TO COLLABORATION!

On a national level, the response of the Party rank-and-file to the Tories' moves to privatise the NHS ancillary services has been encouraging. Many Labour Party members up and down the country have been closely involved in strikes (such as those at Barking and in Newcastle), occupations of hospitals due for closure, lobbies and campaigns against the cuts and against 'competitive tendering'.

On a more local level, while the same potential for resistance is undoubtedly there, Labour Party members have found their efforts to organise and campaign in defense of the NHS, blocked at every turn by Party, and in some cases Trade Union, officials.

In Clwyd, the campaign led by NUPE in response to cutbacks was sabotaged by the actions of Labour County Councillor Ron Drennan and TGWU official Jim Morris. In their capacity as delegates to the Area Health Authority, they proposed and supported a motion to 'seek public consultation over the future of Chatsworth House, Prestatyn'. and endorsed the Authority's proposal that it cut jobs by seeking voluntary redundancies and take other measures to reduce the wages of hospital workers. These scandalous actions have received wide and gleeful publicity from the Tory Press.

In Chester, Party officers have repeatedly refused to organise a meeting of the so-called Labour Campaign to save the NHS, despite the recent introduction of competitive tendering at the Royal Infirmary and imminent threat of privatisation at the Countess of Chester Hospital. In addition, requests from a local NUPE official to speak at Labour Party meetings on these matters have been met with stony silence from the Party Secretary.

Briefing is appealing to all its readers to act now to defend their Health Service. In future editions we will be including detailed discussion on these topics; in the meantime we invite readers to write to us with details of the situation in their local Health Authority, and any measures which are being taken to resist cuts and privatisation. Our columns are also open to Health Service Trade Unionists to give their views on the way forward.

Remember, the NHS is about as 'safe' in the Tories' hands as British Steel was in MacGregor's!

No magazine purporting to deal with the political situation in North Wales would be complete without some discussion on the question of Welsh Nationalism. For this reason we include in our first issue an article on the subject by a member of Plaid Cymru, which we hope will stimulate serious discussion and debate on this important question.

For a Welsh Socialist Republic!

"Abandon hope all class reductionist British Socialists!" may not be the most concise of slogans, but it is one that needs to be posted up all over Wales to remind British Marxists of the distinctive struggle now taking place in Wales. Socialism in Wales will only be realised when the struggle for National liberation is taken into consideration, much as women's liberation must also be an integral part of our revolution.

For too long this century the Labour movement and Nationalist Movement have been not only mutually separated but mutually antagonistic. The Labour Party with its stronghold in the South Wales proletariat has condemned petty-bourgeois - led Plaid Cymru as an irrelevance to the Welsh working class, while Nationalists have denounced the bureaucratic corruption of the Labour Mafia as well as its British Centralist nature.

Both viewpoints are valid but in attempting to uphold their own side (almost exclusively in an electoral context) the potential debate descends into childish name-calling. In seeking to move beyond that, socialist activists in both parties have attempted to develop a more detailed critique of the situation in Wales.

reformism

Plaid Cymru's Left - the National Left - is basically Left reformist unable to break free from the cosy cocoon of electoralism and reformism. The easiest thing in the world is to argue against bourgeois nationalists campaigning electorally for an independent Wales, by exposing their lack of an economic analysis for the current crisis.

Outside the Eastern European states Wales has the largest state-controlled sector with 60% of the workforce working indirectly or directly for various levels of the British State. Of the remaining 40%, threequarters are employed by outside multinationals. Clearly Welsh workers are not only in conflict with the anonymous might of international capital in a branch-factory/extractive industry economy, but also the faceless British state - through 'nationalisation' (sic) and the neo-colonial bureaucracy of the Welsh Office.

Kinnock

Plaid has no answer to this except ineffectual bleatings for a decentralised State. Equally ineffectual has been Labour's claim to represent Wales adequately in the Parliamentary field; in truth, Wales has been a launching pad for innumerable pink careerists. Among Wales' exports is the present Labour leader and MP for Thames Valley, Neil Kinnock, who is a classic example of a Welshman unable to face up to his own nationality and who therefore clings desperately to British chauvinism and displays a paranoid hatred of all things Welsh.

Consider for example his accusation of 'linguistic apartheid' with Anglesey teachers apparently ignoring pleas by English children to go to the toilet. Kinnock backed up his allegation with a single letter from a parent who happened to be Glenys Kinnock's sister-in-law. In the devolution campaign Labour's British Centralism came to the fore as six MPs in South Wales stood by the Tories.(Incidentally, Glenys' brother is now parliamentary candidate for Ynys Mon, where the language situation is reaching crisis proportions).

Historically the absence of a distinct Welsh boutgeoisie has meant that Welsh Nationalism has consistently been in the hands of the 'gwerin' (the common people, rural proletariat) and has been

recognised b socialists as an integral part of the class struggle. Other small nations in Europe such as Denmark and Czechoslovakia had a stronger national bourgeoisie who established stronger national institutions - including Parliaments. In Wales the bourgeoisie was either English or rapidly Anglicised and absorbed into the British ruling class, making any class struggle anti-imperialist too. So the 'nationalist card' - so often a weapon of the ruling class in imperialist countries for uniting opposing classes and ethnic minorities - is in fact a class weapon for Welsh socialists to use against the imperialist flag-waving mentality which Thatcher and her class have used so effectively. The Falklands War, which sent Welsh soldiers to fight Welsh speakers living in Patagonia, was one such occasion when the setting sun of the British Empire temporarily rose again.

British nationalism is typical of the 'big nation' chauvinism which afflicts ex-colonial powers like France, Spain and England and which seeks to envelop and smother smaller adjacent nations. Since the anti-colonialist struggles of the Third World have destroyed the myth of 'Great' Britain the smaller nations have been reasserting their identities. Similarly, the Basques in Spain and Bretons and Corsicans in France have engaged their oppressors.

jingoism

Unfortunately such jingoism is cancerous and has afflicted much of the Labour Movement and even so-called Marxism in Britain. Most Marxists would deny this, arguing that international socialism not bourgeois nationalism is their philosophy as they demonstrate their support for national liberation struggles world-wide. All well and good, but such struggles, armed and otherwise, don't always take place 5,000 miles away. Some occur in your own back yard and when that happens they're usually denounced as weakening the British working class and pandering to bourgeois nationalism. After 15 years of guerrilla struggle in Ireland most British Left groups are still quick to criticise the Republican movement.

Feeble sloganeering about internationalism occurs when British socialists are confronted with a direct challenge to their own national identity - where do they stand? Are they British, defending an imperialist mentality and denying a nation's right to self-determination? Or do they go beyond their abstract internationalism and recognise that a Welsh Socialist Republic, as a link in the chain of world socialism, is the only way for Wales to escape its present situation as a rotting appendage of a rotten state?

Marc V. Jones (Plaid Cymru)





There is no better way to bring up your chil-ren than to teach them the good old-fashioned virtues of scabbing & treachery. After that, though they be mocked and scorned by men, you know they will rejoice in the certainty of a future glory beyond re-tirement. As the Good Book says, 'The House of Lords has many man-sions...'.

(Continued from p12)

It should be remembered that the smashing of Local Goverenment resistance to their policies is a central part of Tory strategy - second only to the destruction of the Trade Union movement in its present form. Since the defeat of the miners' strike and the deluge of Union sell-outs which followed, the fight in local government is likely to become the number one area of anti-Tory struggle over the coming year. This struggle has tremendous potential - not just mobilising to defend jobs and services, but looking further ahead, preparing for the return of a future Labour government, and determining what will be the state of the Labour movement. when this comes about. If we are not to see a re-run of the old class collaboration methods of the Callaghan era, workers must learn the lessons of the miners' strike and the struggles still to come - that only independent, united action by the working class will be able to bring about change and safeguard the historical gains already won by the movement.

DEESIDE MINERS' SUPPORT GROUP

"JOBS NOT JAIL"

concert

DANCE TO

JIVE PILOTS
ABSTRACT
BETWEEN OURSELVES
FALL FROM LISBON
BLUE PARTY
VOTS
plus: STARBURST DISCO

-

friday

July 19

Bar Extension - 12.30pm

Tickets: £1.00
Time: 7.00pm - 1.00am
place: CIVIC HALL, CONNAH'S QUAY

The need for those on the left of the Labour Party to organise and to make independent assessments of the political situation has never been greater, both locally and nationally.

North Wales and Cheshire Labour Briefing is produced by a broad left group of individual L.P. members. If you are interested in the politics of this magazine and would like to contribute to Briefing in any way, contact us at this address:

NW&C Briefing, c/o 21 Chichester St., Chester. - or ring Dave on Flint 61450.

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!