CONFERENCE DELEGATES' BRIEFING

THURSDAY BRIGHTON 1989

AS SEEN ON T.V.!!

FULL EQUALITY!

FOR LESBIANS AND GAY MEN!!

THE choice facing delegates in this afternoon's debate on COMPOSITE 32 is simple. Do you support equality - or discrimination and oppression?

The majority of the NEC has opted for the latter. Equality cannot be qualified: you either have it or you don't. Despite the smooth platitudes from the platform, there will be no real equality for lesbians and gay men as long as a discrimina tory age of consent for gay men remains on the statute book.

Only last year 84% of Conference voted (with unanimous backing by the NEC) in favour of reaffirming and extending the Party's comprehensive lesbian and gay rights policy.

We know that "a year is a long time in politics", but just what has changed between Blackpool 1988 and Brighton 1989? Lesbians and gay men still get beaten up in the streets; have our children taken away; lose our jobs because of our sexuality. If anything the climate is getting more violent and repressive.

What *has* changed is the Party leadership's increasing willingness to embrace Tory ideas - and prejudices. This has been coupled with a reckless electoralism

LABOUR MUST DELIVER

which assumes that the number of votes you win is inversely proportional to your level of commitment and adherence to political principles! It's the policies you adopt and argue for, not the policies you drop and cover up, that count.

This afternoon's debate is not just about denouncing the leadership (though their prejudice, cowardice, and deceit should not be forgotten), nor is it simply about raising your hand at the right time (important as that is!) Lesbian and gay rights need to be taken up and carried forward at *every level of the labour movement*. We don't want any victories we score on the policy front to be left as mere paper commitments. We want to see a lesbian and gay equality policy effectively implemented for the first time.

SUPPORT COMPOSITE 32!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Today's Debates

POLL TAX: Labour's finger on the trigger

THE NEC Statement offers no serious strategy for opposing the Tories' most sweeping attack yet on the working class. What the NEC calls the "success in Scotland" has been *in spite of* Labour's opposition to a campaign of defiance. Labour Councillors should not become Tory agents, attempting only to "minimise" the Tax's impact, not least because of the innumerable Labour supporters who will lose their right to vote as a result.

The NEC claims that tens of thousands have joined *Labour's* Poll Tax protest. *One million* in Scotland are *refusing* to pay and countless numbers in England and Wales have yet to register. Labour should support not undermine this genuine mass action.

It's not enough to "identify with those who cannot pay"; we have to give them practical support and real solidarity by building a mass non-payment campaign. Council and DHSS workers who refuse to collect or help enforce the Poll Tax must be supported not victimsed.

Waiting for the return of a Labour government is not a sufficient response to the Poll Tax. Millions will suffer while the Labour leadership sit back, counting the votes the Tax will bring them. People in dire poverty will not be satisfied by Labour handing out "guidelines on implementing the Poll Tax". It's like firing a shotgun at your best friend but trying to "minimise the impact" by telling her/him that it's someone else's fault and anyway you're doing it as compassionately and fairly as possible.

SUPPORT COMPOSITE 27!

OPPOSE COMPOSITE 25!

CHILD ABUSE

COMPOSITE 35 on Child Abuse tackles the myth that gay men are the main perpetrators of sexual abuse and challenges the belief that teaching children to "say no" is the key to dealing with the problem. The motion correctly situates abuse in the context of male power, but fails to suggest remedies to children's powerlessness. Family courts are already Party policy; the key is to ensure their introduction is prioritised by a Labour government. "Cleveland" showed that Labour MPs are all too willing to line up on the wrong side of this power struggle.

TWO VIEWS ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

AGAINST

PR gives power to the smallest parties, leads to deals in smoke-filled rooms between unaccountable politicians, and ditched manifesto commitments. It's *less* not *more* democratic. In the Labour Party PR will mean centralised Kinnock/Mandelson-controlled candidates lists. Benn & Skinner will be numbers 700 & 701! PR destroys constituency level accountability: no wonder the LCC & 100 Labour MPs support it. PR will lead to the break-up of the coalition which *is* the Labour Party, & different groups seeking their own elected "representatives". Embracing PR now will give SLD/SDP a reason to exist (they're second in double the seats Labour is) just as they're disintegrating.

***John Wilton*, Birmingham Edgbaston**

FOR

FULL democracy can't be achieved outside a socialist system, but *any* advance in democratic rights benefits the working class. The current indefensible electoral system in no way reflects votes cast. Some forms of PR would give much more accurate representation and are thus more democratic. Left opponents of PR invoke the dangers of pacts and coalitions. But it's possible & necessary to support PR *and* oppose coalitionism. Whether or not Labour backs "electoral reform" there'll still be the usual pressure to accommodate to the centre before the next election. Supporting the present system plays into the hands of the ruling class who always work to curtail working class rights.

***Patrick Baker*, Hackney N CLP**

CHARTER 88/CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

IN comparison with other capitalist countries, Britain is riddled with archaic and arbitrary institutions. Its "subjects" are more vulnerable to human rights abuses. Charter 88 claims the answer is a "written constitution". But history shows that serious constitutional reform *only* comes from wars or revolutions. It also shows that a written constitution full of democratic promises can accompany brutal repression (USA, USSR). Finally, the key question is who will gain/lose from any new constitution; and that depends on the balance of forces established in the class struggle.

POLICY REVIEW: DEMOCRACY, THE INDIVIDUAL, & THE COMMUNITY

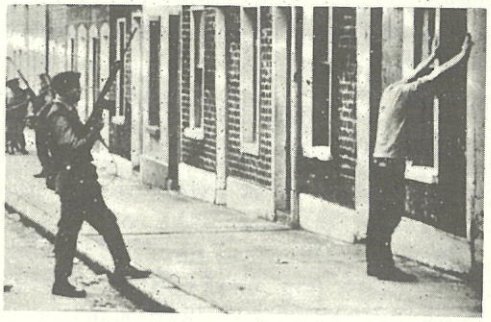
A Party leadership which blocks Conference debate on the Guildford 4 and is silent on deportations, police attacks on Broadwater Farm, & censorship of Sinn Fein loses credibility for its proposals on "democracy".

If you want a "Second Chamber" (reformed House of Lords) with a veto over Commons legislation, state funding of political parties (cash straight to Walworth Rd), more bipartisanship on Ireland, security services retained as at present (subject only to a Commons Select Committee), then this bit of Policy Review is for you.

If, however, you want real democratic control of the cops, accountability of judges, disestablishment of the CofE, abolition of the blasphemy laws, popular control of public services, and an equal "age of consent", (not to mention abolition of the monarchy), then vote it down.

IRELAND

IN contrast to **Kevin McNamara's** ludicrous and reactionary policy of Irish "unity by consent", C36 offers a clear practical and progressive alternative. It rightly notes the repression perpetrated by Britain in the North of Ireland to perpetuate its rule there and calls for the withdrawal of British troops within the life of one Parliament. Tragically, the resolution on the Guildford 4 has not even been timetabled.



VOTING GUIDE
MORNING SESSION

POLICY REVIEW: CONSUMERS & THE COMMUNITY: OPPOSE. Long on waffle about "excellence"; short on commitments to improve/extend basic services.

COMPOSITE 19: SUPPORT. Laudable sentiments but what about restoring cuts, building hospitals, backing striking nurses?

COMPOSITE 20: SUPPORT. Democratic NHS! NEC say remit; NUPE/COHSE say oppose because of calls to sack NHS managers. Pressure on **Kingston** to remit because NUPE/COHSE don't want to be seen voting *against* a health resolution.

COMPOSITE 21: SUPPORT. Wishy-washy but useful.

COMPOSITE 25: OPPOSE. "Step up" fight against Poll Tax but "a non-payment campaign is not the answer!" Then what is?

COMPOSITE 26: SUPPORT. Reasonable guide to what Labour's alternative to Poll Tax ought to be; plus much needed call to restore cuts in local services.

COMPOSITE 27: SUPPORT. For a mass non-payment campaign.

COMPOSITE 28: SUPPORT. NEC is opposed because it wants Councils to be able to break private contracts. Support direct labour!

RESOLUTION 198: SUPPORT. Despite all the fancy talk NEC opposes this real commitment to democratising public services.

NEC STATEMENT ON POLL TAX: OPPOSE. Recipe for destroying any mass opposition: and license for Labour Councils to hammer their own supporters.

AFTERNOON SESSION

POLICY REVIEW: DEMOCRACY FOR INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY: OPPOSE. See article.

COMPOSITE 29: All *Briefing* supporters reject pacts & coalitions, but views on PR itself vary. See articles.

COMPOSITE 30: SUPPORT. A Bill of Rights might provide useful lever for struggle, but watch any NEC consultation like hawks.

RESOLUTION 235: OPPOSE. Labour should *motivate* its voters, not rely on the state.

RESOLUTION 256: SUPPORT. Self-determination for Scotland & the Scottish Party.

RESOLUTION 257: SUPPORT. Bring back elected authorities for London & Met Counties.

COMPOSITE 31: SUPPORT. Freedom of information & democratic media.

COMPOSITE 32: SUPPORT. Equality means equality!

COMPOSITE 33: OPPOSE. The Charter 88 menu; note point (a) would enshrine *property rights*. See article.

COMPOSITE 34: SUPPORT. Fight "Widdicombe" restrictions on local government workers' rights.

RESOLUTION 288: SUPPORT. Improves Policy Review commitments to people with disabilities.

COMPOSITE 35: SUPPORT. Strong statement on child abuse; Stuart Bell please note.

RESOLUTION 298: SUPPORT. Prison reform urgently needed: Britain has highest prison population (proportionately) in Europe.

COMPOSITE 36: SUPPORT. "British Labour can never be free as long as Ireland is in chains."

Yesterday's Debates

MORNING SESSION

ENVIRONMENT

CUNNINGHAM's opening statement condemned water privatisation and damage to the environment (pollution, bad housing, public transport). But NEC & Policy Review Statements only offer "regulation". Water metering will continue with "rebates" (creating another means-tested benefit).

An NUM delegate was the only speaker to oppose any of the proposals, arguing that C38 & C39 to end sea dumping of waste would cost miners' jobs. This clashes with Scargill's statement that he'd sacrifice all the pits for the sake of the environment. Sadly, C39 was narrowly lost after an NEC request for remittance was refused.

On Tuesday, Kinnock said making the economy "competitive" will take priority. Labour will "intervene to persuade" private industry to be "responsible" towards the environment. But will Labour Ministers receiving fat consultancy fees from polluters "intervene" strongly enough?

***Julie Larner*, MSF delegate**

PERGAMON STRIKERS PERK UP CONFERENCE

YESTERDAY 300 delegates and visitors joined the Pergamon strikers' picket of **Maxwell's** Labour Conference beano.

This followed a dramatic challenge to Maxwell by an NUM delegate at the beginning of afternoon Conference session. Cap'n Bob's presence in the hall was then objected to by several speakers. **Brenda Dean** reported that in addition to the Pergamon 23, Maxwell now had 100 SOGAT members sacked from Nuffield Press on his conscience (what there is of it).

At the early evening picket **Tony Benn** & **Tony Banks** gave support and then tried to lobby Maxwell inside the Grand Hotel. The lively demo was entertained by musicians. Later, Mad Max appeared on the hotel balcony and was greeted by roars of "Jump!" and "Scab!"

The strikers have been buoyed by their reception at Conference (despite CAC) and are determined to fight till victory.

LEADER'S LETTER: NO SHOCK

ONE delegate received a leter from Kinnock congratulating him/her on a good Conference speech. The delegate in question is a former member of the Tory Party.

AFTERNOON SESSION

HAMMOND'S LAW

ONLY **Scargill** mentioned *In Place of Strife*, Wilson's doomed 1969 attack on unions. The Policy Review and successful composites put the next Labour government on course to impose *In Place of Strife* ***and*** Heath's Industrial Relations Court on its supporters in the unions.

Meacher, moving the Policy Review, talked of *limited* redress of Tory law: take away the right of minorities to defy majority votes, end sequestrations, extend powers of Industrial Tribunals, restore union rights at GCHQ, establish a legal right to recognition.

This still leaves unions without key rights. They could still be fined and subject to contempt of court (and prison?). Compulsory postal ballots would be retained; but the right to picket would *not* be restored.

Despite Meacher's effective presentation the real meaning of the debate was made clear by **Eric Hammond** who said that this was "the happiest week of my life" and that he wholeheartedly supported this part of the Policy Review. ***Alan Thornett***

COMMUNITY CARE; EDUCATION

ON Community Care, **Anne Davies** stunned Conference with the information that Social Services Directors described the elderly in their care as having a certain "shelf life". Brilliant speech by **Liz Williams** (Wallasey) helped by visual aids from the balcony described how riot police were used to break up a demonstration of elderly people opposed to privatisation of residential homes.

ON Education, strong support from the floor for the delegate who said there should be no private schools but high standards in *all* schools wasn't reflected in resolutions. ***Pauline Purnell***

"GENUINE INTEREST"

LABOUR will allow secondary action when workers can show (to the satisfaction of a special court) that they have "a genuine interest in the outcome of a dispute." To make the point clear, **Meacher** (replying to Scargill on *Newsnight*) said, "Miners do *not* have a genuine interest in a nurses' dispute." We have news for you, Michael. *All* workers have a genuine interest in a nurses' dispute: indeed, in *all* disputes.

Yesterday's Fringe

VOICES FOR RUSHDIE

AT one of the week's most powerful meetings 70 people heard **Narendra Makanji** (Black Sections), **Gita Saghal** (Southall Black Sisters), **Maryan** (CARI) and **Mike Marqusee** (Briefing) discuss fundamentalism and responses to it within the black community and the labour movement. Some people attacked *Voices* for ignoring racism, but were sharply repudiated from floor and platform. **Keith Vaz**, after his outrageous attack on Rushdie the previous night, felt compelled to attend and challenged the speakers to come to Leicester. This debate would be welcomed by *Voices* and hopefully can be organised soon. The meeting had a clear message for the labour movement: it is racist to pretend that divisions don't exist within the black communities and that the left must take sides. The struggle against racism and fundamentalism must go hand in hand.

TRIBUNE: LIVINGSTONE'S DOG LICENSE

THIS year's *Tribune* rally lacked last year's controversy. Both **Todd** and **Livingstone** came dangerously close to accepting Kinnockite dog licenses.

Ken operated on a particularly short leash. Like a scolded child, he wimpered, "We've emerged from Conference with a large degree of agreement... we have to accept all decisions that have been made this week and unite behind them."

Robin Cook, however, is a full licensed poodle!

Witty contributions from **Jo Richardson** and **Tony Banks** made the event more bearable. **Narendra Makanji** (Black Sections) and **Anna Wagstaff** (Pergamon) injected much needed radicalism.

With only 2 women out of 7 speakers, *Tribune* ought to have a 50% quota for women next year to redress the imbalance!

***Bryn Griffiths*, Tottenham CLP**

JUSTICE FOR THE MINERS!

100 people at the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign meeting were treated to a bracing blast of class struggle politics from **Scargill** and **Skinner**. Scargill pledged full support for the remaining 125 sacked miners and called on a Labour government to reinstate them along with all other workers victimised since 1979 with full back-pay: *and sack the coal bosses who sacked the workers!*

CHARTER 88: TALKING SHOP

80 people heard an all-woman platform on electoral reform, Bill of Rights, written constitution. Contributions from the floor livened up the debate. Even the word "class" was heard (from Bob Cryer). Everyone wanted Freedom of Information and a Right of Reply (except *The Guardian's* editor, in attendance). But no one could say quite how these good things were to be won. Reform the Lords? Well, yes, some time (Jane Ewart-Biggs, Labour Peer). Charter 88 seems to think the struggle for democracy can be conducted through ads in *The Guardian*. History suggests otherwise.

CLPs CONFERENCE

THE organisers rightly said socialists in the CLPs need to exchange ideas & information. Few realise the extent of the witch-hunt. **Eric Heffer** said that whilst the leadership had changed the policies, they had left the constitution intact (for the moment). But the Edmunds proposals are a major attack on Party democracy.

NEILZZZ

DEREK Gladwin (CAC) assured Conference that those individuals pictured in the *Sun* sleeping through the leader's speech were *not* delegates. However, they *were* asleep. They couldn't possibly be MPs, could they?

GWYNNETH Dunwoody will be in the Chair for today's lesbian & gay rights debate. **David Blunkett** presided over the women's organisation debate. What's next? **Eric Hammond** calling the shots in the debate on union solidarity? **Stuart Bell** on child abuse? Keith Vaz on blasphemy laws?

SPEAKING TOO SOON

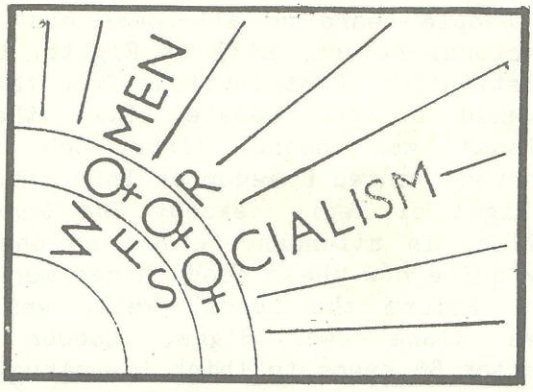
Bill Jordan: "The armies of mass picketers have been demobilised and the next Labour government must not call them up again... Today's Party is a party of law-makers not law-breakers."

Brenda Dean: "Workers are not queuing up to take industrial action."

SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN GROUP. Conference Round-up. Lunchtime. Albion Hotel.

SOCIALISTS IN THE LABOUR PARTY: FIGHTING BACK! Socialist Movement, 6pm, Brighthelm. Delegates' assess Conference & the future.

COMMITTEE AGAINST REPRESSION & FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN IRAQ. Lunchtime, Brighthelm Centre.



WOMEN FOR SOCIALISM

THURSDAY promises more media-managed politics. Except for a likely dramatic NEC defeat on lesbian & gay rights (C.32) the Labour leadership will continue with welfare rhetoric aimed at presenting a human face of capitalism to yuppie voters (not to mention reasserting the City). Lesbian & gay success will be all the sweeter for being one of the extremely few left victories - and on an issue not traditionally seen as important for socialism.

W4S also supports C.35 on child abuse and has prioritised developing a socialist feminist position on the family, male power and abuse of women and children.

None of the health motions make any reference to *women's* health or to the fact that it is *women* who do almost all the so-called community caring.

W4S will be raising these and other socialist-feminist issues at the Socialist Movement's open discussion this evening after Conference. W4S members and supporters will also be getting together at the end of the meeting.

Women for Socialism

ALMA MATER

THE *cursus honorum* for budding Labour apparatchiks seems to be shortening and narrowing. The secret seems to be to get on the NUS Exec as a NOLS candidate or at least to have been on the NOLS NC. Best vintage is 1986-7: only 2 out of the 8 Nolsies of that year are not here at Brighton. The corridors of power run directly from the upper echelons of NUS to the nether regions of Walworth Road.

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

NEIL & Glynis were seen yesterday following their buddy & banker **Robert Maxwell** out of the Grand Hotel. The Kinnocks got in to a *new Rover* and were driven to the back of the Conference Centre 20 yards away, with a police escort. This ritual takes place every morning and afternoon of Conference week. So much for conservation & green consciousness...

BRIEFING

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

If you were watching **Channel 4 News** last night you will have seen the *Briefing* presses rolling into action. But don't be deceived by the glamorous veneer. This bulletin is written, produced and distributed by rank-and-file Labour Party members, without remuneration, and with a great deal of time, toil, and trouble.

This year we were plagued by technical gremlins and organisational disasters. If you thought this year's Conference was a depressing experience, try standing in a Brighton street at midnight with a printing press hired at 12 hours notice because previous arrangements had fallen through while sweating comrades unhinge the office door to get the press in!

What began as "Carry on *Briefing*" rapidly descended to the level of Marx Bros. farce when we were gazumped out of our accommodation; undertook *two* late night runs to London for printing supplies missing from the printing package; and the sub-editor got a parking ticket...

Still, we do it all because we believe we have a serious (but not solemn) socialist message for our fellow Party members. Our quick reference Voting Guides help many **delegates** keep up with Conference **business**; and we know many delegates **take home** a full set of bulletins to use in preparing their report-backs (a small number of back copies are on sale from 32 Waterloo St!).

So please help defray the considerable costs of our noble enterprise... by throwing something in our distributors' buckets before Conference is over. Thanks.

ECONOMY: CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG!

"THE election of a Labour government which will probably be combined with a substantial balance of trade deficit, is likely to place heavy pressure on sterling. A successful industrial policy would eventually help by a growth of exports and reduction of imports. But in the interim some reduction of the value of sterling will probably be required. There is a danger that the reductions in living standards and rising inflation consequent upon a declining exchange rate will threaten the Labour government's programme at the start."

Henry Neuberger,
Economic advisor to Brian Gould

Henry's admission certainly puts paid to the Policy Review, which has no measures to deal with the situation he describes.