1992

SOTHAMP LABOUR BRIEFING

No 1

No Witch-hunt! No expulsions!

The Labour Party should be poised to win the next general election by an overwhelming majority, elected on its most radical program ever. But the opinion polls show that the Tories who are actually putting into practice their most radical policies ever, are way out ahead, with Margaret Thatcher being considered a far more effective leader than Michael Foot.

The right wing in the Labour Party will tell you that Foot is unpopular because he is seen as a man of the left, and because he has refused to deal with 'infiltrators' in the party. Now that he is taking action against 'Militant', the argument goes, all will be well. This is but a smoke-screen for an extremely well-planned campaign, not only against the 'Militant', but against all the policy gains made by the left of the Labour Party over the last few years. It is the right that is threatening a Labour victory, by fudging policies which they oppose. The Healeyites in the party are very busy trying to persuade those who hold the purse strings that the next Labour government will pose no real threat to existing financial institutions, nor to traditional defence deals, particularly with the USA. In order to do this they have introduced the bureaucratic measure of the register, clearly one which paves the way for witch-hunts and expulsions. This attack, seemingly aimed at a small and sectarian section of the Labour Party, is in reality only the beginning of an attack on the left as a whole. The press are far more frightened of the broad-based militant left-wingers in the CLPs and the trade unions, who would probably call themselves Bennites, than they are of the 'Militant'. Unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC are the key issues, supported and fought for by the majority of activists - and these are the policies that would force a future Labour government to tread a very different path from those taken previously. To put it another way: Tony Benn's statements cause the Daily Express far greater apoplexy than Ted Grant's ut pian ramblings.

Despite the decisions taken at union conferences before September, against the witch-hunt, union leaders in the party still used the block vote, either naively or cynically, to ensure that Conference voted in favour of the register. What Conference did not vote for was a witch-hunt and expulsions. Speaker after speaker, in favour of the register, stressed that they were against witch-hunts. Southampton Labour Party reaffirmed our policy against expulsions and witch-hunts before Conference, and it is up to us, drawing on the support of rank and file trade unionists to make sure that expulsions do not take place here. If other constituencies do the same, any attempt at expulsions will fail. But we must base our fight on the premise that

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FORUM on the politics of Tony Benn

Speakers: John Denham, PPC for Southampton, Itchin
Alan Freeman, Author of "The Benn Heresy", and a Socialist Challenge supporter
Steve Jefferies, Socialist Workers Party

at the October Books Festival, Argyle Road F.E. Centre,
Sunday 14th November. Debate starts 4 pm.

1992

any witch-hunt is an attack on the left as a whole; our campaign must have broad-based support among the youth of the party, and in the unions. We should note the success of the Labour Movement conference against the witch-hunt organised on 30th October by Hackney CLP, and aim to link up with their initiatives. We should also back the regional conferences being organised by 'Militant', providing they are genuinely representative, and not simply 'Militant' rallies.

It is vital to see this fight as a political fight to defend hard-won policies, such as unilateral nuclear disarmament, against the attacks of the right wing, who are prepared to disrupt the Labour Party, rather than come to power on such policies. We must not be side-tracked into a simple 'defend Militant' line; we must fight expulsions all the way, and unity in action is our only hope of success.

Wyn Jeffery

...introducing Southampton Labour Briefing

This is the first issue of what we hope will be a regular monthly bulletin, produced by supporters of the weekly socialist newspaper "Socialist Challenge". "Socialist Challenge" provides a serious and systematic analysis of the major political, industrial and social issues in Britain and internationally. We campaign in the trade unions for the return of a Labour government firmly committed to carrying out the radical socialist policies adopted by the Labour Party over the last few years.

"Socialist Challenge" supporters organise monthly discussion meetings. Recent topics have included Poland, Ireland, Central America, Women's Liberation, and how socialists should work in the unions.

If you would like further information about our activities , we can be contacted on Southampton 39851.

Solidarity's struggle continues.....

As the left in the Labour party faces the wrath of the Foot leadership for supporting Tony Benn against Denis the menace, the left in Poland is suffering the persecution and banning of their trade union Solidarnosc.

Foot, frightened by the press campaign which threatens to rob him of a Labour victory in the election, is prepared to suffocate dissent. Jaruzelski, in the shadow of the Soviet Union and similarly afraid for his career, is determined to crush the Polish workers movement.

The imposition of state/party controlled unions (Jaruzelski's register) is meeting stubborn resistance however. The new unions are being boycotted everywhere. At the October Revolution printing plant in Warsaw, which employs several thousand workers, 11 joined. At the URSUS plant in Gorzow, out of 5,000 workers, 90 joined; at the FSC truck factory in Lublin, 33 out of nearly 10,000; at WSK in Swidnik, 20 out of 9,000; and at Nowa Huta, where the new 'union' has offices and controls the plant radio, 100 joined out of 40,000.

Now throughout the country, the preparations are going on for the next test of strength- the general strike called for November 10th.

The stakes are very large and they are far from confined to Poland. The struggle of the Polish workers for democratic rights, for trade-union rights, and for a self-managed republic based on the socialisation of the means production and their control by workers councils is a struggle for socialism. It is part of our struggle. Victory for the Polish workers would give a powerful impetus for other workers victories(and extra-parliamentary ones at that!). A defeat for them would be a defeat for us as well.

Incredibly, the right wing in this country, inside and outside the Labour Party, are able to get away with slandering the Bennite left as being some kind of new stalinist group. Our response can only be to redouble solidarity with Solidarity, to expose the Labour bureaucracy's reluctance to give active support to those resisting the Polish bureaucracy, and to demonstrate our commitment to all struggles for democratic workers control.

Ian Parker

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

no 2

THE WAGES OF UNITY IS EXPULSION

Last Wednesday the NEC had a choice: to make a Labour government safe for capitalism, or not. Their preference is now clear, as is their means. The means can perhaps be construed as the ultimate aim for party democracy - that the policies of the rank and file and those of the parliamentary leadership match exactly. The catch, however is thatthose members whose views don't at present reflect those of the PLP and the shadow cabinet will have to sacrifice their membership in order for this interesting form of "democratic centalism" to work. A Labour Party committed to socialist policies is being driven over a cliff by the atrociously pure "Lemmingist" dogma of the right wing. Since the CLPs persistently refuse to be reduced to a Conservative-style supporters' club, the creation of a narrowly right wing party requires the silencing of all who oppose the class-collaborationist policies of the right wing, namely the advocates of socialism.

Last Wednesday's NEC marks a new move in the pogrom of the left. The basis on which the expulsion of "Militant" is to take place has been changed. The original NEC document, outlining the case for a register, named "Militant" as being ineligible to register, without offering them the opportunity to apply. Having received legal advice that this might be contrary to natural justice, the NEC set about another test to which "Militant" could be put - one they felt confident it could not meet. This shows very clearly the motives of the NEC: this is not an organisational move, but a political one aiming to remove the influence of the "Militant", and eventually other tendencies that fight for the adoption of socialist policies.

In a move away from the idea of a register, and towards the proscribed list, and a witch-hunt, the NEC will shortly consider whether "Militant" is eligible to affiliate to the Labour Party as an organisation, despite the fact that no such application has been submitted. It is probable that the NEC will deem anyone in any way sympathetic to "Militant" to be a member, and therefore liable to be expelled. This could rapidly lead to a situation in which it would be impossible for any party member to sell or even be seen reading a copy of "Militant" and prepare for the discrediting of anyone proposing a motion including such policies as nationalisation. The new NEC proposals therefore go much further than the old, and present a far greater danger to the left of the party, preparing the ground for the intimidation or expulsion of a very wide layer of activists, notably all those who publish their own newspapers and magazines.

In order to ensure that the leadership controls the membership and not vice versa, the right wing need to undermine party democracy. Announcing that the removal of "Militant" was 'not a one-off job' Golding is preparing to reverse all the gains of the last two years, and indeed of long-established democratic rights, starting with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. It is, vital that all constituencies and affiliated trade unions fight back. In Bermondsey the local Party are asserting their right to choose their own candidate, and resisting the

attempts of the NEC to impose a candidate or shortlist. In Hornsey the Party has voted to accept Tariq Ali as a member, and demanded to know the basis on which the NEC wish to remove him, despite a threat of disbandent if they do not comply. The disbanding of Hornsey Labour Party can only damage Labour's prospects in the coming general election, despite the NEC's assertions that it is acting solely in the electoral interests of the Party. All those who are fighting for a Labour government committed to socialist policies should defend the CLPs under attack, and be prepared to follow them if necessary. On no account should be the NEC be allowed to isolate the CLPs that are in the front line.

The Labour Against the Witch-hunt (LAW) campaign, formed out of a conference called by Hackney CLP, is attempting to organise for the defence of parties such as Hornsey, and thereby the whole left, on the widest possible basis. It is unfortunate that the "Militant" dominated Labour Steering Committee against the Witch-hunt have declined to fully co-operate with LAW.

Southampton Labour Party should continue to support the campaigns of LAW and the Labour Steering Committee, in carrying out its declared policy of fighting witch-hunts and expulsions.

Gareth Narbed
Richard Correll

DEFEND ABORTION RIGHTS

Lord Robertson of Oakbridge, a 52 year old merchant banker, has introduced a new anti-abortion bill into the House of Lords. The bill aims to greatly restrict the grounds for abortion by slightly altering the wording of the 1967 Abortion Act. Section one of the Act would then read: "that the risk of pregnancy would involve serious risk to the life of the pregnant woman, or if injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing family is substantially greater than if pregnancy were terminated." (Amendments shown underlined.)

Normally a bill from the Lords would have little chance of becoming law without being given government time. But the bill coincides with the ballot for private member's bills. Heading the ballot were well-known anti-abortionists such as John Corrie, Norman St.John Stevas, and Ray Witney. If one of them was to take on Lord Robertson's bill, it would shorten the parliamentary procedure considerably.

If this happens Southampton Labour Party, in co-operation with the Women's Centre, the LPYS, Trades Council, and local trade unions, must mount a campaign to defend a woman's right to choose. As an immediate first step all members should be informed of the very real threat that the 1967 Act now faces. Abortion rights have been under attack before, from the Benyon, White and Corrie bills, and from the changes made in the documentation required by government. On each occasion they have been defended, but we must not be complacent. If necessary we must mobilise the whole Labour Movement to support a woman's right to choose.

Mike Tucker

ABOUT THIS BULLETIN

This is the second issue of a monthly bulletin produced by Southampton supporters of the weekly socialist newspaper "Socialist Challenge". We intend the bulletin to cover the most important issues facing the Labour movement locally and nationally. For further information on our policy and local activities, phone Southampton 39851.

1982

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

Healey, 1945. "The upper classes in every country are selfish, depraved and decadent...There is a very great danger, unless we are very careful, that we shall find ourselves running with the red flag in front of the armoured car of Tory imperialism and counter-revolution"

HOW LABOUR CAN WIN

Thatcher's visit to the Falklands, coupled with the announcement that there will be an April budget, shows that it is now vitually certain that we will be faces with a general election this year. This election will not be an ordinary one, but will determine the course of British society for a decade or more.

With mass unemployment, falling living standards, decaying welfare services and falling production it might be expected that the Labour Party is poised to win with an over-whelming majority, elected on its most radical programme for decades. But it is the Tories, who are putting into practice their most radical solutions, who are the most popular at the moment, and are confident of winning the election. All socialists in the Labour Party must ask themselves why this is.

Dennis Healey and the rest of the right in the Party (and their friends in the media) tell us that the party is unpopular because Michael Foot is too 'left' and because he has refused to deal with the left in the Party. All would be well if the extremists were expelled, and Labour returned to its 'traditional' policies. This argument is a smokescreen, to mask the SDP fellow-travellers' opposition to the policy gains of the left, which have given us a programme with the potential of gaining mass support. Dennis Healey wants to return to the discredited policies of the past, the policies of a Labour government which obeys the wishes of the Pentagon and the City, rather than Party Conference and the TUC.

Labour can win only if it can present a clear socialist alternative to the Tories and the SDP. The two central planks of such a policy must be unilateral nuclear disarmament, and a programme to fight unemployment. Labour must clearly be seen as the Party that will get rid of Cruise, Trident, US bases and all nuclear weapons from Britain. We must, with CND and the TUC, build a mass campaign against the missiles, which will strengthen a future Labour government in its fight to get rid of nuclear weapons. Unemployment can only be ended by a policy which takes control of the economy out of the hands of the capitalist class and runs it in the interest of the working class.

In order to prevent Labour enetering the election on a socialist programme, Healey and the right have launched the witch-hunt. Any expulsions, however, are a threat to the whole of the Party, and are not just aimed at Militant or any other one tendency. Southampton Labour Party must maintain its policy of opposing expulsions and witch-hunts, and support the constituency parties that are under threat from the NEC.

PTO

The policies of Denis Healey were tried by the last Labour government, and they resulted in Thatcher's victory. We must resist any attempt to return to those failed policies, and instead enter the coming election with a clear socialist alternative to Thatcher.

We must defend the hard-won policies of recent years against the right wing, who are prepared to lose the election than come to power on such policies. We cannot allow them to succeed.

Southampton Labour Briefing

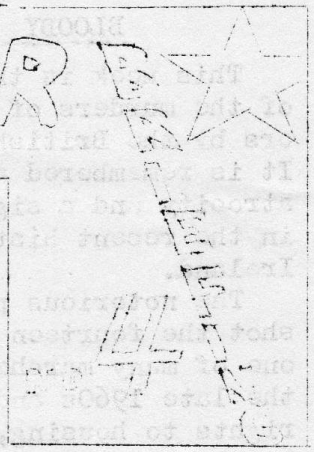
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We are also active in local trade unions and in Trades Council and CND. We hold monthly discussion meetings, at which recent topics have included Poland, Ireland, Central America, Women's Liberation and the campaign against the witch-hunt.

If you would like further information on our policies and activities, we can be contacted by phoning Southampton 398?

1983

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BAN PLASTIC BULLETS!



Last year's Labour Party conference voted by an overwhelming majority to ban plastic bullets. This is a big step forward. It makes Ireland once again an issue in the British Labour Movement. Outside Britain, as always, the repression being meted out in its oldest colony is more clearly seen. The European Parliament has called for an end to the use of plastic bullets (the vote was 110 to 43, with only British Tories and Northern Irish Unionists voting against). Why all the fuss?

Plastic bullets were first used in the North of Ireland in 1973, to succeed the more unreliable rubber bullets. Incidents like the blinding of ten year old Richard Moore in 1972 (when there was actually no rioting in the area) had led the security forces to introduce a weapon they could more accurately target. Target at whom?

Plastic bullets are not used as an 'anti-terrorist' weapon; real bullets are fired at those who attack the security forces, or miss checkpoints and roadblocks. Plastic bullets are used on the streets to deal with protest. In fact many of the dead and injured had not been involved in rioting but were just going about their business or looking out of their windows, or were children playing in the street or running errands. Seven of the fourteen plastic bullet deaths have been children. The very use of plastic bullets has led to rioting in protest at their use. As Bishop Daly has pointed out, "Plastic bullets are responsible for more riots than they have quelled".

Plastic bullets are not, as their name suggests, harmless. In addition to the deaths they have inflicted horrific injuries, including blinding, brain damage, and paralysis. Paul Corr, for example, was shot in 1981 by Royal Marine commandos, firing from a passing Landrover. The plastic bullet hit him on the side of his nose, tearing part of it off, and shattering his palate. Paul was 12 years old. Again there was no rioting in the area. Plastic bullets are as heavy as cricket balls, and harder. They leave the gun at 160 mph.

The resolutions passed at international level, and the hard-won Labour Party vote in October, along with the Bishop of Salisbury's call last week for a ban, are useful. But now it is the urgent task of constituency parties and trade union branches to translate the commitment into action. The Labour movement delegate conference in Manchester on 26th February is sponsored by a number of MPs and organisations. It aims to build a campaign which can ensure that the use of plastic bullets is ended.

The emergency motion from St Lukes is a call for Southampton Labour Party to support this initiative.

Ian Parker

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL

organised in aid of
Anti-Apartheid
Chile Solidarity
El Salvador Solidarity
Friends of Palestine

to be held on 5 February,
at St.Matthew's Church Hall
starts 7.30 pm

Music from Chile
Palestine
El Salvador
South Africa

Food and refreshments available

We urge you to support this event.

BLOODY SUNDAY

This week is the eleventh anniversary of the murders of 14 unarmed demonstrators by the British Army in Derry in 1972. It is remembered annually as both an atrocity and a significant turning point in the recent history of the North of Ireland.

The notorious parachute regiment shot the fourteen civilians on what was one of many marches for civil rights in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Basic rights to housing, employment and voting had been denied to the catholic minority since the partition of Ireland in 1921. By 1968, when the rest of Western Europe was enjoying a comparatively high standard of living, this discrimination could no longer be tolerated. However, no significant reforms were offered by the Loyalist Stormont government of the time; instead the RUC and Loyalist groups resisted the passage of these marches to the extent that street battles ensued. After the British troops were sent in to 'keep the peace', draconian measures were introduced to prevent further protests by the catholic minority. It was against these measures - internment of hundreds without trial or charge and banning of all demonstrations - as well as for civil rights, that a demonstration was called for 30 January 1972 in Derry. It was into a crowd of demonstrators, who were fleeing from water cannon and CS gas, that the Parachute Regiment shot live rounds. As a result fourteen people died.

The resultant public uproar was quietened by a government enquiry under Lord Widgery, which itself attempted to cover up the real story. The Army claimed that they had fired at snipers in the local flats; yet not one of the dead were carrying arms, and all witnesses denied having seen or heard guns other than those of the Army. Widgery remarked: "...firing bordered on the reckless", while contradicting himself by saying: "there was no breakdown in discipline". The daily papers, selective as ever, claimed that Widgery had cleared the Army of blame, and no soldier was ever prosecuted. In fact Colonel Wilford, who had commanded the Paras on that day received an OBE for his work.

It was left to the Derry City Coroner, Mr O'Neill to state the obvious horrific fact that it was "sheer unadulterated murder".

Tom.

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

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PAY THE WATER WORKERS!

The water workers' strike is developing into a crucial test of strength in the battle against the Tory government. To defeat the 4% pay limit imposed by Thatcher would be a massive blow to her line of 'resolute government', and a massive boost to the morale of workers everywhere. The result will be especially important in view of the impending general election, expected this year.

Despite their powerful position to disrupt both industry and domestic supplies the water workers face a number of problems. Foremost will be the huge press campaign to turn public opinion against them. Second will be the use of strike breakers, eg troops. Third will be the union leadership's emphasis on pay differentials, rather than a rise that beats inflation, which could cut off support of the low paid in other industries. Fourth is the danger of withdrawal of TUC support (as happened in the ASLEF dispute) if the dispute does not reach a rapid conclusion, given its harsh effects.

SMASH THE 4 % !

The Labour Party can support the water workers by explaining the case for the full 15% claim, and that it is Thatcher who is prolonging the dispute by refusing their reasonable and necessary claim. We need to secure support for a national campaign with the backing of the whole trade union and Labour movement, to break the 4% limit and win a proper wage for all public sector workers. As a start the PPCs should issue a statement in support and wards should organise fund-raising as was done in the health dispute.

Richard Correll

1983

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

No 5

THE LESSONS OF BERMONDSEY

Despite what 'Sir Robin Day' and the well-paid scribes of the Tory press may say, Labour did not lose Bermondsey because its candidate was too left wing. However the defeat has shown the failures of Labour that must be reversed if the party is to win the next general election.

Labour's defeat in Bermondsey can be put down to a number of factors. Firstly a section of the party leadership did not want Peter Tatchell to win. Evidence of this was the pulping of his election leaflets, the cancelling of his first press conference, and the timing of the expulsion of the 'Militant' editorial board for the day before polling. These events during the campaign had been pre-figured by Michael Foot's disowning of Tatchell in parliament last year, and the attempts of the NEC to impose a candidate on the Bermondsey Party.

These 'own goals' by the NEC provided the Tory gutter press and the right wing candidates with the opportunity to carry out a political and personal smear campaign against Peter Tatchell. No Labour candidate should be ashamed of having refused to fight in the imperialist war in Vietnam, or of being Gay. That those who would have voted Labour before did not do so because of this, demonstrates the need for Labour to campaign for Gay Rights and against wars such as the one fought in Vietnam.

But the reasons for Labour's defeat go beyond what happened in Bermondsey itself. We have to accept that many Labour voters have been disillusioned by the last Labour government, and will only vote for us if they can see the Party putting forward a clear Socialist alternative to the Tories. It was in 1981 when Labour was organising massive marches and campaigns against unemployment that support for the Tories fell and that for the Labour Party increased. The Tories were only able to recover when Labour failed to oppose Thatcher's war in the Atlantic.

Victory in the general election will not be achieved by a retreat from the policies adopted by the last three conferences. What the right are aiming for is a fudging of the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament, and a return to the policies of pay restraint and cuts. At the same time the right are trying to divide the party by expelling supporters of socialist policies. They are giving credibility to the SDP/Liberal Alliance by making Labour's policies indistinguishable from theirs. It means that instead of uniting with the water workers and CND to fight the Tories, our resources are being turned against our own membership. If they succeed we will be isolated from the hundreds of thousands of supporters of CND and Greenham Common, and from those trade unionists fighting unemployment and low pay. This would mean a massive abstention by working class voters.

We will only reverse the defeat of Bermondsey if we go into the election on the basis of a mass campaign for the socialist policies adopted over the last few years.- nuclear disarmament, a 35 hour week and no incomes policy. These policies are the road to a Labour victory.

Mike Tucker

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

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MAY DAY 1983

There will be a festival and social organised by Southampton Trades Council involving exhibitions, stalls, films, games, and speakers, including Reg Race at 6.30, and the PPCs. In the evening there will be a live band and disco.

at Mountbatten Theatre

Sunday 1st May, 3pm - 11pm

Tickets £1.70, and £1 unwaged

including food. Children free.

SLL/CLPD - which against the witch-hunt?

Prior to last year's LP conference the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) gave notice of its preference for a 'democratic' register, thereby signalling its unwillingness to organise an effective campaign against the expulsions which would logically follow from the NEC'c version.

At the end of January this year the AGM of the CLPD voted, by a narrow majority, to apply to the NEC for registration, thus laying the groundwork for the NEC to expel five members of the 'Militant' editorial board, on the eve of the Bermondsey by-election.

Members of Southampton Labour Left (SLL) attended the CLPD conference and voted for registration. This 'hard core' of SLL (no metaphors about rotten apples to be found here!) comprised individual members of CLPD, and were therefore under no obligation to represent SLP's outright opposition to registration and concomitant expulsions. However these comrades occupy important Labour Party positions and therefore reasons for their action and their opinions on the role of the CLPD should be sought.

* Is it SLL policy to support registration?

* It was SLL policy to oppose expulsions. Is this still the case, and by what means? Does the SLL support CLPs who refuse to implement expulsions?

* How do they reconcile their argument (SLL No.1) that CLPs should abide by LP conference on constitutional matters with the denial of access to the constitution of those expelled?

* Should this top down 'democratic' centralism apply to their activities as individual members?

*As representatives and prospective representatives of SLP's policies, how will they counter the suspicion that the alacrity with which they oppose the register and expulsions will be somewhat lacking in view of their personal beliefs as manifested by their CLPD voting?

* The ILP, precursor to the SLL, first proposed the idea of a register. Was this a means of attacking the nature and politics of the 'Militant' through 'exposing' its organisational structure?

* If so, can we therefore blame the SLL's sectarian mentality for the witch-hunt and its repercussions? If not, were the ILP/SLL ever so slightly naive in not anticipating the speed with which the right wing seized upon their jolly jape?

Questions are not necessarily rhetorical!

In accordance with the format of the SLL's 'sixth form review', a Red Star will be awarded to the first complete entry - possibly for own goals.

Gareth Narbed
"Bennite and infantile leftist"

(V.Derer, CLPD Exec.)

STOP THE WITCH-HUNT!

The witch-hunt has started. After months of deferred decisions and changing tactics the NEC voted on 23 Feb to to expel the five members of the Militant Editorial Board as members of an organisation ineligible to affiliate to the Party. The persistance with which the NEC have examined different ways of removing the Militant tendency is a clear sign of the political importance they attatch to it, and shows that it is not the supposed constitutional offences that have put their heads on the block.

Islington Central CLP have already announced that they do not intend to expel Peter Taffe, and the others involved, Hammersmith North and Norwood are expected to do the same. All CLPs, such as ours, that have a policy of opposing expulsions now have a duty to support these CLPs, who will come under great pressure from the NEC, and perhaps will be threatened with suspension.

The witch-hunt, if allowed to proceed will not stop at the Militant Editorial Board. It is an essential part of the right wing's efforts to roll back the gains of the left, and it will attempt to isolate and intimidate all who speak out for socialist policies.

It ill behoves anybne on the left to stand back while the Militant are expelled - they may be next.

Richard Correll

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

No. 6

1983

GAY LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM

The motion from St.Lukes, together with the Charter of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, contain a few modest proposals for fighting the oppression of Gay people. A significant minority of the population, perhaps 5-10%, consistently prefer partners of their own sex, while a further section have occasional Gay contacts. This pattern crosses all boundaries of age, gender, race, occupation and social class, and hence in Britain affects several million, the overwhelming majority of whom hide or refuse to recognise their sexual orientation.

The 1967 Sexual Offences Act has not truly legalised Gay relationships. Consenting adults in private are no longer prosecuted, but members of the armed forces and merchant navy, as well as men under 21 can still face criminal charges. The police harass Gay clubs, and can deport Gay non-citizens, while employers often discriminate, especially in work involving contact with children.

The CHE Charter demands an end to these forms of discrimination, but it also demands that society takes a positive attitude to Gay men and women, as real people with an equal contribution to make. With the rise of capitalism the nuclear family has been firmly established as the model of social relations. Gay people reject this model, and have come under ferocious attack, culminating in the Victorian notion of homosexuality as a disease. Socialists should vigorously resist any such notion, and the conclusions it leads to. It is clear that Gay relationships have occurred at all times, and in all places in human history, and are in fact part of the normal scope of human experience.

The image of sickness is evident in attitudes to the age of consent, and in work with children. The very high age of consent for Gay men (21) assumes that young men need to be protected, and in the absence of Gay contacts would be sure to grow up heterosexual. This denies the validity of Gay preferences , and ignores the fact that most people have a fairly clearly defined preference at a much earlier age. Similarly the assumption is that a Gay person will damage the development of (or even assault) children in their care. There does not seem to be any reason to suppose this is true - indeed ¾ of assaults on children are made by heterosexual men.

Lesbians are doubly oppressed. Not only does the family unit not support them (consider for example the likely living standard of a Lesbian couple with children) but there is a widespread disbelief that female sexualisty can exist in the absence of a man. Paradoxically they are then often denied custody of their children. Some of these questions are now being taken up in the Women's Liberation Movement, though less so in the Gay Movement, which remains very much male-orientated.

In the fight for Gay Liberation, Gay people will be in the forefront, asserting Gay pride and initiating political campaigns. But while individual "coming out" will remain important, the aim must be to change the society that oppresses Gay men and women under capitalism - a task that can only be achieved by the organised strength of the working class, who form the majority of the population, and therefore the majority of Gay people. This means we must, despite the difficulties, fight for the Trade Unions to adopt the struggle for Gay Liberation.

The isolation of Gay people as odd and sick poisons their lives with guilt and shame. Many withdraw into the stifling "Gay Community", while others deny their sexuality completely. True liberation therefore demands morethan legal tolerance - it demands a positive acceptance of a Gay lifestyle as a valid alternative. The arrival of a socialist society will offer all men and women an important new freedom - the freedom to fall in love without any concern for gender.

Richard Correll

CND Dayschool:- Building CND in the Workplace.
Agenda includes speakers and workshops on arms and jobs etc.

Saturday 16 April
from 10 am - 3.30 pm
at TGWU offices, London Rd
Registration fee 50p

The debate on the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy - John Denham replies to Gareth Narbed's article last month.

In last month's Southampton Labour Briefing there was in intemperate attack on Southampton Labour Left and the way individual members voted at the CLPD AGM. I'm grateful for the chance to reply.

1. SLLF does not have a policy of its own so these are personal views.
2. I voted for CLPD to register because I am in favour of Party democracy, and in particular, the sovreignty of conference. This must include the right of conference to take decisions, not only on policy, but also on the way the internal affairs of the Party are conducted. This includes the right of the conference to take decisions we on the left disagree with. (I opposed groups registering before the conference.)
3. CLPD has been succesful because it has been able to unite a whole section of the Party behind democratic demands. If the left decides democracy is just a tactic to be used when it suits them we will never win. (It doesn't bode well for socialism either!)

Unfortunately there was a classic example of this at the Labour CND AGM. It voted for unilateralism to be in the manifesto because it was passed by conference. It also voted against registration because it doesn't like it! The whole thrust of the peace campaign is jeopardised by such unprincipled antics.

The same problem came up at CLPD. After campaigning for NEC control of the manifesto for years, the AGM voted against it this year, because it does not like the current NEC.

4. There is no doubt about my opposition to witch-hunts. I believe CLPs should refuse to recognise expulsions (because the NEC has gone way beyond the conference decision) until the individuals have at least been able to appeal to conference.

But the key question is how do we reverse the witch-hunts? The trade union vote is the vital factor. I believe it is very unlikely that the TUs will reverse their position completely at this years conference. Hence the left should campaign to take control of the register out of the hands of the NEC and to place strong safeguards on the rights of groups to organise. This is a winnable position if those opposed to witch-hunts unite on it.

5. Although opposed to all expulsions I do believe party members have the right to full information about groups operating within the Party. The secretive, sometimes downright dishonest, organisation of some Trotskyist groups has nothing to do with democratic socialism, and, without it, it is unlikely that the with-hunt would have got as far as it has.

John Denham

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING and SOCIALIST ACTION

Southampton Labour Briefing has now been produced for six months. Each month we have tried to cover both local and national issues of importance to Party activists. SLB has been produced by members of Southampton Labour Party in general agreement with the views of the weekly newspaper Socialist Challenge.

Socialist Challenge ceased publication last month. Some of those involved in its production have started a new paper, Socialist Action, edited by Alan Freeman. This paper aims to be a revolutionary socialist voice in the Labour Party, the trade unions and the peace movement, and amongst youth. It is an open paper, opening its columns to all those fighting against the Tories and their friends, open to all those fighting for a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

SLB has decided to support the new paper, and will be selling it at the GC, ward meetings, and in local trade union branches. We think its views and its policies will be of interest to all Labour Party members.

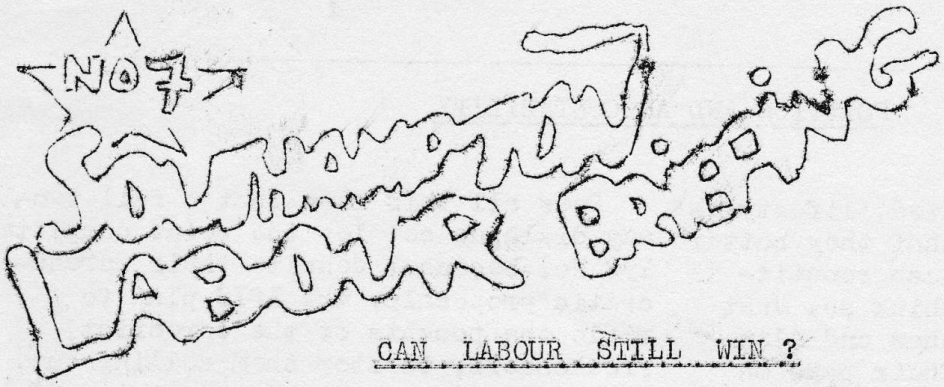
Socialist Action can also be obtained from October Books, 4 Onslow Road, or from Mike Tucker by phoning Southampton 39851. Further details of discussion meetings organised by us can also be obtained from the above number.

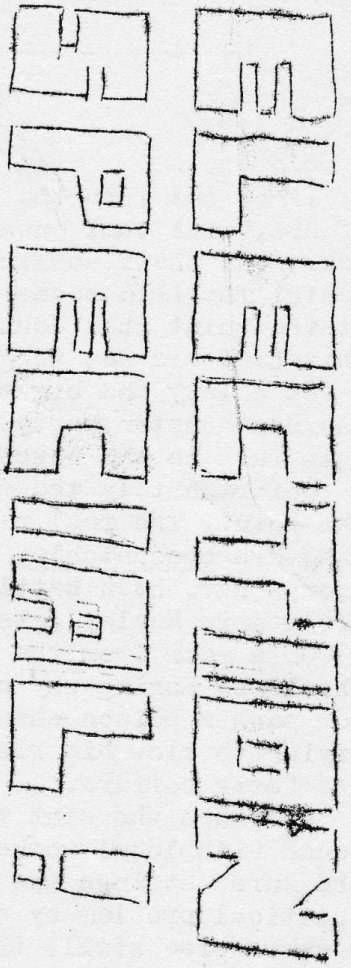
MAY DAY 1983

There will be a festival and social organised by Southampton Trades Council involving exhibitions, stalls, films, games and speakers, including Reg Race at 6.30, and the PPCs. In the evening there will be a live band and a disco.

Venue: Mountbatten Theatre
Sunday 1st May, 3 - 11 pm
Tickets £1.70, and £1 unwaged
(includes food). Children free.

1983





CAN LABOUR STILL WIN ?

We enter the election period in a difficult position. No amount of bluff can hide the fact that Labour faces an uphill struggle if we are to win. But it is only Labour that can offer a socialist alternative to the possibility of another Tory government, and the threat it poses to the working class and oppressed groups in society.

Labour will stand the best chance of winning if it puts to the front its socialist policies and mobilises the support of all sections of the community that will benefit from them. This means linking up with the mass popular campaigns against nuclear weapons - CND and Greenham Common. It means supporting the People's March for Jobs and the many trade union campaigns against privatisation.

Through our canvassing and leafleting we should get support for the May24 women's day of action for peace, and the June 5 demonstration in London that will greet the People's March. We must show by our actions rather than our promises that we support these campaigns. This will complement putting over Labour's case on the doorstep.

In the campaign we must put forward an unequivocal commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, and the removal of all nuclear bases from Britain.

Other key areas of Labour's policies that need to be highlighted are -

* a programme of nationalisation and expansion of the economy to return to full employment
* a commitment to raise working class living standards, and against incomes policies; the defence of trade union rights and the repeal of Tebbit's laws
* to campaign for positive action for women's employment, health care, and the right to abortion
* to repeal the Nationality Act and Immigration Acts, and to campaign against all forms of racism
* to protect civil liberties by obtaining accountability of the police
* a commitment to a united Ireland, the banning of plastic bullets and the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act
* to adopt a socialist foreign policy that supports liberation movements in Central America, South Africa and the Middle East.

Within the Party the witch-hunt must end, and all adopted candidates be allowed to to fight the election for Labour.

Labour can break the hold of the Conservatives if it inspires people to go and persuade others to turn out in their millions to vote against the Tories and the SDP. We can do that in Southampton, and if we are successful that could return a Labour government.

Southampton Labour Briefing is produced by members of Southampton Labour Party who are in general support of the policies of the weekly newspaper Socialist Action.

For further details phone Soton 39851.

POLITICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

If we cut into the bloated 'lifestyles' of MPs, will that ensure that they better represent their working class constituents? The LPYS seems to think so. Just at the point that John Denham and Alan Whitehead are set to get their paws on a fat salary and big meals, and betray the Southampton party, the Young Socialists rush to the rescue.

Unfortunately the comrades are missing the point. The real problem is how to make MPs accountable, a problem that left groups have been battling on for years. If Dennis Healey gets a retainer of £6000 a year from the Daily Express, we should be asking why he wants to write for such a poison sheet, rather than trying to claw his rich pickings into the Party coffers.

Comrades who want to keep MPs in touch with local workers by tightening the purse strings are dealing with a political problem by administrative means. Worse still, their bureaucratic solution could damage the ability of radical MPs to campaign effectively.

Firstly, right wing MPs (Tory or otherwise) don't look plump and pink because of their huge salary, but because they have lucrative business interests to subsidise their political hobby. Left wing MPs (and this would especially apply to working class activists who should be speaking for Labour) are at a disadvantage precisely because they have to fork out for secretaries, travel etc.. If our representative is fully accountable, then the problem of directorships and contacts with reactionary newspapers does not arise.

Secondly a Labour MP does not get seperated from his constituents or local Party because of the champagne and fast cars, but because he becomes mesmerised by the power machinery of Westminster. Rather than penalising a radical MP for entering Parliament we should be supporting him or her through continual discussion and political debate in the local Party. It will then be easier to make sure that parliamentary activity is just one aspect of the Labour MPs activity.

Does all this mean that a full two-way dialogue set les the point completely? No, because, despite their bureaucratic proposals, the LPYS plan to rifle the pockets of the careerist freeloaders, to stop them selling out, is motivated by a deeper suspicion of Parliament. This is healthy, and reflects the growing attraction among the rank and file for extra-parliamentary politics.

The PPC 'tendency' doesn't like the personal and administrative attempt to clamp down on the meagre remuneration a radical MP can expect for a double-time job. But they are a little more vague about the relationship between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggle.

If Parliament is inherently hostile to genuinely radical MPs who want an advance towards socialism at all levels of society, the whole balance of politics should shift out of the commons and into our own common political action.

Against the LPYS we should be saying that radical MPs need more adequate facilities and support, not less. But against the PPC 'tendency' perhaps, we should argue that stepping up political involvement of the constituency in the MP's work also involves less dialogue with Parliament, and more attention paid to building the power of the millions who will never have the dubious privilege of revolving their lives around the division bell.

Ian Parker

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

No 8

1983

The Issues

1. Keep the commitment to nationalise clearing banks in NEC statement to Conference. (July 1982)
2. NEC should not oppose Conference amendments calling for removal of NEC's arbitrary powers over pressure groups and calling for impartial conditions for the operation of pressure groups. (September 1982)
3. Total opposition to incomes policy and support for guaranteed minimum wage. (September 1982)
4. Keep Benn, not Golding, as Chair of Home Policy Committee. (November 1982)
5. Carry out 1981 Conference decision to allow CLP's to carry out a full reselection in the event of boundary changes. (February 1983)
6. Against expelling the Militant editorial board. (February 1983)

How the candidates voted on the Labour National Executive Committee on key issues in the last two years. Where: F = For, A = Against, O = Abstention, - = Absent or not voting, * = Not on NEC.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Frank Allaun	O	F	F	F	F	F
Tony Benn	F	F	F	F	F	F
Betty Boothroyd	-	A	A	-	A	A
Eric Clarke	-	F	A	*	*	*
Laurence Coates	F	F	F	F	F	F
Ken Cure	*	*	*	A	A	A
Anne Davis	*	*	*	A	A	A
Gwyneth Dunwoody	A	A	A	A	A	A
John Evans	*	*	*	A	A	A
Roy Evans	-	A	A	A	A	A
Michael Foot	A	A	A	A	A	A
John Golding	A	A	-	A	A	A
Alan Hadden	-	-	A	A	A	A
Judith Hart	-	F	-	F	F	F
Denis Healey	A	A	A	A	A	A
Eric Heffer	F	F	F	F	F	F
Neville Hough	-	-	A	A	A	A
Doug Hoyle	A	-	F	*	*	*
Denis Howell	*	*	*	A	A	A
Les Huckfield	F	F	F	*	*	*
Neil Kinnock	A	A	A	O	-	A
Alex Kitson	-	A	A	-	A	A
Joan Lestor	A	A	A	*	*	*
Joan Maynard	F	F	A	*	*	*
Sam McCluskie	-	A	A	-	-	-
Jo Richardson	F	F	F	F	F	F
Gerry Russell	-	-	A	*	*	*
Tom Sawyer	*	*	*	F	F	F
Dennis Skinner	F	F	F	F	F	F
Shirley Summerskill	A	A	A	A	A	A
Syd Tierney	A	A	-	A	A	A
Eric Varley	A	A	A	A	A	A
David Williams	-	-	A	A	A	A
Audrey Wise	*	*	*	F	F	F

WHY WE CALL FOR A VOTE FOR ERIC HEFFER

Some peculiar things are happening in the Labour leadership election. Firstly we are in danger of having the terms of the election determined not by the membership of the Party, but by political commentators and the media. They are concentrating on secondary issues, but avoiding the real questions which must be confronted if Labour is to advance.

A second curious feature is Peter Shore and the right wing posturing as champions of rank and file democracy in the Party and the unions. The left should counter this dishonest attempt by being in favour of elections taking place at rank and file level in every union and constituency Party.

At the same time we think only those trade unionists paying the political levy should be eligible to

vote in their unions. The influence of the media should be counteracted by full circulation of the candidates' political platform, and by holding as many public hustings as possible.

In this election we support Eric Heffer. As he himself has stated: "I want to see Clause Four defended in the Party Constitution. There should be freedom of discussion. Members of the Party should not be expelled because of their political views. I don't believe that the problems of this country as a whole can be solved outside the context of democratic socialist policies."

On most issues Eric Heffer is more in line with the views of the majority of the rank and file of the Party than the other candidate being termed left-wing by the media, Neil Kinnock.

We have many differences with Heffer, over the strategy for socialism, over his lack of enthusiasm for women's liberation, and over his failure to openly oppose the Falklands war. He is however still the best candidate standing from the left.

The biggest possible vote for Heffer will be a vote for the conference policies that he has defended and that Kinnock has attacked. It would be a blow to the right, and would expose Kinnock's opportunist claims to being the unitary left candidate.

In the election for Deputy we support Michael Meacher. We think that he and Heffer should form a left slate and campaign together.

We are in danger of being rushed by a form of collective panic into supporting Neil Kinnock. Many are being conned into seeing him as a life-belt to save a drowning party. This mood must be resisted. By examining the policies the candidates stand for, their record, and strategy for Labour, it is clear that Heffer alone stands for the process of renewal undertaken by Labour since 1979.

SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING

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We hold monthly discussion meetings. We can be contacted on Southampton 39851.

SOCIAL TO CELEBRATE THE 65th BIRTHDAY OF NELSON MANDELA

16th July, from 6pm

at 14 Bassett Close

Admission £1 includes food

Proceeds to Anti Apartheid Movement.

RELEASE NELSON MANDELA!

It is twentyone years since Nelson Mandela was arrested in South Africa for his activities against the racist regime. He has spent those twentyone years enduring the terrible conditions in the regime's prisons.

He expressed his ideals at his trial: "I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

As leader of the African National Congress he is seen by the black majority of South Africa as their legitimate leader.

The Labour Party should add its voice to the world-wide campaign for his release.

1983

SLABOUR BRIEFING No 9

LABOUR & IRELAND

"Successive governments, Labour and Tory, have failed to lift their eyes above their short-term responses to violence on the streets of Northern Ireland."

This, is not a quote from republicans nor yet from the so-called "hard left". No, this comes from Patrick O'Callaghan of the National League of Young Liberals in a letter to the Guardian on Thursday 7th. How sad that, just the previous day the Labour Party Conference should shy away yet again from the question of Ireland.

To win the next election we must show above all, that we have policies that will work and that we have the resove to implement these. We must become again the party of credibility. We do not do this by running away from the most pressing problem of the day- the continuing presence of the British Army in the north of Ireland. In our anxiety to gain again the seat of government we must not ignore the "Irish question". NOrthern Ireland is the place of Diplock courts - trial by no jury; now resting on uncorroborated evidence of supergrasses. It is the place of torture in jail, of plastic, of the violence of the British Army. It is the home of a wasted generation; bombs and barbed wire are on our doorstep and the Labour Party just looks o on...

Conference overwhelmingly defeated a motion calling for the party to consult with the nationalists including provisional Sinn Fein. Are the party of democracy or not? SInn Fein have the support of a large section of the Catholic community. Our talking to Sinn Fein will not give the provisionals credibility - they already have that. Despite virtual instruction to the contrary from the pulpit,,Sinn Fein in the last election got massive support. As an organisation, in some areas, it is the catholic community. And yet we continue to abstain from dialogue with them. What we a a party are saying is that we will not listen to the hopes and fears of the catholic people as a whole.

Labour's position is one of support for the eventual unity of Ireland. These are merely words, empty phrases, without the political will behind them. For this reason they are not and are seen as not credible and this does us more harm than any number of Ken Livingstone's trips to Ireland, or of Gerry Adams to the fringes of conference. Continued support for the loyalist veto is quite incredible in a party that claims to support Irish unity. The 6 counties are not a separate part of Ireland. They are just a line on the map drawn around the predominately protestant areas. It is not democracy to allow the biggest group in such a continued situation to veto the wishes of the vast majority of the country as a whole.

Resolutions before conference called for talk and for democracy. The labour Party has rejected these Once again we have shied away from making the difficault decisions to end the war on our doorsteps by the only route possible. We will see the troops leave Ireland and we will see the Country united again, let there be no doubt

We must not let ourselves be out run by the Alliance both by votes and by policies. To conclude with another quote from the Young Liberals.

"We want to unite the people of Ireland as well as the land mass and look forward to a united secular state where people come together to fight for the common good, and where'ones politics are not dependent on one one's religion."

It will be both Labour's shame and failing if we cannot be the party to adopt the policies to bring this about.

Simon Lovestone.

The journal of the Labour Committee on Ireland,'New Labour and Ireland' is available, price 40p, from Mike Tucker,St Lukes Ward. Includes articles on the party conference, on the use of Informers, and an interview with Tony Benn

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NICARAGUA MEETING
Speaker and vidio(video?)
Thursday November 10th 7.30pm
Labour Club, Queensway

INTERNATIONAL. Weekend of socialist debate and discussion.Saturday 29th & Sunday 30th October Kingsaway Princeton College, Sidmouth Street,London WC1 With...KEN LIVINGSTONE,STUART HOLLAND, VLADIMIER DERER, ANDREW GAMBLE, [illegible], ALAN FREEMAN, JEREMY CORBYN, UMMESH DESAI, STEPHANIE GRANT, BARRY HINDESS, JOHN ROSS, HILARY WAINWRIGHT, DOREEN MASSEY... Details from SLB or International PO box 50 London N1 2XP...Cost 2.5o per day.....

SUPPORT THE STRIKING HAMPSHIRE NALGO MEMBERS

For almost two weeks 39 Residential Social Workers have been on strike at Glen House Observation and Assessment Centre at Sarsbury Green.

Since September 30th the strikes have been maintaining a 24 hour picket, based in a tent pitched outside the homes gates. Why has Hampshire NALGO taken all out strike action for the first time?

The dispute nas arisen from the failure of management over a period of five years to improve working conditions for Residential workers. At present they get no pay for shifts or irregular hours, no extra pay for weekend work, little reward for public holiday work, and they work over a 39 hour week. Following a ballot of all those concerned, a work to rule, overtime ban, and ban on admissions has beeen introduced. It was the breaking of this admission ban by management that forced the walkout. The home is being run by management personal and by scabs recruited from the labour exchange at £60 a night.

NALGO members employed at Loewood Hostel in Portsmouth have joined the srike following the Officer in Charge at Loewood undertaking night duties at Glen House and deliberately passing a NALGO picket line. It is important that Labour Party members support this dispute, demonstrating in practice that we are the party of workers. Financial donations are required as are delegations of support. A 24 hour picket based in a tent in the middle of October is not much fun - we must give the maximum support to ensure the strike is successful.

Mike Tucker.

Donations and messages of support for the NALGO strike should be sent to the Branch Secretary, Hamshire County NALGO,The Castle, Winchester.