1983

SLABOURD TON 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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SOUTHAMPTON LABOUR BRIEFING is produced by members of Southampton Labour Party who are in agreement with the policies of the newspaper SOCIALIST ACTION. Socialist Action is a revolutionary socialist voice in the Labour Party, the trade unions, in the peace movement, and amongst youth. We hold monthly discussion meetings., and can be contacted Southampton 39851.

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 has 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.