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OPEN UP THE SECOND FRONT!

by John McDonnell Deputy Leader, GLC

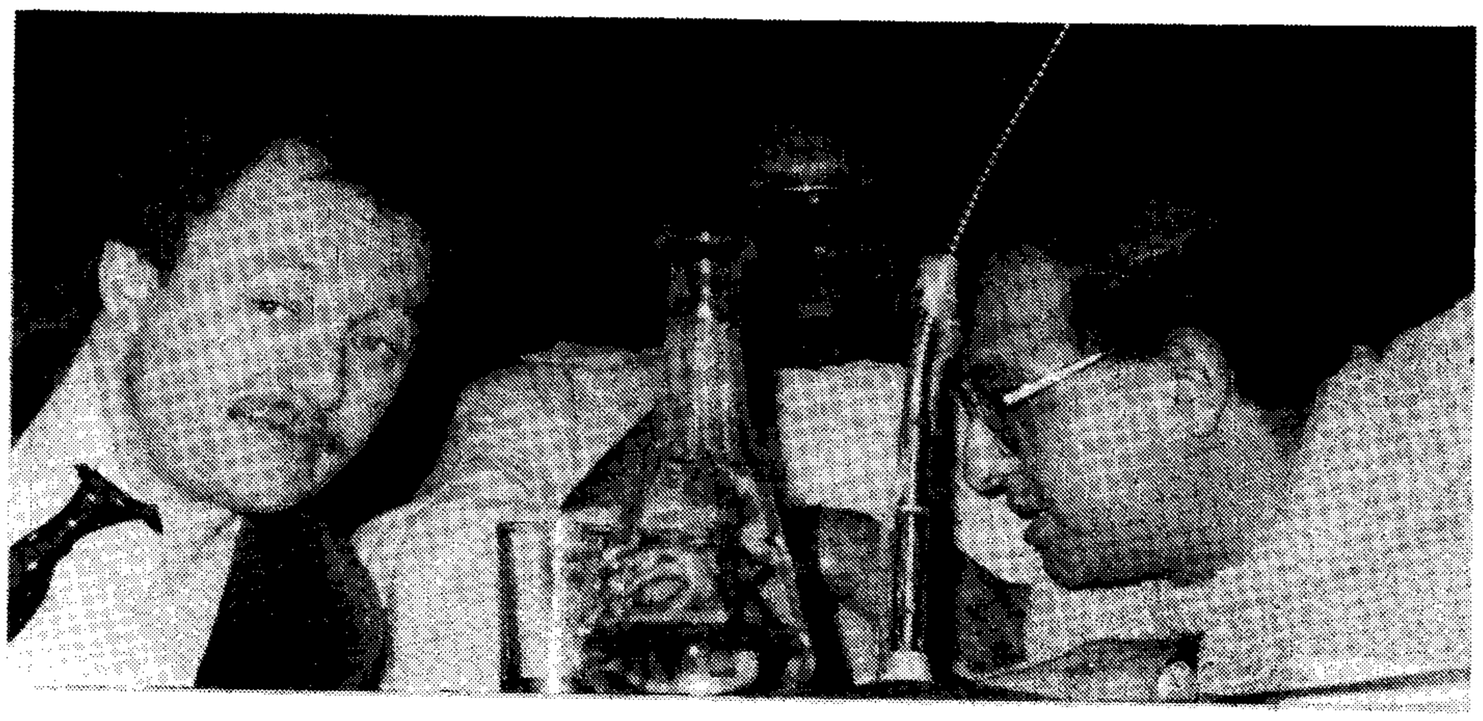
The miners' strike is now in its most critical stage. After more than 11 months of struggle striking NUM members and their families are experiencing extreme hardship. The Coal Board, assisted by the media, is trying to undermine the determination of the strikers by massively exaggerating the return to work figures and refusing to negotiate on any terms acceptable to the union. Despite the failure of the Labour leadership to give firm support for the strike, the party's rank and file members in areas like London have firmly backed the strikers in terms of financial support and by joining picket lines. Now the Labour Party in London can make its most vital contribution to the dispute by opening up a second front against the Government on rate-capping.

Budget day for the London rate-capped boroughs (Camden, Islington, Greenwich, Haringey, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark), ILEA and the GLC is Thursday March 7th. Although there are a whole series of legal challenges being undertaken against the Government by Labour local councils on rate-capping, it is likely that the High Court judges will perform their traditional class role of upholding Thatcher's elected dictatorship. On the Councils' budget day therefore it will be for Labour councillors to decide whether to implement the Government's budget for London involving about £400 million worth of cuts in services and jobs or to stand firm and refuse to make a

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TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT

DAVEY JONES



John Chapman

Target Labour Government Conference, Birmingham, February 16th

Two hundred activists from all over the country attended the Target Labour Government conference in Birmingham on 16 February.

They discussed challenging the two key traditions of the PLP: its domination by white, middle-class men, and its complete failure to fight for radical socialist policies. Bernie Grant also raised the need to adopt a much higher profile on fighting racism and including policies of particular relevance to the black community.

Tony Benn explained in the opening session that many in the PLP saw the role of the Labour Party as a sort of "fan club for the PLP" which would "update the register each year, then re-elect the PLP". He explained the need to build a mass campaigning Labour Party in the here and now to win a real majority for socialist policies. "the way to win is to support all the struggles like those of the miners, the Irish, gay people, and not see them as some sort of embarrassment".

Diane Abbott stressed the need to make the PLP more representative of and accountable to the broad working class movement, in particular through more women and black candidates being selected.

The conference showed the importance of bringing together women, black people, lesbians and gays to discuss challenging the domination of the PLP by white men, and as a forum for thrashing out policies in the interests of the working class, women and men, black and white.

The next national meeting of Target Labour Government will be in London's County Hall on Saturday 16 March at 2pm. For further details ring: Narendra Makanji, or Nadine Finch: 633 8635 work, 802 4604 home.

Policy document presented to the **positive discrimination** workshop:

Target Labour Government is not a short-cut to a seat in Parliament. It is a campaign run by and for those most excluded from positions of power in society and the Labour Party – above all, black people, women and manual workers – aimed at breaking the prevailing capitalist, racist and sexist structures of power. We are not interested in reforming institutionalised racism. We aim to eliminate it. We are not interested in reforming institutionalised sexism. We are about depriving men of their present monopoly of political power, destroying their ability to rule us. We are not interested in reforming the prevailing institutions — the police, armed services, judiciary and Monarchy — through which the ruling class keep us in 'our place.' We are about dismantling them and replacing them with our own machinery of class rule.

Our aim is to replace the present leadership of the labour movement with people prepared to fight for the working class and fight for real power. Wherever possible, we should work for all-black short-lists and/or all-women short-lists, so that the issues can be thrashed out between the contending candidates on the basis of class politics alone. It is a slur on black people and women to imply that only white men can be committed to a real struggle for state power.

And in order to gain power, we must work together with the rest of our movement:

1. To ensure that the miners win their current battle with the Coal Board and the Thatcher Government.

2. To democratise our own organisations, ensuring that no official or MP receives more than the average pay of a skilled manual worker.

3. To bring together Trades Councils, Labour Party General Management Committees, Miners Support Committees, women's and Black and Ethnic Minority Groups and other representative bodies to form powerful committees in each locality. All delegates to these committees should be subject to immediate recall. Positive Action should be implemented to ensure that socialist women, black people, lesbians and gay man, disabled comrades and manual workers are fully represented on these committees.

4. To link together through these committees, the miners' struggle with the fight against rate-capping and the abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan Authorities. Within this framework, we should attempt to ensure the maximum convergence of all our various struggles – the employed with the unemployed, tenants with direct labour operatives, etc.

5. To fight to replace the present leadership of the TUC and the Labour Party with people prepared to fight for the working class and for power.

Sharon Atkins

Diane Abbott Chris Knight

Second front (contd.)

cuts budget.

The London Labour Party's Regional Conference on Rate-capping urged Labour councils in London to take on the Government and not to set a rate. If London's Labour councils stood together in defiance of the Government's demands for cuts there would be a major constitutional crisis which would make Poplar and Clay Cross look like minor skirmishes. It is vital for comrades to demonstrate active support for their local and GLC councillors who are determined to uphold party policy on rate-capping and refuse to set a rate. It is equally important that comrades apply pressure on those councillors who are potentially likely to renege and support compliance with rate-capping in order to persuade them to stand firm.

Labour councillors have known this struggle has been coming for two years. If they had any doubts about standing firm against cuts they had the option to stand down and allow the party to replace them. If they haven't taken this let-out the onus is upon them to support party policy not to set a rate.

It looks certain now that the ILEA and several boroughs will stand firm. On the GLC the recommendation to the Labour Group from the leadership will be to support the 'no rate' option and defy the Government. The budget debate in the GLC Labour Group will be on March 4th at 6pm. CLPs can send observers to this meeting and it is important comrades attend and lobby the Group. With only a Labour majority of 4 over the Tories it would be relatively easy for a few right-wingers on the GLC Labour Group to block the no-rate option in the full council chamber even if it is carried in the Labour Group. It is vital also therefore that comrades lobby the GLC council meeting on March 7th from 2pm onwards.

If the no-rate option is defeated in the GLC council chamber as a result of a betrayal by the right, the left will fall back upon a deficit budget and refuse to allow a budget to go through which entails any cuts. In the following weeks and months therefore guerrilla warfare will be going on at County Hall as the leadership and left members block any cuts proposals coming before council committees. At the same time we will be pushing GLC funds out to the Labour boroughs, who have stood firm on not making a rate, to ensure that they can continue paying wages for as long as possible.

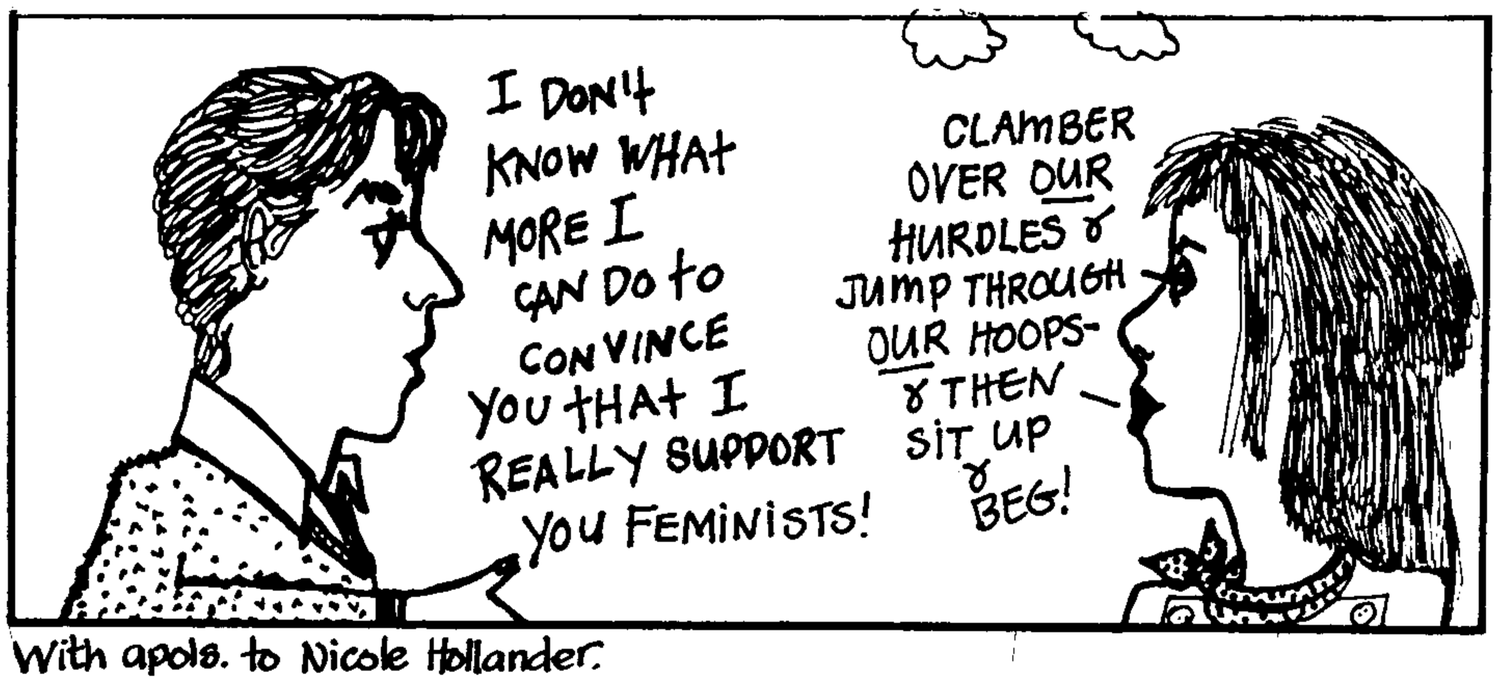
We are now entering into a serious, indeed dangerous confrontation with the Thatcherite state. The aim of our struggle is exactly the same as that of the miners — to protect jobs, services and our community. By throwing London into that struggle we can succeed not only in protecting our own community but also in standing by the miners in securing their communities. It is the responsibility of all comrades in the coming weeks to work fiercely towards holding Labour councillors to party policy of not setting a rate. If that option is defeated as a result of a betrayal by the right in some council chambers it then becomes the duty of comrades to support those councillors engaging in the bitter guerrilla tactics of blocking cuts line by line. Be there at County Hall on March 7th.

WOMEN AND TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT: A REPLY TO ANN PETTIFOR

Stevi Jackson (Secretary, Wales WAC — personal capacity)
Sarah Roelofs (Labour Women for Ireland)

Ann's article in February's National Labour Briefing suggests that feminists involved in Target Labour Government are selling out — are serving the interests of left men at the expense of women. We dispute this. It is as feminists, working for women, that we are active in TLG as well as in the Labour Women's Action Committee.

We do not however, share Ann's assumption that it is possible to work *exclusively* for women within the context of the Labour Party — unless by this Ann means only working with WAC. As feminists we are concerned with *all* aspects of women's oppression. It is not possible to support black women without a commitment to anti-racism. Solidarity with Irish women is not separable from the fight against British imperialism. We can not work with women in mining communities without supporting the fight against pit closures. We believe that while women share a common oppression as women, this is bound up with other oppressions. All women do not have the same needs and priorities. This is something that Ann glosses over. We do not believe, as she seems to, that it is only through WAC that the interests of working class women can be advanced. Fighting male dominance in the Labour Party is only a part of the larger feminist struggle.



With apols. to Nicole Hollander.

ALLIANCE WITH LABOUR LEFT

We are not subordinating our work for women or putting our energies into 'securing the support ... of powerful men'. We have formed an alliance with left men as a means to fighting *all* the different oppressions women face. Ann seems to find such alliances quite acceptable in the context of the Labour Party as a whole. So why reject an alliance with the Labour left who surely have more to offer than the rest of the party?

Ann then goes on to say that Labour women accept the constraints imposed on them by a 'men's party'.* We don't accept them at all! We are constantly fighting them — an exhausting business to be sure. We believe WAC's campaign for real democracy for Labour women to be a crucial part of this just as we do the fight for accountable Labour leaders who actively support the mining communities as well as lesbian mother's custody rights. The Labour Party's faults, while manifold, are not confinded to its 'maleness'. We are members of the Labour Party as socialists as well as feminists — we wish to challenge its Labourism as well as to undermine its patriarchal foundations.

Neither of these aims can be fulfilled if, as Ann seems to imply, we reduce the fight against women's oppression to mere parliamentary representation. We do not agree, as WAC activists ourselves, that the promotion of women parliamentary candidates has been WAC's 'foremost political objective'. The rest of WAC's programme, which aims to give Labour women more political power, is just as important if not more so — and surely more of a threat to male power? The campaign for more women socialist MPs is part of this programme — otherwise we are playing into the hands of our political opponents. We are not seeking to promote individual women as an end in itself (and thereby fostering careerism). We want more women in the PLP who will represent *all* women's interests as active socialists and feminists.

This is precisely what TLG is about. How are we to know that women candidates are, in Ann's words, 'committed to advancing the interests of working class women'? Simply by virtue of their female gender? But this is just biologicalism!

Yes Ann, we do freely admit that we are among 'those who believe that it is not sufficient to support women and black candidates'. Yes, we do wish to 'test', as Ann puts it, women and whoever else's *policies*. Every member of the Labour Party would claim to be anti-racist, but how many of them were on the picket of the Home Office against the obscene virginity testing of Asian women? Hardly a one!

SOCIALISM MUST BE FEMINIST AND ANTI-RACIST

And we not only wish to know everyone's policies we also wish to be actively involved in the formulation of those policies. We know only too well what men, including left men, 'forget' left to their own devices. It was Labour Briefing *women* who argued most forcefully within TLG for there to be an agreed political programme, and it has been women and black people who have been most involved in drawing up the policy papers discussed at TLG's conference. We want to be sure that the socialism TLG promotes is thoroughly feminist and anti-racist, supports women internationally and isn't afraid of the word lesbian!

Ann is concerned that TLG will present women and black people with yet more hurdles. The logic of her argument is that any woman or any black person is better than any white man. So are we to support a woman who opposes the autonomous organisation of women and black people? Who is heterosexist? Who opposes British withdrawal from Ireland? Ann states that it is her conviction that women and black people will 'fail these tests'. Really?!? Is it her conviction that women and black people won't support feminist, anti-racist, socialist policies? But the last national Labour Women's conference showed us to be way ahead of the party as a whole on black sections, Ireland, local government as well as obviously on ourselves! In fact we believe that it is white men who are more likely to stumble and fall. Does Ann think women and Black people in Briefing and TLG are naive enough to be taken in by white men who volunteer to advance our interests? We are as sceptical as she is, but we are in there challenging them and calling them to account. We propose to make damn sure *they* clamber over hurdles and jump through hoops — and sit up and beg as well!

"TESTS OF ACCEPTABILITY"

Ann accuses us of being undemocratic in setting up 'tests of acceptability' when TLG isn't accountable to anyone. TLG is no more and no less undemocratic than WAC is. Obviously whoever is backed by WAC or TLG will still have to go through the usual selection procedures and will be fully accountable to their selecting CLP — or hopefully so. We believe the Labour Party needs both WAC and TLG. It is obviously right for WAC to promote women candidates who actively support WAC. We think we need TLG promoting positive action policies too.

Ann also accuses us of arrogance. Yet we find her attitude to us, as radical left feminists, arrogant in the extreme. Either she is calling our feminism into question or she is making the patronising assumption that we have allowed the irresistable charisma of left men to divert us from the feminist straight and narrow. Well just because we politically *disagree* with Ann does *not* make our feminism any the less so and neither does it mean we can't think for ourselves!

We do no good to the cause of feminism if we use our autonomous organisation to support any woman regardless of her policies. We might just as well set up a Labour 300 group.

* We are unhappy with this term 'men's party' — in emphasising the Labour Party as a patriarchal institution as every party is, we need to be careful that we do not thereby wipe out the tremendous contributions women have made to the whole labour movement.

RAILWORKERS SUPPORT THE MINERS

On January 17th railworkers in the East Midlands and South Yorkshire were called out on a one day strike in protest against victimisation of railworkers refusing to move coal. This harassment had included classifying one signalman as "mentally unstable".

We at Waterloo had been watching events with interest. Roy Butlin of Coalville, the main depot involved, had spoken at one of our branch meetings so we knew what the issue was about. Some of our members had joined a lobby of the NUR Executive calling for a *national* stoppage. So the *regional* stoppage was not to our liking. We decided to take action ourselves. Guards and Drivers joined in stopping work on the 17th to show our solidarity with Coalville and the miners. A successful day saw services in and out of Waterloo severely restricted.

NUR and ASLE&F Head Offices showed their view by doing nothing to stop our action. Their usual course when unofficial stoppages occur is to send in Divisional Officials to order you back to work.

A month later, organising for February 11th was different — not because the rank and file did not understand the issue but because the union leadership ignored it completely. Whilst the SERTUC/NUM Support Committee obviously wanted to make the day a success it felt as if the SERTUC itself was embarrassed by the call for action. Inside the NUR, not until the Wednesday before did any branch receive any material — and that was only one letter giving us permission to attend rallies, written in reply to demands for total support. Two days later I was sent three leaflets for the SERTUC Rally and that only because Jimmy Knapp was on the platform.

Nevertheless the day was a limited success for us — more members at Waterloo took action than did so for Coalville — it included many of the Platform staff as well as the traditionally more militant Guards. Unfortunately because no lead was given to the Drivers to come out as a whole, many trains did run, using train crew from further down the line. Management tried to hide the fact by blaming service difficulties on the weather but many trains were cancelled because of the action.

We showed that given a lead railworkers are prepared to act. How much better it could have been if Unity House and SERTUC had really given their support.

All railworkers know that as soon as the miners are out of the way this Government will turn on us. Which only makes the action of our leadership the worse. In both stoppages we have had the tacit support of Head Office — if only becaue they did not try to stop us, but they are scared to call large scale *official* action in case they run foul of the law. They are hiding behind our *unofficial* actions.

Now is the time for leadership to be given, not run away from. Unfortunately union members draw lessons from this shillyshallying. No-one can call for action like turning on a tap. Unless we are serious now we may not get the response we will need later. Railworkers will fight. The action of thousands of NUR and ASLE&F members around the country has shown that. But only if they have a leadership that they can trust to fight with them.

Greg Tucker (Clapham Junction and Waterloo NUR, Branch Secretary)

HUMBERSIDE FOR THE MINERS CONFERENCE — 9th MARCH 1985

At a recent meeting, Humberside County Association of Trades Councils considered ways in which support for the NUM could be stepped up across the county.

Throughout Humberside, many organisations have declared support for the NUM and are engaged in a variety of fund-raising and other activities. We feel that it is vital to pool this information and that all organisations can learn from sharing their various experiences.

To begin to establish this, HCTAC have called a conference or organisations in support of the NUM which will be held in the Trades and Labour Club, Hull, on Saturday, 9th March.

The conference is intended first and foremost to be *practical*. Workshops will examine different aspects of support work — from fund-raising to establishing supporting industrial action, and there will be speakers from Yorkshire NUM and pits that areas have 'twinned' with.

Your organisation is invited to send two delegates to the conference. There will be a registration fee of £1.00 per delegate to cover expenses, and further details — agenda, etc., will be circulated shortly. Please let me know the names and addresses or your delegates as soon as possible.

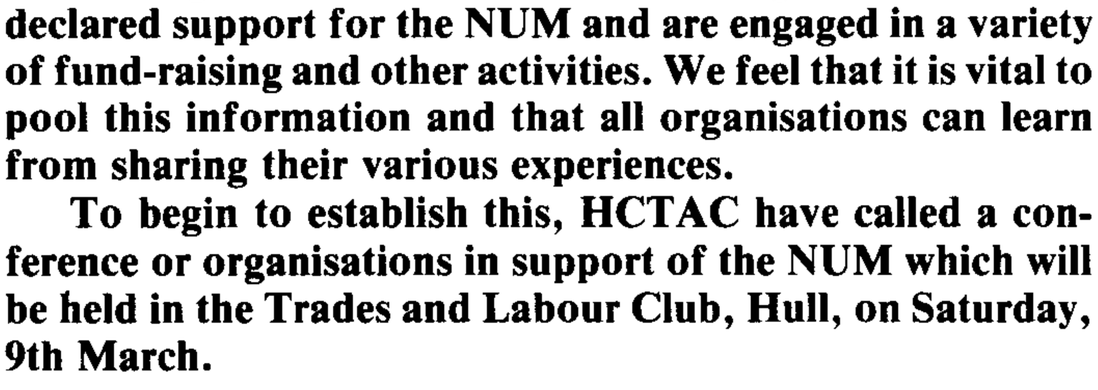
I hope your organisation can participate, and thank you for considering this letter.

Ian Dolphin (for HCATC Executive)

Local authority trade unionists national conference

The air of expectancy hanging over the next crucial weeks as the important decisions on the rates question are made, has given impetus to London Bridge activity.

On the 4th February 85 the Chairperson and Secretary travelled to Liverpool to help organise a national conference for local authority trade unionists on March 30th 1985. It is expected that the planning conference for this event on the 23rd February 85, which is on a delegate basis, will be the start of a permanent rank and file organisation to supplement the links the Unions already have through the TUC and Local Government Campaign Unit.



The resolution to be considered on the 30th, will call for co-ordinated and effective industrial action in defence of jobs and services if and when there are threatened redundancies, privatisation, disciplinaries, action by Government Commissioners, or punitive action against Councillors.

The ceaseless attack on the communities of particularly the metropolitan areas must be turned into a retreat. For too long purely defensive measures have appeared appropriate, and the end of local democracy is in sight. Already few Local Authorities have any realistic opportunity to contribute to the housing stock of their cities, and severe personal circumstances exist as a national scandal. It is vital that the national leaders of the Unions and the leadership of the Labour Party, support workers, tenants, and community groups, (nearly all labour voters), in this fight to win. The niceties of the law will not be acceptable as excuses, and as one speaker stated at the last London Bridge Meeting, 'there is no creative accountancy possible with a GIRO cheque from a dole office'.

March the 6th, the day of the national demonstration will be fully supported, and the lobbies of March 7th to cement the no rate policies of Union Branches and Councils will be major evening events at the Town Halls. Other events are planned . . .

Ed Hall (Secretary London Bridge)

RECALL THE T.U.C.!

While the vast majority of striking miners continue to display their remarkable solidarity a slow drift back to work continues. It is grossly exaggerated by the media and manipulated by the NCB, but it is a factor which cannot be ignored. It continues to put tremendous pressure on the NUM leadership who despite this remain determined to continue the strike.

We have to be blunt about it, however. Were this drift to continue at present levels for an extended period, it would eventually destroy the strike. This is not to be pessimistic. It does not mean the strike cannot be won – far from it. But it does mean there is a problem to be resolved and resolved quickly.

All striking miners are enduring incredible hardship. But one of the main reasons for the drift back is a lack of a convincing perspective giving a way forward which can pull the strike out of its present difficult period. Appeals for even more solidarity are not enough without an effective new initiative.

The NUM leaders themselves know this. And they have been seeking a new initiative. There was an initiative from the South Wales and Durham areas, calling for an emergency full TUC Congress to discuss support for the miners. It was left on the table in favour of the joint approach with NACODS for fresh negotiations around the joint review procedure.

But the government are not interested in fresh negotiations. Their current tactic is to take a hard line and use every means to promote the drift back. Now the High Court has banned mass picketing at five pits in South Wales and a number in Yorkshire where scabs are going in.

I believe the NACODS initiative was a mistake. NACODS have made it clear that strike action is very remote.

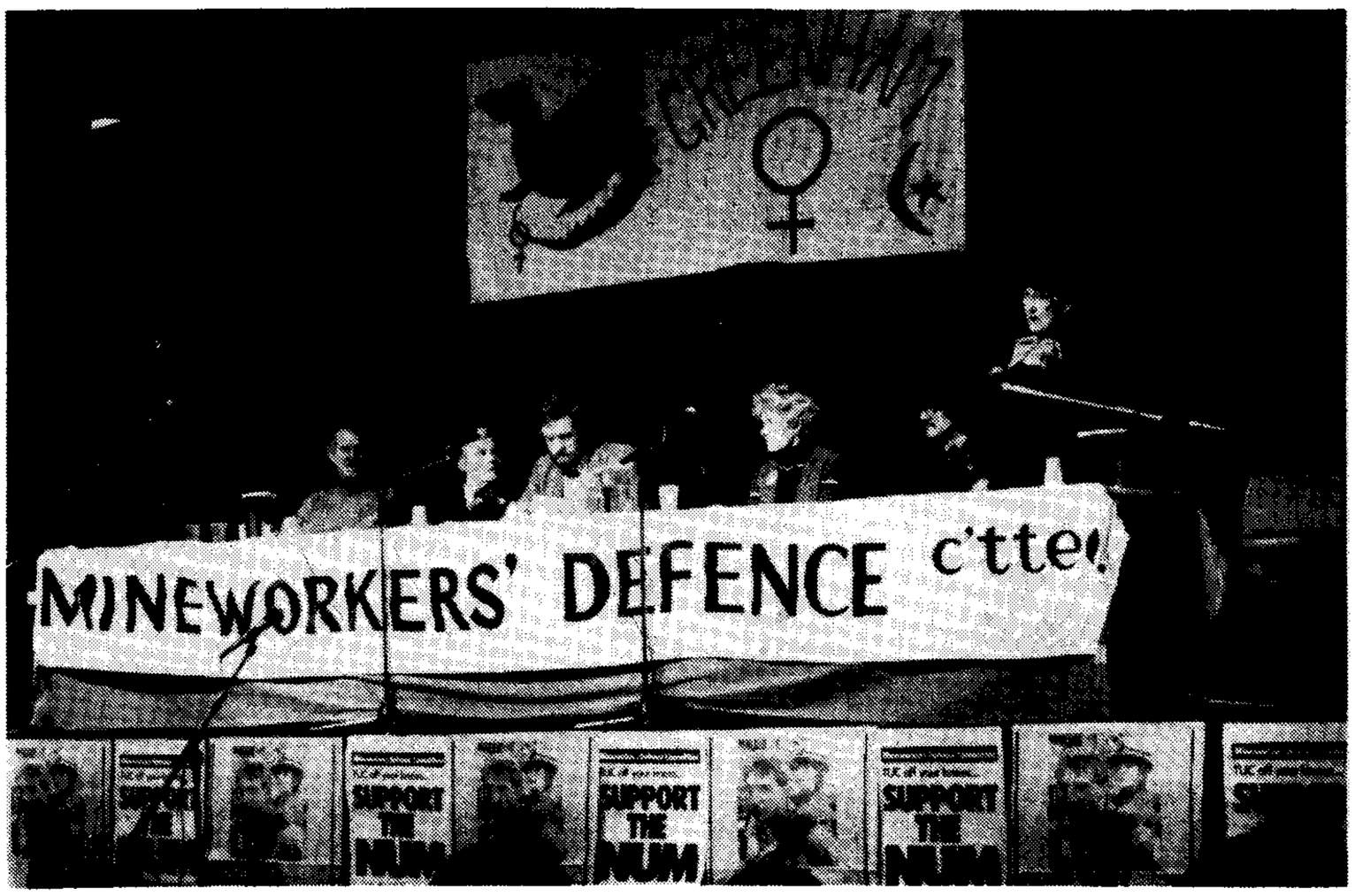
INDUSTRIAL ACTION

In my view the South Wales and Durham move for an emergency TUC Congress was the most important initiative which could be made at the present time. The same policy was adopted at the conference of the Mineworkers' Defence Committee in Shefield on February 9.

Every form of solidarity action is important. Money, picketing power stations, days of action and demonstrations. But time is short. What is needed is industrial action in support of the miners and we have to consider what is the most effective way to get that.

There are two advantages of an emergency TUC Congress. Firstly, if a date was set it would stem the drift back. It would create a completely new focus. The issue would be "what is the TUC going to do". The movement would begin to mobilise to force action.

Secondly, if the TUC can be forced to call action, it is by far the most effective way to get it. The difference between organising action in individual workplaces or unions and being able to say that the TUC is calling everyone out and it is backed by your own union is tremendous. The action over GCHQ showed that.



Lesley Boulton

Joan Maynard speaking at the Mineworkers' Defence Committee Conference February 9th

OUR MOVEMENT, NOT THEIRS

It is true the TUC is controlled by the right wing. That they are responsible for the situation we are in. But it is *our* movement, not theirs, and we cannot concede it to them when the strength and authority of the official movement is needed most.

The miners did not accept the situation when the right wing controlled the NUM under Joe Gormley. They forced strike action on him in 1972 and 1974.

However you look at it, there could hardly be a stronger case for an emergency Congress. The General Council have *failed* to implement the decisions of the September Congress. They have *failed* to implement the decisions of the 1982 conference of executives on the anti-union laws – which are now used with impunity. On top of this, if Congress is not recalled they would be prepared to sit back and watch the miners defeated.

GENERAL STRIKE

I believe that if the NUM and those unions who say they support the miners, called for a recall Congress they would get it. I also believe that the subject on the agenda should be a general strike in support of the miners.

The whole of the left has been forced on the defensive over the general strike issue. Yet there could not be a stronger argument for one. Everyone knows that we stand at a major historical turning point, and if the miners are defeated, it will have a disastrous effect on the labour movement for a generation. How can you talk about *that*, and not think in terms of a general strike.

Some say that the Congress could not be forced to call action. Yet the TUC did call for a general strike over the Pentonville Five and the current situation is far worse than it was then. If the movement could force it then, 120,000 striking miners and their supporters could force it now.

Others say that even if the TUC did call action they would not get a response. I cannot accept this. The miners have again proved themselves to be the vanguard of the British trade union movement. But they are not so far out in front that they can go on strike for a year while the official movement couldn't get anyone else out in their support. The difference is the miners have the Scargill leadership, the most determined the movement has seen this century.

If the TUC wanted a strike in support of the miners they could get one. If they picked the right time, explained the issues and the implications clearly to the movement – that we stand on the verge of the biggest defeat since 1926 – and put out a clear and determined call, they would get a response.

The case for a recall Congress is overwhelming. At the moment the government is confident and the miners are on the defensive. The decision to recall the TUC Congress and discuss the matter of a general strike would dramatically change the situation. Nor would it help the pound very much.

There is another important point as well. The miners have a *right* to have a full debate on the situation in front of the whole movement. They have a *right* – even if they lost the vote or got only a part of what they needed – to know if the movement is prepared to support them or not. They have a *right* to know who will stand with them and who would be prepared to vote them down at a time when the whole movement is on the line.

Alan Thornett

THE MOST IMPORTANT LEGACY OF THE STRIKE

by Tony Benn

The high drama of the miners' struggle has necessarily concentrated public attention on the NUM leadership, the work of the pickets and the women's action groups. All this has tended to overshadow another major development arising from the strike, namely the role of the miners support groups that have sprung up all the country.

No one can possibly know how many such groups there are, but having now spoken in 79 constituencies in support of the strike, I can confirm that in each of them a powerful and active support group exists and they are all raising money and sending it off regularly to the pit communities which need it to survive.

The organisation of these groups varies widely. Many, if not most, were started by local Labour Parties, others on the initiative of the women within the Labour movement, and the trades unions and Labour local authorities have played a very active part, supported in some areas by ministers of religion.

It is hard to put a figure on the total sums of money raised, because there is no central record kept, but it must now run into millions of pounds, and in Chesterfield alone the women's action group has been raising and spending many thousands a week, much of it coming from outside.

The support goes very wide and includes a deep commitment by the ethnic groups — and many gays — who have identified themselves with those miners who have experienced police harassment, as have many in the Irish community who see a repeat in Britain of what has been happening for years in Northern Ireland.

Pensioners, who are suffering from the cold, have been attracted to the idea of digging the coal and making it available to them on a subsidised or free basis through the expansion of the inadequate heating allowances.

The young unemployed have identified with the miners because they see in their struggle the first sign of a fight-back against the policies which threw them on the dole when they left school and offers no hope for their future.

Greenham

The women at Greenham Common have also been quick to see the connection between their campaign against nuclear weapons, and the miner's campaign against nuclear power stations which produce the plutonium that goes to America and then comes back as warheads in Cruise missiles.

Apart from the practical work that has been done, all these groups have been organising meetings, rallies and marches at which speakers from the mining areas have been joined by others to get across the lessons of the strike and to relate it to the battle to save local government from abolition or rate capping, and to preserve the health and education services from the cuts.

Many of the best of these meetings have been in safe Tory seats in the South, where it is clear that the audiences include people who have never been involved before and came because they want to hear the case put, and then contribute with cash or personal help in collecting money or food from others.

These rallies have been biggest, and best attended, that have taken place since the war, most of them exceeding what would be expected at a general election eve-of-poll meeting, and they have been taking place every night somewhere.

That very fact may turn out to be the most important legacy of the strike, for it will bequeath us with a new political organisation already living and working in every part of the country.

Giant leap

Anyone who has listened to the speeches made realises, at once, the giant leap that has occured in political consciousness, understanding and awareness that the strike has produced amongst those who may never have been in any way political before.

Most significant for the future has been the remarkable sense of unity that has been brought about by the need to respond in a practical way to the call of the miners and their families.

While some of the theoretical arguments now taking place on the Left have tended to divide us from each other, the miners' struggle has united us on the basis that we are required to decide whose side we are on in this momentous struggle.

No-one should suppose that when the miners have won all these support groups will quietly go away, leaving everything as it was in March 1984.

The national conference of the women's action groups that was convinced in Chesterfield last November has already decided to stay in being and to widen its terms of reference to cover a whole range of activities, including — most significantly — the political education of working class women.

The same will happen to the support groups generally and they will have the advantage of all the contacts and personal friendships made during the dispute, which are deep and real.

The NUM have sent so many of their members to live miles from home and work full-time for the support groups that we have a ready-made band of experienced campaigners to hand for the next stage of the political struggle.

In Chesterfield this process has already begun and a Community Defence Committee has been set up by an ad hoc group which includes the Trades Council, the women, the Labour and Communist Parties, some of the clergy and a range of other sympathetic organisations.

They are now running a broadly based political campaign with the full support of the NUM, whose own case now ranks as top priority.

It is interesting, and deeply encouraging, that all this activity should have boosted the self-confidence of thousands and thousands of men and women in the Labour movement who may never have realised before how capable they were of running organisations effectively, efficiently and without bureaucracy or the handicap of electoralist careerism.

Therein lies the real socialist dimension — a conviction of the possibilities of self-emancipation, based upon a historic class struggle entered into by a trade union and attracting wide popular support.

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GENERAL STRIKE:

Get the message across!

by Paul Whetton (Secretary, Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee)

ON March 6 of last year, when the ultimatum was given by the NCB to the National Union of Mineworkers, the men of Cortonwood and the other four pits immediately applied to their areas to come out on strike. The whole of Yorkshire came out and the pickets then came down into Nottinghamshire.

Despite the greatest intimidation ever seen by the working class in this country, thousands of Notts miners came out on strike and stayed out on strike.

Despite all the attempts of the Coal Board, who as far back as last June were suggesting that the strike was beginning to crumble, and the media, who have continually argued that the strike is lost, the NUM is smashed, and Arthur Scargill is finished, the strikers refuse to give in and go back to work.

At the time we were fighting for a recognition by the employer that they were wrong to try and close the five pits in the way that they did, but before long rank and file miners as well as the leadership could be heard arguing that the government were behind the strike, and that what we were involved in was a political strike.

Since then, this has become blatantly obvious to everybody. The government is out to smash the NUM and try and finish off Scargill and the rest of the leadership. Beyond that, they will threaten the rights of all trade unionists to organise and engage in industrial action.

It won't just be trade unionists who affected but blacks, women, gays, organisations like CND, anybody that the government considers to be a threat to their policies. That is why this fight has got to be won. And not just to protect people's rights in the future, but to protect the 10,000 miners who have been "criminalised" in the course of the strike and the more than 600 who have lost their jobs as well the 150 who at present lie in jail, and who will no doubt be joined by more. This strike is a battle that the miners can't afford to lose, but more than that, it is a fight that the whole labour movement cannot afford to lose.

Many people have, over the months, been pointing to the fact that the strike is crumbling. But the truth is that the strike is not crumbling half as fast as the pound is. So the Thatcher government have got a lot of problems of their own. Apart from the sliding pound, there are splits in the Cabinet, there is an oil price war about to break out, and the message to the rest of the labour and trade union movement at the present time is that we must pile even more pressure on this hard-pressed government.

We cannot win this battle with words. This battle will be won where it started — on the picket lines. We appeal to all trade unionists to redouble their efforts in raising finance to allow us to take this battle forward, but more than that we want their solidarity shown on the picket lines.



John Harris (IFL)

Mass miners' picket at Cortonwood

The latest development is the banning of mass picketing in South Wales and in Yorkshire. This is a gross attack on the rights of trade unionists and every trade unionist should get on the picket lines and show their solidarity with the miners and make it clear to the courts that we will not accept anti-working class laws and decisions of judges, made in order to smash the miners.

We must make the March 6 Day of Action on rate-capping, called by the TUC, into a day of solidarity with the miners as well, even if the TUC have said that the Day of Action has got nothing to do with the miners' strike. The miners will be there. We are fighting for jobs against an authoritarian government. Local authority workers will be marching on that day against the threat to their jobs.

But the attacks are even more wide-reaching. Jobs in the health service and in transport are also under attack. They'll be next, after the miners, so I don't see how the TUC can argue that the issues of the miners' strike and rate-capping should be kept separate.

If the TUC doesn't do something soon they will find themselves isolated because the rank and file will roll over the TUC and take this dispute onto the streets on their own.

We must fight for a recall TUC Congress to give the rank and file the opportunity to tell their leadership that they can't just pass resolutions saying we support the miners and then refuse to back us up with physical support. We need to be working towards a general strike. General strikes don't just drop out of the air. We need to get the message across to other rank and file trade unionists and Labour Party activists.

March 6 would be a good day around which to fight to get the ball rolling. Other sections of the trade union movement with pay claims in the pipeline should also realise that if they don't take this opportunity to stand up and identify themselves with the miners, they may well find themselves being left behind.

There have been two very distinct attitudes from the Labour Party towards the miners' strike. The rank and file have been brilliant. The leadership, on the other hand, have ducked the issue where possible and don't want to be seen to be backing the miners. The job of the Labour Party is to protect and advance the interests of the working class, and that means getting actively involved in the miners' strike. I think that at this year's Labour Party conference the leadership will have to be told that if they are not going to represent working class interests they must get out and make way for those who will.

The police state does not exist in Notts to the same extent that it did earlier in the strike, but it still exists in all the other main areas of the strike. The police took what they learnt in Nottinghamshire to other parts of the country and there is a great danger that they may become a sort of private army, with Parliament maintaining only a small amount of control, but with the police becoming increasingly autonomous and able to run the country as they see fit.

We've got to make sure we look after the miners who have fallen victim to the actions of the police. There must be a campaign built around those miners who have lost their jobs, or been fined or jailed by the courts for fighting for their jobs.

London/Wales Congress

March 9th will see an important new development in the history of the British labour movement. The London/Wales Congress at London's County Hall will seek to draw out the lessons of the miners' struggle and the broad democratic alliance formed around support for it, for the people of London and Wales. This experience may offer some useful lessons beyond the NUM and beyond the strike for Londoners facing rate-capping and abolition and fights for jobs.

The Wales Congress was launched in Cardiff on October 21st with the backing of the NUM (South Wales Area) to consolidate and broaden support for the NUM's strike throughout Wales. The London Congress will be an examination, and celebration, of the breadth of that support – from hundreds of trade union branches, from the Gays and Lesbians Miners Support Group, from the Women's Movement, from the ethnic minorities and especially of the magnificent way striking mining communities have responded to the threat to their way of life and very existence, not only setting up an alternative welfare system but mobilising whole communities in their own defence.

In the Welsh context, the nearest historical comparison we can make with current events within the communities is with the broad unity and extra-parliamentary resistance shown during the 1926 miners lock-out and in the '30s the struggles against mass unemployment, scab unionism and aid for Republican Spain (so well described in Hywel Francis' book *Miners Against Fascism*).

SAME PHENOMENON

This resistance movement is undoubtedly part of the same phenomenon that resists rate-capping in local government; that opposes the abolition of the GLC and other metropolitan bodies; the mobilising of the unemployed around the People's March for Jobs; and the mass peace campaigns against Cruise and Trident. They are all extra-parliamentary struggles which place greater emphasis than hitherto on educating and mobilising communities and organisations in broad alliances. It is part of the same process which involves communities in direct action to oppose school and hospital closures. All these struggles involve mobilising people beyond the traditional parameters of the labour movement.

Furthermore the NUM as a union had led not so much a strike as a social movement against mass unemployment. Miners and their communities have championed production and construction against the destructive policy and practice of the Thatcher government. Miners have essentially fought to establish a future for the people of this country, facing a government that has no time for people, that perpetrates the violence of mass unemployment.

MUTUAL ASSISTANCE

Against the kind of selfish, short-term thinking shown by many workers, the mining communities have displayed the collective approach of mutual assistance that strengthens everyone. They look back and look ahead while others just look down or look away from the problem that cannot be avoided for long.

Against this background the Congress should offer some very useful and interesting discussions. Among the main speakers on the day will be Ken Livingstone, Illtyd Harrington, Dafydd Elis Thomas (Plaid Cymru President) MP, Ann Clwyd MP, Cath Jones of the South Wales Women's Support Group. The Chair will be Dr Hywel Francis.

Undoubtedly the most intense discussion will take place in the workshops which are on issues highlighted by the miners' struggle and the experiences of their supporters. 'Women In Struggle will be led by Juliet Coke of Lambeth Women s Unit; 'Rate-capping/Abolition by Hilda Keane (leader of Hackney Council); 'The Economics of the Pit Dispute and Nuclear Power' by Andrew Glyn (Fellow of Corpus Christi, Oxford and author of *Economic Aspects of the Coal Industry Dispute* and other books; the 'Media' workshop will be led by Pat Kelly of the GLC Press Office and two leading broadcasting journalists; Dr Doreen Massie (Open University) will lead the 'Unemployment' workshops; 'Police, Gays and Lesbians, Race' will be led by the authors of *Policing the Miners' Strike*.

The Wales Congress was born out of a realisation by large sections of the Welsh people that the miners were struggling for the future of Wales. The London Congress aims to build a strong anti-Thatcher alliance which will go beyond the strike and turn all those so-called minorities who have supported it into an irresistible and united majority to fight for jobs, peace and communities. Two days after the rate-capped and penalised local authorities have to make their decisions on whether to levy a rate it should be an interesting discussion to be involved in.

Elizabeth Porter



KEN LIVINGSTONE has released the following statement on the LONDON/WALES CONGRESS

These past months have seen an emergence of the strong unity between Welsh mining communities and the people of London. Our struggles are common ones, in defence of our jobs, communities and democracy.

We must build on this strength. The Government energy strategy and its policies for local government amount to the same – the sacrifice of the majority to the interests of the few.

This alliance must be developed, the London Congress is an important step on the way.

Details of the London/Wales Congress:

The Congress will be held on March 9th at County Hall, London from 10.00am to 4.00pm. The cost (including lunch) is £4.00 (£2 unwaged). If you wish to attend or would like further details of workshops, speakers, etc, please contact:
Dai Donovan,
630 Green Lanes, London N8
(SAE please, or phone 888 8335 or 558 3801.)



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I would like to receive the next eight weekly issues of BLACK DRAGON, the weekly bulletin of the MINEWORKERS' DEFENCE COMMITTEE. I understand that the committee and its bulletin will continue to campaign for solidarity action against pit closure for this period regardless of immediate developments in relation to the strike.

I enclose a subscription fee of £4 (£2 unwaged; £3 if you have already been a subscriber; nil if you are a striking miner) to cover costs of copying/paper/postage/envelopes.

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science briefing

CEGB makes power reductions

Extensive reductions in mains voltage and frequency and local power cuts show the CEGB has now got its back against the wall with the miners' strike and the cold weather.

The cold spell which began on February 9th is part of a cycle of cold winters involving prolonged very cold spells and corresponding increased demand for electricity. Consequently the huge expenditure on strike-breaking oil is further increased and so the pound slides faster. Government expenditure on fighting the strike has been 2% of the Gross National Product averaged over the year. They cannot allow this to carry on, let alone increase. They have a stark choice: the one dollar pound or rotá power cuts like those which heralded the downfall of the Heath Government in 1974. The reasonable alternative would be for the Government to accept the NUM policy of working pits to exhaustion – the only responsible policy which cares about Britain's energy future.

Round the clock monitoring of mains voltage over the last few weeks indicates that in the week beginning 11th February the CEGB reduced mains voltage to very close to the legal minimum (226 volts) almost continuously, except late at night, over much of – and probably the whole of – the country. In some cases the voltage has fallen below the legal minimum without being cut off as it should be at that point. An increasing number of local cut-offs have also been reported recently. Queries to the London Electricity Board through the London Electricity Consultative Council about voltage reductions have received evasive replies including a bizarre offer to 'check the wiring' of the consumer. These vain attempts to cover up the huge impact of the miners' strike must break soon.

20% POWER LOSS

The CEGB has been reducing mains frequency for long periods and thereby causing clocks and AC motors to run slow. This enables a 1,000 MW saving (2% of total capacity) nationally. Through voltage and frequency reductions together with their almost continuous running of booster power stations – which were only designed for peak time using: their offpeak hydroelectric storage system in Wales, and their 'load management' requests to factories to switch off early, the CEGB is reducing or rescheduling up to 20% of peak demand. At the same time they are spending £80 million per week extra on oil.

ARMY AT THE READY?

Rota power cuts are on the way unless the Government shift large amounts of strike-bound coal. Possibly the army action at Molesworth was a preparation for troop intervention in such an operation.

The current very cold weather is part of a long range periodic weather pattern of series of cold winters which last occured in the 1840s and 1680s.* In the last most similar period *the Thames froze over* in 1683-84 and a 'Frost Fair' was held on it in London.

- **No pit closures except on the grounds of exhaustion!**
- **Coal power not nuclear power!**
- **Victory with the miners!**

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP
and Energy Policy Workshop of Mineworkers Defence Committee

**New Scientist*, 28 Oct 1982.

DEFEND THE NUM LINE ON UNECONOMIC PITS

The Government's arguments to close so-called 'uneconomic pits' has been exposed as fraudulent in economic terms by leading economists. *In energy terms the Government's approach spells disaster* for Britain's future. 'Economic Invisibility' is a 1984-speak cue for attack. Why does not the Government pose the economic invisibility of nuclear power, which is more costly than coal? Is Mrs Thatcher, or Parliament itself a viable economic unit?

FALLING POUND HELPS BRITISH COAL

The real market competitiveness of coal depends on many factors including investment in mine machines and the exchange rate. Even though world coal prices are now artificially low due to 'dumping' by various countries' coal from the North East British coalfield can compete with heavily subsidised foreign coal unless the pound rises above 1.14 dollars.

There is not much chance of this – thanks to the miners' strike! If Thatcher was honest she would now propose an expansion of British coal. Anyway will the value of the pound dictate the future of a mine? Of course a mine cannot be opened or closed at the whims of the market. If a mine is closed its coal is lost forever because of geological collapse – termed 'sterilisation' – which makes it impossible to reopen.

This point must be hammered home relentlessly, now *and* in the future. The Kinnock leadership must have no truck with Thatcher's so-called economic arguments. The NUM stand against closures is absolutely correct.

in the loss forever of millions of tons of coal through geological collapse. Their plans would

The truth is the Tories' closure plan would resu mean the mining viability of Britain's coalfields would be cut from 300 years to 50 years. Britain would run out of coal just after world oil supplies – including North Sea oil – run out in 30 to 40 years. Britain's coal would be vitally needed for conversion to petrol, but it would have been lost.

The CEGB are already intent – without public debate – to build no more coal power stations and go heavily nuclear. But *nuclear power can never be an alternative*. It can never be clean, whereas coal can easily and cheaply be de-sulphurised. The Government's problems over nuclear waste disposal which were admitted recently are likely to be permanent; and the problem of radioactive waste will be with us for thousands of years. There is no future in nuclear power. COAL IS THE FUEL OF THE FUTURE. THE ONLY RESPONSIBLE AND VIABLE POLICY FOR COAL-MINING IS TO WORK PITS TO EXHAUSTION.

Piers Corbyn

CEGB Thatcher' Bludgeon
The central anti-working class role of the CEGB has been exposed in its short and long term activities by the miners' strike. The left must get to grips with how to fight it coherently and what a future Labour Government would do about it . . . Comments please to Energy Policy Workshop of Mineworkers Defence Committee.

Speakers and information
Energy Policy Workshop of Miners Defence Committee, c/o 55 Innis House, East Street, London SE17 2JN. Tel. 701 5691 (Piers Corbyn), or c/o MDC, 127 George Lane, London SE13.

MARCH 6th

From March 6th, those of us who are leading local authorities threatened with rate-capping or abolition face a choice. Either we join in with the miners in taking action which could be branded "illegal" by the Tory courts, or we collude in devastating the communities we're supposed to represent. This is precisely the dilemma which the NUM had to face last year, and it seems appropriate that March 6th sees not only the TUC's day of action in defence of democracy – it is also the anniversary of the start of the strike. I am calling on all supporters of democracy in London, all supporters of local democracy throughout the country, and all those who support the miners, to turn March 6th and 7th into a two-day event of massive pickets, stoppages, demonstrations and lobbies marking the opening of our movement's 'Second Front' in the battle begun by the miners twelve months ago. The Tories fear two opponents which they are attempting to destroy. the NUM on the one hand, popular local government on the other. THEY HAD BANKED ON FORCING THE MINERS TO SURRENDER BEFORE HAVING TO TAKE ON THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE GLC. Now that these plans have come unstuck, a tremendous opportunity opens up before us all. The conditions exist for us to unite the miners' strike with the struggle against rate-capping and build towards a general stoppage of work. Every leader of our movement who says "the time is not ripe" is simply allowing this Government to move on to the next victim. The time IS ripe; it requires a policy of TOTAL RESISTANCE TO EVERYTHING THIS GOVERNMENT IS DOING. Use March 6th and 7th to unite our forces into a combined offensive which will win.

Ken Livingstone

Mass pickets. Tilbury and Neasden power stations.
From 7am. Called by SERTUC/Kent NUM.
Supported by Mine-workers' Defence Committee/Pit Dragon.

WOMEN IN THE COALFIELDS: THE POLITICAL LESSONS

Hazel Jones, of Mountain Ash women's support group talked to *Briefing* about her experience of women's groups in the South Wales Coalfield. What she has to say contains important political lessons for us all. Hazel asked us to stress that she was speaking in a personal capacity.

What do you think women have learnt from the strike?
Which women? That's the problem – there's a split in women against pit closures. We can't pretend it doesn't exist or we won't learn anything from what's happened. There's a difference between supporting the miners and supporting the strike. That's the difference between the two sorts of women involved.

There are those who support the miners out of loyalty to their husbands. They're content with playing the traditional female role – fundraising and food parcels and children's parties. They don't want to do anything more, they shut off from thinking about the political issues. Then there are those who support the strike politically, whatever their husbands think – like the women from other coalfields who've carried on supporting the strike after their husbands have gone back to work. These women want to be involved politically, to go picketing, to go to meetings as well as organising food parcels.

The strike has raised consciousness – most of the women think more politically than they did before, but they're at different levels. It s a big jump from just supporting the miners to being active in your own right. Some women have made that jump, see the fight as theirs as well as the men's. Some of these have become fighters because of the strike. Most were fighters before, but the strike has given them a focus.

It's easier for some women than others. Some men are proud to see their wives on picket lines or speaking at meetings. Others don't want this and this leaves their wives torn between loyalty to their husbands and what is required of them if they want to get out and fight autonomously.

For example, when there's a suggestion about sending delegations to groups outside the coalfield who send us money some won't go. They're afraid their husbands won't like it. And these are the majority.

How far have women been able to organise autonomously around the strike?
With great difficulty. The fighters have often had a triple fight – against their own husbands, against sections of the NUM who don't want women to be too active and within Women Against Pit Closures, against those women who're afraid of offending the men, who don't want to discuss the politics of the strike and don't want to do anything beyond fund raising and food parcels.

If Women Against Pit Closures (ie the South Wales area organisation) had concentrated on fighting the strike politically



Hazel Jones on left at demonstration in Aberdare — home of Joy Watson of the "back to work" campaign

rather than fund raising and food parcels it would have been a lot more effective in organising the women.

Why do you think Women Against Pit Closures in South Wales became dominated by fund raising and food parcels?
Because of the lack of political leadership. The first area meeting was set up as a result of discussions between socialist and feminist women in Cardiff and a group of us from the Cynon Valley. There was a lot of enthusiasm at that first meeting for political debate and action in support of the strike.

But then the Cardiff women who'd set it up hung back, they wouldn't take the lead. They expected us to get on with it ourselves. That's why it deteriorated.

Wouldn't women in the valleys have resented women from Cardiff taking too much of a lead?
But we *wanted* leadership then. We didn't have the experience to know how to organise, we didn't have the confidence to chair big meetings. You could have stood down later once we could run things ourselves. All that happened was that other women from outside took over, women who wouldn't stand down, who side with those men who don't want the women taking action, who want to keep us to fund raising and food parcels.

Many of us had the fighting spirit but not the experience to know how to work in meetings so women like K—— could get round us and keep control. So it deteriorated into talking about food parcels and problems with the DHSS and many of the stronger groups and women stopped coming.

Now we've learnt enough to challenge what's going on, we've overcome our lack of confidence and we're trying to get Women Against Pit Closures back to what it should have been all along. But it's taken us months even to get picketing at the top of the agenda. We finally managed it at the last meeting (31st Jan) and organised a woman's picket at Natgarw. It took us two hours to do it – K—— tried everything to stop it – tried to turn the discussion away from picketing, tried to tell us it was impossible to organise, tried to stop us voting on it. But we got the vote and we won. She's chaired the meetings, run everything and got her way from the beginning. We've never had the elections we were promised – she's always put it off. We've tried to challenge her before, but a lot of the women can't get to every meeting and weren't aware of what was going on and she always got her way. Now things are changing.

I often wonder about women in Sheffield, in National Women Against Pit Closures – do they want to be involved politically or are they only interested in food parcels? I'd like to know if women in other coalfields are having the same problems.

How does the NUM locally view Women Against Pit Closures?
Our Joint Lodges are right behind us – more so than they were in the beginning. They understand why women want to be active in the strike. But some lodges still don't want women being too active.

But there are problems because of differences between the local and national leadership. For example with mass picketing – the national leadership has been in favour of it but the

TIME TO LEARN FROM GREENHAM

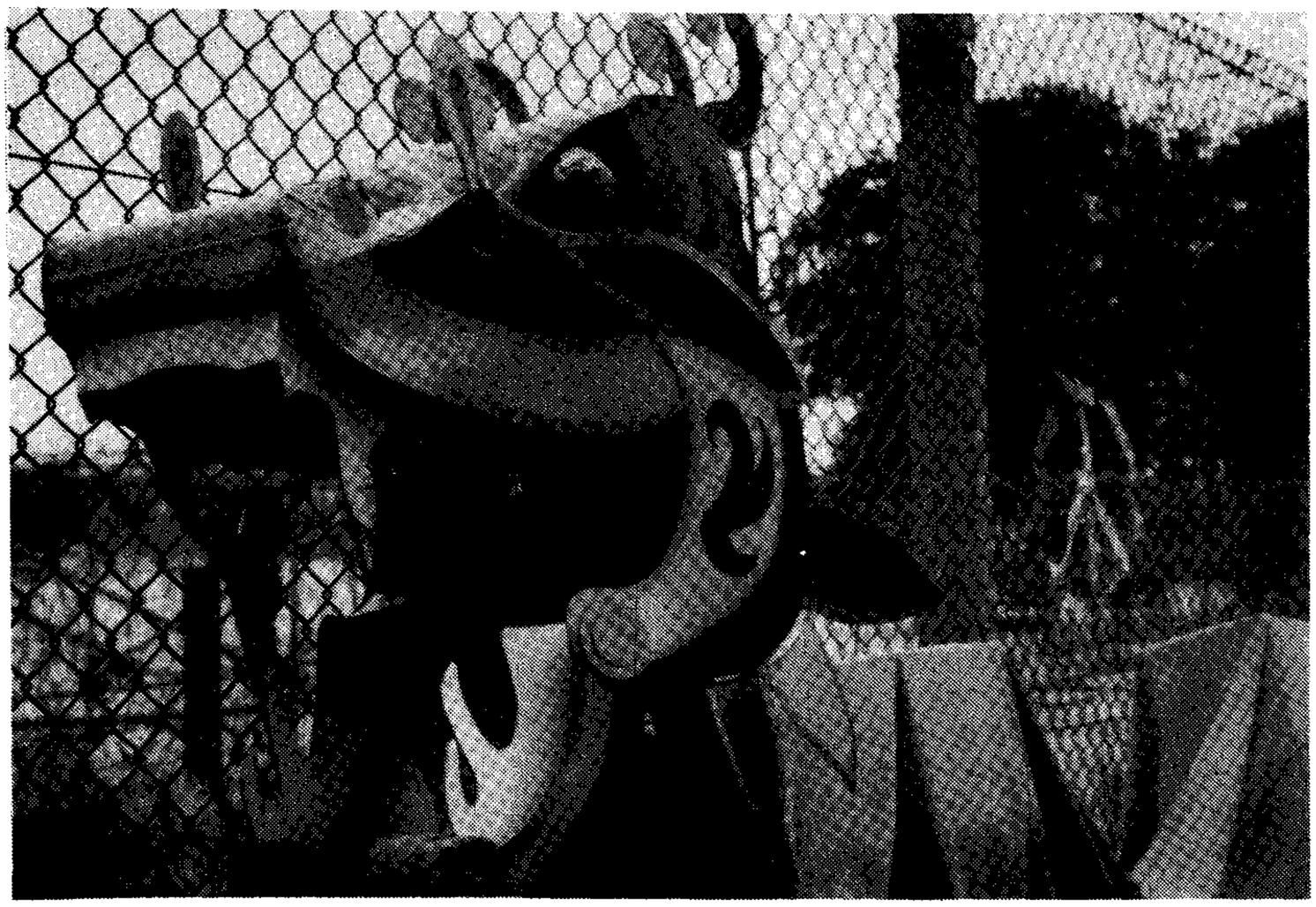
By Peter Tatchell

Over the last twelve months of the miners' strike, one thing has become very clear: though picketing is an essential part of any industrial struggle, by relying almost exclusively on the picket line as the medium of protest, the strike has been effectively hidden away — confined to remote mining villages and lonely pithead roads. It was remained physically isolated from the great mass of the population who live outside the mining areas. These unaffected and often unconcerned millions, have had no opportunity to witness firsthand either the courage and sacrifice of the miners, or the brutality with which the police have suppressed their fight for jobs.

For this reason, whilst picketing must certainly continue, and be accelerated, there is *also* an urgent need to bring the strike out from the distant pit communities and thrust it into the centre of our major cities for all to see. The national demonstration in support of the miners on 24 February must be only the first of *many* political protests to draw public attention to the miners' case, boost the strikers' morale, and pressure the government and NCB to negotiate a fair and just settlement.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

A running series of protests is all the more urgent given the breakdown of pit talks, the continuing drift back to work and the loss of hope amongst some miners that the strike can be won. To give them renewed confidence and rebuilt enthusiasm for the strike, these protests must *not* be confined to the traditional, and largely ineffectual, Sunday stroll through the deserted streets of London. Learning from the Greenham women, and from the non-violent wing of the Suffragette movement before them, *now* is the time to draw on the immense moral power of civil disobedience. Though a very radical and militant form of protest, civil disobedience nevertheless tends to evoke great public sympathy by virtue of its peaceful and dignified nature and the willingness of its participants to endure the hardship of arrest and imprisonment for the sake of their beliefs — in this case, the belief in the right to work.



Ann Flowers

Greenham: the rainbow dragon's head

The Wives' Action Groups and Women's Support Committees have played a vital role during this strike. But their impact might be even greater if 10,000 of these fearless and angry women besieged parliament, picketed Downing Street, blockaded Whitehall and occupied the NCB headquarters. It is one thing for people to see the Battle of Orgreave on their television screens. But their reactions, and the government's responsiveness to negotiations, might be far more favourable to the miners if non-violent mass picketing, and the inevitable police repression, were repeated daily on the streets of central London.

As the strike enters its second year, the fight for jobs must be escalated and diversified. *Every* form and arena of protest must be utilised. *The miners' victory has been long delayed. It must not be denied!*

South Wales exec. hasn't. Our joint lodges tend to back the national leadership. This causes confusion and makes the split in Women Against Pit Closures worse. Those who just support the miners are afraid to do anything in case the local leadership doesn't like it. It makes it more difficult for those of us who support the strike politically to put our point of view.

We had a liaison officer appointed by the NUM. This was supposed to solve these problems by co-ordinating women's and men's picketing. But since he was appointed nothing's happened. It's as if he just came to our meetings to see what was going on, to make sure we weren't doing anything except talking about food parcels. Then he stopped coming, as if we weren't worth bothering with. He was supposed to keep us informed about what was going on in the strike, but we're never told anything. We only find out individually, through talking to the men on the picket lines.

Do you think that women will stay active in politics after the strike?

The fighters will definitely. We've gained experience and confidence and we'll use it in the Labour Party. Even some of the less strong ones are talking of joining the Labour Party.

The really positive thing I've learnt is that it's possible to take on the Labour Party. I never thought it was possible to do anything through the Labour Party before. It's so dead in the valleys and I didn't think anything could change it. Now I don't see why not, why we can't get in there and radicalise the local Labour Party. There's enough of us in the Cynon Valley to do it.

When I was up in London I was impressed by the stand taken by the Labour councils there – we want to make our councils fight for us in the same way. They had the unemployment figures up on the town halls. One said 18%. In the Cynon Valley unemployment is over 27% – that ought to be put up in big letters to remind us what we're fighting for.

The other thing that put me off joining the Labour Party was the witch-hunt against *Militant* in the Rhondda. Now I see the need for more of us on the left to join to stop the witch-hunts.

Our MP, Ann Clwyd, says she's on the Left of the party – so why doesn't she take a stand against witch-hunts like Tony Benn has?

I was pleased to see that Ann took part in the demonstration in the Commons when the government wouldn't allow a debate on the strike – but I was very disappointed that she sat down again as soon as she was told to. It's good to have a woman MP for the Cynon Valley, but I'd like to see her up there fighting alongside Benn and Skinner.

You've been to WAC meetings. Do you think women who've been active in the strike and who join the Labour Party will support WAC?

We will, definitely. It's the logical next step for us to organise as women in the Labour Party now that we've seen the possibility of acting together as a group of women. There's a hard core of us in the Cynon Valley who'll carry on fighting if we can stay together – organising in the Labour Party is the way to do it. These are women who are not going to go back to their traditional roles.

We can see the importance of fighting for more of a voice for women in the Labour Party because we've been fighting for more of a voice for women in the strike.

We need help from WAC. We want to set up women's sections and WAC could help us organise ourselves. It's important for WAC to build those links and to do it now. Now is the time to pull women in the valleys together, to build organisations in the Labour Party that will carry on fighting when the strike is over.

The witch hunt: Kinnock's cure for socialism.

The most recent eruption of the witch hunt to come to light is in Coventry N.E. At present the C.L.P. is finely balanced between right and left. The other relevant piece of information is that George Park, the C.L.P.'s elderly right wing M.P. is thought, by all shades of opinion, to be ripe for retirement. Since Kinnock's grip on the Labour Party depends heavily on his support in the Parliamentary Labour Party, he may be presumed to be interested in the outcome of Coventry N.E.'s parliamentary selection process.

The left's problems began in earnest at the 1984 AGM of the General Committee. Five left wing Trade Union delegates were prevented from participating in the AGM because it was claimed that their delegations were not in order. The delegations were not new to the G.C. One delegate was actually carrying a copy of his letter of appointment. The right won the votes at the A.G.M. by margins of 2 to 4.

When an appeal was made to the Regional Labour Party, the 1984 AGM was nullified so that the party is still operating on the 1983 delegations, which are even less representative.

INQUISITION

The North East Party was summoned to the N.E.C.'s Coventry Enquiry in mid-December 1984. Chaired by Ken Cure, of the Appeals and Mediation Committee of the N.E.C., the three hour meeting devoted 45 minutes to the disputed 1984 AGM and the remaining time to an attack on and inquisition of the Coventry N.E. left, which was accused of intimidation. Cure ruled contributions from the left out of order on the grounds that they were irrelevant but he had no difficulty in accepting statements from the right. The Coventry Labour Left, which meets openly in the area, was attacked. Amusingly, at about the same time, the local Coventry newspaper was reporting a secret meeting of the Coventry right!

A further Appeals and Mediation Committee Enquiry into the 1984 AGM is now awaited. The 1985 AGM is due in March. We are reminded of the way the N.E.C. dealt with the Wythenshawe Party. That Party's operation was suspended until a right wing majority had been cobbled together for the G.C. Then the A.G.M. was allowed to take place.

As an update on the Acocks Green scandal, the 5 would-be L.P. members and transfers have now been waiting nearly two years for the N.E.C. to resolve their problem. They are still being refused admission by a right wing C.L.P. (Yardley). (Any resemblance to a novel by Franz Kafka is purely coincidental).

The explusion of Militants from the Rhonda and Blackburn Parties received national coverage. Little further comment is required except to note that the Rhonda expulsion has widened the target area for the witch hunt. Any connection with Militant will now satisfy the N.E.C.

KINNOCK AND THE L.C.C.

One thing people should be clear about. The witch hunt is now very much the property of Kinnock and the L.C.C. group that surrounds him. Kinnock's politics have become an open book in the last year and a half as he as undermined the miners' struggle and the fights to preserve local government democracy and local jobs and services. In order to keep his hold on the Party and protect his tarnished image, he needs to witch hunt his socialist critics. Nevertheless Labour Against the Witch Hunt's initial prognosis remains as true as ever: there will be no Labour victory while the witch hunting continues.

Finally, an informal word of advice. If the right wing have been on the fiddle in your constituency, think twice before you call in the N.E.C. The disease may not be as bad as the Cure!

Keith Lichman (Secretary, Labour Against the Witch Hunt)



Ken Cure Press Association Photos

SOCIALISM AND NATIONALISM —

Is there a chauvinist in

Much of the left – if not most – regards nationalism at best with suspicion and at worst as a diversion from the class struggle straight and narrow. It's a rare event to find some considered political thought given to nationalism which shows its *progressive* potential. So rare indeed that reading this book felt like discovering perrier water in my lived desert of political philistines.

It's tedious enough having to repeatedly and patiently explain to our labour movement why Sinn Fein are not 'green fascists' and why our Labour Party should no more recruit in Northern Ireland than it should in France. But then one discovers that one's very own Labour Left has this fear of losing the Welsh and Scottish vote – "we'll never have a Labour government!' goes the plaintive cry from the electoralist heart. Mind you, the Labour Party's record in Wales in particular is well on the way to losing our Welsh vote anyway, regardless of – or precisely because of – our patronising attitude to Welsth nationalism.

Citizens and Comrades would be on my 're-education for socialists' reading list – compulsory reading for all aspiring Labour leaders. Highly readable (i.e. it is not written in NLRese), though with an irritating tendency to resort to French idiom, it cogently argues the case for us to root out the English chauvinism in our un-reconstructed socialist souls. Thus:

"Marxists have approached the 'problem' [of nationalism] as persistent historical embarrassment whose recurrence requires explanation at the deepest economic or cultural level. They have . . . neglected the political dimension of class struggle . . . nationalist perspectives can not be explained in crude economistic terms, but must be set in the context of the changing political and ideological structures of the international system . . . The key focus of explanation . . . is rooted in the thesis of the declining credibility of the British state in the system of Western imperialism . . . it is essential to emphasise the extent to which the British labour movement is itself implicated . . . Marxism's theoretical failings on the national question are mirrored in the deficiencies of socialist practice. The inability to recognise the democratic impulse *that lies at the heart of nationalism has too often reflected socialism's own neglect of that democratic, emancipatory ideal."* (Emphasis added).

The authors wish our aim to be unequivocally stated – "the free federation of a socialist England with a socialist Scotland, Wales and Ireland." This they say will entail "exorcising the ghost of Stalinism by recapturing the emancipatory vision of socialism."

I have but two questions. Firstly, I find

Clive Ponting: the issues for the left

Robert Latham,
(Camden Councillor)

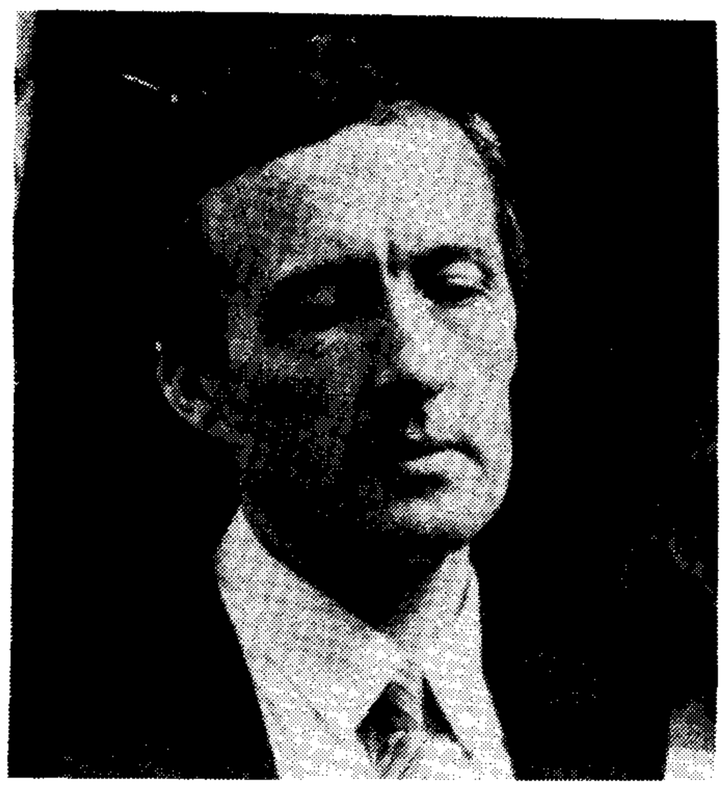
THE Clive Ponting acquittal raises a number of issues for the left.

State secrecy versus access to information.

The Official Secrets Act was rushed through Parliament with little debate during a foreign policy crisis in 1911. In 1970 when the Tory MP Jonathan Aitken and the editor of the Sunday Telegraph were prosecuted for publishing the Biafran war papers (and were acquitted) the judge suggested that the government should consider "whether or not section 2 of this Act has reached retirement age and should be pensioned off". In 1977, judicial criticism forced the prosecution to drop the more serious section 1 charge against Crispin Aubrey, John Barry and Duncan Campbell. The sentence of conditional discharges against the two journalists on their convictions of the section 2 offences indicated the judges' view of the merits of the prosecution. Before the Ponting case, the Act had been written off as a judicial blunderbus which was so draconian and wide in scope that it was unusable in practice. In 1977 and 1979 Labour and Conservative administrations proposed reforms to the Act. Each measure was widely criticised because it failed to give any access to information. Effective campaigns eventually defeated both measures on the basis that the old discredited Act was better than a more precise and effective measure to protect state security without some effective move towards open government. The left needs to accept that open government leads to public debate and to better government. An Acess to Information Act needs to be high on the political agenda. Some measure to precisely define spying and control of essential state secrets would then be acceptable.

A State Trial?

The role of Thatcher in the decision to prosecute remains unclear. The decision to prosecute was clearly a political one. The Ministry of Defence Police advised against prosecution. Clive Ponting had been given the option of resigning without the risk of prosecution. The role of John Stanley who had sought to mislead



Press Association Photos

Parliament was clearly central.

Thereafter a panel of 60 were vetted for the jury – a device used to weed out the left rather than the right. The trial was then mounted in a shroud of secrecy surrounding the "Crown Jewels" document, even though it was conceded that state security was not involved. This tactic was effective in both stifling public debate and ocscuring the real issue namely whether a civil servant should connive with the government to mislead Parliament.

The government then sought to hide behind the civil servants who were forced to shore up the prosecution. Richard Mottram, Heseltine's private secretary had to sacrifice his own integrity to justify the actions of his political masters. The two relevant defence ministers kept well away from court.

The role of the judiciary.

Mr Justice McCowan has had an unexceptional judicial career. After the Ponting case, it is clear that the liberty of the individual is not safe in his hands. It would be wrong to suggest political influence. The problem is that the judiciary, as a result of their backgrounds and training, tend to show the same values as this government. Remember the Denning decision in the Agee/Hosenball deportation case when he ruled that questions of national security come before individual freedom.

The following criticisms can be made against tne judge.

*His agreement to allow large chunks of the trial to be heard in camera, in a case where state security was not invovled.

*His attempt to stifle public debate by banning Channel 4 re-enactments of the daily proceedings. The decision was taken without allowing Channel 4 to be heard.

*The ruling that "the interests of the state" were synonomous with the policies of the government of the day. In the leading case on statutory interpretation of *Brutus v Cozens*, the House of Lords ruled that words should be given their normal and natural meaning. The Court of Appeal has on numerous occasions emphasised, that phrases should not be given judicial glosses, but should be left to the jury. Mr Justice McCowan clearly felt that it was unsafe to leave such matters to the jury. Having made this ruling, the only logical verdict was one of guilty.

*Mr Justice McCowan suggested that he should direct the jury to convict in view of his ruling on "the interests of state". The prosecutor asked for an adjournment, and having discussed the matter with Sir Thomas Heather ington the DPP, asked the judge not to direct the jury to convict. It would have been an unprecedented step in recent years for such a direction to have been given in a State Trial.

Was the verdict predictable?

The Official Secrets Act has become so discredited that it is almost impossible for the prosecution to get a conviction in a case such as this. I always predicted an acquittal and won a bet with one of Clive Ponting's colleagues in the Ministry of Defence, where civil servants were less optimistic. I suspect that Sarah Tisdall would have been acquitted if she had pleaded not guilty. The monstrous sentence passed on her by the Lord Chief Justice must have concentrated the minds of the Ponting jury magnificently.

The Aftermath

A further nail (if not the final one) has now been placed in the coffin of the Official Secrets Act. Any future prosecution is less likely.

An important tactic of the defence was to generate the maximum public debate about the case. Several journalists put themselves at risk of contempt of court for the articles they wrote. David Leigh and the Observer now face the possibility of a prosecution for the report setting out the legal argument which took place in the absence of the jury. Papers are being considered by the Attorney General. The jury are not normally told of such matters in case they prejudice the defence. Mr Justice McCowan made his views fairly clear to the jury in his summing up. The rulings of the judge and his willingness to leave the case to the jury at the request of the State's legal advisers are clearly matters of interest to the public and the jury in a State Trial such as this. Any decision to prosecute the Observer would merely extend this shoddy political affair and set the scene for a further State Trial. On occasions, juries may reach an odd decision. The left should remember that the jury system is an essential safeguard for civil liberties.

of discussion – as opposed to tub thumpings of Trotskyist bibles – on all these issues, let alone breaking of Marxist moulds. Labour Briefing, in line with its support for open, innovative social ist and feminist debate could encourage such discussion in its pages. Perhaps this book's authors would care to keep the ball rolling by responding to the points made here?

my soup?

"Citizens and Comrades: Socialism in a world of nation states" by Brian Jenkins and Gunter Minnerup, Pluto Press, £4.95, reviewed by Sarah Roelofs (Hornsey CLP).

difficult to reconcile the authors' commitment to national autonomy with their argument for the *British* Labour Party to 'take on board' the democratic aspirations of nationalist movements and 'seek to reinforce their socialist implications'. It is not at all clear what, concretely, is being said here. Is it that while we recognise and support Welsh self-government we do not believe this should be reflected in a Welsh socialist and nationalist party? That we should argue for Welsh people not to join Plaid Cymru, but the Welsh – i.e. British – Labour Party? Or that until the British Labour Party has recognised the democratic aspirations of Welsh nationalism it's okay for Welsh people to join Plaid Cymru? Something is not quite right here – the concrete implications of the arguments appear to have been glossed over. For surely if one believes in Welsh autonomy then one supports a Welsh nationalist party? Or is it that the Welsh Labour Party should become autonomous?

Secondly the book contains not a single reference, not so much as a footnote, to *women* and nationalism. Both the authors are college lecturers and can not be unaware of the ongoing debate and discussion on this issue. Or can they? Is it they have made the grossly ignorant assumption that what is good for all is good for women? Have they not heard of patriarchy? Do our re-educators themselves need re-educating? Or is it that our authors with humble anti-sexist male effacement felt that it was not for them as men to write about such things? Well, forgive my life-learnt cynicism, but I suspect the former reason rather than the latter. And even if it was the latter, at least there should have been an acknowledgement that national independence struggles, like socialist ones, do *not* automatically serve the interests of women *as women*. I strongly recommend an immediate reading of Margaret Ward's excellent book *Unmanageable Revolutionaries, Women and Irish Nationalism* just for starters.

While there is no mention of those who constitute over half the population and who are oppressed by the male minority, there is much else that is useful. The book includes a historical look at Marxism's treatment of nationalism (only Lenin really gets any Brownie points), what a socialist foreign policy should entail, to whom would a socialist federated Britain look for alliances, the 'break up' of Britain, the progressive features of nationalist movements in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. There is a dearth

Letters

COME OFF IT, JON!

Dear Editor.

I would like to comment on Jon Baston's letter in the February Briefing in which he decries the use of political violence and goes on to state that the only way to bring about radical change is to: 'mobilise working people around a programme that will topple the system'.

Come off it Jon! do you really think that if a truly revolutionary party of the left looked for one moment like coming to power 'democratically', the ruling clique in Britain would voluntarily give up its power and privilege? Surely every medium both lawful and otherwise would be mobilized to prevent this happening and as a last resort both troops and police would utilised in defence of 'freedom'. No state in the history of the world has ever given up its power without a fight a I am sure the British state system of privelege would be no different to the others.

In the cause of political debate I would like to quote a political statement written by Fahizah, formerly Nancy Ling Perry in the 'Coming of the Cobra', the political manifesto of the Symbionese Liberation Army published in the early seventies, (I have abridged this statement in the interests of space).

... 'I believe that whenever people are confronted with oppression, starvation and the death of their freedom that they want to fight. It has been the history of many political leaders to suppress this will of the people and to pretend that the people do not have the right to fight, and to pretend that the people will somehow achieve their liberation without revolutionary violence. But the truth is that there has never been a precedence for a non-violence revolution. When any member of the people's army strikes out at the murderer of our people and children we are doing so in self-defence, we are doing so because we are left with no alternative and force of arms is now our only legal means to affect revolutionary justice. However, the natural instincts of many people in our country have become perverted by the conditioning to which they have been subjected, they have been conditioned to be afraid of revolutionary violence. The only way to destroy fear is to destroy the makers of fears. A revolutionary is not a criminal, nor is she he an adventurer, and revolutionary violence is nothing but the most profound means of achieving internal as well as external balance' ...

I would be interested to hear what comrade Baston has to say on these points.

Fraternally,

Richard Collyer.

PALE PINK JSG

Dear NB,

The Jewish Socialist Group refused to take part in the Anti Arab Racism conference because it doesn't see the connection between Zionism, Imperialism and such anti Arab racism. Fair enough, but to make those criticisms in the Jewish Chronicle — a reactionary Zionist rag — is indefensible.

The JC's leading article of September 14th 'GLC Questions' noted that "there is enough Arab money ... to finance a dozen such questions." Substitute the term 'Jewish money' and you see the problem with allies such as the JC. In the same issue a letter from a leading member of the JSG appears attacking the Conference under the heading 'GLC Groups Grant Ill Advised'. On the facing page an article 'Livingstone, Jews, Israel and Zionism' appears also attacking the Conference and this devotes the first 3 paragraphs to the JSG letter. The result of which is an article by Ann Sofer in the Times, a London Standard article further attacking the GLC, and a Daily Mail tirade plus others all attacking a Conference on Anti Arab Racism which, as the JC itself subsequently admits, has a large number of Jewish participants. Indeed underneath the JSG letter were 2 from Lady Porter and Michael Fiddler, an ex Tory MP. This alone should tell Mr Rosenburg about the connections between Zionism and anti Arab (and Jewish) Racism.

No one objects to the JSG "communicating" its "position to the GLC and to the Jewish Community" via its own publications. We do object to the JSG which claims to be SOCIALIST, attacking the left and anti imperialist groups in racist papers. But being 'non-Zionist' the JSG obviously feels no such obligations. And what attempt did the JSG make to differentiate its position from that of the racist right, as opposed to merely giving them ammunition? On the rare occasions when much of the left and far right agree on something e.g. EEC withdrawal, then the left goes out of its way to make its position clear e.g. by refusing to speak on the same platforms with Powell. The JSG made no such attempt because the whole point of the exercise was to curry favour with the Jewish bourgeoisie. Hence why previous attacks on the JSG up till their letter ceased and why the said editorial mentioned them favourably.

A number of JSG members did attend the Conference and they did dissociate themselves from the JSG leaderships' behaviour. Many more Jewish socialists attended and they wouldn't consider joining such a pale pink organisation.

Tony Greenstein

Jewish Socialists' Group replies

Dear Briefing,

I don't wnat to engage in a long correspondence with Tony Greenstein, but I really must reply to some of the points in his letter in the February 'Briefing', in answer to my letter in the previous issue on the subject of the Brighton NF march.

Tony Greenstein complains that I do not take up the failure of the Jewish community to attend the counter-demonstration. He is obviously an assiduous and attentive reader of the 'Jewish Chronicle'. He will therefore know that in the week following the march the 'JC' published two letters, one from JSG member Craig Sheldon and the other from people close to the JSG. These both made the point that the Jewish community had been noticeable by its absence, whereas the JSG had been visibly present.

The point was not made to 'Briefing' because my previous letter was directed not to the Jewish community but to the left.

So why wasn't the Jewish community there? Further perusal of the 'JC' letters column would have supplied the answer. The communal leadership called for Jews not to be present, because they preferred to place their faith in, and rely on the protection of the police and the state. Now the JSG feels that this is dangerously misguided, as examples in other countries have shown, and tries to put these points to Jews, at an appropriate time and place.

I am not going to engage in a point-by-point refutation of Tony Greenstein's assertions on the facts of the march. We obviously had different perceptions. My perception was that the Left was weak and divided, and this gave me a sense of weakness. I have not felt this at other demonstrations against NF marches which I have attended. But I was not trying to communicate doom and gloom. Neither is vainglorious pride appropriate. Rather, the point is that Briefing supporters should mobilise for demonstrations against fascist marches. Together we will be strong, and outnumber the fascists many times over. But hiding the facts from ourselves does nobody any service.

Tony Greenstein's last point really is ludicrous. He tries to smear a letter which I and two others wrote on behalf of the JSG not on the grounds of what was actually in the letter (and I would welcome a debate in 'Briefing' on those issues), but on the grounds of who was the author of the letter printed next to it. This is a peculiar form of 'guilt by association', to say the least!

Yours in comradeship

Mike Heiser (Brent East CLP and Jewish Socialists' Group)

TONY GREENSTEIN'S NONSENSE

Dear Labour Briefing

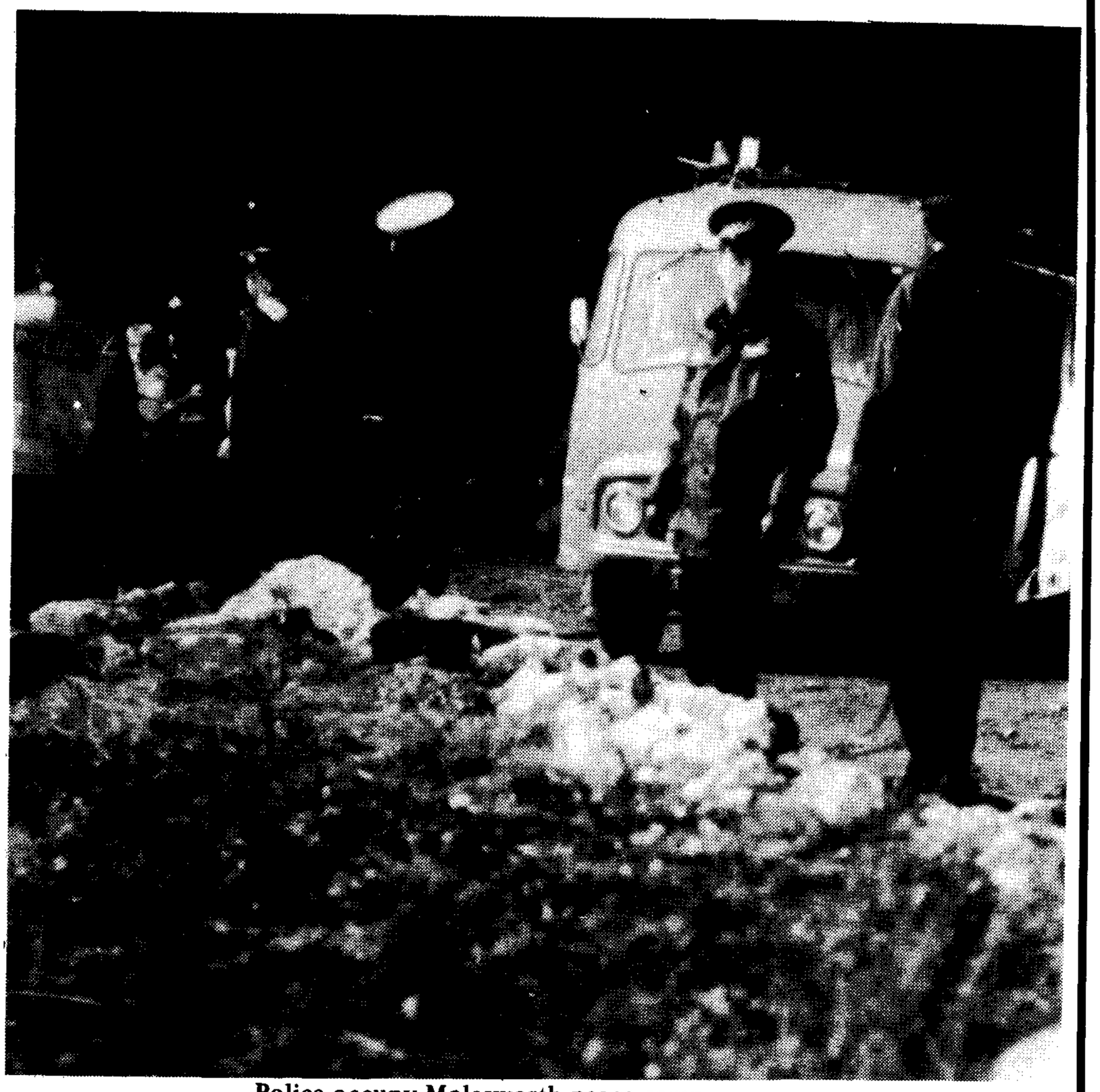
Tony Greenstein really does talk nonsense sometimes. He read great significance into the headline which appeared above the "Jewish Chronicle"s report of the Brighton NF march ('NF march frizzles') and attempts to link this to the Zionist conception of the futility of trying to combat anti-semitism. He attempts to explain the behaviour of the Jewish communal leadership (the Board of Deputies) by reference to this conception. Now, although they are Zionists, it is manifestly untrue to say the leaders of the Board of Deputies consider it futile to combat anti-semitism. Greenstein knows very well that they have a Defence Committee which concerns itself precisely with keeping a sharp eye on, and countering the efforts of, the far Right (of course, they do this in their own low-key, bourgeois way and they also keep a watch on the far Left, but that is another matter). To believe that they are indifferent to anti-semitism or that they consider it futile to fight it is to live in a cloud cuckoo-land where rigid schematism leads to a denial of reality. The leaders of the Board of Deputies are not consistent ideological Zionists: they do not believe that Jews have no place outside of Israel, nor do they believe that there is no viable future for the Jewish community in Britain.

In France, the *extreme right-wing* Zionist youth movement BETAR, which of course accepts all the ideological precepts of Zionism, has gained quite a reputation for beating up fascists — likewise the ultra-rightist American Jewish Defence League (of course such groups have a purely militarist conception of fighting fascism, they are violently anti-communist, they preach that only through emigration to Israel can Jews find safety and they isolate Jews from powerful allies such as blacks and the labour movement, but again this is a different matter).

MIDNIGHT MILITARY OPERATION IN MOLESWORTH

The use of 3,000 soldiers and police in a dawn raid against 200 peaceful protesters at Molesworth marks a new phase in the role of the State towards groups exercising their democratic rights to challenge government policies.

The miners were quite right when they said that if the use of mass police presence on the picket line was tolerated by the public, we would soon see the same tactics used against all other forms of protest. The use of soldiers, the sheer logistics of a military operation, the under-cover and secret aspects of a surprise attack, the rounding-up of innocent families and their eviction with one hour's notice to quit, is new and bears a disturbing similarity to the use of force in Chile, El Salvador and South Africa. Police violence and harassment at Greenham is well documented but even at Greenham, the authorities used the civil courts to order evictions. The picture of bailiffs waving court actions in an early morning action in the full view of the press and television is a sickening sight. Yet it is different in kind to a para-military exercise using 1,500 Royal Engineers to bulldoze their way round the perimeter of the site where 64 Cruise Missiles will be stationed. Right through Rainbow Village they went where only hours before families, some with little children, had settled down for the night. 600 Military police and 1,000 civil police ensured that all the caravans, buses and tents were removed. Under the glare of floodlights, the army put up 7½ miles of barbed wire fence 6-feet high featuring razor wire. Loud hailers inside the area and road blocks outside were all part of the exercise which took 5 months to plan. Heseltine, the local parish council, and the Ratepayers Against the Molesworth Settlement have called the operation a success.



Police occupy Molesworth peace camp

Yet in reality the State has reinforced the protest which it hoped to suppress. Thousands of CND members have pledged to protest at Molesworth. The Easter demonstrations will be a major event. This is just the spark needed to revitalise the membership of peace groups. The debate on the relationship of the State and the use of its powers to control the people has sharpened. Our civil and democratic rights are in peril. The police are about to be given further powers over the public in respect of 'static' demonstrations. It is time for the trade unions, the labour movement and the peace movement to close ranks against this government. The government will try to isolate and divide us. We can only win if we make the links. GCHQ, the miners' struggle, Greenham and now Molesworth have a common cause. We are experiencing a major attack on our freedoms, our communities and our future.

The use of force at Molesworth was not just because the local ratepayers objected to the Peace Convoy at Rainbow Village. True there was a local media campaign against the community. In the last few weeks hysteria was running high. It may well be that this was all part of the exercise by the MoD. We have seen smear campaigns in the past. Just in time the army stepped in to liberate the local post office and property-owning democrats. By popular demand, the people of Molesworth insisted on their right to be a US base, a prime target in any future war. It is ironic that if they really wanted to be left in peace, they should have joined the protest not collaborated with the State. They, like us, will never be free while Cruise Missiles are at Greenham and Molesworth.

DEMONSTATE AT
MOLESWORTH AT EASTER,
IT MIGHT BE YOUR
LAST CHANCE.

Joy Hurcombe, Vice Chair CND,
Chair Labour CND

Greenstein confuses two things: it is true that Zionism cannot (and does not seek to) overcome anti-semitism, but this does not mean that Zionists cannot fight anti-Semites. It is metaphysical nonsense to claim that this is so! In his pamphlet 'Zionism — anti-semitism's twin in Jewish garb', Greestein claims that the only time Zionists fought fascism was in the Warsaw Ghetto (I should say — the leader of that revolt, Mordecai Anielewicz, belongs beyond a shadow of a doubt to the memory of the international proletariat); again, he is simply ignorant — the left Zionists organised self-defence squads during the Russian pogroms of 1905 (see Weinstock's 'Zionism: False Messiah').

Lastly, mention should be made of a particularly stupid and *morally dubious* remark that Greenstein makes in the aforementioned pamphlet. Speaking of the Holocaust, he writes that 'if it was the Nazis who pulled the trigger, it was the Zionists who provided them with an alibi'. In what way, may we ask, did the Zionists provide the Nazis with an alibi for their 'Final Solution'?

Tony Greenstein is clearly a sincere supporter of the Palestinians, but neither they not anyone else are well served by some of the things he says and writes.

ALAN ADLER

Editor's Note: This letter closes the correspondence on this subject

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

Africa's longest war — support Eritrean self-determination

Paul Highfield (Brent South LP)

It isn't very surprising that not much is known about Eritrea on the left. The media have virtually ignored it, and, when they have reported, have almost always referred to it as a 'rebel held part of Ethiopia'. In fact, the Eritrean people's claim to self determination, and the refusal of Ethiopia, both under the U.S. backed Haile Selassie regime and the U.S.S.R.-backed Derg regime, has led to Africa's longest war, now in its 24th year.

The Eritrean people's claim is based on centuries of separate development and culture, but in this brief article on this complex issue I will concentrate on the period since 1890, when Eritrea was forged into an Italian colony. From 1890 to 1941, when the Italians were defeated, Eritrea developed economically and politically under Italian rule. Ethiopia remained a feudal type monarchy with pre-capitalist forms of agriculture etc during this period while Eritrea became integrated into the world economy. 2 ports, railways and industry were developed so that by the 1930's 20% of Eritreans were urban workers, separated apartheid-style from the Italian settlers, who also took the most fertile lands off the peasantry.

BRITISH TOOK OVER

The repression when the British took over with a military administration from 1941 to 1952. They were supposed to act on behalf of the Allied Powers, but *British* imperialist interests came first, and Britain intended to partition Eritrea between Sudan, which they ruled, and Ethiopia, ruled by the pro-Western Haile Selassi. Neither the U.S. nor Britain wanted an independent Eritrea, for the latter had and has the only 2 ports on the Red Sea for hundreds of miles, providing naval facilities and access from the Indian Ocean to the mediterranean.

Selassie wanted Eritrea incorporated into Ethiopia, and when the Allied Powers couldn't agree on Eritrea's future, used the Ethiopian controlled Orthodox church, violence, and engineered communal conflict to destabilise Eritrea and persuade the U.N. to agree with his aims. By 1952 the U.N. had decided on a federation, with an Eritrean elected assembly. The major imperialist powers knew, however, that the U.N. would do nothing to stop Selassie subverting even this limited compromise, which he duly did. Specialist terror and assassination squads were used; Eritrean factories closed and transferred to Ethiopia; one of the main Eritrean languages was banned in schools, trade unions banned and members of the Eritrean parliament replaced by Ethiopians, who duly voted to dissolve themselves and annex Eritrea to Ethiopia. The U.S. gave massive military aid to Ethiopia in exchange for military, port and listening station facilities.

In 1961 the armed struggle began. In 1974 Selassie was overthrown in Ethiopia and replaced by a military regime, the Derg; those Derg members favouring a political solution in Eritrea were liquidated, and under Mengistu, the Derg became extremely repressive, banning unions and political parties. The USSR started giving it its full support in 1977 and only a huge military offensive prevented the Eritreans from gaining total control of their country. Massive military aid to the Derg has continued, and napalm, cluster bombs and booby trap bombs are only some of the horrific weapons used against Eritrean civilians and the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front), which is now the only liberation movement operating inside Eritrea, and which controls over 80% of the rural areas.



Eritrea: EPLF fighters in positions on the Afabet frontline — Frits N. Eisenloeffel

The EPLF has set up mass organisations of women, peasants, workers, youth, students and small traders; extensive land reform and redistribution have taken place, with women now allowed to own land. Mass literacy campaigns have reached many of the remotest areas in the mountainous regions, revolution schools have been set up, and health care has been made a top priority. However, it's estimated that Eritrea is getting less than 1/20th of the aid going to Ethiopia, much of which is diverted to the Ethiopian army. The Eritrean Relief Association, on the other hand, has a democratic and efficient distribution system hampered only by shortage of trucks and fuel, and of course by lack of aid itself. The Soviet backed Derg is using the famine and drought to try and destroy the Eritrean revolution, which is still proceeding apace in spite of the enormous problems. The EPLF hasn't all that many supporters — as it is both anti-imperialist and anti-stalinist. We, however, can learn much from the revolution and should give it our full support and the 1982 Labour Party programme backs the Eritrean cause and the EPLF — that means battling in the party against the Stan Newenses and those who regard the Ethiopian regime as progressive and the Eritreans as 'bandits'. It means publicising the Eritrean case, helping the support committees, and pressuring for aid to be sent direct to Eritrea. I must apologise that this short article inevitably glosses over many complex issues and does not deal with many others. Anyone interested in the Eritrean Support Committee, please write to ESC, BCM Box 7007, London WC1V 6XX.

South Africa: Black

In a strong gesture of international solidarity, the 100,000 strong National Union of Mineworkers — the first 'legal' trade union of Black miners in South Africa — agreed to provide financial support to the striking British miners.

Explaining the decision, Mr. Mokheseng Maloka siad that the money would be collected on the shop floor. South Africa's Black miners are among the lowest-paid of the Republic's industrial workers and any contribution would be a great sacrifice.

"The money will not be substantial," Mr. Maloka said. "It will definitely not be millions of rands". Financial support would be provided because the British NUM came to the help of the South African miners on various issues.

"British miners provided us with expert legal advice when we were probing the Holbane mine disaster. Otherwise we would have lost out on the issue. Our members are going to benefit following the court's decisions." Mr. Maloka then went on to say "We are also drawing lessons from the strike. One day we too might be faced with the whole issue of the closure of mines."

The South African mine bosses have also not been slow to give their own kind of support to British miners. Two of the largest mining corporations have sent officials to Britain's strike-bound coal fields with tempting offers of work in South Africa. Goldfields of South Africa has announced that up to 300 miners who had applied for jobs would be interviewed. Gencor (UK)

Operation Bodysnatch!

Amidst the tragedy and hunger of the Ethiopian famine, the leaders of the Zionist Movement — the Jewish Agency/World Zionist Organisation and Israeli Government — saw their chance. A chance to 'redeem' Ethiopia's 'lost' Jews, and to bring them 'home'.

Not that Israel was always that keen for Black Jews to enter. In the early 70s, the Black Israelite community living in Dimonah, site of Israel's nuclear weapons site, and in the Negev were deported to the USA, their children have been refused primary education and they themselves any social facilities. In one celebrated case, the Ministry of Interior refused to issue a birth certificate for the daughter of one Adina Carter, born March 6 1971, because being born Black, they wouldn't accept that she could be Jewish.

(Yediot Aharanot 18/2/72, reprinted in Documents from Israel 1967-73, Uri Davies/ Mezvinsky, Ithaca Press.) The Falashas too were not considered Jewish until 1971, after an intensive faction fight between Israels 2 Chief Rabbis. Even now, the Rabbis demand that they undergo a 'ritual bath' and a token circumcision, in order to 'purify' them as acceptable to Israel's racial elite.

WHY THE CHANGE IN ATTITUDE?

Why the change in Israel's attitude? Because unlike 10 years earlier, there are now more Jews leaving Israel than entering. With a faster Arab birthrate, the fear is always present, horror of horrors, the Arabs will one day outnumber the Jews in their 'Jewish State'. Hence the rise of Rabbi Kahane. Israel is a state unlike all others. It claims to represent not simply its own citizens (or its Jewish ones) but also Jews all over the world regardless of whether they wish to be so represented. Israel's mission is the 'ingathering of the exiles', the winding up of the Jewish Diaspora. And Israel came into being, and is still today, a settler colonial society acting as the protector and guarantor of the West's interests in the Middle East. Today Israel is busy gobbling up the West Bank and for that it needs colonisers. No wonder that 1 of the 5 reception centres for the Falashas is in Kiryat Arba, the Gush Emmunim settlement skirting Hebron. The need for more Jews is obvious if the Palestinians are to be replaced.

But surely, the Zionists reply, you cannot accuse us of racism, now that we take Black Jews as well. But not only is racism based on all sorts of arbitrary factors, of which colour is but one, Israel selected ONLY those Ethiopians who happened to be Jewish to 'rescue'. Indeed those they took by mistake who were not Jewish have only been given temporary residence permits. The $300 million that was spent on their flight and absorption, could have benefitted and fed them and thousands of other Ethiopians, as could the 4 billion dollars plus that the US hands over to its strategic asset in the Middle East. Instead Israel strikes the most cynical deal of all — it gave the Ethiopian arms with which to pursue their genocidal war against the Eritreans in exchange for being able to carry out its Operation Bodysnatch. Israel and the West have always supported the Ethiopians, whatever regime, in their war against the Eritreans.

DESTROYING JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Since the setting up of the Israeli state, there has been a conscious policy of destroying Jewish communities in Arab/African countries in order to provide Israel with a native, Jewish working class and thereby enable the Ashkenazi Jews, the 'pioneers', to become the new Zionist Jewish bourgeoisie. Destabilisation of these Jewish communities included bombs in Jewish synagogues in Iraq, espionage in Egypt and Syria, secret deals with Arab dictators and of course the mere fact that Israel claimed to be a 'Jewish' state representing Jews in the Arab countries (who were in a state of war with Israel) in itself was a potent factor endangering them. (For more information see Marion Woolfson, 'Prophets in Babylon — Jews in the Arab World', Faber & Faber).

Once the fanfare over their arrival has died down the Falashas will no doubt find themselves at the very bottom of Israel's ethnic ladder, despised, ignored and discriminated against.

Tony Greenstein

miners support NUM

Ltd, whose parent company owns coal, gold, platinum and uranium mines was vetting 100 applicants.

The two black trade unions in the mining industry have strongly condemned this. They have called on British coal miners who have already been recruited to work in South African mines to return home because their presence here militates against the interest and dignity of black miners.

In a statement, the Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers Union (Bamcwu) and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) said the recruited miners have "sold out" in the bitter struggle of the British NUM and should go back home to join the miners' just cause in that country. The International Metal Workers Federation has issued a statement supporting the appeal to British miners not to emigrate to South Africa. The Black unions have also pointed out that "all whites who emigrate to South Africa face conscription into the army. The army is being used against workers demanding their human and trade union rights" the statement said.

The unions have accused British and South African employers of "exploiting miners" who were on strike in Britain for "their own political reasons".

The average monthly wages of workers in the gold mines, according to the official figures published by the Department of Mines for 1983 were: White workers 1,377 Rand, Black workers 252 Rand.

Charlie van Gelderen

NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT

At a time when progressives in Grenada were silenced, Party Members, the Peoples Revolutionary Army and militia were hunted down and arrested and the US began dismantling the gains of the Revolution. The Committee for Human Rights in Grenada was formed in the UK in an attempt to obtain a modicum of Human Rights for our People. WE SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF THE COMMITTEE IN CAMPAIGNING FOR A PROPER DEFENCE FOR THE POLITICAL PRISONERS OPPOSED AS WE ARE TO THIS OR ANY OTHER YANKEE MANIPULATED TRIAL AND WILL ASSIST THEM FULLY IN THEIR EFFORTS.

A more recent development has been the formation of a so called Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement by a section of the former leadership of the New Jewel Movement. Whilst we welcome any progressive movement in the climate presently existing in Grenada, we have serious reservation about any organisation named after a recently slain hero, in that it may be closely identified with that personality and we are against the personalisation of policies. In the present light this gives the impression that the New Jewel Movement contained two factions, one led by Maurice Bishop, the other by Bernard Coard, with whom the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement now wish to dissociate themselves. We state that the policies of the New Jewel Movement were the policies of its supporters, members and leaders and today we of the New Jewel Movement (UK) make no apology for having given our full support to these policies, on the contrary, we are indeed proud of the achievements of the Revolution in pursuance of the policies. THE MISTAKES WHICH LED TO THE COLLAPSE OF THE REVOLUTION MUST REST ON THE SHOULDERS OF ALL OUR LEADERS, MEMBERS AND CLOSE SUPPORTERS ALIKE AND WE OF THE NEW JEWEL MOVEMENT (UK) ACCEPT OUR FULL SHARE OF THAT RESPONSIBILITY. Our duty is to clearly identify these mistakes with the objective eliminating them and preventing any reoccurance whilst at the same time working towards the removal of the imperialist forces.

We condemn the collaboration of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement with the Yankee manipulated 'trial'. We further oppose the collaboration by the participation of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement in an election, which even by the puppets of the occupation forces own acknowledgement, does not have the support of the Grenadian people. We do no accept the argument of the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement that by participating in the election it gives the progressives an opportunity to have a platform. We of the New Jewel Movement believe that the most effective and meaningful platform for our task is to be found amongst the workers and farmers of Grenada. The struggle will not be won without the united support and full participation of the masses.

The alliance of all progressive forces inside and outside of Grenada is a necessary prerequisite for the total victory in struggle to restore the Revolution and reinstate its gains to the People of Grenada.

We are determined to play a full part towards the total victory of our People and we call upon all Comrades and supporters to unite in this purpose.

FORWARD EVER, BACKWARD NEVER — LONG LIVE THE GRENADIAN REVOLUTION

Popieluszko affair: Jaruzelski under threat

By Oliver MacDonald

Last October's murder of the Catholic Priest Father Jerzy Popieluszko and the trial and imprisonment of the four political police officers most directly involved in the murder have seriously weakened the Jaruzelski regime and have raised serious doubts about its capacity to restabilise the political system in Poland.

The priest's murder occurred just as the Jaruzelski group appeared to be establishing a real political dominance for the first time since the crackdown against the working class movement in December 1981. The amnesty of last summer under which all but a handful of opposition leaders and activists had been released signalled considerable self-confidence within the government and opened the way for both a long-term modus vivendi between the regime and the Church hierarchy and a political offensive to win open backing from influential elements within the intelligentsia if not the working class.

Jaruzelski's rhetoric about respect for the rule of law, about seeking reforms and a reconciliation between the state and society seemed likely to produce some tangible results in the form of a willingness on the part of sections of the society to accept the regime as at least a 'lesser evil'. Above all, Cardinal Glemp, the Catholic Primate, seemed ready to respond.



Martial law declared in Poland 13th December 1981

Keystone

The murder of Father Popieluszko was a blatant attempt to destroy Jaruzelski's entire strategy. Popieluszko, though only a parish priest, was a national figure because of his outspoken defence of Solidarity and of political freedom. His murder could be expected to destroy the keystone of Jaruzelski's policy – a deal with the Church hierarchy – and expose as empty rhetoric all the government's talk about respecting legal norms. Jaruzelski, in order to survive, would have had to become a prisoner of his own security apparatus and thus also of the Soviet leadership. Confrontation with the Church would have pushed the regime into a wholesale repressive drive against the leaders of Poland's independent intelligentsia.

From a legal point of view it is, of course, important to know exactly who was behind the priest's murder. The idea that only the four political police officers sentenced were involved lacks credibility. In his pre-trial testimony, Lieutenant Chmielewski named Deputy Minister of the Interior Wladyslaw Ciaston as the one who gave the order, only to retract this in court.

But what is certain is that powerful forces within the state bureaucracy were sympathetic to the murder and wanted such a provocation to take place. It is also very likely that, at the least, the Czechoslovak and GDR governments, if not the Soviet government also, would have been happy to see Jaruzelski's detente with the Church hierarchy fail. The General's own moves after the murder make this plain enough. the sacking of those in the party apparatus responsible for overseeing security and his own direct assumption of responsibility for these tasks, his hurried visits to Prague and East Berlin. Furthermore, the deaths of the two top officials investigating the murder indicate that a vicious struggle was taking place within the bureaucracy.

As an attempt to make Jaruzelski the creature of the most politically degenerate part of the bureaucracy, the affair is reminiscent of a similar incident in the Czechoslovak normalisation process after the Soviet invasion of 1968. The new party leader, Husak, claimed some credentials as a reformer and these were finally destroyed in the eyes of the intelligentsia by the Hubl affair in the summer of 1972. Hubl, a leading Dubcekite reform Communist had been the key figure in rehabilitating Husak, a victim of the Stalinist purges of the 1960s. Hubl had also been Husak's campaign manager in the spring of 1969, urging the Dubcekites to vote Husak as party leader. In 1972 Hubl was arrested and put on trial for subversion. Husak went on holiday to try to avoid signing the sentence. The trial was postponed until Husak returned and was forced to sign, giving Hubl the heaviest sentence of all the post-invasion repression. From then on Husak was nothing more than a pawn without any shred of political independence: a weak and contemptible figure

To avoid such a fate, Jaruzelski embarked on what had always been thought of as unthinkable (not only in Eastern Europe): putting senior political police functionaries on trial for criminal activity. And by publicly threatening to carry the search for conspirators right up to the top, Jaruzelski sought to intimidate the powerful forces opposed to him during the period of the trial.

The trial's first phase must have done much to improve the Jaruzelski leadership's credibility amongst those who expected the trial to be little more than a shabby cover-up. A grizzly picture of political police harassment and chicanery was revealed, with the accused making such off-the-cuff remarks – broadcast on Polish radio – as the fact that they knew that those carrying out autopsies were controlled by the political police. There was also stunning irony in the fact that senior police officers in the dock faced the Popieluszko family lawyer, Olszewski, a prominent adviser to the Solidarity leadership! But in the trial's later stages, crude attempts, not only by the accused, but by the Prosecuting Counsel itself to smear Popieluszko and the church must have squandered much of the political capital that the authorities had gained earlier.

The current polemics between the Church hierarchy and the state over such attacks on the Church will probably not have any lasting effect on Church-State relations. The real problems for the Jaruzelski group after the Popieluszko scandal are two-fold: first, the forces ready for compromise with the authorities stabilising the political situation have had a graphic illustration of the Jaruzelski group's own weakness within the state apparatus and will be more cautious about trusting its ability to deliver on any deal; secondly, Jaruzelski's enemies within the apparatus have been wounded without being destroyed, and until and unless Jaruzelski achieves a compromise with influential figures in Polish society, he will be heavily dependent on precisely these political opponents within the state to maintain stability. The security apparatus must be profoundly demoralised by the jailing of four colleagues, while all the corrupt hangers-on within the State bureaucracy on whom Jaruzelski depends to keep the machinery functioning must fear even more that they too could be sacrificed in the cause of Jaruzelski's normalisation strategy.

Thus, the government's room for manoeuvre has become narrower and unless it is prepared to make a bolder move towards positive concessions to society, the likelihood is that it will be pushed once again down the road of arresting hundreds of former Solidarity leaders and activists, trapped in a pattern of increasing repression and political stagnation, in the style of the Husak regime in Czechoslovakia during the 1970s.

THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT AND THE IRISH IN BRITAIN

by NIALL POWER, SECRETARY: LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND

It may be of little immediate comfort to Dr Miaire O'Shea, Peter Lynch and the others recently picked up in Britain under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, but their arrests have given the Irish community over here a new confidence and determination to rid themselves of the constant threat of that particular piece of legislation.

If the main aim of the PTA is to keep the Irish in Britain politically subdued then the existence of the 'Irish in Britain Representation Group' is a major threat to that policy. The IBRG is a radical and young organisation committed to legitimated political and cultural work among its own community. It argues for the unconditional withdrawal of Britain from Ireland and campaigns vigorously against anti-Irish racism as well as for more educational and other facilities for the Irish community. Both O'Shea and Lynch were members.

As well as launching a national petition and publicity campaign which the LCI supports, the IBRG have proposed the following model resolution:

'This body notes that over 6,000 people have been arrested under the PTA since 1974 but less than 2.5% have ever been charged (and less than 50% of those have ever been convicted).
We also note that nine people were arrested in the Midlands over the Christmas and new year holiday period and five have subsequently been charged with 'conspiracy' – a charge considered by the Irish community to be 'catch-all'.
This body condemns the PTA as a racist weapon of repression used unjustifiably and indiscriminately against the Irish community in Britain to stifle legitimate and legal political activity.
This body resolves to:
a) Support the international campaign being mounted by the Irish community against the PTA and which was launched in the Commons on the 22nd January.
b) To circulate information to all members on the usage and working of the PTA and on the campaign for repeal.
c) To make a donation to the defence campaign against the PTA.
d) To support the call by Irish groups for the Council/Corporation to declare the borough a PTA free zone.
e) In the event of any member of the local community being subjected to PTA harassment to take immediate and supportive action – eg media contact, political lobby work, legal support etc.
f) To call upon other councils, trade unions, trades councils etc to adopt a similar policy.'

Labour Party members should adapt this model resolution for use in their ward or CLP by adding on a section urging the NEC to campaign in support of the present Party policy which opposes the PTA. The Party locally too should be organising meetings on the question with, for example, IBRG, LCI or NCCL speakers. And lastly do send letters and cards of support to those arrested. For Miaire O'Shea the address is Risley Remand Centre, Risley, Cheshire.

The up-to-date position is now that Dr. Maire O'Shea has been granted bail with no opposition from the DPP. All of the others who are on conspiracy charges have now applied for bail.

A lobby of parliament supported by LCI, the IBRG and the Connolly Association has in the meantime been called for March 6th in opposition to the PTA.

ADVANCE NOTICE: LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 14th April 1985 10am County Hall, York Rd., London SE1. This year we intend to break away from just the normal business aspects of an AGM and so have invited LCI members Christine Crawley MEP, Clare Short MP and Ken Livingstone to lead off an open discussion on the 'Process of British Withdrawal from Ireland'. A further session will be on the Irish in Britain and we have invited Deputy GLC Leader John McDonnell to introduce the discussion.

Observers will be very welcome and registration will cost £1.50 for both LCI members and observers with 50p for the unwaged. A creche will be provided though advance notice is requested. Disabled access. On the evening before (Saturday 13th April) London LCI will be organising a social. Details yet to be finalised, but accommodation is guaranteed for those staying over for the AGM.

For more information about the AGM or LCI membership contact the Secretary, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

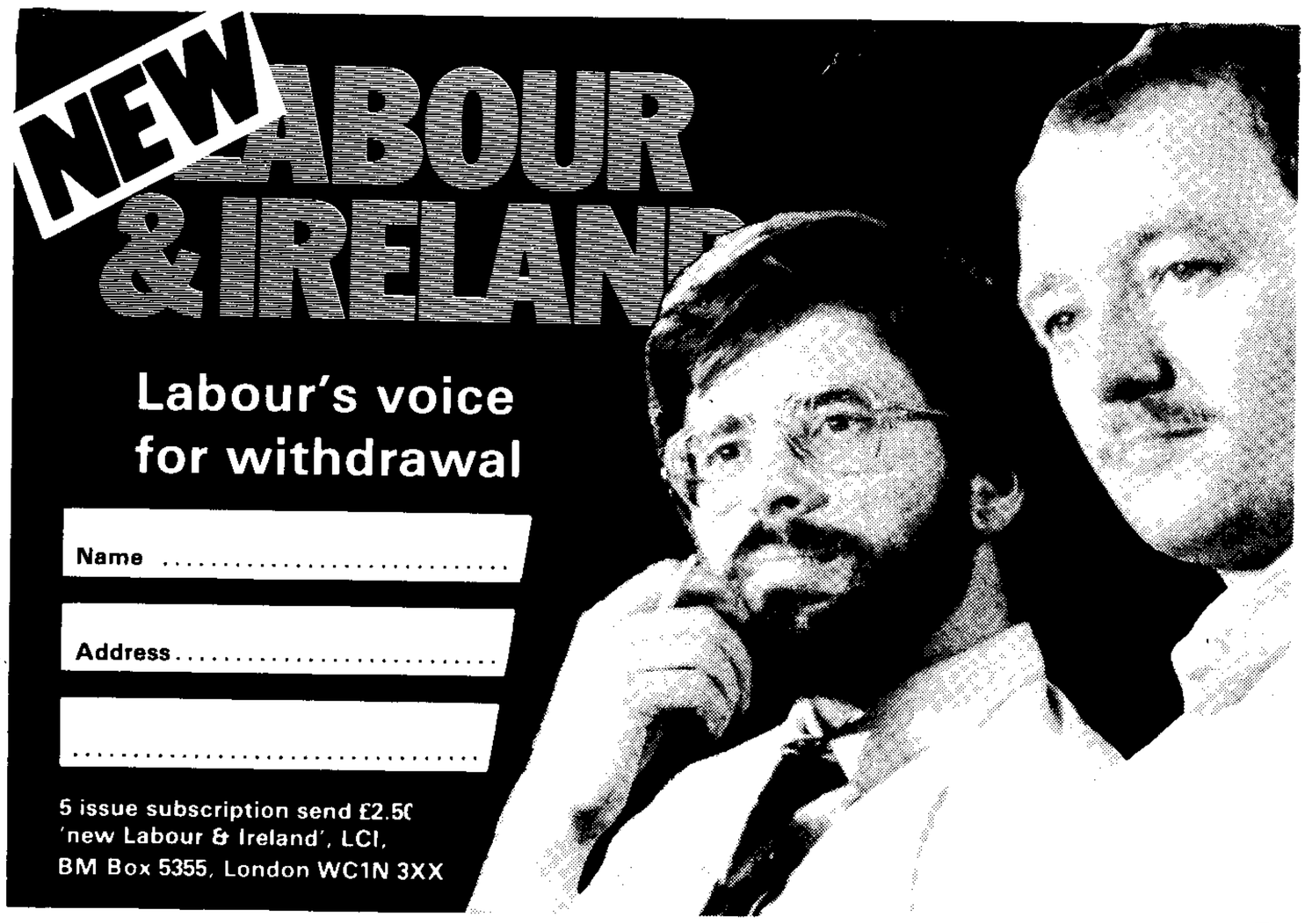
USEFUL MATERIAL AVAILABLE

* *'Nothing But The Same Old Story: The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism' by Liz Curtis. Published by Information on Ireland, Box 189, Ivor Place, London NW1 6DA. (102pp £1.30 plus postage).*

* *New Labour & Ireland – February/March issue with Miaire O'Shea on cover has much coverage on the PTA and the recent arrests. Subscription rates £3 for 5 issues of the quarterly from LCI BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.*

* *The Birmingham Framework by Fr. Faul & Fr. Murray. 50p plus postage available from LCI.*

* *Information Sheets on the PTA. Published by the NCCL. They cover 'what is illegal under the PTA, arrest, questioning, search and exclusion'. Also sheets on travelling between Britain and Ireland and 'International Interest Groups'. 95p per pack plus 25p postage to NCCL, 21 Tabard St., London SE1 4LA.*



YOUTH BRIEFING

Defend Labour's youth

Recent moves inside the Labour Party, spearheaded by Labour Solidarity and sections of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee should sound the alarm amongst the left in the party and youth in the LPYS.

Of late, the NEC has set up one of its infamous working parties to begin investigations into supporters of the *Militant*. This working party is also drawing up its own definition of the 'principles of democratic socialism', which presumably Labour Party members must pledge allegiance to. All this is happening in the wake of Kinnock's defeat on the question of reselection, with the defeat of the Evan's amendment and the unity of the left behind the miners. This working party will not only revise clause 4 of the Labour Party constitution but it may also begin to instigate expulsions.

Last year saw the expulsion of comrades from Blackburn. Similar attacks would appear to be again on the increase with the recent case of the expulsion of YS member Brychan Davies because he is a supporter of the *Militant*. In the West Midlands Warley YS has been threatened with closure by the right wing and left members are being singled out for investigation.

Also people are being refused entry into Yardley LP, and two young people were refused transfers to Roy Hattersley's constituency, Sparkhill. In addition, there have been attacks on Southall LP and Vauxhall LP Black sections. These are just some of the examples of what has been happening recently.

The LPYS has to be in the forefront of the fight against witchunts because if witchunts are once again on the agenda, the LPYS will be under attack. The assault on the left, culminating in the expulsion of the *Militant* Editorial Board saw the YS's budget drastically cut to a mere 1% of the party's total expenditure.

History has shown that during periods of witchunts the YS has been singled out for attack. In the past we have seen attacks on budget and the right of the LPYS to pass resolutions to elect it's own representatives and even the closing down of the LPYS.

The left in the party, alongside the YS, must place the defence of the LPYS at the heart of its concerns. The role of youth in the miners' strike and the solidarity they have given has shown the potential to win youth to socialism. Witchunts in the LPYS will prevent us from building mass support amongst youth and overcoming the fact that Labour support amongst youth was third at the last election. The task of all socialists in the Labour Party is to build and defend the LPYS.

Bernie Wilde (Selly Oak YS) and Carl Taylor (Worley YS) — both members of the West Midlands Reg. Cttee LPYS

Defend student autonomy

Recently, the Polytechnic of North London had its student union funds taken over by the Receiver on the basis of the Attorney General's ruling on student union financing. This ruling states that no student union may use its funds to pay for coaches to demonstrations, or to make lump sum payments to political organisations, amongst other things. The attack on PNL was made following the student union's announcement of its intention to make so-called ultra vires payments in the form of a £5,000 donation to the NUM.

Other student unions are also under attack. Auditors working on student accounts at Sussex university were instructed by the administration to look for ultra vires payments. Amonst other things, the union at Sussex were told that monies used to provide creche facilities on campus and to pay for the yearly old folk's party might be ultra vires!

We must see these attacks on student unions through the ultra vires rulings as part and parcel of the same package of anti-union laws which in the past have been used against the NGA, GCHQ and now the miners. These anti-union laws are transparent, their blatant intent is to smash the effectiveness of mass action.

At the NUS Easter conference, the question of student union autonomy will be raised. It is vital that the NUS National Executive be forced to take a front line position to defend its members from these attacks upon students and their right to organise politically. The NUS leadership must give full legal and financial backing to any college union placed under attack.

Shelley Holland (chairperson, external affairs, Sussex Univ. students union)

Struggle for peace, justice

"The decision to expel 5 members of the Militant Editorial Board and the recent rejection of the appeal by the Blackburn 5 and Brychan Davies against expulsion can be seen as part of a long campaign by the right wing of the Party to get rid of those whose socialist ideas represent a threat to their control of the machine.

One of the motives at this moment for stepping up the campaign against the left is the fact that a number of right wing MPs may not get through the reselection process and those MPs who are at risk are all too ready to argue that anybody who criticises their record must be part of a 'hard left conspiracy' and then make that accusation the excuse for an appeal to the NEC to intervene.

How then should the left respond? The best way to maintain the integrity of the Party as a democratic vehicle for socialist transformation is by concentrating on and intensifying our own political work in conjunction with the unions and all those engaged in struggle for peace and social justice."

TONY BENN

(Part of a longer article written for Southern Region Activist)

Resolution to National LPYS conference from Hastings and Rye LPYS.

146. This Conference is totally opposed to recent interpretations of the law relating to the issuing of contraceptives.

This ruling will cause misery for thousands of young women, forced to use 'back street' abortion clinics.

We demand that the next Labour Government passes laws which reverse this and all other anti-working class legislation, and we demand that the Labour leaders do more to highlight this and other problems facing youth.

We also demand that the next Labour Government introduces socialist policies which will create the kind of society which will enable people to express themselves sexually without discrimination or victimisation.

The next issue of Briefing will be out on 21st March.
Deadline for articles: March 11th

Next National Editorial Board:
Sunday 24th March at 12 noon at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham

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