20p

LABOUR BRIEFING

NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 17 MAY 1985

NO SURRENDER TO KINNOCK:

REGROUP THE LEFT!

Editorial statement

The Tory press, still jubilant at the defeat of the miners, have developed a sudden new interest in the Labour Left. They have been quick to portray us as in disarray and as being marginalised by an otherwise united Labour Party flourishing under Kinnock's leadership. In particular they have sought to portray Tony Benn – the only obvious potential contender for the leadership of the Party – as a discredited figure rapidly being deserted by his most significant former allies and no longer representing a force to be feared.

In fact, while the defeat of the miners has certainly provided certain of our former leaders with a more congenial atmosphere in which to move both upwards and rightwards at the same time, it remains true that the Labour Left in 1985 is more closely linked with the working class and the communities we represent than at any time since before the war. Yes, in the miners' strike we were defeated. But Thatcherism has emerged from that strike battered and dented as well. The fact that Labour is doing well now, in the opinion polls, is something which all of us throughout our movement can take credit for – the miners above all, but also those Labour authorities which are showing their commitment to the communities they represent. In no way can we allow Kinnock or his supporters to monopolise credit for Labour's electoral strength – which is, in any case, nothing to the support we would be receiving if Kinnock and the TUC leaders had enabled the miners to win.

But, of course, the jubilation of the media does have some basis in reality. The defeat of the miners *has* dealt us a severe blow.

The betrayal of some council leaderships, in particular the GLC, who reneged on the collective decision to defy government policy on rate-capping, and which followed on so rapidly after the defeat of the miners' strike, is another setback. That betrayal is all the more severe because it was carried out by leaders of whom we had high expectations, and it has dealt a blow to what was one of the greatest achievements and strengths of those councils – their ability to involve and mobilise different sections of the oppressed in united political action. Indeed it is true to say that the ability of the rate-capped councils to involve their workforces, community organisations, gay and lesbian groups, ethnic groups, women's groups in action to defend jobs and services is one of the main reasons why many councils are still defiant now. Of course the present circumstances are not ideal to confront and take on the government. The defeat of the miners' strike has weakened the movement and the threat of surcharge and disqualification hangs over the careers, jobs and financial security of individuals. But what is absolutely certain is that difficulties such as these will be minor in comparison to those a future Labour government committed to introducing socialist policies will have to face. Those that have fallen at this first hurdle have shown themselves to be incapable of playing a leadership role in these struggles to come.

Nevertheless, a majority of rate-capped councils are still holding firm, and with the newly found strength of the Left developed through the miners' strike we are in an excellent position to begin a fightback on a broader level than ever before. Chesterfield's Community Defence Committee has been an exemplary initiative as has Women Against Pit Closures' rapid reorganisation and regroupment for their conference on May 3rd. We also welcome the initiative being taken by Labour Herald in calling for a regrouping of the Left. We believe that Labour Briefing, Labour Herald, the Campaign Group of MPs, together with all groups of the oppressed organising within the Labour Movement who are prepared to challenge the present leadership, must urgently meet together to organise. As the Party rides high in the opinion polls, the months ahead are likely to see renewed attempts by the Right to witch-hunt socialists from the Party and reverse key aspects of Party policy. The fight for an accountable leadership continues.

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

OUR ANSWER TO KEN

Ted Knight
Matthew Warburton

The decision of the GLC and the ILEA to comply with the Rates Act caused great joy among our enemies, not just because it happened but because of the way in which it happened.

The appearance of a public split in the Left at the start of a crucial struggle let the Right in our Party off the hook.

Party Conference demanded that councillors refused to implement the Tories' legislation.

This meant not only the defence of jobs and services, but the refusal to accept central government's right to dictate local council expenditure, and therefore impose massive cuts not just for one year but for years to come.

Ken's decision to go for a "fall-back" position is described by himself as the equivalent of a general organising an orderly retreat from the battlefield to avoid a defeat.

He argued that, once it was obvious that the no-rate position could not be won at the GLC, it was his responsibility to achieve the best possible legal budget. Nonsense!

How can there be a "fall-back" when the issue is who runs the councils — elected members or the central state controlled by Thatcher and Jenkin? Under the conditions of the Rates Act, "fall-back" is compliance.

By carrying through that position, Ken in practice accepted the Tory government's right to dictate both the rate limit and the expenditure level, and therefore gave credibility to their legislation.

Neil Kinnock and Jack Cunningham have argued that Labour councils would have no choice, in the end, but to comply and wait the return of the next Labour government to change the position. The events at County Hall were thus welcomed by the right wing.

As a consequence of his decisions, Ken then felt compelled to launch an attack on those who had stood firmly by Labour Party policy and had refused to comply at every stage.

The ten at County Hall who voted down every attempt to set a precept or a fall-back budget were absolutely correct in their action and have our support for their principled stand.

Ken has claimed that objective conditions for action to defeat the government do not exist, and so that damage limitation is all that is possible.

By what alchemy does he claim to know that these objective conditions do not exist?

What Ken is really saying now is that no leadership should embark on a struggle unless it is known in advance that victory is more or less certain.

Should Arthur Scargill have told the Cortonwood miners to go back when they took the initiative and asked for support from their area and national leaderships?

There was no way that he, or anyone else for that matter, could guarantee in March 1984 that the "objective conditions" were right for the miners to win.

When the miners were confronted with the unprecedented use of a national police force, road blocks, mass arrests, the blatant manipulation of the judiciary, the seizure of assets and funds, should they have called it a day?

It is obvious from this that no one can predict the outcome of a struggle in advance.

Scargill and the miners had no choice but to fight when the challenge was laid down. Neither do councillors now.

Labour Herald gave unconditional support to Scargill and the NUM, and continues to do so. Are we to change our position when it comes to the councils fighting ratecapping?

To ask these questions is to show that the logic of Ken's position is to say that Thatcher and the state are too powerful to be defeated.



John Chapman

Matthew Warburton and Ted Knight vote to continue the fight, Lambeth Council Chamber, April 10th.

Ken is now completely misrepresenting the strategy which has been argued in the pages of the Herald, a strategy which Ken helped to form and which, until recently, he appeared to be supporting consistently in articles and speeches all around the country.

This is how Ken himself spelt out the background to rate-capping in an article published as long ago as March 1984. He stressed that rate-capping was not a tactic for a single year as far as the government was concerned.

In the first year, their intention would be to break the resistance of a short list of Labour councils, including "all the radical socialist councils', but then, "having disposed of them in 1985, it would leave the government free to tackle another group of councils the following year".

He went further. He wrote: "If the government is particularly clever they may demand relatively low cuts ... in the first year knowing that this will increase pressure on Labour councillors to stay in office and make the cuts as painlessly as possible.

"Then in the following year when Labour councillors are implicated upon to their necks in the new system, and any campaign has been dissipated, the government could go for the really big deductions.'

He pointed out that there would be "powerful voices within the movement" who will argue that the law must be obeyed, and that "we may find that on councils with only a narrow majority the threat of surcharge, bankruptcy and disbarment from public office will mean that Labour loses is majority at the crucial budget meeting".

Yet Ken's conclusion was absolutely firm: "Irrespective of the odds, Labour councils have no option but to refuse to comply with the new laws.'

There should, therefore, be no pretence that the problems which beset the GLC were not and could not have been foreseen.

Ken's own words show that he was well aware of the possibility that the rate-cap limit would be set relatively high for at least some of the rate-capped councils.

It is hard to believe that he was unaware of the overall financial position of the GLC until a few days before budget day.

If he wasn't, as leader, collective or otherwise, he should have been.

It is a distasteful and unworthy tactic to personalise the blame and try to make a scapegoat out of John McDonnell for allegedly concealing the fact that the GLC could make a rate and avoid cuts.

What we accept is that the GLC faces cuts rather less severe than those faced by some of the boroughs — but as Ken said a year ago, that should have made no difference to the strategy.

No one ever pretended that it would be easy to achieve a majority in all the rate-capped councils for action which might be judged unlawful and might lead to surcharge and disbarment.

It was never likely that all the rate-capped councils would face exactly the same situation. The government was bound to draw up all sorts of tactics to divide us.

One key to a successful fight-back was to devise a response that would unite councils as far as possible — and that was why the refusal to make a rate was adopted.

Yet no magic recipe was available to put all the affected councils in exactly the same position on March 7.

It was known from at least July 1984, when the issue was discussed at the Special Local Government Conference of the Labour Party that the precepting authorities were legally required to make a rate by March 10, while the boroughs and cities were not.

This fact was well known, and would have remained a fact whatever resolution had been passed by the boroughs on March 7.

It was always likely that a policy not to make a rate would fail to carry at the GLC.

There need have been no shame in this for the GLC leadership. But Ken seems to want to cast around for someone to blame.

"We", he says, failed to bring together the coun-

SHEFFIELD:
OPEN UP THE CAMPAIGN

March the 7th in Sheffield saw a heartwarming demonstration of massive proportions declaring the opposition of the community to the Government's Ratecapping plan. The partnership between Council, Trade Unions and community groups had delivered the most diverse of groups and interests in a common call for defiance.

Sadly instead of building on that rock solid three cornered base, Sheffield's Labour group has, in its customary paternalistic fashion, concentrated the campaign on defending councillors. The priority has been keeping the Labour Group 'intact' in its resistance.

WORK FOR NOTHING

It is certainly the cause that so far the Labour Group have avoided setting a rate for 1985/86 but such is this 'resistance' that the trade unions have been asked to work for nothing to provide a 'gratuitous windfall' to avoid the risk of surcharge for councillors. Instead of taking financial control from chief officers, the politicians have handed them full control. This has predictably been siezed with relish by people who have lovingly prepared cuts budgets over the last few months, 'for campaigning reasons only'. Recently, Sheffield's campaign against ratecapping has meant for trade unionists, a freeze on vacant posts and restrictions on 'unnecessary' expenditure, for community groups and service users, no petrol for minibusses, no combs for kids in residential care, OAPs being exhorted to contribute to their luncheon club transport costs. etc.

No-one underestimates the personal commitment displayed by individual councillors and no-one denies they are under intense pressure. To be fair to some of those reluctant councillors, whose loyalty all this activity is designed to appeal to, approaches were made to the Labour whip last summer expressing concern about the implications of a strategy which may lead to breaking the law. Instead of being given an opportunity to stand down in a diginified fashion, they have been carried along with the promise that it would never come to that.



Martin Jenkinson

Demonstration in support of Sheffield Council's stand against rate-capping.

Fragile unity

Consequently the focus of Sheffield's battle has been on the fragile unity of the Labour group, lurching from meeting to meeting, hours of agonizing in between and each deferment decision being hailed as a major victory.

Meanwhile community groups view with bewilderment uncertainties and confusion over their funding. And trade unions are confronted with controls which uncannily resemble the very cuts they thought they were fighting. At the same time trade unions in the direct works department are taking limited industrial action in support of a 2 year old claim for consolidated payments. The response of the Labour group has been uncompromising with large numbers being suspended.

The people of Sheffield have clearly demonstrated their opposition to central government cuts and controls. The trade unions have displayed an unprecedented unity and committment to fight cuts in services and jobs. The Labour group are still together in their defiant stance. There is still a wonderful opportunity for the group to raise their introspective sights and forge a genuine partnership in this crucial fight.

Phil Reid
Welfare Rights Adviser
Family and Community Services Department

cillors concerned, or to bring the trade unions or the constituency parties into such meetings.

Instead, he claims, there was a reliance on meetings of leaders who report back, more or sometimes less, accurately.

In reality, Labour Groups in the boroughs, and constituency parties, have been debating these issues almost uninterruptedly since July last year, if not earlier.

There has been in the boroughs and the cities outside London close liaison between Labour Groups and local trade unions, and not just with shop stewards either. Workplace meetings have been held in virtually all of the councils affected, and the issues thoroughly discussed.

If Ken regrets now that the GLC's strategy against the Rates Act was not discussed earlier or more thoroughly in the GLC Labour Group or with the GLC workeers, it is simply unfair of him to project that failure on to everybody else.

Just how far the boroughs and, outside London, Sheffield, Manchester and Liverpool, have succeeded in mobilising support for their stand of non-compliance was evidence in the crowds of thousands who gathered outside Town Halls on March 7.

And it is precisely these people, and the millions more who stand behind them, that the Left in the Labour Groups owe it to stand by their position and refuse to make a rate.

It was Ken's responsibility to lead those Labour councillors sticking by Party policy and voting down each and every attempt to set a precept — whoever put it forward and even if, in the end, he was defeated.

Ken forgets that the crucial decisions in this battle will be taken not just in the council chamber, but in the working class organisations outside.

The trade unions and the local communities have the right to know that they can rely on us as the fight continues.

There has not, and never has been, any prospect of forcing a government retreat on this issue from within the council chamber. The most determined and diehard councillors can always be removed from office and Tory cuts imposed through other agencies.

The whole point of the strategy was to create a climate for industrial action by the trade unions to defend services.

Only the unions and local organisations really have the strength to stop the government in its tracks.

The GLC has been effectively taken out of the fight before it has really begun.

It would have been possible to avoid this, despite a defeat in the council, if only Ken had stuck to the strategy he has so eloquently presented in the past.

Now the only sequence of events which will appear to justify Ken's argument is the collapse of those councils which are still resisting.

Not only has the GLC taken itself out of the fight, but in such a way that it is condemned to sitting on the sidelines waiting in hope for others to comply.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MINERS' STRIKE



John Chapman

"Right behind you comrade", Left to right, Mick McGahey and Gordon McClellan addressing a demonstration of the miners.

A few days after the majority of miners returned to work, Mick McGahey, President of the NUM in Scotland, was reported as saying that he had "no differences with Kinnock", and that the Labour Party leader was being invited to attend the Scottish Miners' Gala, as the guest of honour. For most rank and file miners and for the left of the labour movement, this statement by McGahey made no sense. One of the clear aspects of the strike was that Kinnock consistently undermined it, and in so doing played a central part in its defeat. In contrast with the Scargill leadership which fought the strike to win, Kinnock scabbed on it. Why then did McGahey claim to have no differences with him?

To understand this we should concentrate on McGahey, not as an individual but on his politics, which are the politics of the Communist Party of Great Britain. It is well known that thte CPGB has had a big influence in the NUM in the past.

What the left underestimated in the strike was that despite the public internal crisis in the CPGB, the influence of thie ideas remain considerable.

Despite the differences between the Morning Star and the Euro-Communist wing, most pronounced on international issues, both wings have a common attitude to the TUC leadership. They see the 'unity' of the labour leadership, by which they mean the labour bureaucracy, as paramount. The different wings of the CPGB orient to different sections of the labour movement — the Morning Star wing towards the militant base which looks to Benn and Scargill for leadership, and Marxism Today, the journal of the Euro-Communist wing, towards the LCC/Kinnock forces within a coalitionist framework. However they both have common elements of politics and programme, basing themselves on the labour bureaucracy and with a popular front strategy at the level of government.

Their capitulation to the labour leadership came into play most obviously at the TUC Congress in September '84. The NUM and their supporters had a number of resolutions at this vital Congress, including a call for a Day of Action, a 50p levy on all trade unionists and a demand that all trade unionists respect NUM picket lines:

"... on the eve of Congress when the NUM President showed every inclination of going over the heads of the TUC barons and appealing direct to delegates and the rank and file, McGahey pressed Scargill into a midnight meeting with Murray and senior TUC colleagues."

The Guardian 5/3/85

As a result of this meeting, apparently engineered by McGahey, the original resolutsions withdrawn in favour of a compromise which promised support, while giving the TUC a way out. In particular the Guidelines stated that the agreement of the unions inside the workplace had to be obtained before the NUM could impose pickets. This clause was especially important in relation to the power stations.

COMPROMISE

This compromise maintained the unity of the left and centre at the TUC, whereas the original motions, designed to organise the action neeeded to win the strike, would have split the Congress. 'Unity' was based solely on verbal support and financial solidarity — enough to keep the strike going, but not enough to ensure victory.

TEACHERS FIGHTING TO WIN!

Vanessa Wiseman,
(President Lambeth NUT,
Women's Member, Regional EC)

Schools throughout the country will face continuing disruption this term as NUT action in support of our pay claim for £1200 for all teachers is escalated. The NUT national conference at Easter voted to intensify strike action by calling out members for further selective and repeated strikes, as well as extending the "sanctions" being taken of not doing dinner duties and restricting cover of absent teachers to include not compiling reports or records and not being involved in curricular innovations.

Unfortunately a number of strengthening amendments calling for a one-day national strike; non-cooperation with exams; and extended strike action in selected areas were all defeated. This, plus hints that we might restrict our action to Tory areas only if Labour authorities declare support, which would exclude the strongest organised areas from action, all make our campaign much harder.

Positive

On a positive note, it was agreed to strengthen links with the EIS in Scotland, NATFHE and the other teacher union NAS/UWT as well as closely campaigning with other public service unions. Action by teachers throughout the country has been excellent.

In London, all areas called out have had overwhelming support for action with the majority of strikers being actively involved in lobbying, leafletting estates, visiting other union branches and holding meetings in the schools not called out.

In my own association many of the schools balloted had 100% support for the strike. A quickly organised ballot by the National Executive in response to attempts to take legal action by Solihull against teachers' refusal to do dinner time supervision and other duties, resulted in support across the country, with 87% support in London.

Parental support has been very positive particularly in those areas where communities are also facing the struggle against rate-capping.



Press Association Photos

Glenys Kinnock, NUT representative, outside Wykeham Junior School, Brent, taking part in the nationwide pay claim action.

We all realise we face an uphill task following the return to work of the miners. However, in many ways the solidarity work we have done for the miners and the support we've given for the campaign against rate-capping, particularly demonstrated by the very large number of teachers on the demonstrations on March 6th, have strengthened and united us. We're fighting to win.

As it was, it became clear in the month or so following the Congress, that active solidarity was not forthcoming, and nor did the TUC have any intention of organising it.

Scargill's demand that Willis and Kinnock speak with him at a series of NUM rallies was his recognition that he needed to put pressure on the labour movement leadership to force them to deliver. In contrast the CP promoted 'unity' with this leadership, a leadership which in February '85 tried to force an agreement on the NUM, drawn up behind their backs, with the NCB, on terms which were worse than those previously on offer.

'Unity' continues to be the message after the strike, and means no challenge to the leadership of the labour movement. As the editorial in the Morning Start stated on March 5th, the day after the return to work, the Labour Party and TUC leadership had "not done enough" to win the strike. It did not point to the betrayals that had taken place, and the need to replace these scab leaders.

The influence of the CPGB on other areas of the strike is now becoming clearer also.

The analysis by both wings of the party of the 1980s, and the strategy of the Euro-Communist wing in particular, of the need to build "broad democratic alliances" to oppose Thatcherism, led in the strike to consistent opposition to the tactics of mass action and mass mobilisation as at Orgreave, promoted by Scargill. Such tactics, they felt, would divide them from sections of these "broad alliances", sections such as the church. Such alliances also deny any leading role for the Labour left, the section which most consistently supported the strike. As a result the CP did not readily participate in the Mineworkers' Defence Committee, which organised the only significant national solidarity conference during the whole strike, and which had its origins at the Labour Party Conference. The Morning Star-controlled LCDTU Conference held in January 1985, was to call a Day of Action in support of the strike, but instead organised a Sunday demonstration, thus once again allowing the TUC leadership off the hook.

Since the end of the strike it has become very clear that for the Euro-Communist wing of the CP, mass picketing, mass mobilisations of any sort, are seen as "counter-productive", industrial action as a "narrow, traditional method" of struggle, somehow out of date or old fashioned in the 1980s. Instead they want to replace this type of action by engaging in a "battle of ideas" in order to "change public opinion". By mass picketing of power stations, not organised nationally by the NUM because of the TUC Guidelines, would have brought power cuts and the likelihood of a victory for the NUM. Assertions that mass picketing and industrial action are no longer appropriate in the '80s is in reality a cover-up for the refusal of the labour bureaucracy — both left and right — to organise such action.

The balance sheet of the CPGB of the strike is that Scargill's methods were wrong and were responsible for the isolation of the NUM. The difference between Scargill, Benn and the Labour Left as opposed to the CP and Kinnock, is that the former are prepared to adopt class struggle methods in order to win, while the latter is firmly within the framework of class collaboration. Any amount of theoretical justification in the pages of journals like Marxism Today, cannot cover up this basic political difference and those who supported the miners throughout the strike should not be misled by it now.

Brendan Young
Jane Kelly

THE QUESTION OF POWER AT THE HEART OF THE JOBS CAMPAIGN

By John Palmer

(John Palmer is a member of the National Steering Committee of the Socialist Society and works for the GLEB. He writes in a personal capacity.)

Whatever else may be said about it, the Labour Party's national campaign on jobs and industry, launched this month, is hardly premature. Six years after Thatcher's election and with unemployment set stuck at between three and four million as far ahead as we can see, such a campaign is long overdue.

It is not yet clear just what kind of campaign it will prove to be. But socialists of all schools dare not leave matters to Walworth Road and the Parliamentary Labour leadership; the issue of the jobs crisis and the need to hammer out a fighting, alternative strategy needs to be taken into every community and every workplace in the country.

As far as the leadership is concerned that alternative is already more or less in place. We are told that Labour's 1983 election manifeso — updated by taking account of the admittedly significant development of worker co-operatives and left local authority enterprise boards — provides a sufficient response to the economic crisis.

STILL FURTHER TO THE RIGHT

The socialist left should need a lot of convincing before they accept any such proposition. In point of fact an important faction of the leadership, around Roy Hattersley, is already interpreting a thoroughly inadequate 1983 election platform in ways that push Labour's economic strategy still further to the right.

A subtle evolution of policy has already taken place in that we are no longer told that Keynesian reflation, plus more public spending and borrowing backed by marginal doses of extended state ownership and municipal socialism will 'solve' unemployment over two years.

REDUCE EXPECTATIONS

In essence the Labour right and the soft 'left' leadership are determined on an approach which will 'reduce expectations' about what a future Labour government can or will be able to do about unemployment. In part this reflects some hedging of bets lest a coalition deal has to be done with the Liberals after the next election.

It is true that a yawning gap between rhetoric and results over economic change and opposition from a hostile and frightened establishment could unleash a fearful political backlash. The experience of the Mitterrand regime in France and the way in which the international economic crisis has pulled social democratic governments everywhere to the right has burned itself into the consciousness of many Labour leaders.

Ironically even the present hodge-podge of 'moderate' Keynesian spending and borrowing policies, quasi-siege economy measures such as import and capital controls, and gestures in the direction of greater public and municipal ownership is likely to be enough to trigger the kind of currency and financial



crisis which has degutted so many previous governments.

DEADLY PERIL

Indeed the stakes have never been higher in that another Labour failure to confront the economic and jobs crisis will boost the extreme right wing now radicalised beyond Thatcherism. A policy of drift and incapacity to address the jobs issues — whether in coalition or not — would spell early disaster for a future Labour government and place the organised Labour movement and the left in deadly peril.

Even the Labour right are losing faith in simple Keynesian demand management. The industry and jobs crisis reflects the structural decline of British capitalist industry which can only be influenced at the margins by a higher Public Sector Borrowing Requirement and state spending.

POWER

The first and foremost issue in economic policy is power. The justification for more public ownership — whether at the level of the state or socialist enterprise boards — ultimately rests on whether this process shifts power from capital to working people. Nationalisation can and has been in the past an actual substitute for and a barrier to that shift of power.

But without beginning the process where working people — through their trade union and community organisations begin to set and implement THEIR priorities and economic goals — even "radical" experiments in economic planning will serve the objectives of capital. And in a period of structural crisis capital has no interest in putting full employment above its central goal of restoring the rate of profit, intensifying management power and boosting British capital's relative rate of accumulation upto and above those of its trade rivals.

WORKING CLASS DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

So we need economic planning and we need far greater public ownership of all types (state, local and cooperative). But we need this in a context of a massive extension of working class democratic control over econmic decision making.

The truth is that without a sustained shift in economic production for social need rather than for the market there will be no feasible return to anything like full employment. A campaign to popularise socially useful production (which more and more people see makes 'sense' when vast unmet needs co-exist with massive unemployment of people and resources) should be at the heart of a socialist jobs campaign. The significance of this is better understood at present by the feminist, radical 'green' groups in Europe than by the British left.

Of course in any transitional period begun by such a massive shift of power and decision making in the economy, production for the market and significant private ownership of industry may remain. The full conquest of economic power by working people — upto and including direct management — will not come overnight.

Equally obviously during such a transition the economy will have to be protected from internal economic subversion (capital strikes etc) and external hostility (currency, speculation and trade sanctions). Such measures are more likely to be accepted and defended if working people see them as serving a wider economic democracy not as props for ailing and discredited 'national' economic and industrial lobbies.

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

But the left will relegate international action in this field at its peril. The left now should be debating with socialists in Europe and elsewhere how international labour can act in solidarity with governments thrown into confrontation with capital. The work done in encouraging alternative economic plans by trade unionists in international combines and dialogue about a concerted trans-national strategy on working hours, the control of technology, defence of union rights, and the development of alternative plans including arms conversion, are vital in this respect.

The message in any serious jobs campaign during the next few years must be that the crisis is so serious that no government can 'solve' it without the full and independent participation of working people and their organisations. Without popular mobilisation, state and government power in the hands of the left may prove a bitter, disillusioning and all too brief chimera.

Where was the anger at Molesworth?

Joy Hurcombe,
Vice-Chair CND,
Chair Labour CND
(in a personal capacity)

As demonstrations go, Molesworth at Easter was decidedly low key. Yes, the balloons and rainbow coloured flags were pretty enough. The whistles and bells sounded out a good humoured protest. Yes, the protesters braved the amazing mud and rain. The numbers were reasonable given the difficulty of getting a mass protest outside London. (20,000 was probably an underestimate, but certainly there was not a vast crowd). But there was something missing from the day's event. Anger. There was the wire, the police, the military police, the dogs, the high permanent expensive wire and the spiteful razor wire. Where was the anger, why didn't we have a mass trespass?



True there were moments of explosive anger at the heavy police presence. There were some very determined protesters taking down the outer fence, there was anger at the arbitrary arrests of protesters who crossed the wire to offer a daffodil to the officers. There was a spirit of solidarity in the crowds of ordinary people, milling round the peace garden with their dogs and push chairs. But not the sort of anger and solidarity needed to take on the state and challenge the existing order. If this is all we are to do, we will never change the nuclear policies of this or any other government.

We have to step up the action. We have to do more than this.



John Chapman



John Chapman



John Chapman

Re-selection: Women and Black People lose out

LATEST RESULTS

BATTERSEA
Alf Dubs resulted from short list of one.

WOOLWICH
John Austin Walker: white Council leader beat off 2 other white male contenders and one white woman with no pretensions to feminism.

PRESTON
Audrey Wise is still the one gain for women on the left and even here the left were originally considering a white male hero.

BLAENAU GWENT
Michael Foot re-selected unopposed.

BIRMINGHAM LADYWOOD
Clare Short re-selected *but* significantly she did have a contest against an Asian man and another woman.

Apart from that white male MPs are being re-selected all over the North East and Wales.

RE-SELECTING

BOW AND POPLAR
2 or 3 white male contenders are seeking to elbow out a woman with the same if not more street cred than they

TOTTENHAM
3 main local candidates with support picking up for the local Black contender.

BRENT EAST
Well publicised contest between white male and Black woman. With white male activists engaged in ideological warfare with Ken and looking likely to ignore the fact that they are delegates not individuals in a selection meeting.

LEWISHAM EAST*
One bit of fresh air, having taken a principled stand in defence of Black Sections; the main contenders are a Black man and a Black woman.

WESTMINSTER NORTH*
Advertising widely for a woman candidate and aiming to offer delegates a wide choice. Here the white male hopeful did withdraw in favour of a woman candidate.

SOUTHALL*
Local Asian members are determined to choose an Asian candidate. But the present white incumbent is not keen to withdraw and the NEC has come to his rescue; there also seem to be other younger white males waiting for a chance to step in if the local community cannot 'sort itself out' — hardly an anti-racist move.

**** Not surprisingly these 3 CLPs are not being viewed with much favour by Regional Office on account of their unorthodox views.



Syd Bidwell



Audrey Wise, selected for Preston.

Re-selection is not going well for women or Black comrades. They either are not even in for consideration or they are in grave danger of being used by one of a number of predominantly white male factions as candidates that will attract wider support and yet hold the line.

There is as yet little recognition of the positive value of having the strength and experience of the Black and Feminist community added to the local party. Nor an acceptance that women and Black people will at times have developed a different and often more progressive, attitude to the political and economic problems facing us.

Positive action needed
It is not enough for the left to say ... *He* is not a bad candidate. *He* is a good consituency MP. *He* will have the support of most of the GC.

No CLP with any Left pretensions (such as Battersea) should be accepting a short list of one.

No CLP with a large Black community should be accepting the right of white male candidates to stand without an extremely strong challenge.

Look at the size of the Black community for instance in Hackney North, Tottenham and Deptford.

Look at the fact that Audrey Wise is the only woman to be selected in this initial round of re-selections. Look at the fact that one of the few women MPs, Clare Short, did battle it out in re-selection.

Target Labour Government is writing to all London CLPs urging them to give *serious* considerations to women and Black candidates and offering to send speakers if necessary.

Please contact us. (If you are outside London we may be able to send a speaker or give advice at least).
Nadine Finch (01 633 8635) Narendra Makanji (01 889 7734)

Whose choice
All too often it seems that the definition of a good candidate has been decided upon long ago by predominantly white male GCs. It is based upon a combative Anglo Saxon style of oratory in the meeting room and all boys together in the pub afterwards. And politically, it is rooted in the issues relevant to that dominant and domineering section of the population.

Target Labour Government believes this must change, and asks all white male contenders to list their views and activities that support a womans right to choose; abolition of immigration laws. the eradication of the racism that pervades the party, a united Ireland etc etc etc.

Accountability
Accountability is also very much part of our campaign. One reason to choose a Black candidate to represent Tottenham or a woman to represent an Inner City area is that women and the Black community are the ones under the heaviest pressure and who have developed radical political responses to this rooted in their own experience. And they will be held accountable by these wider constituencies as well as their own local Labour party.

We accept this, but local activists have as yet to understand the strength this will bring to the Labour Party or the extra demands on all members. For instance, all the white men who are inviting Black women to stand need

TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Next Meeting
2.30 SUNDAY APRIL 28th COUNTY HALL, SE1
(ask at desk for Room Number)

ALL WELCOME AND ESPECIALLY BLACK COMRADES AND WOMEN WISHING FOR A RADICAL SOCIALIST LABOUR GOVERNMENT

DISCUSSION ON GAY RIGHTS AND ISSUES THAT TLG WILL BE PRIORITISING IN THE LEAD UP TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE

MORAL MAJORITY RULE *NOT* OKAY!

Sarah Roelofs

Advances for women's liberation gained during the more moderate '70s (though even these primarily benefited white women) are increasingly threatened by regrouped and forward-marching 'moral majorities' given new confidence by the 1980s heaven-made Thatcher-Reagan marriage. Women's health and abortion clinics have been fire-bombed (and where's the rhetoric about 'terrorist violence' now, eh?) in the United States, we have the Powell Bill and the Gillick judgement here in Britain, and in Ireland, where British imperialism has allowed a most unholy alliance of church and state, the so-called 'Kerry Babies Tribunal' has put all Irish women on trial.

Explicitly and proudly reactionary and recidivist the moral right have linked their deeply mysognist hands to do ideological battle against the very conception of 'women's liberation'. But most of the left is 'out to struggle' leaving behind a note saying 'put the boot in sisters!' Important it may be – but it's a 'women's issue' nevertheless and down at the Town Hall, Council Leaders may – or may not – be about to 'go over the top'.

While we are out in the streets our living room carpets and Habitat duvets are being pulled out from under, and off from on top, of us. And lo and behold, rather like what happened to Lewisham Labour Group, The Family's patriarchal authority is being reestablished. "There is yet to be a moral left which will recognise sexual politics as a point of confrontation and campaign as hard as Mrs. Gillick for a progressive morality – or even consider what that might be." (Rose Shapiro, Marxism Today, February 1985). As it happens, Feminists for years now have been discussing and debating what constitutes a feminist morality (how to have good feminist practice without more-feminist-than-thou judgemental put-downs), but the economistic left eschews such things as deviations from the class struggle straight and narrow.

Rate-capping is obviously crucial, but our form of class struggle should incorporate a campaign against the Powell Bill as *equally* important. We need a class analysis that unites the struggles for local government democracy, for defence of jobs and services *now*, with those for women's right to choose and the facilities we need to make our choices effective. Black people and Irish people need no explanations to understand Enoch Powell as the devil incarnate – they *know* it. Women know it too. Does the left?

The campaign against the Powell Bill requires labour movement wide support such as that that women mobilised against the Corrie Bill in 1979. So, excuse us comrades, but we're off to the Town Hall to demand support for the anti-Powell lobby on April 24th and demonstration on April 27th. And we are taking our feminist carpets and duvets with us to insure against myopic outrage at betraying council leaders that would leave all of us out in the cold with but the Lord Jesus for company.

Enoch Powell's Bill on in vitro fertilisation – 'test tube babies' – and embryo research is being rushed through Parliament. Powell's Bill will limit women's control over our fertility. Its most immediate effect will be on infertile women and men, but it has implications for us all.

**In vitro fertilisation will stop.*

**Research on infertility will be severely limited.*

**The microscopic embryo will have legal rights. This threatens abortion rights and contraceptive methods like the coil and the mini-pill. That is why anti-abortionists are backing this bill. That is why it is called the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill.*

Infertility treatment, like abortion, contraception and sterilisation, is part of reproductive technology. All can be used against women or for our benefit.

It is women, regardless of age, class, sexuality, race or disability, who must determine how these scientific advances can be best used. We must ensure that we are not exploited by those who want to discriminate against us.

We need discussion of these issues, not restrictive laws.

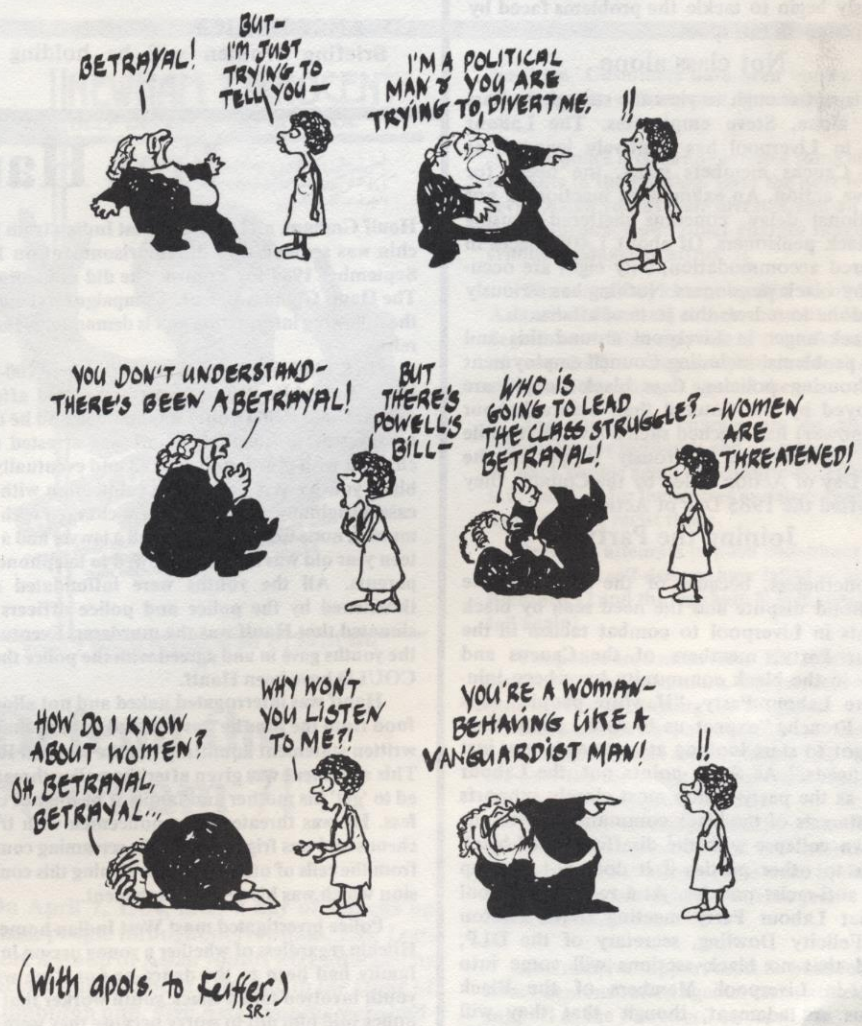
Rights for embryos means rights taken away from women.

Mass lobby of Parliament, April 24th.

Demonstration, April 27th.

For more information contact: ALRA on 01-359 5200; NAC on 01-405 4801; WRRC on 01-251 6332.

There is also a demonstration on June 23rd against the Gillick ruling on contraception for under 16 year olds.



to recognise their power and their difference and learn.

And in the reselection contest, these white male comrades must realise that they are not politically correct individuals they are delegates from their branches, who have a lot to learn about collective socialist decision making from women and the Black Community.

Open up the contests

Finally, in the next few months we would like to see women and/or Black comrades as front runners for DEPTFORD, HACKNEY NORTH AND SOUTH, BETHNAL GREEN AND STEPNEY, HORNSEY AND WOOD GREEN AND EVERYWHERE ELSE.

It is going to take a great number of re-selection to achieve a representation that truely reflects the local population and on the way white males will have to relinquish their power for once.

LIVERPOOL'S BLACK CAUCUS

By Tim Rigby

The Liverpool Black Caucus campaign against the appointment by the City Council of Sam Bond to the position as director of the new Race Relations Unit shows no sign of ending. NALGO and other involved trade unions alongside all Liverpool's black organisations maintain a complete boycott of the post, demanding its readvertisement and the appointment of someone acceptable to the black community.

Though lack of financial resources has handicapped the work of the Caucus and its support group, the campaign is gaining support nationwide. Representatives of the Caucus have recently participated at a black sections fringe meeting at the LPYS conference and have spoken at the NUT conference. Manchester and London black sections have held meetings in support of the campaign with Liverpool Caucus speakers, and Labour Party ward and constituency meetings on the issue in Glasgow, Leeds and London are soon to take place. With most trade unions supporting the Black Caucus, alongside 13 wards and three Liverpool constituencies, the dispute continues to divide the Liverpool labour movement.

The intransigence of Militant and the City Council over the matter threaten the Council's own capacity to fight its battles against the government. While Militant have declared the methods of the Black Caucus as being opposed to those of the labour movement the spokesperson of the Black Caucus, Steve French, states that he sees clear parallels between the historic struggles for the establishment of the labour movement in Britain and those the Black Caucus and its support group are going through now. As he and others in the campaign state, if the Labour Council wants the support of the black organisations and community it must seriously begin to tackle the problems faced by black people in Liverpool.

Not class alone

It is not enough to view the struggle in class terms alone, Steve emphasises. The Labour Party in Liverpool has positively ignored, as Black Caucus members insist, the needs for positive action. An example of inaction if not intentional delay, concerns sheltered housing for black pensioners. Of about 1,400 places in sheltered accommodation, only eight are occupied by black pensioners. Nothing has seriously been done to redress this state of affairs.

Black anger in Liverpool around this and other problems, including Council employment and housing policies, (less black people are employed by the Council than before Labour took power) has reached such a level that while black organisations vigorously supported the 1984 Day of Action called by the Council, they boycotted the 1985 Day of Action.

Joining the Party

Nonetheless, because of the nature of the Sam Bond dispute and the need seen by black activists in Liverpool to combat racism in the Labour Party, members of the Caucus and others in the black community have been joining the Labour Party. "If white people" says Steve French, "expect us to vote Labour they have got to start looking at our needs, not just their needs." As Steve points out, the Labour Party as the party which most closely supports the interests of the black community, threatens its own collapse with the disaffection of black voters to other parties if it does not develop clear anti-racist policies. At a recent Liverpool District Labour Party meeting Derek Hatton and Felicity Dowling, secretary of the DLP, stated that no black sections will come into being in Liverpool. Members of the Black Caucus are adamant, though that they will form black sections and they will not be told, as they say, by their oppressors what they can and cannot do. As one Caucus member said, it is like men telling women they must not fight for their own liberation. Steve French makes his own support for black sections clear. "People", he states, "can accuse black sections as supporting apartheid notions, I don't see it that way. We've always been separated." In fact Steve believes the Caucus itself has acted as a sort of black section. When the Labour Party was in opposition, though many Caucus members were not members of the Party, the Caucus acted through a liaison committee in close unity with the campaigns of the Party, and wholeheartedly supported its struggles. Now, the Black Caucus is considered by the Militant as being on the side of the enemy.

The issues around the Sam Bond dispute go far beyond concern solely for the fate of one post in a race relations unit. Those active in the campaign to gain readvertisement of the post are tackling the very problems of the Labour Party's inability to confront its own and British society's racism.

BRIEFING WOMEN

Briefing Women are now meeting regularly before every Briefing National Editorial Board meeting. The next meeting is at 11.30 am on Sunday May 19th at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham. All women Briefing supporters are welcome to attend. We are keen to make contact with women Briefing supporters throughout the country so if there are any women who would be prepared to act as a contact for the women in their Briefing group, please contact Jane or Sarah at the address below.

ADVANCE NOTICE.

Briefing Women will be holding an AGM on Saturday July 6th. Further details will appear in the next issue of Briefing.

NATIONAL LABOUR WOMEN'S CONFERENCE – BOURNEMOUTH 1985.

Briefing Women will be holding a fringe meeting on the Saturday evening June 15th. Speakers will include: Anita Patel, Black Sections Steering Committee, Hazel Smith, South Wales Women Against Pit Closures, Mairie O'Shea.

For information about **Briefing Women**, contact: Jane Stockton or Sarah Roelofs, 341 Cranwich Road, London N16.

Free Hanif Graham

Hanif Graham, a 21 year old West Indian from Hitchin was sentenced to life imprisonment on 14th September 1984 for a murder he did not commit. The Hanif Graham Defence Campaign has collated the following information and is demanding Hanif's release.

On 8.10.83 in a Hitchin car park where 100-200 black and white youths had congregated after a dance, Colin Reid (white) was stabbed and he died on the way to hospital. Hanif was arrested and charged with murder on 9.10.83 and eventually 13 black youths were arrested in connection with the case. Originally six of these were charged with the murder, none were allowed to call a lawyer and a sixteen year old was not even allowed to telephone his parents. All the youths were intimidated and threatened by the police and police officers insinuated that Hanif was the murderer. Eventually the youths gave in and agreed with the police that it COULD have been Hanif.

Hanif was interrogated naked and not allowed food from the time he was arrested until he made a written statement admitting that he stabbed Reid. This statement was given after the police threatened to 'get' his mother and family if he did not confess. He was threatened by policemen with truncheons and was frightened by the screaming coming from the cells of other boys into signing this confession which was his seventh statement.

Police investigated most West Indian homes in Hitchin regardless of whether a young person in the family had been to the dance or not. One white youth involved told a Black youth worker that the police told him not to worry because they were only interested in the Black boys. Other people have noted remarks referring to 'cleaning up' Hitchin.

Hanif was held in custody for approximately 11 months without bail and the trial which was expected to last a week lasted only 3 days. Hanif's lawyers were those recommended by the police and no defence witnesses were called. Even the barrister representing Hanif was changed only a few weeks before and the lawyers refused to put in an application for an appeal.

The Judge made no reference to Hanif's defence and called the jury back during recess to state that he couldn't see why the verdict was taking so long. Once the verdict was announced he made it clear that he was pleased with it. However, all evidence was circumstantial and none of Reid's blood was found on Hanif, his clothes or the knife that he was alleged to have used.

Hanif has now applied for legal aid so that his new lawyer can obtain the costly transcript of the trial which is necessary for an appeal. The defence campaign seeks local and national support (already forthcoming from black groups and individuals) in the form of petitions, letters and donations. The procedure is long and slow but there must be no let up. Hitchin is now firmly on the map of organised resistance against the racism and police harassment which is rampant throughout the country.

** SEND FOR PETITIONS FROM Carole Burgher, c/o Newham Monitoring Project, 285 Romford Rd, London E7 9H5*
** WRITE TO THE HOME SECRETARY*
** ORGANISE COLLECTIONS*
** WRITE TO YOUR M.P.*
** PUBLICISE THIS CASE*
** AFFILIATE TO THE HANIF GRAHAM DEFENCE CAMPAIGN (address as above)*

Black Sections: East Lewisham defies the N.E.C.

East Lewisham's continued defiance of the NEC over the involvement of its black sections in the Parliamentary selection process can only succeed if the challenge is taken up by other CLPs with black sections.

That's why the 14th April meeting convened by Vauxhall CLP in the hope of reaching collective agreement over the next move is so important. The defeat of a black sections composite at this year's Greater London Labour Party Conference foreshadows a heavier defeat at Annual Conference. An unrepresentative structure is being used to stop attempts to redress the balance in favour of black people within the Party.

East Lewisham, with its final selection due on 10th May, was showing, as this issue goes to press, every sign of reaching that date with an unofficial candidate. GC delegates have been sent letters stating Party Rules and asking them to reverse their earlier decision to keep the black section in its selection process. A deadline of 12th April was set.

Involving the black section in the decision was based on the need to give black people a sense of direct involvement in Party affairs. Choosing and campaigning for a Parliamentary candidate are the most important tasks most Party members perform.

Conference's decision against black sections last year defied the logic of that need to make the Party truly representative of black people. This principle has been overridingly important in East Lewisham.

Simply disqualifying GC members will not close down the issue, especially if other constituencies with black sections are prepared to risk the possibility of fielding unofficial candidates.

The fact that the process has so far produced two black people — Russell Profitt and Sharon Atkin — as frontrunners will make East Lewisham delegates' defence of their black section's right all the more difficult. Why risk being declared unofficial when you're on your way to selecting a black candidate.

All the more reason to establish lines of mutual support between CLPs with black sections.

Jim Mallory,
Chair, East Lewisham CLP



Russell Profitt

Lewisham East Labour Party has always been convinced that black sections are an inevitable necessity within the wider Labour Party

If the Labour Party is to open up its franchise to enable and encourage a greater participation from minority groups, which until now have had their very eixstence deemed void by the wider movement, they cannot justify this uncalled for attack on black sections. Let it be quite clear that when comrades condemn black sections as being apartheid, they obviously close their eyes to the apartheid of an all-white all-male Labour Party.

With this view in mind East Lewisham has decided to confront the hypocrisy of the Labour Party and particularly the dinosaurs of Walworth Road This has been no easy decision But when it is blatantly obvious that the Labour Party has failed black people so inexcusably, East Lewisham has had to stand firm. In doing so, we have opened ourselves up to attack, and the threat of closure.

We have no intention of backing down on the fundamental question of black participation nor will we hide our Black Section.

We will continue to defy the bureaucrats until black people have won their fight.

Remember, throughout the history of black people, we have had to defy laws and fight opposition to gain equality That fight still continues today.

Niall Sookoo



Defend the Newham 7!

On April 7, 1984, after a day of attacks on black people throughout Newham, East London, a group of Asian youths were attacked by racists who had been drinking in the Duke of Edinburgh pub. Five Asian youths were badly hurt.

The pub is well known as a haunt of racists in Newham. Customers have been known to insult black people walking part, throw things at them, etc.

The police arrived and arrested some of the participants in the fighting. Over the next few weeks seven Asian youths were arrested and all charged with conspiracy and other charges ranging from criminal damage to affray.

The conspiracy charge against six of the seven Asians was dismissed at their committal hearing on September 4. Now only one of them faces a charge of 'conspiracy to cause criminal damage'. All seven stil have other charges against them.

The conspiracy charges are an attempt to criminalise the legitimate and necessary self-defence of black people against racist attack. Their 'crime' is to stand up for themselves and their communities against white racist thugs.

Previous attempts to push conspiracy charges against black self-defence have failed — as with the Bradford 12 and the Newham 8. It is vital that they fail again!

The police are a racist force. The Newham 7 have been deliberately picked on. The police have shown little interest in catching the attackers.

Black people have no choice but organise their own defence against racist attacks. The Newham 7 are only the tip of the iceberg: vicious attacks on black people happen every day.

The labour movement must be committed to actively supporting such black self-defence. Where necessary, and if black people want it, the labour movement should organise defence jointly with the black communities.

And massive support must be built for the national demonstration against racist attacks and in support of the Newham 7 on April 27.
The demo assembles at 1pm at Plashet Park, Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6.

YOUTH BRIEFING

'85 LPYS conference

At this year's LPYS National Conference (held in Blackpool over Easter weekend), supporters of the regional bulletins that are now organised in five regions were involved in a daily bulletin (*Youth Fightback*) initiated by 'Southern Region Activist'. By the end of the conference comrades in the London, Eastern and South Western regions had decided to set up their own.

Articles included in the bulletin covered the main issues taken up in the debates and fringe meetings that took place over the weekend — Youth CND, Ireland, lesbian and gay liberation, the witchunt, YTS, ratecapping, Nicaragua, abortion rights, women's liberation etc. Some of them are reprinted on this page.

One of the biggest issues of the conference was the question of Liverpool City Council and the Black Caucus. Over 300 people attended a packed meeting organised by Manchester Black Section.

Ireland was taken up by a fringe meeting with a speaker from the Labour Committee on Ireland and a miner's wife who was on the Armagh picket.

Lesbian and gay liberation was the one question which the present leadership of the YS seem very unsure about. A large number of lesbian and gay comrades from the Militant attended the LGYS fringe meeting to explain why Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners was good — but the LPYS still fails to recognise and support LGYS.

Briefing organised a fringe meeting with speakers from LCGR, WAPC, Briefing and the regional bulletins.

And the regional bulletins themselves organised a meeting of over 100 YS activists to discuss future national co-ordination. A discussion took place about the type of alliances that we should be building (it was unanimously agreed that we must be clear in our opposition to the witchunt) and on the best ways to organise so as to get the maximum involvement of all viewpoints from all regional bulletins.

Lastly, this year's conference had 69 less branches at it than last year's — proving beyond doubt that the YS has failed to grow in the miner's strike.

By Dave Shepherd (Leeds NE LPYS and 'Yorkshire Activist')

Election results for LPYS representative on the NEC — 1985

Francis Curran (Militant)	161
F.Gent (Militant)	34
Debbie Withall (Youth Fightback)	22
Simon Pottinger (Class Fighter)	20
Simon Greigs (LCC)	16

Lesbian and gay youth organise

By Karen Briscoe (Croydon NE LPYS, CPSA)

At present, Lesbian and Gay YS is redrafting its constitution. One of the main problems now is that it has no mention of lesbians. The most important thing we aim to do is to bring lesbian and gay issues out into the open, so that people become aware of the types of discrimination lesbians and gay men face. We want trade unions to take up the question of us being sacked because of our sexuality. We want the Labour Party to take up these issues and formulate a positive policy.

We see the importance of forming alliances with other oppressed groups — we should be working together. During the miners' strike, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners and Lesbians Against Pit Closures found common ground with miners. The miners themselves overcame old prejudice and saw they had a lot in common with us. And large groups of gay men and lesbians organised for the first time on a political issue not directly linked to gay rights.

We must build on this and bring these people into the LP and LPYS. Individual YS branches can support us by affiliating, taking up issues we're fighting on, having speakers at their meetings. We're very keen to have an input into the regional YS bulletins — especially if one can be set up in London.

Note — LGYS relaunch meeting will be on the 6th May the day after the LCGR AGM (4/5 May at County Hall).

N.U.S. CONFERENCE REPORT

This Easter's National Union of Students Conference saw Socialist Students in NOLS – the student section of Briefing – emerge as a major force in the student-movement. The Kinnock-supporting 'Democratic Left' faction which controls the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) retained a majority on the National Executive, but for the first time in three years they lost a full-time post to the Left Alliance (a 'popular front' of Communists, Liberals and independents). This was largely the result of dissatisfaction with the present leadership of NOLS.

Socialist Students provided the most serious alternative to the Executive in a number of policy debates, including sexual politics, the Youth Training Scheme and Internationalism. The Executive was forced to accept Socialist Student proposals to defend victimised miners (including working with the Mineworkers' Defence Committee) and to continue working with Women Against Pit Closures. Our proposals on YTS – to organise trainees in colleges, and to oppose compulsion – were passed by Conference. In the debate on Internationalism, Socialist Students proposed that NUS should break links with the State run Student Unions in Eastern Europe. Although this was defeated by the more Stalinist oriented members of the Executive it gained a fair measure of support.

In the elections, Socialist Students candidate Simon Pottinger was easily elected to a part-time post. Our support for the miners at Christmas Conference in contrast to the equivocation of the Executive gained us much support from left wing delegates both inside and outside NOLS. We've become so much of a threat to the Executive in fact that in later elections NOLS chose to elect the SWP rather than NOLS NC member Helen McHale of Socialist Students.

The decision by Sunderland Polytechnic Student Union to ban its Jewish Society dominated Conference. The society was banned after a Union meeting had agreed a policy of 'Zionism is racism' and extended this to their Jewish Society's pro-Zionist constitution, in the name of giving no platform to racism. The national debate following this decision has been extremely complicated and emotionally charged. There was widespread agreement that Sunderland Poly was wrong in banning its Jewish Society and that Jewish students have a right to organise autonomously against anti-semitism and around Jewish culture and religion. The ban stems from a misunderstanding of the tactic of no platform for racism. While Zionism falsely argues that anti-semitism requires the Jews to have a homeland a Jewish Society which calls for the understanding of Zionism cannot be regarded as racist.

In the emergency debate the Executive pushed through a motion to suspend Sunderland Poly as from next December's conference unless the Jewish Society is reinstated. Socialist Students opposed this on the grounds that it would generate more support for Sunderland and might lead to other Unions banning their Jewish Societies. Also, it seems unlikely to change much at Sunderland. It is not clear what will happen, but the Union of Jewish Students and the General Union of Palestinian Students have begun negotiations to try and resolve the issue.

Alick Bridger, Vice-President, Sussex University Student Union

Next issue out: Thursday 16th May
Deadline for articles: Monday 6th May

Next National editorial board at 1pm Sunday 19th May at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham

Class is the issue

Pat Waylett (East Lewisham CLP)

Few Labour Party members would question the need to make the Parliamentary Party more representative of its supporters. Members often talk of the need for at least 50% women and a considerable number of Black MP's. This must be considered a minimum demand, the other political parties are unlikely to play any part in redressing Parliament's inbuilt bias. The Labour Party should therefore seek to deal with parliament as a whole. There should be a large minority of women and between 70 and 100 black MP's in the PLP if this Party is serious about representing the oppressed and disadvantaged in society.

DOMINATION OF THE MIDDLE CLASS

One aspect of the unrepresentative nature of parliament is almost totally ignored, the domination of the middle class. The marked reluctance to face this issue may be peculiar to the London Labour Party. We do seem to be awash with middle class academic, most of whom don't know a shop floor from a dance floor and think deprivation is the off license running out of claret. I hope the party membership is more representative in other areas. If not, it is probably beyond hope. The signs are not good. The general reaction to declining working class support seems to be "Why don't the working class vote for all these nice 'socialist' policies we give them."

The PLP has had a middle class majority since 1929 and the current crop are no different. We have a deputy leader who states how hard it was for his family to pay the mortgage in the thirties, an old etonian education spokesperson, plus the usual collection of solicitors, doctors and Oxbridge graduates. Even those from working class backgrounds tend to be trade union bureaucrats who have been busy selling out strikes most of their lives.

If the current pressure for a more representative PLP ends up with a dramatic increase in the number of middle class women it will not advance socialism by one day. Judging by the number of careerists climbing on the bandwagon, there is real danger of yet another idea being hijacked by the middle class to perpetuate its own power. I do not believe that an increase in black MPs represents the same danger, even middle class black people still experience racism every day of their lives and usually retain strong links with the black community.

People born in a privileged environment have been controlling this party for too long, it is time they were pushed aside. I will work for the election of any black candidate, any working class candidate and will not support a white working class man against a woman of that class. If a white middle class man or woman is selected, I will not cross the street to deliver a leaflet. I am sick of the middle class using this party as their personal gravy train, I am sick of pseudo socialists with no class analysis, and do gooders who should be in the Liberal Party. I have listened to their patronising crap for too long and I have had enough.

PRIVATE ROUTE TO CAREER

Middle class people who use the Labour Party as their private route to a career are just as much the enemy as the Tories. In fact they are worse because they disguise their manipulation with words of friendship. The only members of the middle class who are of any use in the struggle for socialism are those who recognise their classes' part as agents of the ruling class and are determined to work for their own classes' elimination.

All the arguments that apply to women and black people apply equally to working class people. To deny the case for any one is to deny all three. It is time for the Labour Party to deliver on representation and real distribution of wealth or to fade into deserved obscurity.

Model resolution for annual Conference Lesbian and gay rights.

Important – remember to vary the wording of this resolution: identical resolutions count as one at Conference.

"This conference opposes all discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and notes that existing Labour Party policy with regard to homosexuality fails to meet the legitimate demands of lesbians and gay men, and that a consistent and principled campaign conducted over a number of years is necessary to reverse that failure. Conference welcomes the progress made by some Labour authorities and looks for an end to the institutionalised oppression of gay men and lesbian women. It therefore:

a) instructs the national executive committee to draw up a lesbian and gay rights bill, which should specifically:

i) declare that lesbian and gay acts and relationships are not contrary to the public policy of the law;

ii) prohibit discrimination by the courts against lesbians and gay men in child custody and in unfair dismissal on grounds in any way connected with sexuality or lifestyle.

iii) abolish criminal laws that discriminate against lesbians and gay men.

iv) make discrimination on grounds of sexuality an actionable civil offence and invalidate all discriminatory regulations and bye-laws;

v) prevent police harassment and discrimination against lesbians and gay men and calls upon the Parliamentary Labour Party to introduce such a bill and to support bills to reform the law in this direction with a three line whip.

b) calls upon all Labour local authorities, district and county Labour Parties to adopt practises and policy to prevent discrimination against lesbians and gay men, and in particular to:

i) adopt and enforce equal opportunities in relation to sexual orientation along the same lines as Islington, Hackney, the GLC and Manchester,

ii) end discrimination against single people and lesbians and gays in housing policies;

iii) provide funds for lesbian and gay switchboards and centres;

iv) publicise the anti-discriminatory policies listed above.

c) instructs the national executive committee to:

i) organise a campaign of education amongst the membership of the Party on the oppression of lesbians and gay men in conjunction with the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

ii) place advertisements in the lesbian and gay media and produce leaflets using the slogan "The Labour Party supports lesbian and gay rights – join the Labour Party".

d) instructs the national executive committee to set up a sub-committee in collaboration with the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights to organise implementation of this policy".

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights AGM. May 4/5, County Hall, London, 10 am – 6 pm. Workshops include: Miners' strike; Rugby; Labour Party; Local Government; AIDS; Women-only space throughout. Ken Livingstone, Newham 7. Round table discussion with: Dianne Abbott and Linda Bellos (Black Section), Ian Dunn (editor, 'Gay Scotland'), Dai Donavan, (Dulais Valley NUM). Evening social, creche, wheelchair access and signer. Registration £2/£1. Details from 01-286 4823 or 01-587 1643.

We are organising a lesbian and gay delegation in the early summer with the intention of meeting a number of different groups and organisations of varying political persuasion. We aim to go to both the north and south – visiting Dublin and Belfast as well as possibly Cork and Derry, with the trip lasting between three days and a week.

Organisations we are thinking of meeting include: Sinn Fein, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Trade Unions, Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association, Lesbians and Gays Against Imperialism.

At least half the delegation will be women, and there will be reserved places for black lesbians and gays. The autonomous women's group can be reached by writing to: Labour Lesbians, c/o AWP, Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC1 or phoning Sarah on 01-883 3798 or Sue on 01-883 9246.

The group as a whole can be contacted by writing to: L&G Delegation, c/o LCLGR, 39 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH or phoning LCLGR on 01-286 4823 or Ttobie on 01-226 1097.

With thanks and comradeship,
Sarah Roelofs and Ttobie Glenny,
Delegation Organisers.

Mozambique — the failure of the Nkomati Accord

Mozambique, stretching along the South East Coast of Africa is a country memorable for its spirit of revolution. The liberation front, Frelimo, led the country to independence in 1975, through armed struggle with the Portuguese. Always under the banner, and in many cases the practice of peoples power, Frelimo then began to turn the country in a socialist direction. The armed struggle was also notable for the first significant contribution of the women's militia and the early years of independence led to significant gains for women, particularly in the campaign against 'lobolo' (bride price) and the oppressive polygamous family structure.

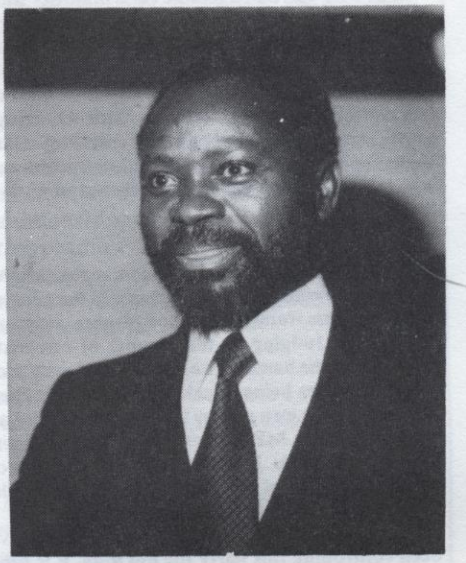
Mozambique was left however in a state of total underdevelopment. The Portuguese had run the country through a regime in many ways worse than that of neighbouring South Africa. What industry and commerce existed was abandoned and often destroyed by the fleeing 300,000 Portuguese that inhabited Mozambique before independence. With only 30,000 Portuguese and almost no skilled workforce (only 2% of Mozambicans were literate), the country faced the task of development. Much of the economy of Mozambique was inextricably linked to that of South Africa. Migrant labourers from the Southern part of Mozambique worked in the South African Mines and the port of Maputo relied almost entirely on South African business. South Africa, not unsurprisingly, now chose a policy of virtual economic boycott of "Marxist" Mozambique.

ENTHUSIASTIC ATTEMPTS

Despite the economoic problems enthusiastic attempts wer emade to develop the country and gains were made in production over the early years of independence. In hindsight, the 4th Congress of Frelimo held in April 1983 criticised the concentration on large projects. For example, much foreign currency was used to attempt to develop state farms with high technology solutions. Despite this investment state farms remained far less productive than the peasant farmer who could have been provided with some basic equipment to much increase productivity. However by 1983 the analysis has perhaps come too late. The foreign currency of the early years was drying up and with the world economic recession many foreign goods, like lorries and tractors were costing relatively 15 times as much in terms of Mozambican produce than in the '70s.

In the early '80's a drought struck most parts of central and southern Mozambique holding out for over 4 years.

Since the beginning there had existed a 'resistance' movement, the Mozambique National Resistance, quite rightly dubbed the 'armed bandits' by Frelimo. Their existence relies entirely on external support mainly from South Africa and Portugal. Their leaders were disaffected Frelimo fighters or formerly of the Portuguese secret police. Their 'soldiers' are drawn from among the many near starving scraping an existence from the drought stricken and who see a chance to eat, either from supplies dropped from South Africa or simply by stealing food from their fellow Mozambicans. Through the use of guerilla tactics these armed bandits have been able to bring economic havoc to the country and stopped emergency supplies of food from reaching the areas needed. The excellent health and education network built up over the years now lies in disarray as supplies and personnel cannot travel outside many cities particularly in the parts of Mozambique bordering on South Africa and Malawi.



Universal Pictorial Press

Samore Machel, President of Mozambique.

STUNNING

This disruption, coupled with the need to renegotiate the foreign debt, led to one of the most surprising and stunning political events in Southern Africa — the signing of the Nkomati Accord between the state of Mozambique and South Africa, in March of 1984. The accord agreed some areas of economic co-operation but most importantly was a pact of mutual non-aggression. In the year of the Accords existence it has made no change to South Africa's policy of destabilisation of Mozambique but did enhance South Africa's status, giving it an external facade as the peace maker thus giving Western governments an excuse to allow the European tour of Botha in the summer of '84. On Mozambique's side it was almost certainly damaging. It meant a period of ideological confusion. Prior to the Nkomati accord the rallying cry had always been that there would be no true independence in Southern Africa while apartheid exists. The African National Congress, South Africa's liberation movement, received more than just political and diplomatic support. It had no military bases but there was some passage of ANC fighters over the border with Swaziland. However at the signing of Nkomati, the people were suddenly greeted with an ideology of South Africa as a friendly neighbour and all but a few diplomatic figures from the ANC were unceremoniously thrown out of Mozambique.

Samora Machel, the president of Mozambique has recently announced the failure of the Nkomati accord. This brings new hope to the situation and once again shows that Frelimo is a party capable of critical appraisal. However, Mozambique is a long way from solving its problems. The 'bandits' seem stronger than ever, certainly in the area surrounding the capital Maputo and there are still thousands starving and food shortages even in the cities.

Oxfam are collecting aid for Mozambique and more information can be obtained from the Mozambique Information Office, 32 Percy Street, W1. If you can help please do so, meanwhile the struggle continues!

Two ex-cooperantes (workers) in Mozambique.

Sunderland Poly suspended

Earlier this year, Sunderland Polytechnic passed a policy supporting the Palestinians and opposing Zionism as a racist movement and ideology. In consequence it refused to recognise a Jewish Society whose constitution included supporting Zionism. Instead it preferred to recognise a non-Zionist Jewish society. We believe it was tactically wrong for Sunderland to have taken this stance as it is a misapplication of the No Platform for Racists policy and focuses the debate on the rights of Zionists rather than the oppression of Palestinians.

Nonetheless, we reject the accusation that Sunderland's actions were in any way anti-semitic. Only three months ago NUS Executive were censured by conference for not supporting North London Poly in their fight against the NF. The Union of Jewish Students, an Israeli funded Zionist group which launched the attack on Sunderland, also gave no support to PNL. Its chairperson, M. Kalman, in a letter to the Jewish Chronicle (15.6.84) wrote "For UJS to follow a policy in which it supported the extreme left in banning Patrick Harrington from his lectures at PNL would have been politically suicidal . . . to have joined the extreme left in their violent and illegal actions would have added more fuel to the NF's propaganda victory at PNL."

Not surprisingly it was North London Poly which moved the amendment supporting Sunderland.

Yet NUS Executive was prepared to move an emergency motion suspending Sunderland from next Christmas. To NUS Executive the rights of Zionist students (a number of Jewish anti-Zionists at Sunderland supported their union) were paramount. It alleged that Jewish students' identity was under attack. It was the National Black Students Alliance which gave Sunderland the firmest support.

At NUS conference, the Executive's motion was passed by a slim majority. It is regrettable when a left union is under attack – having democratically made a decision at a 1,000-strong UGM – that the Socialist Organiser dominated SSIN (Socialist Students in NOLS) could give only token support with their member on NUS Executive, Simon Pottinger, supporting the suspension! It seems Socialist Organiser are going down the same road on Palestine as they did on Ireland. It balanced the rights of the Palestinians with those of the Zionists. It refused to condemn Zionism as racist. Although we have tactical disagreements with Sunderland they have triggered off a new debate on Zionism.

Tony Greenstein.
Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine.

Ireland: Women's request for open democratic discussion to be overruled?

The Labour Party bureaucracy is once more attempting to suppress the views and initiatives of women in the Party. Since last year's National Women's Conference, Labour women have had the most progressive policy on Ireland of any section of the Party. That was followed this year by an initiative from Labour women in London, which resulted in the recent London Labour Party AGM adopting a resolution calling for debate and discussion on the matter of British withdrawal from Ireland, with specific reference to the effect withdrawal would have on women. The resolution calls on the London Executive to initiate these discussions within the London Labour Party, and to involve representatives from the majority of republican opinion. The democratic rights of London Labour Party members to determine regional policy are now being threatened, however, by an attempt to prevent the London Executive from complying with this resolution.

Hornsey and Wood Green Labour Party Women's Section and Hayes and Harlington CLP, the original sponsors of the resolution, have responded by issuing a statement, which is reproduced below.

David Hughes, Labour Party National Agent, has written a letter to the London Labour Party Secretary, George Page, instructing him not to implement a composite resolution on Ireland which was passed by a clear majority on a card vote at the London Labour AGM in March. The National Agent is seeking an NEC decision "preventing your (i.e. London) Council complying with the resolution." (Letter to George Page, March 25th, 1985).

The composite resolution in question was a Labour *women's* initiative. Our primary aim was open, broad, non-exclusive debate and discussion throughout the London labour movement on the issue of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland *most especially from women's perspective.* The little dialogue that has managed to break through the wall of silence on Ireland has taken place between men and our views as women and feminists have rarely, if at all, been sought or expressed. In particular we feel that the continued strip-searching of women in Armagh prison raises the question of British involvement in Ireland. We proposed that the Withdrawal Bill published last summer by Tony Benn could usefully form an introduction and basis for these discussions. As part of the debate we also proposed public meetings specifically with women speakers and that *all* Irish republican and nationalist opinion be consulted and involved. For us as women this would mean for example, Irish feminists who wish to see a united Ireland (Labour Party policy), women like Bernadette Devlin McAlisky and Margaret Ward, the Women's Caucus of Irish Trade Unionists for Unity and Independence, SDLP women, Sinn Fein Women's Department, Irish Labour Party Women's Department. We also think that Irish people living in London, in particular organisations like the London Irish Women's Centre and the Irish in Britain Representation Group should be included.

Angry and dismayed

We have to say that we are angry and dismayed by David Hughes' action. There is now extensive evidence of the disinformation and censorship that exists on Ireland and as women we know only too well how our activities, feelings, opinions, bodies – our very lives – are similarly distorted, abused – and silenced. We believe this silencing by society, of both women and Irish people (and thereby of Irish women in particular), to be quite undemocratic, sexist and anti-Irish.

We are extremely confused about the role of paid Labour Party officers. Does their job description specifically and explicitly include the taking of political decisions? As feminists and socialists we find the concept of 'neutral' (i.e. the way civil servants are meant to be) officers dubious, but if paid, non-elected officers are to take political decisions how are they accountable? From the wording of David Hughes' letter *he* has decided that this resolution should not be implemented and he is then seeking NEC confirmation of his decision. All resolutions passed by regional conferences are automatically reported to the NEC anyway.

'Listen to women for a change'

Regional conference cannot form policy that conflicts with national Labour Party policy. We would most strongly argue that our resolution does not do so. Open discussions on withdrawal involving broad consultations are well within our position of support for Irish reunification. Peter Archer, Labour spokesperson on Ireland, has frequently stated his willingness to meet all elected representatives in Northern Ireland. And one of the Labour Party's own slogans is 'Listen to Women for a Change!' Indeed if there was some constitutional problem with our resolution surely London AGM's Standing Orders Committee should have advised us of it *before* it was debated by the meeting? Nothing at all was ever raised with us.

The resolution is now the property of the London EC and it is obviously for them to decide how this will be dealt with. As the sponsoring organisations we wish to make our views known. We do urge the London EC to allow all of us the opportunity to listen to women, and Irish people, and to then make up our own minds.

Hornsey Women's Section
Hayes and Harlington CLP

RESOLUTION

THE FOLLOWING COMPOSITE ON N.IRELAND WAS PASSED BY 350,000 TO 229,500 VOTES AT THE 18TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GREATER LONDON REGIONAL COUNCIL OF THE LABOUR PARTY HELD ON THE 2ND AND 3RD MARCH 1985.

Motions 92 - 95
Composite "0"

"This Annual Meeting supports the position adopted by National Labour Women's Conference, May 1984, in condemning the repression of Irish women, especially the strip-searching of women in Armagh prison and recognising the achievement of the Regional Women's Council in organising a delegation to visit prisoners in Armagh.

Annual Meeting believes that ongoing repression and the serious deterioration of civil liberties in Northern Ireland raises the question of a British withdrawal.

Annual Meeting believes there should be open and wide ranging debate and discussion throughout the labour movement on the matter of British withdrawal.

Annual Meeting notes Tony Benn MP's Bill for withdrawal from Northern Ireland and requests the London Executive to initiate such discussion by:

1. *Circulating all London CLPs and affiliated organisations with a copy of the Bill and its introduction requesting that organisations discuss it and send back their views.*
2. *The executive then discuss London Labour comments and prepare a report to also be circulated.*
3. *The Executive organise a public meeting on this issue with London Labour Party, Trade Union, and GLC speakers including women speakers who would also deal with how a British withdrawal would affect women in Northern Ireland, recognising that strip-searching is a deplroable practice intended purely to degrade and demoralise the prisoners.*
4. *Fully involving representatives from the majority of republican opinion in the consultations, discussions and public meetings which are to be held. In addition, the Executive invite representatives to attend the 1986 Annual Meeting of the Greater London Labour Party Regional Council."*

Moved: Hornsey & Wood Green Women's Section
Seconded: Hayes & Harlington CLP

VETO LETTER

The Labour Party
Mr. G. Page
GLRC *25/3/85*

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 19 March and enclosures concerning Composite 0 carried at your regional conference.

I am reporting this matter to the April meeting of the Organisation Committee for a decision preventing your Council com plying with the resolution. As soon as the NEC makes a decision I will write to you. In the meantime I would ask that you do not correspond with any organisation on the Matter.

Yours Sincerely,
David Hughes
National Agent

Ireland: for a creative dialogue

Since it was formed 5 years ago, the LCI has campaigned to bring home to the British Labour movement the realities of the North of Ireland. As part of this campaign, it has actively sought a sustained dialogue between Republican organisations in Ireland and trade unions and constituency Labour Parties in Britain.

For this reason, we welcomed the initiatve taken by our national President, Ken Livingstone, when he invited Gerry Adams to London and later visited him in Belfast. The LCI organised a fringe meeting at the 1983 Labour Party Conference at which Gerry Adams was the main speaker. Dialogue does not imply uncritical support for Sinn Fein, and the dialogue we seek is not only with that organisation. However, this dialogue is crucial for the following reason.

Successive British Governments have sought to protray Sinn Fein and the Republican movement in general as a small group of 'mad gunmen' totally unrepresentative of the communities from which they come. We used to be told that if ever Sinn Fein could win elections through the ballot box, then it would have some kind of legitimacy and be regarded as an organisation with which the British would have to deal. Sinn Fein's successes in elections recently — most notably Bobby Sands election during the hunger strike and Gerry Adams election to Westminster — have revealed this argument as a sham. Tory Government policy is still to refuse to recognise the legitimacy of the Party which clearly represents the majority in key working class Catholic communities in the 6 Counties.

We are now told that Sinn Fein cannot be accepted as legitimate because it supports the violence of the IRA. Yet all sides consistently use violence in the 6 counties — Republicans, Loyalists, and, not least, the British themselves. The plain truth is that British Governments have never wanted British people to know the truth about Britain's role in Ireland. The British establishment does not want people here to know about British oppression or the Resilience and fighting spirit of the communities which suffer and resist it. Sinn Fein has demonstrated quite clearly that it is a very authentic voice of a desperately oppressed people. It has earned the right to be listened to.

The LCI fully supports the motion passed at the London Labour Party's Annual Conference. We welcome the decision to involve the majority of Republican opinion in 'consultation, discussion and public meetings, and to invite its representative to the 1986 Annual Meeting'. It is inexplicable to us that the National Agent, David Hughes, has seen fit to refer this motion to the NEC Organisation subcommittee with a view to 'blocking its implementation'. This is a serious threat to the democratic rights of local Parties, and reminiscent of the bad old days when Bertrand Russell and others were expelled from the Party. They insisted on their democratic right to meet representatives of the official Soviet peace movement, and even though they made it clear that they took an independent line themselves, they were duly purged from the Party. Surely, we are not going to revert to that kind of intolerance.

As well as building a dialogue with Sinn Fein, the LCI has also sought a positive and constructive dialogue with Labour's official spokespeople on N. Ireland. We believe we have been successful in this, and that such dialogue benefits the Party as a whole. Peter Archer and Clive Soley, among others, have accepted offers to come on our platforms and discuss the issues with us.

We appeal to the Organisation Sub-Committee of the National Executive and to the NEC itself, to refrain from interference in democratic decisions of Regional Labour Parties. No one gains from unnecessary confrontations. Let us work together to extend democratic discussion, not restrict it.

Richard Chessum
Press Officer, Labour Committee on Ireland

A perspective on the miners' defeat

Paul Whetton



Immediately after the strike was called off, there was a feeling of bitterness, of having been let down, of not knowing what to do next. Four weeks on, after having faced the reality of going back down the pit, and recognising the reality of the political situation we realise that we cannot afford the luxury of saying that it is all over and packing it in. We have got to take the fight forward

We are faced with a whole number of important issues – the men who have been sacked the men who are in prison.

Margaret Thatcher on her tour of South East Asia has been saying that the unions are smashed and finished We have to demonstrate clearly that this is not the case and we have to fight for a politicisation of the rank and file in the NUM.

Personally, I am sceptical about the recent opinion polls giving Labour an increasing lead. I think a great deal of grass roots work needs to be done in the Party on what precisely are the lessons of the miners' strike and the role of the Party leadership.

A lot of people are still joining the Labour Party, including people in the mining communities, and I think in years to come that will bear quite a lot of fruit.

It is particularly important the various women's action committees set up during the strike aren t allowed to go under. I know that a lot of work is still being done by women in these groups and it is essential that they are allowed to make their own decisions, maintain their own autonomy and so on.

I think it is also important that those in the Labour Party and the unions who have fought over the past twelve months in support of the miners do not get demoralised by the defeat. It is just as important to carry on the fight in the Labour Party for a leadership that bases itself on working class policies as it is to fight within the unions.

Kinnock must be challenged as leader of the Party. Clearly, the problem here is finding someone suitable to do it. Everyone is fighting shy.

One lesson of the strike for me, as the secretary of the Notts miners rank and file strike committee, was the need for a rank and file movement alongside the official movement. It was quite uplifting to see how people came together to build a very solid local organisation in the face of the scabbing.

In the face of the defeat, it is time for us to stand back and see what can be achieved, what our objectives are now, and then approach that in a positive way. We cannot afford to see the defeat as the end of the world. We've got to learn the lessons and take the fight forward from there.

Published by Labour Briefing, 162 Millfields Road, London E5.

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd [TU], Forster Road, London N17.