LABOUR
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CRUISE MISSILES:
WE'RE NOT BEATEN YET!
by Tony Benn

The Cruise missiles are the best educators for CND. Remember that they cruise around the countryside. That's their whole purpose: the Russians are not supposed to know they are there. So you'll be driving along a country lane one day, and find a cruise missile trundling along. The appalling danger in which that puts this country, the extent to which we are exposed as a target, or risk being the victim of an accidental explosion, will be clear.

Nobody, but nobody, should feel that because they've got here, that means we've lost.

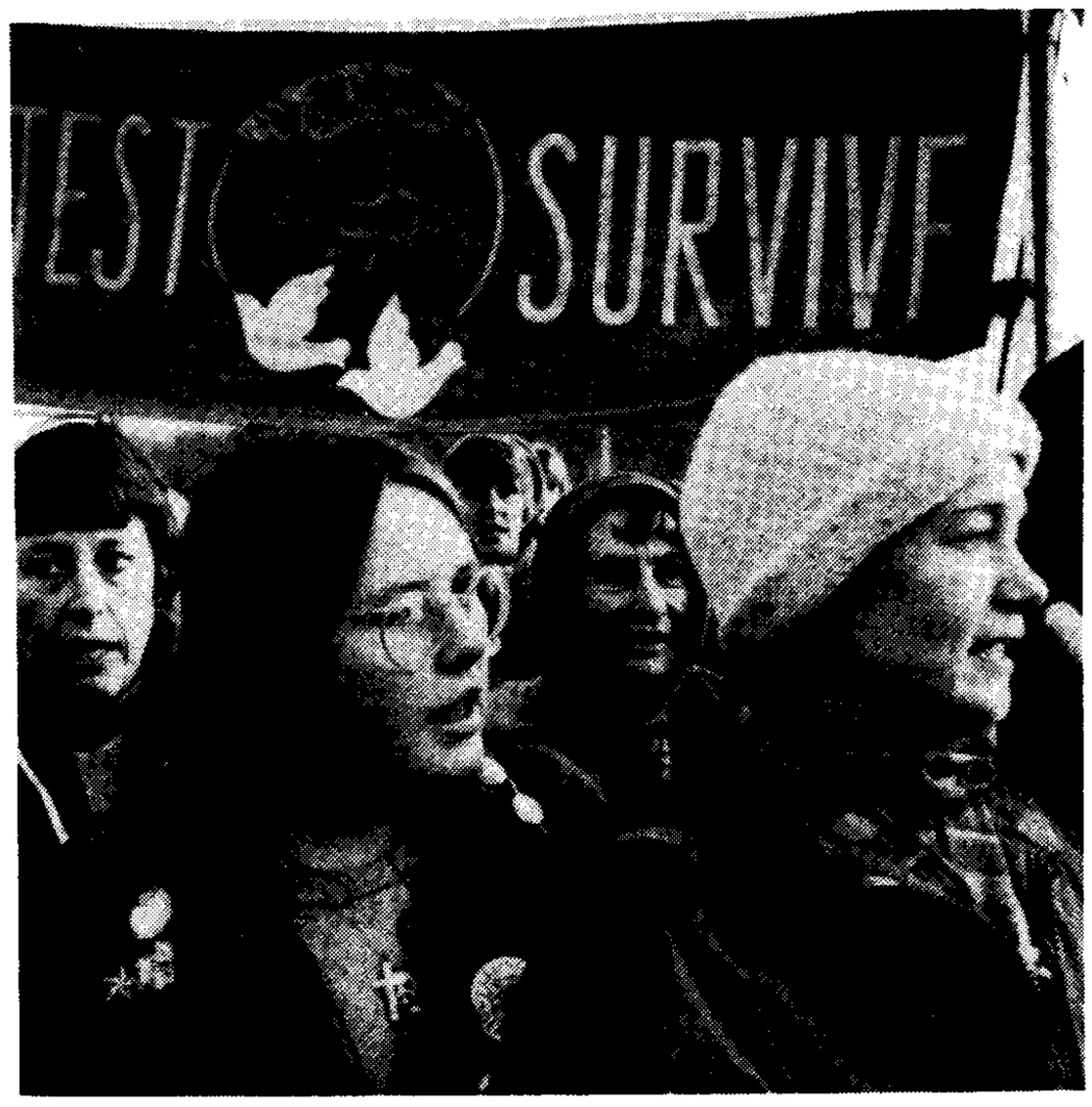
CND has got to go much more political. I understand that it can't be linked to the Labour Party as such, and nobody is suggesting it should. But there is a danger that, almost as if it were a political party on its own, it might think it would be more popular if it toned down its message.

There would always be a CND spokesperson in any discussion on the media, like a churchman who is supposed to be in favour of peace — but CND would lose its cutting edge. Moral revulsion against killing, and arcane and sophisticated discussions about weapons technology, are no basis for a peace movement. The peace movement has got to be much more political, much more international, linked much more directly with the struggle of workers for other things like homes and jobs.

I think CND will make a very great mistake if it doesn't make a much sharper edge in its campaign. If there is any suggestion that it's dropping its opposition to American bases and going for the freeze, I would say I'm in favour of the freeze, but it's a remedy for America. For us, it's a non-nuclear defence policy and getting rid of the bases.

So I think CND has quite a big political decision to take, and I very much hope, that obviously, with its degree of support around the country, that it maintains its cutting edge and indeed makes it more explicitly political in character.

However, it's very important not to have a campaign of competitive purity, with some people saying that others have sold out in any way. There will be a multiplicity of responses and the most important thing is that those responses, because they are multiplied and varied, don't turn against each other, because to split the peace movement now must be the prime objective of the government and NATO, and therefore we need an acceptance that you're going to have a diversity of response, and each will support the others as far as they honestly can.



What was interesting about the Brighton conference is that it just reconfirmed Labour policy. There were some people who said "let's drop it", and all the rest. Yet the Labour Party remains quite clearly a unilateral nuclear disarmament party.

However, even the Labour Party has got to shift beyond simply being in favour of giving up a particular weapon. I think the next stage for the Labour Party is to move towards non-alignment; a different foreign policy which breaks with the stranglehold of the rest of Western foreign policy, which is simply a backup for American global military and economic interests throughout the world.

I hope one thing comes out clearly on October 22: that after the long campaign against Cruise, its arrival should not be treated as a defeat. It's the next stage in the campaign.

EXPULSIONS ARE A DISGRACE

The expulsions agreed at this years Conference are a disgrace to the labour movement. No one should be expelled unless they stand against official Labour candidates.

The charge against the Militant tendency is that they are a party within a party. Isn't it strange that only the Left is accused of this, though we all know that there are organised groups on the right such as Solidarity. The expulsions were therefore on political grounds. In fact, all expulsions I can remember have been expulsions of left wingers. I remember, when Conference was controlled by the right, Konni Zilliacus, MP for Gateshead being expelled because he didn't support party policy.

There must be no more expulsions because they are wrong. And because they are wrong they create divisions not unity. We need a united movement to defeat the Tories and get a Labour government elected, committed to socialist democracy and the working class. You cannot have socialism without democracy, and it is not democratic to expel people with different ideas. If we don't like particular ideas, we must defeat them with better ideas.

Instead of attacking our own people we should be attacking the Tories, the real enemy of the workers. And if we think we will appease our enemies by expelling a few Marxists, we are wrong. It will only whet their appetite, and they will try to push us further along the road of expelling our membership.

JOAN MAYNARD



Sheila Gray

RUSSELL TUCK'S LIES: WYTHENSHAWE REPLIES

The fight to defend Wythenshawe against the NEC continues. We lost at party conference on referring back the NEC report on suspension, but the moral victory was ours.

Sam McCluskie from the chair was possibly the only person in the hall who thought our motion was lost on a show of hands. Ours was the only anti-witch hunt item not to be put to a card vote because we had received such good support amongst the unions that it would have embarrassed the NEC. Lastly, Russel Tuck, reporting for the NEC, was forced to concede that no one will be excluded from the reconvened AGM on November 4th.

We are convinced that if we had been able to reply to the NEC allegations and point out the lies in Russel Tuck's report, we would have received even more support.

While winning Russel Tuck's promise of an open AGM, we were still worried that it be conducted properly. We don't know which unions have newly affiliated under national agent David Hughes' one-person reign over the constituency for the last six months. We don't know how many new members we have signed up. But we do know that on March membership and affiliations that a clear majority would support the constituency officers against the NEC. We are concerned that this may be reversed by back door moves.

For example, the EETPU delegation have in the past supported the officers. We know now that another EETPU branch is trying to send delegates who aren't even members of that branch. Chapple has tried to do this before in London. He shut down a branch which wouldn't do what he wanted.

Wythenshawe are in the process of organising a conference to discuss these issues that have confronted us for the last five months, and in all probability will confront other Labour Parties in the near future. What is happening in Manchester is important nationally.

The NEC has already created two labour groups on Manchester City Council by expelling twenty six councillors who have defended party policy of no cuts and rent increases. Proceedings are taking place against another seven councillors, asking them to give unequivocal statements that they won't go against the labour group whip (in Manchester that means they agree to vote for cuts against party policy).

If the NEC are serious about party unity they should stop the proceedings and readmit the twenty-six. Otherwise, with two opposed Labour groups, the NEC will be encouraging the right wing to put through policies in coalition with the Tories and the Liberals. On top of that, what will the NEC do next if the Labour councillors outside of the group outnumber the official labour group?

We need a conference to campaign against NEC interference into CLPs and district parties, and in particular to defend the Manchester Labour Party. Wythenshawe has been the scapegoat in Manchester to scareoffothers in Manchester from selecting those councillors who best represent the Labour Party and its decided policy. It hasn't worked yet, but we don't know what more is to come. What we do know is that the NEC have been taking extreme measures to prevent yet another industrial city being won to radical positions such as implementing party policy and defending services.

ALF HOMES
Chair, Wythenshawe Labour Party
For information contact: Cllr. Alf Homes. 39 Mullacre Road, Benchill, Manchester 22.

LABOUR AGAINST THE WITCH HUNT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CAMDEN TOWN HALL, SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER

Open to all affiliated Labour Parties, wards, women's sections, trade unions, young socialists, socialist societies and to individual affiliates.

Speakers include
Audrey Wise
Alf Homes, Chair, *Wythenshawe Labour Party*

For affiliaton, delegation, etc., write to: The Secretary, Keith Lichman, 11 Wilderton Road, N16 or phone (01) 802 1709.

A few thoughts on my expulsion

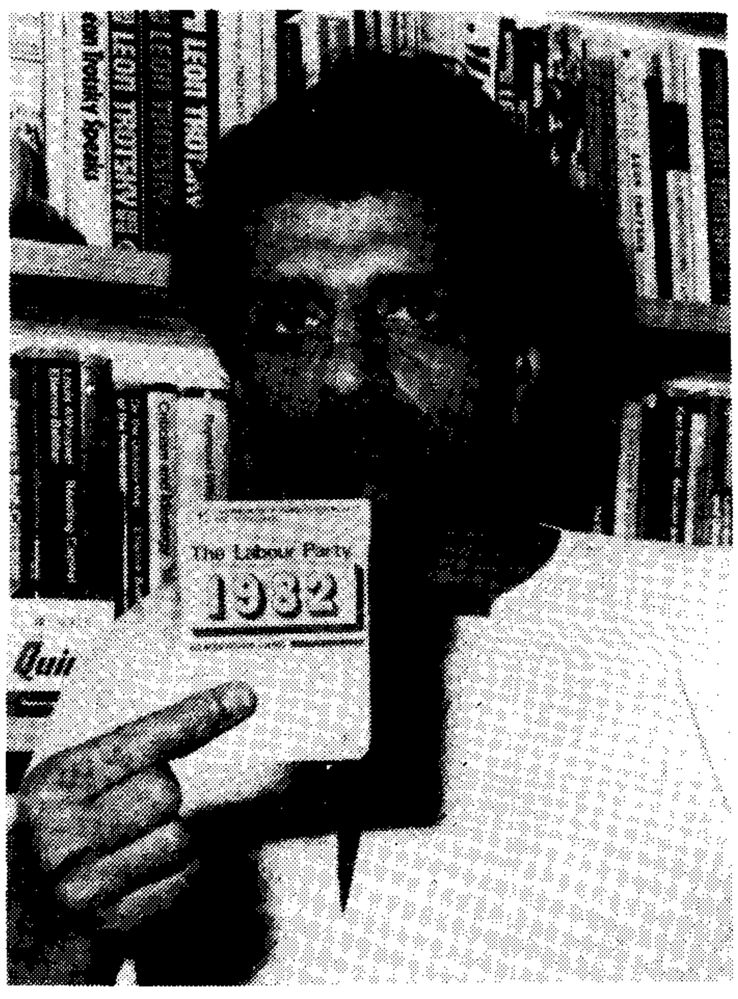
TARIQ ALI

For almost three years the NEC denied that I was a member of the Labour Party. Then they decided to expel me, a decision ratified by the block vote at the Labour Party Conference. The vote itself (3,493,000 to 1,670,000) indicates that the bulk of the CLPs as well as some unions were opposed to the decision, but that is not the heart of the matter. What has happened, in reality, is that the Broad Church wallahs have laid down the limits of the dissenters they will tolerate within their ranks. Former Tories are welcome (indeed the Hornsey and Wood Green Party recruited one such person not long ago); disillusioned SDP careerists will be greeted with open arms; repentant racists will find no bar to entry. It would appear that only Marxists are regarded as a dubious category, despite the fact that many dead veterans of the party cut their first political teeth in the ranks of the old Social Democratic Federation.

On closer scrutiny it would appear that Labourist barriers only go up when a particular type of Marxist is concerned. I have no doubt that Professor Eric Hobsbawn, star performer at the Fabian Society this year, the toast of *Guardian* columnists and *Financial Times* leader writers, would have no problems in joining the Hampstead Labour Party. Has not Kinnock referred to him as 'the most sagacious Marxist in Britain' or words to that effect. In short there are *legal* Marxists like Hobsbawm, Rowthorn and Martin Jaques who pose no problems whatsoever. They want a coalition from Edward Heath leftwards and call for the return of the SDP to the ranks of Labour. All three men are, in fact, members of the British Communist Party and represent its extreme right fringe. Socialism has become an unattainable utopia as far as they are concerned. The middle-classes loom large in their horizons as the saviours of modern civilization.

It is those of us who still believe that capitalism needs to be abolished; that Britain is a class society and that the working class has not disappeared, despite the periodic structural changes it is undergoing today; that socialism will mean the expropriation of the expropriaters by the majority of working people; that NATO is an immoral agency for the defence of imperialist interests and that Labour should become an explicitly socialist party and aim to campaign for socialist principles; it is we who are regarded as pariahs to be kept at a distance. Russell Tuck stated openly that the reason for my exclusion was that I remained a Marxist committed to socialist democracy. 'He did not say', Tuck continued, 'that he supports parliamentary democracy.' I have consistently said that I am in favour of a vigorous Labour presence and majority in Parliament. What is at issue is how socialism will come about. Kinnock argued in a letter to *The Guardian* defending the decision to exclude me that 'socialism would only come about through repeated parliamentary victories.' This is akin to saying that it will never happen. Why did the 1945 or 1966 Labour Governments not push it through?

The point is that the transition to socialism can be aided by a parliamentary majority. This would give the process the necessary legitimacy, but its implementation will require a massive mobilisation from below on every level. Parliament has no control over the Armed



Forces. If the situation ever arose would the British equivalents of Pinochet and Zia defend a socialist government against the native ruling class? The very notion is laughable.

What is doubly entertaining is that Messrs. Tuck, Golding, Hattersley, have made it clear that they believe in a benign capitalism. Do any of them really believe in Clause Four except as a necessary decoration? Yet they are in the Labour Party and I am not.

In itself my expulsion is an irrelevant footnote. There are more fundamental issues at stake. Will the attempt by the 'dream-ticket' to return to an old-style Labourism succeed or will the CLPs and the trade-union Broad Lefts recover from the defeat at Brighton and move forward in the years to come. What if Kinnock can not qualitatively improve Labour's standing at the next round of elections. Will this indicate that a further move to the Right is needed before the ruling class is truly pacified. The battle of Brighton did not take place because capitalist democracy had already ensured that Benn and Livingstone were not in the new Parliament. The ideologues of British capitalism have not yet finished with the Labour Party. In that sense these are still early days. Socialists in the Labour Party and the trade unions have a lengthy struggle ahead. It is the outcome of these future battles that will be decisive in shaping the pattern of working class politics in the coming period.

Tariq Ali expelled

Conference did consider the question of Tariq Ali's membership — sorry, it's his *expulsion* now that the NEC have doubts about their ability to refuse membership. We tried a reference back of the page in the NEC report which talked about the 'Authority of the NEC to expel an individual from membership of the Labour Party being clearly defined in the constitution'. We didn't, of course, win that reference back. On a card vote we got some unions on our side, along with the CLPs, with 1,600,000 for reference back and 4,000,000 against. Somehow the 1,600 membership of Hornsey and Wood Green paled into insigificance when those kind of block votes were weighed against them.

The NEC did reveal — in the person of Russell Tuck — that they had scheduled a meeting with Tariq Ali at their October NEC meeting, before they continued with their procedure. In the new-found spirit of Party Unity, this meeting could, of course, discover what a reasonable person Tariq is, and they didn't really mean it after all. Or they could go on, with the mandate of conference to pursue his expulsion to the bitter end. If expulsion is the conclusion, then we are faced with how they'll carry it out and how we can resist. Hornsey and Wood Green has yet to discuss the potential developments.

Whatever the outcome, the story so far is one of intolerance from the NEC and other members of the Party who talk of the only place for socialists being *in* the Labour Party, fighting for our polices and against the common enemy. When those socialists start coming in, however, the tune changes and the NEC start looking for ways to get them *out*, despite their having agreed to accept the objects and programme of the Party. It's the NEC who have picked the fight over Tariq Ali for the past two years. We must ensure that we don't sacrifice *our* principles and stand on the new found altar of Party Unity.

DIANA MINNS
Secretary, Hornsey and Wood Green
(in a personal capacity)

FIGHTING FOR A CHANGE

Jo Richardson, in her speech at the Women's Action Committee Rally at Annual Conference, voiced the views of a growing number of women in the Party when she said that we would no longer accept the situation where women were not able to play their full part in the Party, and that the fight for change had begun. Far from feeling deflated by defeat women have begun to feel the strength of solidarity and the whole campaign for women's rights in the Party is beginning to broaden out to encompass every aspect of the Party's structure.



Over the coming year there are a number of areas that need tackling.

First, and most important, we must build the CLPD Women's Action Committee into a broad-based country-wide campaign so that we can fully represent the views and aspirations of all radical women in the Party. This has already begun to happen with our decision to hold meetings in as many different parts of the country as possible and to encourage the setting up of regional WAC groups which can develop their own campaigning strategies and build membership, rather than being led from London all the time. Already women in a number of regions are finding the need for such organisation; the recent problems that our sisters in Scotland have faced in trying to get the NEC to agree to changes in the composition of the Scottish Regional Executive have highlighted this need and it is imperative that this becomes one of our priorities over the coming months.

Second, we must start work *now* for next year's Women's Conference and Annual Conference. As far as Annual Conference is concerned we will be hit by the three year rule on some of our main campaigning issues; we need to plan our strategy now to maximise pressure on the Party on this issues and to develop demands which we *can* take to next year's Conference. We must also plan *now* who our candidates for the Women's Section of the NEC are to be. The ludicrous fiasco of this year, where we didn't even have five women to vote for, let alone five women we could really support, must not happen again. And next year it must be women who put forward the first list of likely candidates NOT men. This will mean putting women's names forward and then working hard to ensure that they are delegates to Conference so that they can stand. And on the subject of women delegates to Conference — we must have MORE. This year there were *fewer* women delegates than last year, and a number of constituencies who wanted to send the additional woman delegate allowed for in the Party's rules were unable to do so because of bureaucratic manoeuvring. Next year we must ensure that we submit water-tight cases for additional women delegates and that as many parties as possible do so.

Third, we need to maximise our strength on the National Labour Women's Committee, and on the Regional Women's Executives. Radical women in all the regions need to get together to discuss who their candidates are to be for these bodies — another reason for regional WAC groups! If we can form a strong group on the National Labour Women's Committee we will be able to fight for the implementation of Women's Conference policy at the highest level and not just from on the sidelines as we have to do at present. But it isn't only the *implementation* of the policies that is a problem. It is also *knowledge* of what those policies are. Because no written report is produced containing the decisions made, we are denied a history. Each year everything happens afresh — and is forgotten once Women's Conference is over. Knowledge is power: knowledge of our organisation's policies will give us a platform from which to fight — which is of course why we are denied a report of our Conference's decisions. We need women elected to the NLWC who will fight for a report of our policies so that we can then fight to implement them.

Last, we must not ignore what is going on in the other sections of the NEC as far as the election of women is concerned. There are still no women in the Trade Union Section — a situation which is a disgrace to our movement, and there are only two in the Constituency Section — Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise. And have you noticed who always comes *bottom* of the poll in the Constituency Section! It's obvious isn't it — Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise. We must expose the incredible depth of male chauvinism in the Party and more importantly on the left. Why the hell should Jo and Audrey always come bottom! I suppose we will be told the same old story we get about women being selected as Parliamentary Candidates — you have to be elected on your merits, as a socialist, etc. etc. Well I'm sick and tired of this phoney argument and will not accept that Jo and Audrey are any the less socialist than the five men above them — in fact I think that in many respects they are *more* socialist! But they, like the rest of us, are discriminated against *because they are women* and it has got to STOP. It also isn't good enough that they are the only two women in sight in the Constituency Section elections. We must work to get more left women standing — and then get them elected.

There's a long way to go for women in the Party, but the most encouraging thing is that the will for change amongst women is there in abundance — and change there will be!

WAC can be contacted at:
39 Caldervale Rd., London SW4.

WAC 'Women discover your strength' T Shirts £3.50 and badges 20p available from above address.

WAC AGM Sunday Dec. 4th.
County Hall, London SE1.

WAC postcards and Bulletin (containing articles about WAC and its demands, information about the positions of the leadership contenders, and much more!) available from 89 Woodside Gdns., London N.17. £1 + 20p p&p.

Mandy Moore
Tottenham CLP

Organising the fightback

The Labour Left is in considerable disarray following the Tories landslide victory in the General Election, and the subsequent replacement of Michael Foot and Denis Healey at Conference. Reaction to these bruising defeats has been defensive: in fact, far too defensive. One gains the impression that large sections of the Party wish to forget the experience of the past ten years, and long for the return of the simple life before our innocence was destroyed.

The Party has shifted sharply to the right, mirroring the right-wing shift in public attitudes which has been successfully generated by the government. In this hostile environment it is not surprising that the Party should have responded by electing the Kinnock/-Hattersley ticket: their election has been due to fear at what the future might hold, a simplistic concern that our leaders should perform prettily on television, and, it must be said, a defeatist attitude towards what are regarded as 'vote-losing' policies such as unilateralism, opposition to council house sales, and withdrawal from the EEC.

It is remarkable that Mrs. Thatcher's government should have not only succeeded in defeating the Labour Party at the polls, but also in changing its leadership. The Tories also seem, by their election victory, to have found the abilitiy to shift the Labour Party's policies to the right, so that they appear to be in step with the new consensus of populist and reactionary attitudes. Is it not remarkable that an avowedly socialist party should find itself under pressure to shift policy rightwards at a time when the chances of reconstructing welfare capitalism grow slimmer every day?

The New Landscape

There is a new contour to the landscape of the Labour Party. It is plain that Neil Kinnock will seek to lead from the front, and legitimise changes in policy and direction by the use of the block votes of the big unions rather than by any fundamental change in the political ideology of the Party and trade union activists. Just as Attlee and Gaitskell dominated the Party Conference by being able to count on the unqualified support of Peaking, Lawther and Williamson, so Kinnock and Hattersley will rely on the block votes of the TGWU, GMBATU and AUEW in order to push their views forward. This strategy is, frankly, likely to stand a good chance of success given the distance of time which now separates 1983 from the experience of the trade unions under the last Labour Government. It was that distrust of the last Wilson/Callaghan government which enabled the Left to split the block vote monolith and change the Party. The conditions for again achieving that kind of success are temporarily in abeyance.

What Must be Done?

We are in complete agreement with the new leadership of the Party in stating that victory at the coming general election is crucial to the interests of working people. But we want that Labour victory to be a genuine victory for socialist ideas, which will give really practical backing to the implementation of a socialist manifesto by that government.

We also give notice that we are not willing to give up those socialist ideas be-



Labour Party Photo Library

cause of opportunism by the leaders. Nor are we prepared to tolerate the pathetic and damaging witch-hunt of Party members which played a major part in destroying unity and so undermining our election chances. If the new leadership is prepared to support the existing socialist policies of the Party, and stop the grey apparatniks of witch-hunt warfare in their tracks, then they will receive genuine support from all sections of the Party.

The likelihood is, however, that such a commitment will not be forthcoming. Kinnock wants one development more than anything else: freedom for the leadership from commitments. It is the thread which links his attitudes together: and the left must change this policy of the 'doctor's mandate' because it is the antithesis of our tradition as a programmatic party which calls on its leaders to implement a specific programme when they have the chance in government.

Rating our Chances

The Labour Left's voice is now less powerful than it was just two years ago. The trade unions have been deradicalised because of mass unemployment and political pressure from the government. Tony Benn is out of Parliament. The constituency Labour Parties have shifted somewhat to the right because sections in the centre have capitulated and collapsed to the right. The old alliance of CLPD, 'Bennites' and left groups has broken down; but, paradoxically, the PLP has shifted to the left under the pressures of reselection. In short, an effective alliance of the left has to be reconstructed.

Objectives

It is not easy to predict the terrain on which the battle will be fought. But we would be ignoring reality if we ignored the crucial value of radicalising work in the trade unions; and here the importance of workplace branches is central. We must prepare to defend policy against raids from the right, and to be plain in our opposition to witch-hunting tactics if they are tried.

In one sense the left is in a strong position. The Party can not now be governed amicably without the consent of the left: and that will be discovered very quickly, if attempts are made to test our resolve.

But defence is not enough. The Left has made some serious mistakes in the past decade. In the next ten years we must build a more collective leadership that is not so dependent on individuals; we must cease to think in purely organisational terms and begin to popularise socialist ideas: and we must not be defensive about Party policy. Policy is just frankly inadeqaute over public ownership and the financial sector, NATO, civil nuclear power and women's rights.

The PLP still needs bringing under control through democratic changes. And we still need to make considerable progress in persuading the Party that it is legitimate to link the struggles of industrial workers with the politics of the labour movement.

Time is short. We have probably two clear years to re-organise the left, win rational support for our objectives, and then win the movement. The prize at the end of it: a new kind of Labour Government wholly unlike our experience of the last 20 years. And that is worth fighting for.

by Reg Race

RATES: THE TORIES' STRATEGY

The Government's White Paper with its proposals to 'cap' the rates of selected local authorities has received considerable publicity in recent weeks. What the media have not explained is that the White Paper represents part of a two year strategy by the Tories against inner city Labour local authorities. The first stage of this strategy is to use the existing legislative framework to force selected Councils to make large rate rises in 1984. The second stage is to use the new legislation outlined in the White Paper to 'cap' the rates of selected Councils in 1985, with the Government confident that popular support for these Councils in any struggle with central government will be minimised by the high rate rises that they have levied in 1984. The purpose of this article therefore is to explain both the current legislative framework applying to Labour Boroughs setting their budgets for 1984/5 and the proposals for rate capping in the recent White Paper.

Heseltine while Secretary of State for the Environment introduced a series of legislative measures designed to strengthen central government control over the total volume of local government expenditure and over the ability of individual local authorities to spend more than the Government wanted. The legislation changed with bewildering rapidity in response to opposition and practical problems in implementation, but now consists of two main control mechanisms; the Grant Related Expenditure Assessment (GRE)/Block Grant system and the system of targets and penalties.

Each year the government determines within total proposed public expenditure the level of current expenditure which it would like local authorities to undertake, and the overall level of support it is prepared to give local authorities with this expenditure. Under the Tories, central government support to local authorities fell from over 60% of total expenditure to 52.8% in 1983/4. The majority of this support is distributed through the block grant system. Thus total local government current expenditure for 1983/4 was estimated as £22,307 million and £8,730 million was distributed to local authorities as block grant (£3,052 million was tributed in other grants).



David Hoffman

DON'T CUT THEM OFF! Home telephones for the elderly in Hackney.

Highly Subjective

This total block grant is then distributed to individual local authorities by reference to GREs. An authority's GRE is, in theory, an assessment of the amount the authority needs to spend to provide a standard level of service and is the total of the GREs for different Council services. Thus an authority with a larger than average number of old people should have a higher than average Social Services GRE for the elderly. In practice the needs assessments are highly subjective and open to criticism that they are biased against the inner city areas. For example, Social Services GREs make no allowance for the fact that in inner city areas the scope for volunteers to work as home helps or provide meals on wheels is much less than in country areas. 26 out of 32 London Boroughs, including most Tory Boroughs, spend in excess of GRE.

Having set the GRE for each authority the government determines what is a reasonable contribution from the rate payers. This is done through a highly complex system designed to even out differences between authorities with high rate bases and ones with low rate bases in order to ensure that all local authorities will levy the same rate poundage if they spend to their GRE. Thus an authority like Westminster with a high rate base should get less block grant than an authority like Hackney, as it is assumed that the ratepayers' contribution in Westminster is greater. If an authority spends above GRE, grant for this additional expenditure tapers off rapidly.

Targets and Penalties.

The Government found that the GRE/Block Grant system did not have the effect it wanted and introduced the system of targets and penalties. Each year as well as setting a GRE for each authority it lays down a target, normally determined in relation to previous year's expenditure. If an authority spends above target it becomes liable to penalties, that is its block grant is **cut**. Some authorities like ILEA whose spending is well above target receive no block grant at all, so high are their penalties. The system means that an authority budgeting above target has to raise from the rates money to compensate for penalties as well as money to finance the extra expenditure. For example, to finance each pound of expenditure above target in 1983/4 Hackney council had to raise £1.62 from the rates to compensate for the effect of penalties.

Use of these control mechanisms, GREs and targets, enables the Government to force local authorities in a position of having to make large cuts or large rate rises.

The White Paper on Rates

The White Paper published in August outlines the Government's plans to limit the rate rises of selected authorities from 1985/6. The scheme envisaged has three stages: selecting authorities for rate limitation, setting levels of expenditure for the authorities selected, and translating the expenditure level into a maximum rate. Authorities with budgets under £10 million (mainly Tory) are excluded from the scheme.

Private rubbish in Oxfordshire

Chris Morgan (West Oxford CLP)

A new campaign is about to be launched in Oxford against further privatisation of the refuse service. South Oxfordshire has some experience of the true cost of this latest Tory fetish. On April 1st 1983, the District Council handed over refuse collection to Pritchard Industrial Services, despite warnings from its Chief Technical Officer Mr Malcolm Campbell. He expressed the serious doubts as to whether this least experienced of the tenders had fully appreciated the extent of the service required, especially in urban areas (Oxford Star 3 March 1983). However, the lure of a promised annual saving of between £150,000 to £200,000 per annum was too much.

Pritchard's plan for South Oxfordshire was to use only one depot at Wallingford, cut the workforce from 59 to 43 and vechicles from twelve to nine. Dust collectors were to work a nine—hour day instead of eight. Pritchard's naturally offered new contracts to the then redundent direct labour-force. Initially they turned the offer down. The attitude of the District Council to what had been a loyal workforce can only be described as shabby. This and the derisory basic redundency payments of one week's money for every year of service, had left them feeling very bitter. However economic necessity forced many to accept Pritchard's job offer, although after several months of operation, the labour is now mainly casual.

But the story hardly stops there. Since April there has been an avalanche of complaints reported in the local press. The District Council, which retains its statutory control of the contractor through a system of fines, has been forced to use its powers several times. As early as the 8th April, one local resident, by his own admission 'a strong believer in private enterprise and denationalisation' wrote to the Oxford Mail complaining about the mountain of garbage outside his gate and disparaging the new arrangements.

On the 26th April villagers in Towersey near Thame, threatened to sue the Council for non-compliance with its statutory duty under the 1936 Public Health Act. Malcolm Campbell 'soothed' the protestors, saying that things were improving and complaints getting fewer. In May complaints were still coming into the Council offices at the rate of 50 per day, admittedly an improvement on a staggering three hundred a day in the first few weeks.

By August of this year Pritchards had been fined at least five times by the District Council and 20p had been wiped off the shares of their parent company. Their response to all this was to lean heavily on the workforce. The Oxford Mail reported one of them as saying 'the boss has told us he wants to see us run'. Safety standards are now ignored in the new rush for efficiency. Vechicles are overloaded, which is not only unsafe but incurs a hidden cost in terms of increased wear on roads. Dustcarts are left uncleaned giving an added health risk. Council regulations on safety and operational practice are broken regularly. Not that these things would evoke much response from the Tory Council. What it cannot ignore is the still constant flood of complaints concerning the service. And several weeks ago, this most accomodating of Councils, warned Pritchard's that it was coming close to having its services terminated.

The Oxford Campaign aims to show ratepayers that privatisation is expensive, to point up the political fetishism of the Tories and develop political awareness of the benefits of the Direct Labour Organisation. When privatisation was first proposed it went under a different title. The rallying cry of the tories was then 'Lakerise Local Government'—a slogan more prophetic than they could have known.

In the year preceding the year when rate limitation will apply the Goverment will select those authorities who will be affected. Selection is likely to depend on a number of factors including degree of 'overspending' in relation to GRE, recent trends in expenditure compared with other authorities, staffing levels, levels of rates, and performance against guidelines set by the Secretary of State.

Having selected local authorities the Government will lay down the expenditure level on which their eventual rate limit will be based. An authority which considers that it cannot contain its expenditure to the level set will be able to seek derogation from the Secretary of State, who may set a higher expenditure level if he is satisfied that a good case has been made, or set a lower level. In granting a derogation the Secretary of State may extract undertakings from the authority concerned, for example, that 'value for money' studies are carried out.

About December of the year before rates are set the Secretary of State will notify the selected authorities of the rate limit which he proposes to set based on the expenditure level which has been established and he may take account of any balances which the authority has accumulated. If the local authority does not accept this rate limit the Secretary of State can set an interim limit while he considers further representations but if agreement cannot be reached he can set a maximum rate by order through Parliament, and the local authority will have no power to levy a higher rate.

The White Paper also contains proposals for the Government to control rate in all authorities should this be considered necessary.

The Government has now set provision targets for local authorities for their 1984/5 budgets representing cuts of up to 6% in cash terms (and therefore more allowing for inflation) on their 1983/4 budgets. In order to maintain services while complying with the law therefore some authorities will have to raise their rates by much more than the rate of inflation. Yet it is precisely these authorities. including most Labour London Boroughs, who are likely to be hit by rate capping in 1985. What these Labour authorities will have to decide is whether to fight on the Government's terms against restrictions on rates in 1985 or to fight this Winter for more resources to meet our needs and if necessary refuse to set budgets on the Government's terms.

Hugh Flinn
Vice-Chair Hackney South CLP

Read Socialist Student
Articles by Tony Benn, Sarah Veale (NUS Deputy President) and Tony Dale.
Copies available at 10p plus postage from Bryn Griffiths, 35, Quebec Street, Brighton, Sussex.

Socialist Students In NOLS
DAY SCHOOL
November 5th
Discussing the newspaper and the NUS Christmas Conference.
For further details contact:
Jane on 01-263-9484.

For adequate creche facilities!

There is an obvious and urgent need for the Labour Party as a whole to provide adequate creche and care facilities to get maximum participation at its meetings.

It is unworthy of a major political party avowedly devoted to the cause of improving life for everyone to discriminate against parents and those responsible for infirm people.

What is required is a network of helpers in each geographical area, both qualified and unqualified, to assist and run creches at every meeting or to organise and run a baby-sitting/care service.

Labour Briefing asks that those with experience, ideas or the need for such schemes to use the pages of this journal to build the basis for nation-wide action against this discrimination.

Doug Bailey
Stoke-on-Trent (central) CLP
Andy Platt
Stoke-on-Trent (North) CLP

FIGHTING FO

The National Health Service offering free treatment at the time of need has radically altered health care for the working class. It is now in the forefront of Tory attacks and it is up to the working class to defend it.

Thatcher, keenly aware of the strength of public feeling about the Health Service could not just come out in a manifesto and propose to abolish it — although that is certainly the intention. Instead there has been a constant sinister erosion of growth and development. The introduction of cash limits in 1979 meant that Health Authorities could no longer overspend and be bailed out by central government. The fact that nearly every authority, before cash limits, did overspend showed that no government has even given enough priority to giving the NHS sufficient money to run properly.

In their first term of office the Tories cut as much as they gauged to acceptable to the electorate. Instead of the nationwide massacre we are now seeing, they engaged in local skirmishes — mostly in London — making bed losses and hospital closures look like 'local' issues. Last year at the height of the pay dispute when it really was clear how much support the NHS could get Thatcher retrenched. When the Think Tank report was embarrasingly leaked, she publicly disowned it. Then, in one of the most crass and callous lies of her political career she told the nation, in anticipation of an early election, that the NHS was safe with the Tories.

Now, a year later the truth is apparent. Thatcher and her monetarist ministers have launched the final assault on the Health Service. Within three weeks of the election victory the new Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, was announcing cuts of £100 million in the budget of the health service with Fowler ludicrously saying that the saving could be made 'without patient care suffering.'

Thatcher, Fowler, Lawson and co.,have no concept of patient care or of suffering. When was the last time any of them waited four hours in pain in a casualty unable to cope because of staff cuts? Which one of them would have to endure the agony of arthritis for three years before they could have surgery? Working class people have to do it every day. Areas like Hackney are riddled with victims of the Tory health strategy.

But while we were still reeling with the blow of the 'Lawson cuts' Fowler announced that 8,000 jobs must go! And just to make sure there is no doubt about the future of the NHS a circular was slipped in directing all Health Authorities to put cleaning, catering and laundry services out to tender even if they do it just as an 'exercise'.

Meanwhile, Kenneth Clarke has time to rummage through his dictionary to look up the meaning of cuts and then tells us that there are no cuts in the NHS. 'There have been no cuts only a delay in growth'.

But since 1079 over 6,000 beds have disappeared from the NHS and in London alone over 50 hospitals are scheduled to close.



Stefano Cagoni (I.F.L.)

Campaigners against closure of the South London Hospital for Women, July 1983.

The Tories have said consistently that there is no money to give to the NHS. They swept to an election victory largely fuelled by the boost to nationalism and imperialism of the Falklands War — which cost billions to wage and is costing billions to defend. There is no 'delay in growth' to the pharmaceutical companies who earn billions annually from the NHS budget. The Tories find money to defend and bolster only capitalist interests.

Now, with doctors and nurses jobs scheduled for the chop even the reactionary British Medical Association and the Royal College of Nursing are objecting. And, reaction against the severity of the latest cuts is even fashionable amongst Tory 'wets'. Ancillary workers jobs, mainly women's jobs, have been going for years, but working class women are hardly relevant to the BMA and rarely news worthy. They are however usually in the front line of the battle in the NHS for better services and decent pay.

The official objections and reasoned speeches of the BMA the RCN and the Regional Health authority chairs (usually staunch Tories) will not stop the cuts. Working class unity and action can.

In Bradford workers have been occupying their hospital for over two months to stop it closing. In Brent the District Health Authority has refused to make the Lawson cuts. These leads have shown the way forward and other workers and Health Authorities are following.

R THE NHS

THORNTON VIEW

Thornton View is an 82-bed geriatric hospital in Bradford. It is the first hospital in the Region to be scheduled for closure. The workers, determined that it will not close, took the decision to occupy it on August 5th.

They immediately set up an occupation committee to run the hospital and ousted the Nursing Officer from her office which is now the 'headquarters' of the occupation.

Thornton View, although small, represents 10% of Bradford's long stay geriatric beds. The patients are extremely well cared for and the relatives have proved staunch supporters of the fight to keep the hospital.

Management attempted to win public support by launching a smear campaign in the local press immediately after the occupation started — claiming that the patients were suffering and being used as pawns. They were quickly left isolated when the consultant geriatrician was sent in and announced publicly that he was perfectly happy with the level of care and the hospital was running normally as far as he was concerned.

TREMENDOUS PUBLIC SUPPORT

Public support has been tremendous. There is a continuous 24 hour picket and a weekly supporters' meeting.

Management are only allowed into the hospital with permission of the occupation committee and are accompanied wherever they go to ensure there is no harassment or intimidation. The District Health Authority attempted to frighten the workers and some supporters by sending them letters saying that their presence outside of working time was illegal. The workers had a meeting and instructed the full-time union officials to meet management and tell them that such tactics would not be tolerated, and continued to picket as usual!

The occupation is well organised and has issued ten demands which include no further proposals for cuts and closures, no victimisations or intimidation of staff, adequate staffing levels, that the health authority release all their unlaundered books to the occupation committee and that the Health Minister sets up a public enquiry with Trade Union representatives into geriatric care in Bradford.

The action was made official by NUPE, COHSE and the GMBTU.

NEARLY ALL WOMEN

The workers, nearly all women and mostly part-time have become very strong since the occupation started. As well as doing their normal work they are organising the picketing, speaking at meetings all over the country, writing leaflets, organising demonstrations, and looking after their children and coping with domestic work. They have provided a lead for workers everywhere and an example of how to fight the Tories.

The occupation will not crumble or go away. It will not either win or lose. The only way it will lose is if it does not get support from the labour movement. Trade union leaders are never keen to organise supporting strike action and Thornton View is no exception. Workers locally must take the initiative in pledging strike action if there is any attempt to break the occupation.

Labour MPs must publicly say that if one worker is intimidated, one piece of equipment moved or any attempt made to smash the pickets with private ambulances and the police then they will be there — at the hospital on the picket line defending the workers who are defending the NHS.

BRENT AHA DEFIES TORIES!

Faced with 300 unfilled jobs and a further 130 redundancies, Brent Area Health Authority voted at its September meeting to refuse to implement further cuts. The meeting also refused to consider the circular on privatisation and voted to save the casualty department at Wembley Hospital.

This rebellion has received massive support from health unions, the local Community Health Council and users of the NHS. Other AHAs, in Sheffield and Northumberland, have followed the Brent example. The Brent cuts were part of Fowler's 2000 jobs to be destroyed in the NHS — for Brent, one in twelve of every 'frontline' medical jobs.

NUPE and COHSE have pledged a stoppage in support of the AHA and a new unity has been forged to resist Tory health cuts.

The Tory response has been to threaten legal action and to threaten to replace the AHA with Commissioners. In addition more Tory nominees to the authority have been approved. However, even if the vote is reversed Brent has provided a lead to fight Tory cuts and a united union/community campaign can still defeat the Fowler cuts.

GRAHAM DURHAM
Brent AHA

- *Organise a work place meeting, and invite a speaker. We need pledges of supporting strike action if the Health Authority makes any attempt to break the occupation. If you pass a resolution in support then send a copy to Royston Moore, Chairperson, DHA Bicknor Station Road, Baildon, Shipley.*
- *Picketing — we need supporters at the hospital 24 hours a day. Volunteer either individually or as an organisation to take a turn on the picket rota. Phone the Occupation Headquarters Bradford 817574*
- *Raise the issue in your tenants association, Labour Party, community group etc.*
- *Send a donation — we need money to keep the occupation going.*
- *Messages of support and donations to Betty Elie, c/o Resource Centre, 93 Little Horton Lane, Bradford 5.*

Brent members were not swayed be the 'illegality' of overspending. If the Tories make actions in defence of working class living standards illegal then the law must be defied. If Health Authority members vote to cut services and close hospitals then they relinquish their claim to run the health service and the workers must take over.

In Hackney the local campaign built mass support for the DHA meeting on September 26th where the closure of four hospitals, the loss of 98 beds and 500 jobs were going to be voted on. Over 1000 people were at the town hall for the meeting. Council workers took strike action in support and over 200 people crammed into the council chamber to make it clear to the authority that they would not tolerate the cuts. Workers made it clear that they would defend the threatened hospitals by occupations. After angry scenes following a split vote the DHA was forced to withdraw the consultation document and the chair said he had no choice but to find something more acceptable to the people of Hackney.

Anti-tory rhetoric and speech making will not defend the NHS. Labour politicians and trade union leaders who stand on platforms and rostrums and talk about opposing the cuts and 'fighting them in the streets' have to back it up with action. In Hackney Brian Sedgmore said he would fight but when angry working class people barred the exit of the council chamber until they had a decision he pushed them aside to escort the DHA chairperson out. In Bradford, the workers at Thorton View had to ask Bickerstaff and Williams, the general secretaries of NUPE and COHSE to go to the hospital after a demonstration in support of the occupation. It had never occured to them to give that kind of support to the people fighting to keep the hospital open through workers control.

The Tories have control and use it well to defend their class. They pass laws which repress working class action, they impose financial controls which oppress working class people.

But we have the power to take that control and we must use it. Workers will occupy hospitals to defend them, trade unions must then organise supporting strike action. DHA's will vote against cuts and the labour movement must defend them against being disbanded.

The NHS will not wait five years for Kinnock and Hattersley to dream. It will not wait for the Trade union leaders to discuss solutions with the Tories.

The solution is available. Last year over three million people took strike action in defence of the health workers. That support and more is still there and needs to be mobilised.

The message to the Tories must be absolutely clear. Health workers are not in retreat-we are on the offensive. Socialists created the NHS and will defend it from Tory scalpels. We can and will bring the government down to save the NHS.

ANDREA CAMPBELL (COHSE)

LIVERPOOL IN THE FRONTLINE

In May this year the people of Liverpool gave their verdict on 10 years of Liberal/Tory rule. Labour was swept to power on a no-cuts platform. Revulsion at the policies of the local 'alliance' of non-Labour parties was maintained through the general election campaign as evidenced by the victory of Terry Fields in Broadgreen which was, on paper, an 'Alliance' seat. This success combined with the determination of the local Party to resist cuts makes Liverpool a likely candidate for the next major battleground in the fight for local democracy. The lines of engagement are already being drawn and in this article I shall argue that the movement cannot afford to let Liverpool go the way of Lambeth and Lothian. This time we *must* win.

Labour's return to power had its roots in the total failure of the other parties to tackle the massive problems facing the city. The previously Liberal-controlled council had presided over a series of massive cuts with the loss of over 5,000 local authority jobs. It had a disgraceful record on housing, council house building was essentially suspended and the repairs and maintainence service a disaster, all in a city with the highest council house rents in the country. Arguments over the reorganisation of secondary education remained unresolved. The Liberals plans for wholesale closures were thwarted by local resistance, most notably the occupation of Croxteth comprehensive.

Positive Platform

It was against this background that the Labour Party won electoral support in May, a victory due, in the main, to an increased turnout. People were actually motivated to go out and vote Labour in. The reason for this was probably the positive platform on which the election was fought. Labour's manifesto promised no cuts, no rate rise and a cut in council rents as well as a plan to begin a major council house building programme and a pledge to create at least 1,000 jobs in its first year.

Since coming to power the progress of the Labour group in implementing its polices has been steady rather than spectacular. Seventeen 'priority areas' have been identified in the city in which council spending will be concentrated. Council rents *are* coming down, council houses *are* to be built and a start has already been made on creating jobs. The Labour council, however, is faced with a serious financial crisis. The last act of the outgoing Liberals was to set the budget. Looking over their shoulders at the possibility of a Labour victory they budgeted for yet more cuts, so leaving the Labour group with insufficent resources to fund its programme. In previous years it might have been possible to raise revenue from the rates but the Tories' rate-capping proposals will remove that option. Only two alternatives remain: for Labour to capitulate and impose the Tory cuts; or for the council to mobilise for a confrontation with Thatcher and her axe-weilding henchmen. The Labour group, like the Liverpool District Party is dominated by the left, with supporters of Militant particularly strongly placed. On the one hand this ensures a determination to resist the cuts, and on the other makes it more likely that the Tories will single out Liverpool as a priority target.



John Smith (I.F.L.)

Liverpool: South East section joins People's March for Jobs.

Local Initiatives

Yet nowhere in the country is there a better case for local initiatives. Liverpool has suffered from years of neglect, and the high level of unemployment and deprivation make it imperative that the council intervenes in job creation and meets the greater demand for social and welfare services. The strength of Labour's case in Liverpool and the support given to that case last May are what makes the city an important focus for the fight-back against the Tories.

The task of the left is to mobilise the whole of the Labour movement in the fight-back. To gain the backing of the local authority unions; to win the support of local people and to link the struggle for Liverpool's services with similar battles taking place elsewhere.

One significant step has already been taken; the council organised a successful rally of stewards from the local authority unions. Over 800 activists turned up to hear the problems facing the council and the extent to which their support will form the basis for any resistance. It is imperative that this support is broadened as far and as rapidly as possible. The next most obvious step in this process would be for a link to be made between the City Council and the Labour-controlled County Council which is also faced with the Tory hatchet. Unfortunately there are few signs of a working relationship being formed. The left, and especially Militant, don't seem to take the

Support Viji Kumar!

Viji Kumar is a Malaysian national who has lived in this country for nearly eight years. He started teaching 2½ years ago, after being made redundant. In September 1982 he was appointed to the Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College at Fenton, but has now been forced to leave his job because the Home Office and the Department of Employment have refused to renew his work permit. The only basis for such a decision is racial. Despite appeals by the Labour controlled Staffordshire County Council, the employing authority, they were informed that they must advertise Viji's post.

A campaign of protest was organised. It was supported by all sections of the local community. The college authorities and the LEA have attempted to keep Viji in his post and a petition has been enthusiastically signed by colleagues, friends, and people of Stoke-on-Trent. Coverage of Viji's plight by the local media has been favourable and the Home Secretary has been questioned by his MP – Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent South). Unfortunately, Viji is now in a 'Catch 22' situation. He needs a work permit to get a job, and a job to get a work permit. Furthermore his leave to stay in this country is pending consideration of his case by the Home Office and therefore he faces the prospect of being deported.

Meanwhile Viji is unemployed. He is ineligible for unemployment or supplementary benefit, because without a work permit he is not in a position to take employment. The fight to regain his work permit goes on and we continue to present the Home Office with signatures to the petition and letters of support. We feel the issue is fundamental, not just to Viji, but also to the development of satisfactory race relations in this country. Teachers have a duty to make a stand over such issues, particularly in light of the conclusions to the Scarman Report.

Stuart Coles
Stoke-on-Trent (Central) CLP
& NUT rep S-o-T 6th Form College, Fenton



Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

fighting in the Labour movement for lesbian and gay male liberation

Join us! Individuals from £1.
Affiliate your ward/CLP £5, Y.S. £2.
LCGR National Office, 21 Devonshire Promenade
Lerton, Nottingham NG7 2DS (0602-780124).

Militant expulsion in Gillingham

Right-wingers in Gillingham have decided to use the NEC ruling banning the 'provision of facilities for Militant' to fracture and demoralise the local left-wing. The 50 member GMC decided by a large majority to enforce the ban back in August. Seeing this as an attack on his democratic rights, Bob Herley, the only Militant supporter present, continued to sell the paper after the meeting.

In response to this the right-wing dominated Executive recommended to the September GMC that Bob be expelled. Squeezed between the fear of disobeying the NEC and the fear of precipitating a major bust-up, with all the consequent publicity, the soft centre swung behind a resolution referring back the Executive's recommendation.

On the face of it this could look like stalemate. But the left is involved in a defensive battle, and the recommendation from the next Executive is likely to be a resumed, if watered down, attack on Militant.

Unity may have been the message to come out from the national conference, but the right wing here, know that that means unity without socialism. A lot will depend on the statements that Kinnock makes in the next couple of weeks, as many honest Kinnock supporters do not yet see him as a witch-hunter. Before then we have a real chance to use Hattersley's television statement, about being opposed to expelling people 'just for selling a paper', and defeat this first attack.

We will not rely on this however. Bob Herley is not officially being expelled for selling 'Militant', but 'failing to comply with a democratic GMC decision disallowing the sale of Militant'. This argument obviously has a lot of weight within the 'centre' of the Party.

Locally we are very lucky, in that Militant is working with all other left forces who want to fight the witch-hunt on an equal basis.

Our main agreed task is to build a **political campaign** against the expulsion of socialists generally. We have planned a major meeting with leading Labour Party members, a petition, and a letter writing campaign.

Les Hartop,
Gillingham Labour Party

County Council or County Party seriously, perhaps in the mistaken belief that its demise will bring more powers to the City Council. This needs to be swiftly reversed; a joint meeting of the respective Parties and groups should be organised to set in motion a joint campaign for local democracy.

The Electorate

Neither can a confrontationist position be sustained without massive support from the electorate. It is this area which poses the greatest problems. Ever since May the local media, portraying the Labour council as 'Marxist', have whipped up a storm over every decision that has been taken. Sadly this has sometimes succeeded, mainly because, with their centralist views, some leading councillors have not paid sufficient attention to explaining policy decisions in advance of them being implemented. If Liverpudlians are to back *their* council against the government this attitude needs to be changed. The council and the Party must show themselves to be responsive to peoples needs.

Two examples may serve to illustrate this point. Liverpool's black community overwhelmingly voted Labour in May, yet since coming to power the council have taken no concrete steps to reverse the under-representation of black people in its workforce (under the Liberals only 300 black people were employed out of a total workforce of more than 30,000). Indeed, moves within the Party towards a policy of positive action for both women and the ethnic minorities have been persistently thwarted. If the Party and the council expect support from Liverpool's black community it must show them that it is interested in removing discrimination against them (a recent C.R.E. report classified Liverpool as the worst city in the country for racial discrimination).

Similarly, in their desire to start a crash programme of council house building the Labour group (and Party) have refused to support local housing co-ops whose mainly working class membership should be our natural allies in taking on Thatcher.

If broad support is to be achieved then something more than a crude economist approach to the city's problems must be taken. All Liverpudlians need to feel that the City Council is *their* council, only then will they want to defend it.

Finally, whilst it may have emotional appeal to a few, there is no prospect of a successful confrontation if Liverpool goes it alone. Isolation finished off both Lambeth and Lothian. This time other councils, the trade unions and the Party nationally must combine to build a massive campaign. Liverpool can be central in achieving that. The Sheffield meeting of threatened authorities failed to provide a lead for the fight. A new conference should be called now in Liverpool and Liverpool's Labour councillors should be ready to stand in the front line. Together we can win.

STU CLARKE
Merseyside Labour Briefing Editorial Board (in a personal capacity)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

SRI LANKA: STOP THE POGROMS!

Conference Arrangements Committee introduced a startling new procedure into the 1983 conference by ruling all emergency resolutions out of order, it is said on the grounds that they did not constitute emergencies. This included a resolution on Sri Lanka. It was eventually put on the agenda for debate, but the resolution concerned was withdrawn in the confusion.

We hope the new leadership's concern for 'democratic socialism' will lead it rapidly to rectify the present situation; to date no leading Labour Party spokesperson has come out against the murder of democracy by the present government of Sri Lanka with the military and economic backing of the British government. As background we print an article by the editor of the 'Tamil Times' which arrived too late for the conference edition of Briefing supplement.

In 1948, 1.2 million Tamil plantation workers brought into the country from South India 150 years ago by the British were deprived of their citizenship and franchise, and so made stateless and voteless. Approximately 400,000 have been compulsorily repatriated to India, 175,000 granted registered citizenship and the rest with the natural increase since 1948 remain stateless and voteless, but working in the tea plantations under slave conditions.

Britain left a legacy without any guarantee for the protection of the minority



Tamils and plantation workers. The constitution imposed at independence has resulted in the permanent ethnic domination by the majority Sinhalese community.

The United National Party (UNP) government elected in 1977 is the most right wing Thatcher-type government ever to rule Sri Lanka. Its 'open economy' policy has led to enormous debts to the West. It is strongly pro-US, and one of the very few third world countries to support Thatcher in the Falklands war. It is enormously repressive and anti-working class; it is currently negotiating the lease of Trincomalee harbour, one of the best natural harbours in the east, to the US government and the prospect of US bases at Trinco brings the threat of superpower conflict to the Indian Ocean. India, which is thoroughly worried, might do anything to prevent this happening.

None of the known Labour leaders or the NEC has made any comment or condemnation of the anti-democratic practices, human rights violations, or the recent pogroms against the Tamil minority. Yet not only is the Thatcher government supplying military equipment to the Sri Lankan regime to kill and maim defenceless people — it is training 600 Sri Lankan service personnel at Wiltshire under the gentle hands of the SAS. 30 combat landrovers — similar to those being used in Northern Ireland — have been recently supplied to the government.

The International Commission of Jurists, Amnesty International, the UN subcommission of human rights and the World Council of Churches have condemned the discrimination and violence used against the Tamils and other human rights violations in Sri Lanka.

It is to be hoped that Labour Party branches will bring pressure to bear on the leadership to take a definite stand on these issues and condemn the anti-Tamil and anti-working class policies of the government.

P. RAY

Lebanon: the longest war

The war in Lebanon is the longest in two senses – the longest civil war and the longest Israel has fought. Its origins lie in the Maronite state established by French colonialism. The civil war of 1958 onwards is a continuation of its pre-independence struggle in a different form. Power and wealth were divided on confessionalist lines with poverty being the preserve of the Shiite shanty towns circling Beirut and the Palestinian refugee camps. Until the 1975/6 civil war, Lebanon was the banking capital of the Middle East.

In 1958 the US marines entered Beirut to prop up the regime. In 1976 the Syrian army did the same. Today the multinational 'peace-keeping' forces preserve the Israeli-installed Phalangist regime.

Microcosm of the Middle East

Lebanon represents a microcosm of the struggles of the Middle East. Within Amal, the Shii militia's Islamic fundamentalism took hold after the revolution in Iran. Over 300,000 Palestinians were driven into Lebanon by the Zionists after the 1947/9 war, only to face continued discrimination. After 1967, the PLO took control of the camps driving out the Lebanese army. Growing Palestinian power and the rise of the Lebanese National Movement – a combination of a number of leftist parties and militias, including many Christians – helped shatter the Maronite regime. The army disintegrated as the Muslim conscripts deserted. With some reluctance the PLO was drawn into the war. As the Phalangists faced defeat the Syrian army entered the battle with Israeli/US backing. The worst massacre of the war occured at the Palestinian refugee camp of Tel a Zaata in East Beirut, when 3,000 died. But the Syrians and the Phalange soon came into conflict as Israel became drawn in on the latter's side.

Today the Syrian regime, in order to prevent their own marginalisation tactically support the Druse and Muslim militias. Theirs is the support, as Lenin remarked, that a rope gives a hanging man. Syria's bid for influence, (e.g., bombing civilian parts of East Beirut), at the same time as using the PLO rebels' legitimate disagreements in order to neutralise the PLO as an independent force – politically and militarily. They are helped in this by the PLO's previous reliance on and identification with these regimes.

Partitioned

Lebanon is effectively partitioned between Israel in the South, the Syrians in the North and Bequa'a valley, the Druse in the Shouf and the Phalangists in Greater Beirut. Only US and French bombardment saved Gemayel but that is no permanent solution. A reformed but confessionalist state, giving more influence to the Muslim bourgeoisie, is the aim of the US. It is hard to see the present ceasefire lasting any length of time whilst the causes of the civil war remain. At best the Phalangist army will consolidate their hold in Beirut whilst the US strikes a deal with Syria to neutralise the PLO and co-opt the Druse, Israel will remaini in the South with its valuable water resources and 4th largest market. The Palestinian revolution and the social/democratic revolutions of the Middle East meet, and their common enemy is Lebanese capitalism and its US backers. Israel wishes to see a divided Lebanon whereas the US wants a reformed, centralised Lebanese state. It is this contradiction which explains the dilemma and problems for imperialism. The question is whether the anti-Phalangist forces can unite on a common programme to overthrow both the sectarian state and the economic system which feeds it whilst taking advantage of the divisions between the imperialists and their Arab proteges.

Tony Greenstein

BEY071703-07/17/81-BEIRUT: Aftermath of the Israeli air raid on Beirut,in the area where several Palestinian organozations have offices,07/17. More than 100 persons were killed and 350 wounded in the fifth raid in one weeks against Palestinian targets in Lebanon.
(UPI) ca/str-I.Tawil



French troops out of Chad

by CHRIS BERTRAM

Chad, among the poorest countries in the world, is today the subject of a military intervention by French imperialism. Gaining a notional independence in 1960, Chad has been torn by armed strife ever since. This is the fourth time French troops have been used.

Chad is an entirely artificial creation, the product of France tying together the loose ends of its African empire. The country falls into two zones, the north and the south split at the height of Lake Chad. The productive southern part of the country is christian and animist in tradition. The cotton growing middle class were the favoured administrators of colonial rule. The arabophone north, inhabited by muslim nomads, has more in common with Libya and Sudan than with the rest of the country.

The objective of French imperialism today is to preserve at any price the agreements that link Chad to France within the French monetary zone and to prevent any development in Chad which might destabilise in their turn all the local oligarchies linked to imperialism. It should also be seen in the context of greater imperialist intervention around the world as a response to greater instability. We see this also in Lebanon. The new means that are available for such operations include the US Rapid Deployment Force and the French Rapid Action Force of 80,000 professional soldiers.

It would be a mistake for socialists to see anything particularly progressive about either side in Chad. Both the 'rebel' Goukouni Oueddi and the 'President' Hissene Habre came out of the FROLINAT, a national liberation movement that has degenerated into feuding cliques. Libya has changed sides at least six times and the French have backed whichever combination of military chiefs it thinks will bring stability at any particular time. This time they are rooting for their former agent Habre, but are open to negotiations.

The interests of the people of Chad are best served by the immediate departure of French troops and the demilitarisation of a society that spends a third of its budget on arms when its people are starving. It is not for us to say whether Chad should be partitioned, federated or whatever. It is for the peoples of Chad to decide their own destiny.

DEBATE

COMMON MARKET

Why Labour should oppose the EEC

Conference settled one issue once and for all: whether opposing the EEC is a right or a left wing stance. Ditching Labour's anti-market policy was a cornerstone of Hattersley-Kinnock's rightward drive.

Those who want to be neutral make a classic mistake. They reject the *arguments* of some of the EEC's 'little England' opponents and forget what the EEC *really is*.

The British ruling class want the EEC, not as a luxury, but to survive. They want to use *European big capital* to restructure British society, making Western Europe into a strong, centralised economic and military bloc: a rival to America, a bulwark against Eastern Europe, and a trebly effective superexploiter of the third world. The EEC is not a step towards 'European integration' or 'internationalism' but an attempt to forge a new, reactionary superpower.

How is this being done? First, as Lord Carrington so clearly put it: 'Europe is going to emerge as one of the largest and richest communities in the world with the potential of the present superpowers, and it is unthinkable that this new Europe should lack adequate means of self-defence.' For 'self-defence', read 'aggression'. For 'adequate' read 'nuclear'. The EEC is not a peaceful alternative to Cruise and Trident but a frightening new nuclear threat. It is not a retreat from gunboat diplomacy but an attempt to put the *whole* weight of Europe behind activities like those of the French in Chad, so as to 'save' chunks of the third world from US control — i.e. to put them under West European control.

Second, the EEC is centralising capital to resist the USA's successful economic offensive.

The steel industry is classic. Replying to US tariffs, quotas and blockades, Brussels produced the 'D'Avignon' plan and closed steel plants throughout Europe, cutting production from 32m tons to 20m tons and throwing hundreds of thousands of steel workers on the scrapheap.

British capital wants to be part of this centralisation; not to save jobs, but to join in a carnival of rationalisation that has raised unemployment in countries like Belgium to near the 20 per cent mark.

Third, the EEC's CAP is designed to lead Western Europe through an agricultural war with the USA, driving the European peasantry off the land and forcing European consumers to subsidise rich farmers. Between 1960 and 1967, 882,000 family farms were closed in Europe. By 1982 the CAP had driven food prices 25 per cent higher than they would have been on the world market.

Each of these moves demonstrates the EEC as an alliance of Western European capital *against* American capital, Eastern Europe, the third world and West European workers and small farmers. How can it be fought? Is it 'jingoistic' to call for withdrawal?

Socialists cannot fight British imperialism by counterposing a European superpower which will develop a *stronger* militarism and a *more effective* world reactionary role. The EEC will not lead British workers away from isolation into the world unity of workers. It will cut them off from Eastern European workers. It will cut them off from third world workers and peasants: and *more* effectively than British imperialism, which is on its last legs and clamouring to get into the Common Market to give it new life! The alternative to the EEC is not little England but a real opening towards an alliance with the workers of Eastern Europe and the third world *against* the decaying remnants of English jingoism.

But nor can socialist policy *ignore* the cornerstone of big business's attempts to shore up its decaying rule. British capital *needs the EEC to survive*. Its desperation to build a strong, centralised European capital is reshaping every aspect of British politics from the Alliance, through the Labour Party, to the Tory Party itself. "Neither for nor against" the EEC is the politics of the ostrich.

John Ross

EEC: Forum for our internationalism

Pete Lambert & Tony Greenstein

In the late '60s, Cabinet Ministers Heffer and Benn supported EEC membership while Douglas Jay and Reg Prentice opposed. Even today, right wingers inside the Party such as Austin Mitchell and Peter Shore remain opposed. Why is it then that EEC withdrawal is seen as a left-right issue?

In the early '70s, with the massive battles over the Industrial Relations Act looming, the left Trade Union bureaucrats and Party leaders saw the EEC issue as a convenient diversion from the struggles taking place. This diversion took the form of an entirely false counterposition of British and European capitalism. Little wonder that the 'Anti' forces could unite the Daily Express, Powell, the NF, and Teddy Taylor with the Labour Left (and much of its right).

It is a nationalism, which harks back to the days of the Empire, seeking to restore the trade and economic links of old. It is an unrealistic nostalgia which, while popular in the opinion polls melts with the first rays of dawn. We saw this in the EEC referendum of 1975 (and the last General Election) with the Left being forced to defend British sovereignty and Roy Jenkins et al assuming the role of the internationalists. Defeat in the referendum was a watershed for the Left in Wilson's government, with Benn being demoted from Industry to Energy and Heffer being sacked. But it is this nationalism, a belief that the British state and ruling class are somehow preferable to their European counterparts , which is the Achilles Heel of Labour's economic policy. It is class collaborationist. The ramifications of this nationalism are the baggage of the AES: import controls and the siege economy.

These positions involve and foster, a belief in a golden age when food was cheap and the natives knew their place. A xenophobic atmosphere is thus created, a context in which Labour support for Thatchers war in the Malvinas suddenly seems natural. The anti-marketeers seek to put the clock back as surely as any Luddite. What is progressive about the British monarchy and the Lords? Is it not the European Courts which abolished birching, condemned torture in Ireland, and granted minimum human rights to prisoners?

The EEC represents an attempt to create a single market in Europe yet capitalism exists on the basis of nation states, national economies and markets. Within them are located the operations of the American and Japanese multinationals, virtually invulnerable to control by isolated nation states . The first proponents of the EEC had envisaged the creation of European multinationals: the structures they had created proved instead to be a mere convenience facility for already existing, extra European ones. The aim of a European wide market and economy can, ironically, only be achieved on the basis of social ownership of production and distribution. *If we are to condemn the EEC it is precisely because it is unable to achieve the objectives it sets itself.*

The EEC is NOT primarily a political unit—though when the Greeks vetoed a Thatcherite resolution on the Korean air disaster, Kinnock was the first to attack the Pasok government.

We do not, then, wish to argue for anything so crass as support for the Treaty of Rome. We are simply not interested in it one way or the other. The Left cannot steer a line between right wing pro marketeers and 'left' AES peddlars by mouthing Militant style slogans about a 'United Socialist States of Europe' whilst doing nothing practical to achieve it.

Instead, the Left must move from the abstraction to the beginning of a strategy for the European Labour Movements. Through END, the Peace Movement has shown us the way. Multinationals must be attacked internationally, no less than must the stationing of Cruise missiles. We need to seek allies on the left in Europe not to isolate ourselves from them. The institutional framework of the EEC provides us with an—albeit far from prefect—FORUM for our internationalist perspectives.

SINN FEIN WOMEN VISIT PARTY CONFERENCE

— Not that you would have known of course. Not unless you were there. There was not a word, not even a by-the-by reference, anywhere in the media. The papers *did* tie themselves in the most fantastic knots in their competition for the Best Lie About Gerry Adams — 1st Prize *must* undoubtedly go to the Daily Mirror with their story of 'IRA supporters planning to smuggle Adams into conference to give him a standing ovation'. (We should be so stupid and so lucky!) But the two women from the Sinn Fein Department of Women's Affairs, who accompanied Adams to speak at the joint Labour Committee on Ireland/Royal Arsenal Co-op fring meeting, were completely and utterly ignored. What Gerry Adams has referred to as the 'wall of disinformation on Ireland' came down with a vengeance with regard to women and Ireland.

Unless you were there you would never have known that Chris McAuley and Sile Darragh spoke at both the press conference (where the media ran amok and ended up screaming at each other) and the enormous (over 600) fringe meeting. *Unless* you were there you would never have known that Chris described the conditions that women in the nationalist ghettos live under with the day to day repression, sexual harassment, brutality and violence of the British state. Chris outlined how the Department of Women's Affairs attempts to both help and support these women and campaign against sexist attitudes and practices.



A Dublin demonstration against the constitutional amendment on abortion. Photo by Derek Speirs.

STRIP SEARCHES

Unless you were there you would never have known that Sile Darragh, an ex-Armagh prisoner, described the strip-searches that women in Armagh are currently having to endure. Since November 1982 every time a prisoner leaves or returns to the prison she will be strip-searched. If a woman refuses to be strip-searched when leaving the prison for a court appearance (once a week for remand prisoners or every day if named in a trial like the Black supergrass one) she will be forcibly stripped. While a few women did refuse last November no remand or trial prisoners are refusing now, as the strip-search experience is bad enough without the horror of being held down and having all clothing forcibly removed. If a woman is leaving the prison for any other reason aside from a court appearance, such as a hospital appointment, inter-prison visit (ie brother or fiance), or parole (for family death) it is possible for the woman to refuse to be strip-searched without running the risk of being forced to do so — she will simply be returned to her cell and lose her appointment, visit or parole.

The strip-search entails removing every item of clothing in a small cubicle with a sheet across it that just comes to chest level. Each piece of clothing must then be handed out to a woman prison officer for examination. This examination includes all items of underwear *and* sanitary protection, whether pads or tampons. Used sanitary protection, after it has been examined, is thrown away and new protection provided. After this examination has finished the woman prisoner herself is 'visually examined' — stared at while having to turn round slowly. No male prison officers are present, but the prisoner knows they are on stand-by in the next room in case of 'trouble'.

HUMILIATING

Sile emphasised in her account of this procedure that it was obviously not a security precaution, but solely aimed at demoralising and humiliating the women prisoners. Being stared at while standing completely naked, without even sanitary protection if menstruating, by prison officials who are usually unionists, and frequently Loyalists, makes the woman feel thoroughly degraded and is part and parcel of the sexual harassment of nationalist women both inside and outside of prison.

In later informal discussions with Labour Party feminists Chris described the sexist verbal abuse she had been subjected to when once picked up for 'questioning' (a euphemism for harassment). British soldiers talked of making her 'suck their cocks because they'd heard that was what whores like her liked'. During these discussions both Sile and Chris said that they felt that British women stereotyped Irish women as backward and 'priest dominated' and that they felt there was an inexcusable amount of just plain ignorance about Republican women in the British Women's Liberation Movement. Even accepting that lack of free speech on Ireland and the media distortions it was still possible for British feminists to educate themselves on the *facts of British violence* for example and to not just swallow the British state's version of what happens in Northern Ireland without even questioning it.

WOMEN'S CENTRE

Chris also talked about the work of the new Falls Road Women's Centre. This is a drop-in centre with creche facilities where women can receive help and advice about health or legal matters. In particular the centre works to help battered women by referring them to refuges and contacting sympathetic lawyers and arranging exclusion orders. Chris and Sile were closely questioned about Sinn Fein's policy on abortion and the recent anti-amendment campaign in the South. While Sinn Fein is opposed to abortion both women said they supported a woman's right to choose (as in fact does Adams himself). Feminists in Sinn Fein are organising to change their organisation's position. On the anti-amendment campaign Chris said she felt Sinn Fein had 'learnt hard lessons' from their lack of organised involvement — though very many individual Sinn Fein members participated in the campaign.

During their brief visit the Sinn Fein women also met Labour MPs and trade union leaders. Most were sympathetic, but one former PPC, not all that far from our new leader's think-tank, took a moralistic line on violence saying that Republican violence must end before British violence. Would we ask that the Sandinistas stopped defending themselves from American imperialism *before* we campaigned against American involvement in Nicaragua?

All the Labour Party feminists that Chris and Sile met were enthusiastic about the need for further such meetings and discussions even when they were critical of Sinn Fein's position on abortion for example. It was strongly felt that given the lack of information on Ireland such visits went a long way to breaking down the wall of disinformation on Ireland and led to increased support for British troop withdrawal as more British women came to see the reality of the role that the troops play.

Sarah Roelofs
Islington South CLP

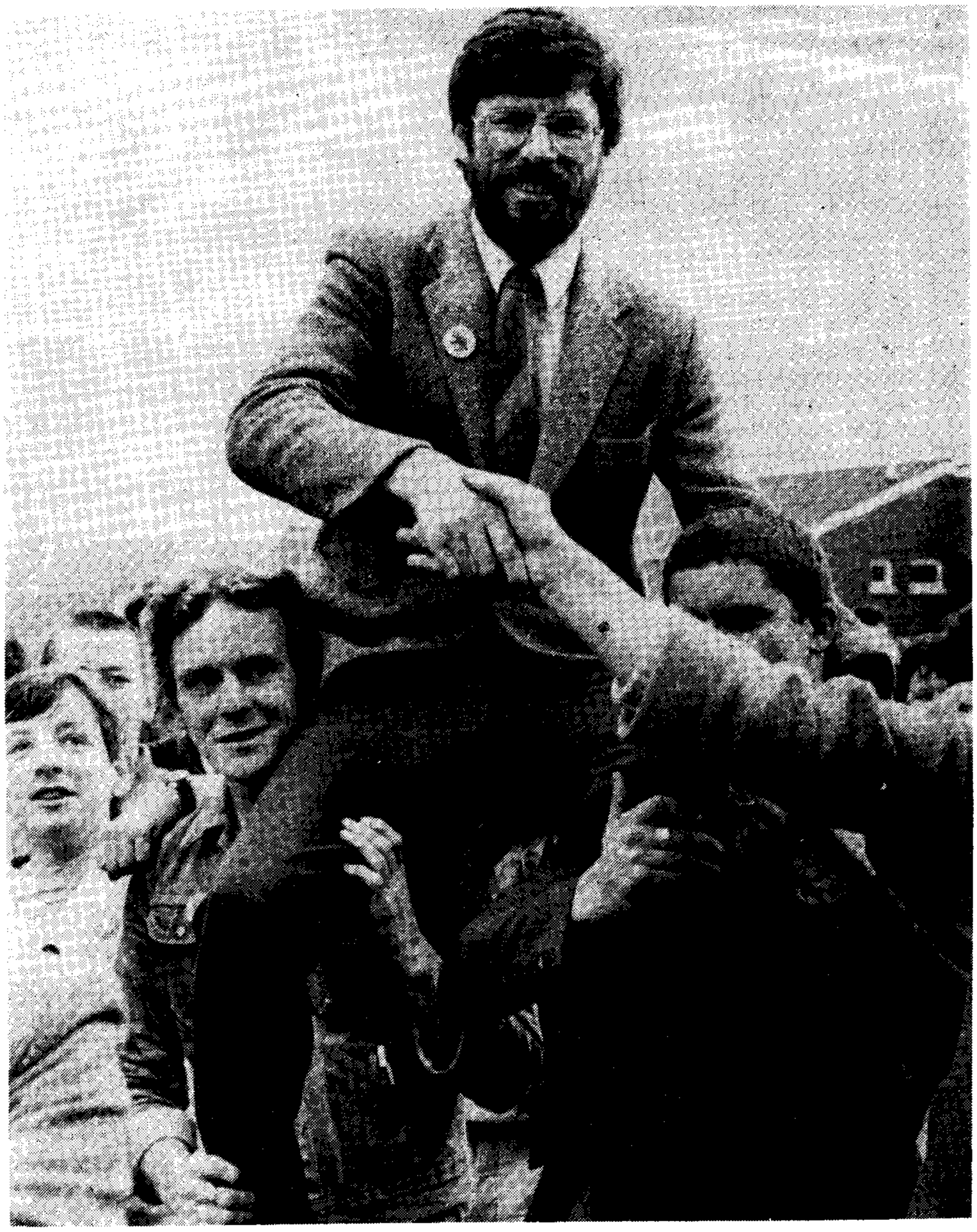
Sarah Roelofs is the Women's Officer for the Labour Committee on Ireland. Contact her at 60D Barnsbury St., London N1 for further information or if your women's section would like a speaker.

A message from Gerry Adams

The wise, talented and cynical television reviewer in my local newspaper will forgive me, I hope, if I quote his impression of the British Labour Party Conference.

'Connolly's words rang ironically against the televised presentation of the Labour Party Conference from Brighton . . . They are an unattractive lot, this Labour Party. Any idealism that once existed in the Labour creed vanished with the first taste of the spoils of office. The first cars, the first salutes, the first invitations to country houses and the first mumblings from the bald domes of England and Labour principles disappeared like the morning dew. It was either a crusade or nothing, and it has long ceased to be a crusade. The perks of office are almost painfully felt in the television presentation of those men. The old leader made his valedictory speech. Michael Foot is almost the classic example of the tendency in Labour politicians to self-destruct. In the past he has wept for minorities in Chile and Nicaragua and Namibia, but he bought a few months of office at the price of a squalid deal on Northern Ireland. His successor confesses to having learned the craft of politics at Mr Foot's knees. One could think of better masters . . .'

There is nothing therefore, justifiable cynicism to one side, to indicate that the change of leadership of the British Labour Party heralds a change of attitude on the question of Ireland. On the contrary, Mr Kinnock who understands little about Welsh nationalism, can hardly be expected to understand the relationship between nationalism and socialism in Ireland. But then again, as he carefully measures the mood of his party on the many issues facing it, he and his advisors must realise, if nothing else, that the debate on Ireland at the Brighton Conference showed clearly the increasing grass roots disenchantment with the Labour Party's present position on partition, on Irish decolonisation and the loyalist veto.



TONY BENN

Tony Benn articulated clearly that grass roots feeling when he bravely stood out and spelt out what Labour must do in regard to Ireland, and the Conference Chairperson, mindful of the sensitivity of the issue ordered a card vote without waiting for the customary call from the floor for such a vote. 'I am told,' he declared, 'that a card vote must always be used on motions relating to Northern Ireland.' That card vote, and its predictable Union block vote spelt defeat for the progressive composite motions. Or did it?

No amount of fudging by the Labour leadership on policy, or the formulation of policy can hide the fact that Ireland is once again becoming a central issue in British politics and an issue about which those in British politics with a democratic or socialist conscience are increasingly concerned. Evidence of that concern, for those who wished to see it, was obvious at the Corn Exchange fringe meeting and in the private meetings between Sinn Fein women activists, myself and Labour Party activists.

COMMON EXPERIENCE

We, in Ireland, realise the need to build upon that concern. We recognise the common experience shared by the Irish and British working class. We assert that to be a socialist means to be anti-imperialist and to be anti-imperialist means recognising and restoring to the Irish people their right to national self-determination and sovereignty. This is the message which must be propagated at constituency level, within the unions, in local and ultimately national manifestos. Labour's tory policy on Ireland must be changed. Only Labour Party activists can do this. It will be a slow tedious process but then rebuilding a British Labour Party, based on Labour ideals will regardless, or despite, leadership changes be a slow tedious process.

The question of Ireland and the cause of Irish independence is an integral part of that process. There is no magic formula. Only by hard work, by lobbying, educating and winning the argument from the grass roots upwards will progress be made. There is work to be done. Let us do it.

Gerry Adams

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