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LABOUR BRIEFING

NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 29 JULY 1986

Wapping: build on the ballot victory:

BRING OUT FLEET STREET!

By Alan Thornett

"Which way forward now?" was the crucial question posed by the results of the secret ballot of the 6,000 sacked print workers at Wapping on the deal said by Rupert Murdoch to be his "final offer".

In a result which confounded almost every commentator on the dispute the NGA members voted 648 against and 165 in favour of the deal, the AEU voted 112 against and 56 in favour and, in the most surprising vote of all, the members of the majority union SOGAT 82 voted 2,081 against and 1,415 in favour of the deal.

This remarkable vote is a tribute to the local chapel and branch leaderships and the active militant print workers from the picket lines who fought so hard for a principled vote in defence of jobs and to reject the lay-off offer.

Their jubilance at the results was in sharp contrast to Brenda Dean's television performance, where she looked as if she was announcing a major defeat.

It could hardly be more important for the whole labour movement that those who fought for this successful result build on it by developing a new way forward which can lead to a victory in the dispute, which is now in its 20th week.

Brenda Dean and the SOGAT Executive know that the local leaderships have the ability to do this. No sooner was the result announced than the SOGAT NEC voted to move a resolution to the SOGAT Conference which would place the control of the dispute entirely in its hands.



That was not all. The seven point resolution went on to call for the dispute to be prosecuted by all means "consistent with ensuring the maintenance of SOGAT as an independent Trade Union" — a policy which would trap the dispute within its print strategy, which is clearly inadequate to win the dispute.

Since then, the results of the Conference have created a serious problem for the dispute. There was rank and file pressure on Dean which eventually forced her to recognise that the NI dispute was about jobs and not compensation — which had been her consistent position; but the decisions the Conference took over the conduct of the dispute are politically disastrous. However, this pales into insignificance against the fact that the Executive motion was *carried unanimously* after what have been described as "behind the scenes negotiations" between the London Branch and the EC.

LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!

FLEET St. (CONTINUED)

It is now union policy adopted by Conference not to do anything which would infringe the law and lead to the sequestration of union funds and to place the control of the dispute in the hands of the NEC.

This comes at a time when the clear implication of the ballot results was that the dispute should be escalated by involving the rest of Fleet Street and other SOGAT members doing work associated with NI production.

There were no resolutions at Conference on this. Instead a number of resolutions were adopted calling for picketing to be stepped up at Wapping, for a campaign on the expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC, and for a stepping up of the boycott campaign.

Whilst all these measures are important they will not win the dispute.

The London branches and the militant printers running the picket lines surely cannot settle for this? They are the ones who have been the driving force of the dispute up to now. They are the ones who so successfully campaigned for the successful ballot result. They are the ones who should keep democratic control of the dispute and forge a way forward which can break the present deadlock.

"Wreckers"

Nothing else makes sense. Brenda Dean opened the conference by calling the London branches "wreckers" and it ended with a unanimous vote to give the NEC control of the dispute.

The control of the dispute should be in the hands of the rank and file of the three unions involved.

The NGA leadership have taken a stronger stand than Brenda Dean. They did at least recommend a "no" vote in the ballot. But an important factor in that was the regular meeting of all those in dispute which has allowed the rank and file to make their voice heard.

All this is worse when considered against the remarkable commitment to the dispute by the vast majority of those involved. When was there a dispute of this magnitude with such a high percentage of members involved in picketing? It is probably unique!

It is not so surprising when looked at against the proud history of the trade unions on Fleet St. They have a history not only of supporting themselves but of supporting other sections of workers under attack from both the law and the employers.

Now they are under attack — and it is an attack which involves all Fleet St workers — not just as a principle but because of the clear implications of what a defeat at NI would mean for the whole of the newspaper industry.

Murdoch's bribe rejected



Print workers march to the picket at Wapping — Photo: Ian Swindale

Our rejection of Murdoch's £50 million bribe is a vital step forward in our struggle to defend our jobs and conditions, and to maintain traditional trade unionism in the print industry. It also exposes the myth that we would sell our principles rather than continue the fight.

If the strikers had accepted the bribe, this would have meant a scabs' charter, allowing employers to dismiss workers in any industry and replace trade unionists with subservient scabs. Our decision represents our determination to challenge the right of bosses to beat us down and to destroy our jobs for ever.

The 'no' vote has also exposed that the SOGAT leadership is isolated from the rank and file. It is a kick in the teeth for the 'new realism' of Brenda Dean, Norman Willis and Neil Kinnock.

Printworkers have supported the struggles of other workers both industrially and financially — such as health workers, miners, post office workers and teachers. We shall continue to do so, as a principle of workers' unity. We call for solidarity action now to protect the working class movement.

***Invite strikers to workplace meetings.**

***Call for solidarity action of workplaces.**

***Step up support for picketing at Wapping and elsewhere.**

***Demand the printworkers' case is a priority for the whole movement.**

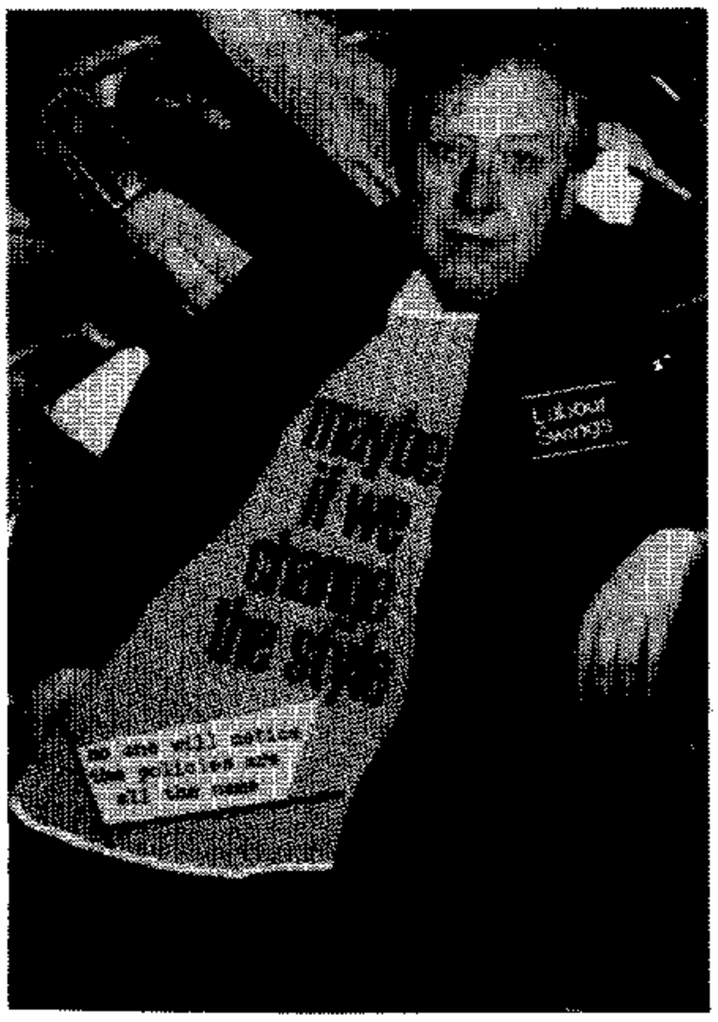
Larry Hyett,
(Chair, Union of Print Support Groups)

DEMONSTRATE!
Against Apartheid

Saturday June 28

Assemble 11.00am at Hyde Park

March to Clapham Common



Cath Tate

NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue will be a pilot issue for the projected new fortnightly Briefing. It is due out on July 8th and articles should be sent into 162 Millfields Road, London E5 0AE by 30th June.

OUR PRINTERS

As we attempt the transition to a fortnightly paper, we say goodbye — for the moment — to our printers, Wernham. To Bernie and Phil, we say thank you for your help, support and understanding over the past 4-5 years.

We urge all our supporters and labour movement organisations to use Wernhams. We know you will get the same excellent service as we have received.

All enquiries to Wernhams of 4 Forster Road, Tottenham N17, tel: 01-808 1677.

Page 1 **Cartoon by Dave Bangs, Banner Maker, 73 Whidborne Buildings, Tonbridge Street, London WC1, tel: 985 5674.**

The Lambeth 31: Defended Jobs & Services

Now in Need of Your Help

Councillors Face Bankruptcy

On April 2nd thirty one Lambeth Labour Councillors were banned from holding council office. Severe financial penalties were imposed upon them:
In the High Court they were ordered to pay £106,000 surcharge plus £100,000 for the District Auditor's legal costs.
This was their harsh reward for refusing to make cuts in jobs or services in one of London's poorest boroughs.

Leading Labour

Elected in 1982 this new group of Labour Councillors came to power in Lambeth with a clear policy of **NO CUTS**. They built homes, created jobs and implemented radical policy initiatives in areas such as Equal Opportunities and community development, leading the way for local authorities all over the country.

Tory Cuts

They did this against a background of increasingly savage cuts in funding to local councils as Thatcher sought to decimate the activities of all those opposed to her.
The attack on local government culminated in 1984 when Lambeth, along with 17 other authorities, was "ratecapped", a policy which sought finally to impose £13 million of cuts in the borough.

Lambeth Fightback

No Socialist council could implement those cuts. So, following the national policy of the Labour Party and of the local unions, Lambeth joined with 8 other councils and refused to set a rate until sufficient resources became available to fund necessary jobs and services.
Lambeth Councillors held out and no cuts were made.

Retribution

The Tories' retribution was harsh. Lambeth's Labour Councillors have been ordered to repay their massive fines at a rate of £5,000 a month.
Sould they default on payment the penalty is clear: personl fiancial ruin, bankruptcy and bailiffs at the door.
These huge sums are obviously way beyond the means of any small group of working class people.

Consequently Lambeth Labour Group are appealling to others for help. They are being punished for standing up against the Government on behalf of ordinary people in their community.
It is now time for the Labour Movement to come forward and stand up for them.
Don't let the Lambeth 31 down.

Please complete and return the standing order form.

To invite a surcharged/disqualified councillor to speak at your union or party meeting contact the Fighting Fund.

Lambeth Fighting Fund

£5000 a month to pay

STANDING ORDER AUTHORITY

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Bank Name .....

Bank Address .....

.....

Account Number .....

I hereby give authority to the payment of the following standing order from my current account:
Please pay **The Lambeth Fighting Fund**, Account No. 90009364, Sorting Code 77–91–09, The Trustee Savings Bank, Brixton Branch, 18 Acre Lane, Brixton, London SW2 5SQ the sum of £ ..... on the ..... day of each month, commencing on ...../...../..... and on the same day each month until further notice.

Date ..... Signature .....

Thank you for your support. Please return immediately to Lambeth Fighting Fund, c/o Chief Whip, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, London SW2.

Badges, Booklets, Tankards and Video!

Please return this form to order.

Please send:

..... Badges (Sack Tory Judges, Not Labour Councillors) @ £2.50 for 10. £.....

..... Copies of "The Battle for Lambeth" (36 pages) @ £1 each. £.....

..... Copies of "Councils for the Defence" (20 minute video by the makers of "The Battle for Orgreave") @ £10 a copy. £.....

Total: £.....

Please make cheques payable to **Lambeth Fighting Fund** and return to:
Lambeth Fighting Fund, c/o Chief Whip's Office, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, London SW2.

Lambeth Fighting Fund, c/o Chief Whip's Office, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, London SW2

FIGHTING THE WITCH-HUNT

The expulsion of Derek Hatton and the decision, by 13 votes to 12, to refuse to reinstate Kevin Scally and Amir Khan are better reflections of attitudes in the NEC than the endorsement of Pat Wall. Kevin Scally had spoken to the press about membership irregularities after attempting for a year to resolve the matter internally. Amir Khan had taken part in meetings of Black members in his area. Both were members of Roy Hattersley's constituency, Birmingham Sparkbrook, and neither had any connection with Militant.

Roy Hattersley spoke at the GC meeting prior to their expulsions and called for the 'boil to be lanced'. Ken Cure heard their appeal and recommended that it should be rejected. Both Hattersley and Cure attended the Appeals and Mediations Committee and voted to recommend to the NEC that the appeal should be rejected. This was passed by 3 votes to 2. The NEC then voted by 13 votes to 12 to reject the appeals with both Hattersley and Cure voting for rejection. Such behaviour was in breach of the rules of natural justice.

As Larry Whitty told the *Guardian*, on the same day, the rules are not 'adequate to restrain authoritarian moves by sections of the Party who happen to be in control at any particular time, or to protect the individual in the Party from injustice.'

The NEC have usually refused alleged members of Militant legal representation and the right to call witnesses, and have cloaked their activities in secrecy by doing away with recorded votes. The successful legal challenges have bought time which should allow all sections of the Party to consider a more constructive way forward.



Tony Mulhearn and Derek Hatton: facing up to the witch-hunt

The balance of forces inside the Party is such that resistance to the witch hunt must be coupled with a practical way forward which will make it more likely that the Rules will be applied impartially. This could be achieved by the application of the Rules being transferred from the NEC to an elected independent appeal body. Such a body would seek to act on the basis of consensus and develop a long term approach based on tolerating the right to associate, but would not permit the breach of Rules which were both clear and understood. No one should be expelled without warning on the basis of an arbitrary interpretation of the Rules. Unless such an alternative is available Kinnock will use his majority on the NEC, and at Conference, to continue the witch hunt.

Meanwhile, there are a number of ways that the current expulsions can be resisted. The right of those, like Scally and Khan, who have had their appeals disallowed by the NEC, to have their cases reported to Conference must be established beyond doubt, and delegates must be prepared to move reference back of those sections of the NEC Report.

The argument that the expulsions are not only wrong but a damaging distraction must be brought up in every Party forum because expulsions will occur when the perceived benefits outweigh the disadvantages. The Constituencies and unions must be convinced that expulsions will benefit neither the Party nor sectional interests. Expulsions are seen as popular with the press and voters.

The way the leadership are using the opportunity to change policies, with the help of those who have replaced loyalty to Socialist policies with loyalty to the leadership, must be understood. The temporary nature of press support must be explained. At the General Election, the Party could either be undermined by the divisions arising from mass expulsions or claims that the Party remains dominated by Militant, or both. The 'evidence' will come from Kinnock and others in the Party, not those who are standing against the Party. Quotations from the Leadership will be used to attack the Party — as was the case in 1983.

Information on expulsions, and the damage which they are doing must continue to be available. Resolutions, meetings, and publicity should be used to focus on the issue both in the Constituencies and unions.

Criticism of NEC witch hunters should extend from the Constituencies into the unions' Broad Lefts. The NUR, T&GWU, and NUPE are all opposed to witch hunts but their NEC representatives are not in line with their union's policies.

Kevin O'Reilly
(Legal Adviser, CLPD)

THE NEED

The need for a concerted campaign against the witch-hunt can no longer be in doubt. The maximum publicity around the extent of the attacks on socialists in the Labour Party — *Militant*, Black Sections and *Briefing* supporters plus a number of individuals — and on defending the right of those with views different to the Party leadership to speak out and organise if necessary, must be sought between now and Party Conference.

If the disastrous Trade Union and Party Regional Conferences are anything to go by, there will be resolutions to expel anyone selling or supporting *Militant* at Party Conference. Only Women's Conference, Young Socialists Conference and the Black Sections AGM stand out as clearly opposed to the witch-hunt. Sections of the TGWU General Council have fought to overturn that union's clear policy against the witch-hunt and are blocking Ron Todd from speaking out in the manner he did at their Bienniel Delegate Conference in 1985.

The Party NEC is concentrating on the

HATTERSLEY'S PURGE

Kevin Scally,
Sparkbrook CLP

Seven months after being expelled from Birmingham Sparkbrook Constituency Labour Party my appeal against expulsion was finally rejected by the NEC on June 9th. My crime? I had appeared on a Channel 4 documentary programme which showed that there were large-scale membership irregularities in the CLP. There has been no suggestion that I was a member of Militant or even a Trotskyist. In fact my only sectional affiliation in 17 years membership of the party has been in the Labour Committee for Ireland and the CLPD. The expulsion and that of Councillor Amir Khan for forming a Black Section, clearly shows that the NEC is after more than just Militant. It shows that the clock is now turning back towards the 1950s when the NEC conducted a McCarthyite witch-hunt against left wing individuals and constituencies. It is clear that many right wing CLPs will see this as the green light for more expulsions of left-wingers.

Amir was expelled for forming a Black Section in Sparkbrook in direct contravention to the views of Roy Hattersley. Both of us will continue to campaign for re-admission and for an independent inquiry into Sparkbrook. In Birmingham alone the campaign for an independent inquiry is gaining momentum. Ken Livingstone has said, "Sparkbrook is a rotten borough. Kevin and Amir have been expelled for bringing the party into disrepute by supporting a black section and appearing on television in order to oppose the Sparkbrook mafia's attempt to block the creation of a Black Section'. Many left wing councillors, including Trades Council Secretary and Sparkbrook councillor Mick Rice, have backed the call for an independent inquiry. In a very right wing city this is very significant.

It is almost three years since the mass recruitment was started by right wingers in Sparkbrook. At one ward meeting in December 1983, I as secretary, was handed 160 membership applications, many more than the usual number. An investigation by the ward executive revealed that about half of these were fraudulent. The intention behind such recruitment was an attempt to bolster Hattersley's position in the re-selection battle due in 1984.



John Chapman

Amir Khan

We were able to show that applications came from addresses which did not exist, from people who did not exist, and from individuals who protested that they hadn't wanted to join the Labour Party in the first place and hadn't signed an application form! Our demands to have toe matter independently investigated were rejected – not surprisingly since it is clear to me that such an investigation would have ended up pointing the finger at Roy Hattersley. Having unsuccessfully fought for eighteen months to have an investigation I reluctantly appeared on television and produced my evidence. The constituency responded by expelling me. Amir Khan was expelled the same evening, but our experiences are linked in more ways than that. Both of us were part of a left that challenged the paternalistic relationship of the local party to black people. Amir formed a Black Section so that black people could collectively fight the discrimination they face. The white right-wing wanted to do things for black people and then use them as voting fodder in internal elections. The Sparkbrook left believed that black people can do things for themselves and that they are not clients of ambitious white politicians. For believing that in Sparkbrook you face expulsion.

The Sparkbrook Labour Democracy Campaign has been set up by the left in Birmingham following the expulsions of Kevin and Amir. They would be grateful for sponsorship, money and messages of support.

Contact: c/o Bernie Wilde, 293 Clifton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12. Tel: 021-236 8323 (daytime); 021-777-8588 (evening).

Resolution

This . . . notes the NEC inspired enquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party over the alleged irregularities and the resulting expulsion of those attempting to implement party policy against Tory cuts.

It also notes the longstanding dispute over membership irregularities in Birmingham Sparkbrook CLP and the expulsion of two members who highlighted the issue.

It notes the different NEC attitude towards these two cases and calls for an independent enquiry into Sparkbrook CLP.

We also note the expulsion of Kevin Scally and Amir Khan on June 9th and call for their immediate reinstatement.

FOR A CONCERTED CAMPAIGN

Kevin Lee

Militant. There was a rumour that sections of the NEC were moving to *oppose* the expulsion of comrades Khan, Scally and Rafique from Birmingham, in order to stop any broad front against the witch-hunt and begin the "salami" tactic, slicing off *Militant* first.

Although this has not succeeded in blocking the expulsions of the Birmingham comrades, we still need to work to ensure that *Militant* are not isolated, and point out that the attacks on *Militant* are more to do with their record on at least attempting to defend local government than to do with the fact that they are better organised than most.

We should also be honest and call for a recognition of the right of socialists to organise within the Party — we're asking for no more than is granted to the Fabian Society, the Co-op Party and the British wing of the Israeli Labour Party, Poale Zion. The right wing of the Party organises through Labour Solidarity, in which there are many leading MPs — but that, of course, is acceptable to Mr Kinnock. Similarly, *Briefing* should not pretend that it does not organise — how else could you produce a monthly paper? We should simply explain that the history of the Party entitles us to do so.

The Witch-Hunt Conference on June 21 provides an excellent opportunity to launch an ongoing campaign against the purge. The organising meetings have seen fraught arguments, with *Socialist Action* arguing against any ongoing campaign against the witch hunt (presumably because they are against any campaign of the left that is still moving leftwards — witness their wrecking role in Labour Left Co-ordination and the Labour Committee on Ireland).

Yet without the widest possible campaign, reaching into the unions in particular, we will face massive defeat at Party Conference. So the continued lobbies of the National Executive; Left MPs speaking out; the production of *Witch-Hunt News*; preparations for the Blackpool Conference and beyond, require such an ongoing campaign.

The NEC, under the spurious grounds of wishing to avoid having legal action taken against local Constituency Parties, are now to publish a "procedure for parties to follow when taking disciplinary action". All told, the investigation into Liverpool District Labour Party, the special meetings, the expulsions, the legal fees, the accommodation costs, the publication of the reports, etc., are estimated to have cost the Labour Party £100,000! Just think what an effective campaign against unemployment, or nuclear weapons, or simply in membership recruitment could have been carried out if the real figure is anywhere near this amount. It is time to start asking if our subs are being put to the best use!

As *Briefing* goes to press, we don't know the result of the latest round of Liverpool "hearings". Whatever the outcome, we give our full support to those Parties who refuse to accept the expulsions of their members and Councillors.

WHO DO WE SUPPORT FOR TREASURER

Last month's *Briefing* National Steering Committee discussed elections at Labour Party Annual Conference — among them, the election for National Treasurer. We were unable to reach a decision on which to support out of Gavin Strang and Ken Livingstone.

We have asked both candidates to send us a statement of the political basis on which they are standing for the NEC, which we now print

..STRANG?

Labour can win power at the general election on a radical and socialist programme. It is simply not true that the electorate will prefer the party which projects the most moderate image. The existence of the SDP-Liberal alliance makes it all the more necessary for Labour to campaign on the radical policies which this country so desperately needs.

Support in the Labour Party for a defence policy which makes a complete break with the bi-partisan approach of successive governments has never been stronger. If we give a clear lead on the need for a government that removes all nuclear weapons from British territory during the next parliament we can start to win votes on the defence issue.



L. P. Photo Library.

Last year's annual conference voted overwhelmingly for a composite resolution instructing the NEC to mount a campaign to build support for a non-nuclear defence policy. We should not wait until the run up to the next general election before we start the process of educating Labour MPs, party activists and potential Labour voters on a policy which must involve a decisive diversion of resources from military to civil production and services.

Annual conference is the supreme policy making organ of the party. Last year's vote on composite 70 which called for 'a halt to the nuclear power programme and a phasing out of all existing plants' was clear-cut. This year we should achieve a two thirds majority for that policy.

The economic case for a dominant role for coal in our energy economy has always been overwhelming. After Chernobyl there is no electorally acceptable alternative.

Labour's destiny should be to secure a return to full employment in this country. A Labour government which secures a million new full-time jobs in two years will be a significant advance. We still need an economic strategy for full employment. The failure of the Conservative government to use the North Sea oil revenues to massively increase investment in our manufacturing industries has done incalculable harm to the prospects for higher living standards for working people in this country throughout the next decade. Regardless of the future price of oil, the reversal of Britain's industrial decline can only be achieved within the framework of a major expansion of public ownership and investment.

Investment in manufacturing industry is crucial to this country's future but it is not the most effective way to create work in the short-term. The next Labour government must create hundreds of thousands of new full-time jobs in education, health and public transport services as well as in the construction industry.

The Treasurer of the Labour Party has a responsibility to devote a substantial part of his time to securing more resources for the party and to playing a part in ensuring that they are used effectively to improve Party organisation at national, regional and local level.

All the Labour Party resources and more are needed to win victory at the general election. We should learn from the successful political fund campaign and help 'Trade Unionists for Labour' make a real grass-roots impact throughout the country.

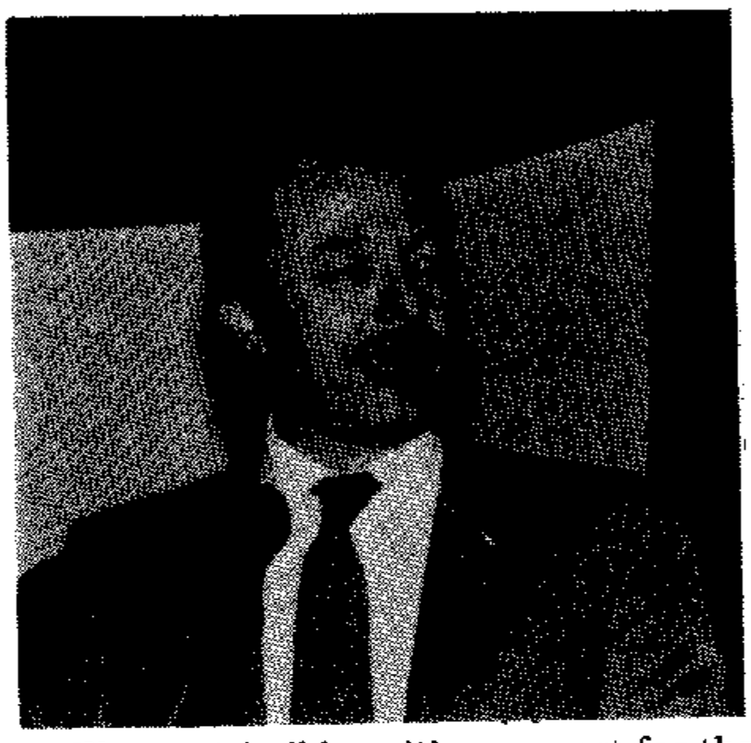
We must improve organisation and campaigning at constituency and branch level.

However merely streamlining organisation or a quantitative increase of campaigning is not in itself sufficient. Greater involvement in the policy making process by party's members and potential members is equally vital. Many of these come from the sections of our society which in addition to being disadvantaged by

LIVINGSTONE OR...

I see the role of treasurer as a campaigning role — during the miners' strike the treasurer should have led a national campaign to raise funds for the miners and should now be doing the same for the surcharged councillors as well as spearheading the drive to raise funds to campaign for our policies.

There has been much priase for the campaigning techniques of the GLC but these campaigns were based on getting across firmly socialist policies in a popular style.



John Chapman

We must build positive support for the policies of intervention in the economy that can bring down unemployment. We need substantial expansion of public services. We must make it clear that such programmes can only be funded by the control and direction of capital. We need to break the grip of the multinationals.

CND has produced a revulsion at the escalation of nuclear terror. The Labour Party must reach the same people, to convince them that a party with a defence policy based on the scrapping of Polaris, the withdrawal of Cruise and the cancellation of Trident is worth voting for.

Millions fear the attacks on benefits. We must turn that resentment into positive support for expanding and democratising the welfare state.

The party should unite around such policies rather than assuming that we can win by watering them down. Reaching out to those we have ignored in the past requires confronting racism and sexism wherever it occurs. Black sections should be recognised as autonomous bodies with the right to affiliate at all levels. The party must fully agree to the constitutional changes proposed by WAC.

We must introduce the following organisational changes:

*A major drive to establish thousands of workplace branches.

*An immediate drive to increase membership reaching out to involve women, the elderly, young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, and lesbians and gay men.

*Regional officers to spend their time campaigning rather than policing the party.

*A range of regional and national fund-raising events, using party supporters in the arts.

*Integrating the use of the Parliamentary Labour Party in general party campaigns and putting more resources into the targeting of key constituencies.

To achieve these ends party members need to be involved as they were during the miners' struggle. That requires that the NEC campaigns for the policies of conference, firmly resisting witch-hunts.

I have always opposed expulsions from the party, withdrawals of the whip from Labour Groups and the exclusion of individuals from panels of candidates. I see no reason to change that position.

Ken Livingstone

BLACK SECTIONS FOR THE NEC

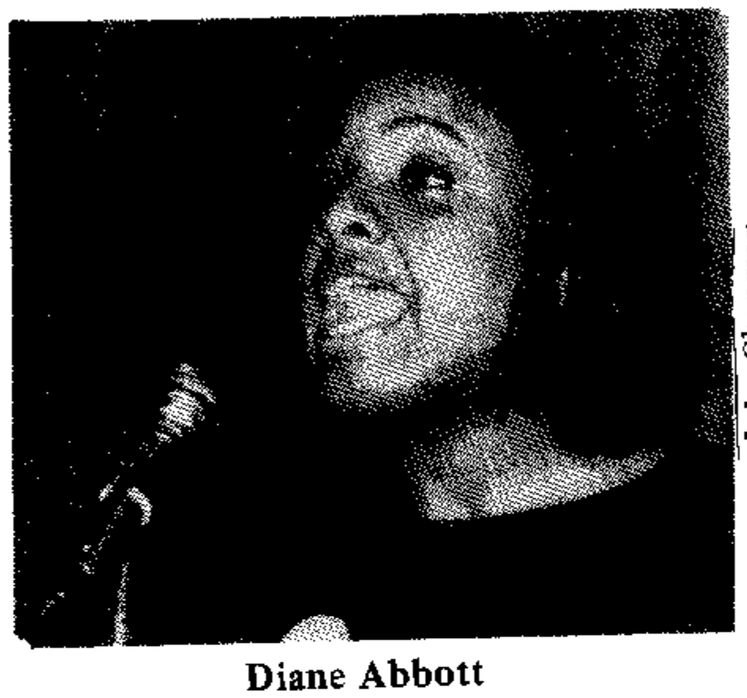
Two prominent Black Sections supporters will be seeking nominations to contest the CLP section of Labour's National Executive at the annual conference in Blackpool. The Black Sections National Committee has agreed to support the candidacy of Russell Proffitt (PPC, Lewisham East) and Narendra Makanji (National Secretary of Black Sections, Hornsey/Wood Green), alongside that of Diane Abbott who will be contesting the women's section. This move has assumed greater importance since the cynical and racist carving out of TGWU deputy general-secretary Bill Morris. The NEC is assured of at least one black member for 1986/7 — Militant supporter Linda Douglas representing the Young Socialists.



Narendra Makanji

The main platform of the three Black Section candidates will be the immediate implementation of the demand that Black Sections should be established in all constituencies where black members want these with full rights of representation on GCs, regional conferences and the national executive. Election of any or all of these three will also spell the end of the failed Advisory Committee and ensure that the black perspective is fully reflected in all the decision-making processes of the Labour Party.

The record of the NEC over the past years in combatting racism is quite appalling. The Jobs and Industry campaign made no reference to the disproportionately high levels of unemployment in the black communities nor did it mention the racism faced by those in work; the nearest was euphemistic mention of "inner cities". This has been compounded by the deliberate exclusion of anti-racism in the so-called "Freedom and Fairness" campaign. The ad agency made sure that no black faces appeared in the images, as if the million black voters did not have any political rights or aspirations.



John Chapman

Diane Abbott

Two members of the NEC representing CLPs have consistently refused to listen to the arguments and demands of black members. Also, by their actions in supporting the witch-hunt, comrades Blunkett and Meacher have set up the scene in which people such as Cllr. Amir Khan and Cllr Mohammed Rafiq of Birmingham have been expelled by the NEC. Their only "crime" was to seek representation for black people which has been denied by the barons of rotten boroughs such as Roy Hattersley.

Black members of the NEC will also ensure that there is no double talk by Party leadership on issues such as immigration and nationality. Whilst promising to repeal these racist laws to black audiences, senior members of the shadow cabinet have gone around making speeches that there will be no real changes under a Labour government.

Black Sections supporters are determined to put a stop to all this!

S. Sabaratnam,
Treasurer, Labour Party
Black Sections

Letter

For a National Regroupment of the Labour Left

At the *Briefing* fringe meeting of the Greater London Labour Party AGM, Tony Benn made a specific reference to whether Neil Knnock should be replaced as Labour leader before the next election. On previous occasions, such as at the Alliance for Socialism rally, Benn had rejected the idea of a challenge to Kinnock on the grounds that this would "personalise" the political issues. This time, however, he rejected running against Kinnock because it would be appearing to foster disunity in the eyes of the unemployed, the poor, etc.: those that he said were not politically active but who desperately need a Labour government.

Such an argument seems flawed, on at least two counts. Firstly Benn seems to be motivated by the very electoralism he criticised at the same meeting. While, to be sure, there are no conditions I would want to place on the return of a majority Labour government, this is not the same as being indifferent to the programme or composition of such a government. We cannot subordinate the struggle for politics and leaders within the Party to the dubious notion of electoral credibility, when in fact winning the election is centrally related to having the correct policies and leaders who will implement them. The same goes for the support activists have given to workers in struggle, such as the miners or printers, which equally cannot be sacrificed on the altar of electoral cretinism. The manufacturers of public opinion may claim for their own reasons that the movement's support for workers in dispute harms the Labour Party's election chances: in fact, the opposite is true. The miners' strike was the key turning-point in the collapse in support for the government.

More specifically, is it the campaigns of the left or the attacks of the right which are "disuniting" the Labour Party? Should the leadership be allowed a free hand on which to dictate the terms on which unity is achieved? Before the call for a challenge to Kinnock and Hattersley is labelled divisive, it should be remembered that it is the leadership that is pursuing the witch-hunt, junking Party policy and writing its own along the way.

For the left in the Party to duck this problem on the grounds of Party unity is a little fraudulent. There is far more that the leaders of the left should be doing, which would not cast it in a divisive light. But how can the defence of crucial policies go beyond an individual speech and become the focus of a collective campaign, as long as the Labour left remains largely disorganised and uncoordinated at a national level?

To be sure, there are *Briefing* Groups, Campaign Groups, and local Labour lefts. At the national level, there is the Campaign Group of MPs, Labour Left Co-ordination, the CLPD, and publications such as *Briefing* and *Campaign Group News*. But none of these groupings or publications is yet in a position to bridge the gap and organise the left-wing activists in the CLPs on a national basis — except the Campaign Group MPs. Is it surprising that the right-wing should continue their offensive while the left remains disorganised, particularly if we bear in mind that the offensive began in 1982 after the Rank and File Mobilising Committee was wound up?

Clearly, four years on, the RFMC cannot be resurrected — particularly as a number of its components have become rabid witch-hunters and architects of Kinnock's cross-class strategy. But there is a sizeable and developing current in the Party which urgently needs to be organised together on a national scale if the leadership's lurch to the right — and possibly to coalitionism — is to be halted. It is incumbent on nationally recognised leaders of the left, such as Benn, Heffer or Skinner, to start organising this current.

Mike Phipps
Battersea CLP

their class position are also discriminated against because of gender or colour. The party must adopt measures to ensure more adequate representation of women and Black people at every level of its organisation. It must recognise the right of its Black members to organise themselves in Black sections when they so desire and it must meet the demands of the National Conference of Labour women. This alone will significantly increase the credibility of our claim to represent the interests of all the under privileged members of our society.

Last, but not least, a purge of the party could only be damaging in the long run. A united party is vital to ensure Labour's victory at the next general election. Nothing should stand in the way of the overriding priority.

Gavin Strang

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF 'RADICAL REALISM'

Phil Hearse
(Hampstead and Highgate CLP)

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee is having a rethink. The May '86 issue of *Labour Activist*, the LCC newsletter, carries a major editorial declaring that there has been some 'stagnation' in LCC perspectives and that therefore a new strategy has to be worked out. The source of the LCC's disquiet is revealingly set out in the article. The LCC takes exception to the widespread impression that it is part of a 'soft left' axis together with Tribune, *Marxism Today* etc; it admits that 'many constituency parties are still dominated by *Briefing/Campaign* Group or other politics'; and it claims that there has been a 'misleading impression on the ground' about LCC initiatives. In short, the LCC wants to challenge the assumption that radicalism in the party is represented by the 'hard left' and stake its own claim to being the 'realistic' radical left.

There are in the article some welcome signs of realism about Kinnock and what the party leadership represents. It admits that there 'may have been an initial over-estimation of the political space around Kinnock' and that in the policies of the party leadership 'we can observe all the hallmarks of a Keynesian technicism reminiscent of Wilson in 1964 rather than a preparation for a radical assault on the power of capital'.

But if this is what the LCC now think about the leadership, and they seriously want to fight it, they will find themselves pushed into alliances with the hard left inside the party, whether they want such alliances or not. For it is precisely the '*Briefing/Campaign* Group' left which has been saying that Kinnock is moving party policy to the right in a manner reminiscent of Wilson, and exactly this hard left which has been trying to fight it. On the other hand it is the conscious and specific objective of the LCC, outlined in the article, to 'marginalise' the hard left in the party and 'detach the more realistic and open-minded sections of the hard left' from people like *Briefing*.

In fact the LCC are in a bind. As we shall see, their project of trying to create a radical space between Kinnock and the hard left is thoroughly utopian and will come a cropper; between now and the general election every section of the left in the party is going to have to decide whether to go with Kinnock in the name of 'unity' or fight the shift to the right, and thus line up with the hard left. Despite this recent profession of radical faith by the LCC, we suspect that the choice for most of them will be the former rather than the latter.


Labour Activist

MAY 86 20p

Newsletter of the LCC

A STRATEGY FOR LABOUR'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

1. A TIME OF CHANGE

This is a time of considerable ferment and change on the Left, both within the Labour Party and other forces, notably the Communist Party.

One well observed feature has been the emergence of what some have dubbed a "fundamentalist" Left, ranging from Militant, the Labour ultra-Left; the Morning Star faction (see particularly the *Class Politics* pamphlet); the revolutionary groups; and even *New Left Review* through Ralph Miliband's strictures against the so-called new revisionism. There is no doubt of the inter-relationship between these forces. For example, Tony Benn's blessing of M[illegible]t and the Cla[illegible] Politics [illegible]

capitalism or the Left!

The fundamentalist refusal to accept the scale of the problems facing the labour movement helps to explain the growing disaffection of sections of the Left from their erstwhile allies. The central focus has been reactions to the 1983 defeat. Benn's belief that Labour's 8 million vote was a triumphant affirmation of socialism (repeated by Miliband in New Left Review 148) proved particularly symbolic of the backwardness of this type of thinking. While the provocative and opportunist manoeuvres of the "Hard Left" on the NEC on NATO and other issues, revealed that they remain fixated with questions of leadership and events inside the Party, under the illusion that if these were put right our other problems would fade away.

These develo[illegible]ents were an im[illegible]merg-

In this context, the break between Ken Livingstone and the ultra-left is of great significance. He had been traditionally projected as part of the trimmy rate Benn/Scargill/Livingstone ionised by the ultra-left. More importantly the lessons drawn by Livingstone on the limits of vanguardism may have positive repercussions in the constituency influenced by *Briefing*.

There were of course trends prior to 1983. Recent splits and re-alignments also have their roots in the limits to the dominant political project of the late 1970s, that of the democratic reforms of the Labour Party. Such reforms were and are vital. But they need to be set against the sheer scale of problems and issues raised by the defeats of 1979 and 1983 and setbacks in class and social struggles gene

T[illegible]ampaign fo

A CARICATURE OF THE LEFT

The basic line of argument of the LCC is that there is a 'third way' between Kinnock and the hard left 'ultras'. This 'third way' position is very reminiscent of the recent argument by Peter Carter, CP industrial organiser, that there is a 'third way' in the labour movement which includes 'Sawyer, Bickerstaffe, Knapp, Livingstone and . . . the LCC' (!). In order to argue for the 'third way' the LCC have to make a sweeping caricature of the hard left. This is what they say:

'The "fundamentalist" left . . . is expressed through certain common themes, including the assertion that Thatcherism is business as usual for capitalism; the denial that the left and the Labour Movement has been on the retreat, or that there has been a rightward move in British politics; the espousal of traditional "class politics" as the crucial ingredient of socialist advance. The "business as usual" approach is the essence of the fundamentalist camp'.

On most of these particulars of the analysis of the hard left, the LCC explanation of our positions is simply false. We would precisely argue that Thatcherism is NOT business as usual for capitalism; that there HAS been a shift to the right and that the labour movement in many respects has been in a period of defensive struggles and retreat; and that 'business as usual' is hardly an adequate response.

The problem is not one of recognising that Thatcherism represents a specific, very class conscious and 'tough' capitalist response to the crisis (although not an 'exceptional form of state' as *Marxism Today* theorists say), but of deciding what the appropriate response to Thatcherism is. This is where the difference between *Briefing* and the LCC/soft left lies.

The soft left, and above all *Marxism Today*, have responded by saying that Thatcherism is a massive threat, and to get over it we have to create a 'popular front' by lowering our sights, jettisoning our socialist objectives and above all avoid getting involved in hard struggles against the Tory government. We have said the opposite; that Thatcherism *is* a massive threat to the labour movement which has to be fought here and now, in struggle, to preserve and extend the social and political gains of the labour movement and its allies. Now where exactly does the LCC stand on this question? 'Fundamentally' with *Marxism Today*, or basically with the 'hard left'?

Let's put it another way: is the appropriate response to the rightward polarisation of British politics by Thatcherism to move to the right ourselves and become more 'moderate'? Or is it to stand out against the predominant trend and create the basis for a fightback and for a swing in the other direction?

The urgency of this question is posed by the activity of the Labour Party leadership which is engaged in a determined and very coherent attempt to push the party in a moderate direction, including what the LCC themselves describe as 'Keynesian technicism rather than an assault on capital'. In the coming period

L.L.C. WOUND UP

The undersigned delegates and observers to the Labour Left Co-ordination regret its winding up as an umbrella organisation for the left campaigns and tendencies in the Party.

In its one year of existence the LLC was able to co-ordinate united activity and campaigning around a number of vital issues: in support of the debate on lesbian and gay rights at '85 annual conference; supporting positive action for women and Black people in the Party; opposition to the witch-hunt; a joint bulletin at annual Conference and joint fringe meetings at regional, youth and women's conferences.

All these activities were made possible by the goodwill of its participants and their preparedness to act on a consensus basis as equal participating organisations.

Unfortunately a minority of organisations — Socialist Action, WAC, CLPD — insisted that the LLC could not proceed unless it changed its basis into a two tier structure with "larger" organisations comprising a steering group and "smaller" organisations relegated to a subordinate role. The composition of this steering group was arbitrarily constructed to include some campaigns and tendencies but to exclude others. As no consensus could be found for resolving this difference, all organisations of the LLC agreed on its dissolution.

For our part we remain convinced of the necessity for left unity and co-operation wherever and whenever possible. We will continue to work with others on the left around definite objectives and issues, particularly around opposition to the witch hunt. We would urge all the campaigns and tendencies on the left to continue such co-operation through democratic and non-exclusive forms.

Davy Jones, former LLC Secretary
Walter Woolfgang*, Labour CND observer
Nadine Finch, Target Labour Government
Theresa Conway*, LCLGR delegate
Jeremy Corbyn*, Campaign Group of MPs observer
Narendra Makanji*, Target Labour Government delegate
Anita Patel*, Black Sections delegate
Basil Hinton*, LCI observer
Steph Grant*, Labour Women for Ireland delegate
Jane Prust, Labour Briefing
Jane Kelly, International
Jenny Fisher, Socialist Viewpoint.
***in a personal capacity**

in the Labour Party no-one is going to get anywhere by abstaining on this central question.

THE WITCH HUNT

Nowhere is the incoherence of the LCC's response to the present situation more clearly shown than in their reaction to the witch hunt inside the party. Once you admit, as does the LCC at least tacitly, that the party leadership is engaged in a process of moving the party to the right, then you have to put the administrative measures being taken against Militant and other left wingers (for example in Birmingham and Exeter) in that context. Just why has this obsession with chasing out the 'ultras' come now? Is it purely and simply an accident? Or is there some political relationship between the shift to the right by the party leadership and these anti-left organisational measures? And why does the LCC itself choose this very moment to make isolating the hard left its number one stated task?

The LCC says in their article that on Merseyside 'this has not been a witch hunt against socialist beliefs, but a corrective action against a vanguard party which has hijacked Labour's administration'. It is difficult to know whether this is naivety or duplicity.

Does the LCC really believe that the anti-Militant purge is motivated by a desire by the party leaders to pursue a relentless fight against abuses of procedure and dirty dealings in local parties? If that were really the case, why haven't the NEC launched an enquiry into Sparkbrook CLP, and the semi-mafia style operations of Hattersley and his supporters in that constituency?

And why hasn't the LCC put together a weighty dossier on such abuses by the right wing, rather than 'evidence' by doubtless fair-minded democratic socialists like Ken Cure, Tony Clarke and Roy Hattersley on the NEC? And why, comrades of the LCC, do you think that you are 'misinterpreted' on the ground by local party activists – is it perhaps because they see you in practice as lining up with the right wing?

KINNOCK LEADERSHIP

The LCC article concludes with a lengthy discourse on the nature of the socialist project and the agencies and tactics of socialist transition. It reasserts the need for extra-parliamentary action; argues against any notion of 'smashing the state machine'; argues that there are a 'plurality of subjects' in the transition to socialism, not just an homogenous working class; rejects coalitionism; defends the importance of 'market mechanisms'; and puts forward the notion of a 'new, radical left' to fight for all these objectives.

It is outside the scope of a brief article like this to reply in detail to all the LCC say on this. But the question we want to pose is what does it all *mean*, here and now in the class struggle and in the internal divisions in the party? Let's start with a quote from the LCC, which is deadly accurate and very well said:

'There is no surer sign of a real shift to the Right as when people start finding strikes, protests and campaigns outside conventional channels embarrassing and dangerous to electoral prospects. It is also the crucial area in which people engaged in action learn to make a critique of capitalist society.'

And so say all of us. But who exactly do the LCC have in mind when they write this? All the sectarian and vanguardist ultras down at *Briefing*, not to mention people on the miners' and Wapping picket lines, would probably think of Neil Kinnock. It is not totally outside the bounds of possibility that the LCC themselves were thinking of the party leadership when they wrote this piece.

But if this is so, and if the LCC genuinely believes that it is in struggle that people learn to make a critique of capitalist society – and that therefore mass struggle is the material foundation of any socialist strategy – how can it conceivably be a key strategic task to create a new left in the party which is, as the LCC says, 'supportive but critical' of the Kinnock camp?

Here you have a nice paradox which sums up all the contradictions of what the LCC is trying to do. The LCC, at least tacitly, admits we have a rightward moving party leadership which is going in a Wilson-type direction and is embarrassed by mass extra-parliamentary activity. It admits that it overestimated the potential of this leadership, and by inference the LCC became too associated with it. But instead of sounding the alarm bells, and warning what a Kinnock government might look like, and urging a struggle against the rightward drift, it wants a new left in the party which is 'supportive but critical' of this very leadership!

The LCC does not want to be misinterpreted. It wants to keep its radical credentials, and generate a debate about socialist strategy. But in the real divide inside the party – for the shift to the right or against it – there is not a lot of room for a political position whose 'radicalism' consists of basic support for the leadership and furtive visits to witch hunt committees carrying weighty dossiers fingering the left. Schizophrenics often feel that people don't understand them. Sad to report, the split personality of the LCC remains only in the mind; when you meet their supporters in your local constituency party, things become clarified very rapidly.

LABOUR GOVERNMENT

LCC supporters would doubtless say that our judgement of them is one-sided. Indeed, there is no point denying that, at least on paper, the LCC remains committed to many radical social and political measures. The nub of the question – what stance to take towards the party leadership – must revolve around what we can expect from a Kinnock government, which is now a real possibility.

Briefing's view is that there is a very real danger that a Kinnock-led government would be a re-run of Wilsonism, but in a very different context. The 1964-70 and 1974-9 governments had a disastrous enough effect on the course of British politics, but a centre-right Labour government in today's conditions of mass unemployment and economic crisis would be an even bigger disaster. Apart from demoralising a labour movement already pulverised by the best part of a decade of Thatcherism, a Labour government which failed to take on board an assault on capital would be forced to administer capitalism's crisis – as did Wilson and Callaghan.

The experience of Mitterand in France shows what this can lead to in a period of severe crisis, a sharp shift to the right, and the growth of ultra-right radicalism. Therefore it seems obvious that the left of the party must set itself the dual task of trying to fight for radical socialist measures now, as the best way of trying to avoid this catastrophe, and of building a militant left which will not be disorientated by such a development.

Throughout the LCC editorial there is no inkling that a Kinnock government could turn out to be a right wing government compelled to launch attacks on the working class. If the LCC think this is excluded they are sleepwalking. We wait with interest to see whether their rethink will make them wake up.

LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS AND THE LOCAL ELECTIONS

Tobie Glenny
Islington North CLP

The Local Government elections have been a watershed for Lesbian and Gay intervention in local government. They were the first major electoral test of "Lesbian and Gay initiatives", as well as being the launchpad for the next wave of activity.

As a result of the elections we now have a greatly increased number of Out Lesbian and Gay Councillors: including Bob Crossman — the new Mayor of Islington. We also now have far more Councils with manifesto commitments on Lesbian and Gay Rights, and a whole series of new initiatives taking off — the biggest being the six person Lesbian and Gay Unit in Haringey.



John Chapman

Bob Crossman

As an election "issue" — the results have been very contradictory. In Haringey, racism and homophobia were key issues on which the elections were fought, with the local press and opposition parties churning out the most vicious propaganda. The Council Leadership fought hard in defence of Black People, Lesbians and Gays and around its other progressive policies, and increased by 8 the size of the Labour Group. Interestingly, the right wing Councillors, who disowned the Council Leadership and policies, lost their seats.

Likewise Camden, Hackney and Lambeth — which have been leading Councils as regards lesbian and gay initiatives, also increased their majorities, after strong political campaigning.

The situation in Islington, however, has been very different. The campaign was completely apolitical: the manifesto (including a sizeable section on lesbian and gay rights) was "lost" — so that no one knew what our policies were; and leading Councillors went out of their way to sabotage lesbian and gay initiatives in the period coming up to the election.

Despite all this, there were still vicious attacks from the local press, and opposition, around the issue of Lesbian and Gay Rights, and the issue came up repeatedly on the doorstep. Labour Councillors in the South of the Borough responded by trying to distance themselves from Lesbian and Gay initiatives, and some Councillors went so far as to attack the policies, in letters to the local press.

The results of the election in Islington South were disastrous — with the majority of seats going to the SDP. Those Councillors who denounced policy lost their seats, like in Haringey. In contrast, the three Gay Councillors standing in the North of the Borough got elected, with no loss in votes, and Bob Crossman, who fought the most upfront Lesbian and Gay campaign, scored one of the highest votes.

The results then show a very interesting pattern. Councils which have an upfront profile on lesbian and gay rights, provoke vicious homophobia from the local press, and opposition parties. Those Councils which counter this attack, by campaigning hard in defence of Lesbians and Gays, undermine the homophobia, and get out the Lesbian and Gay vote. For them the issue is a vote winner. Those Labour Coucillors, however, who pander to prejudice, disown their own policies, and try to look the other way, are on a hiding to nothing.

The issue is a crucial one for the Labour Party in Islington South, as Gay MP Chris Smith is standng for re-election, and homophobia will be a central issue. The strategy adopted by the Party over the next two years, is going to determine his fate. Bermondsey or Haringey? — that is the question.

TIME TO STEP UP FIGHT FOR THE N.H.S.

John Lister

Neasden Hospital, St Mary's Harrow Road, New End Hospital Hampstead, Riverside's West London and wards at Charing Cross Hospital, beds and services at the Maudsley psychiatric Hospital: the toll of cuts and closures in London's NHS shows no signs of diminishing.

Health Minister Barney "Rubble" Hayhoe may have intervened in the immediate aftermath of May 8th to stave off the embarrassing closure of Westminster Hospital until after the next election, but he cannot hope to stop all of the impending cuts and closures without a major injection of new money. The latest cuts are the outcome of £80m slashed from London's NHS since 1982.

Indeed, if the Tories did a "U-turn" on health services in the politically sensitive constitutencies of London and the South East, they would be under immense pressure to provide more cash to stave off similar cutbacks in Manchester, Newcastle and the rest of the country.

The local elections showed quite clearly that the health cuts are a major liability to the government. They also showed that the labour movement lags way behind the kind of campaigning approach which is needed to capitalise on that situation.

If London Labour Parties built serious and systematic health campaign work, that alone could tip the balance at the next General Election.

The issues are clear enough:

- hospital, ward and bed closures affecting most of London's 30 health districts; growing waiting lists; plunging standards;
- the scandalous lack of systematic screening for curable cervical and breast cancer — resulting in the needless deaths of thousands of women each year. Why has there been no united campaign on this by Women's Sections?
- and the fight for genuine provision of "community care" to relieve the burden on thousands of individual women saddled with responsibility for sick and elderly relatives.

A real fight on these and other questions could win enormous popular support — and encourage health unions to take firm action against cuts in service and standards.

One of the driving forces undermining standards of patient care has been the Tory insistence upon putting ancillary services out to competitive tender.

This policy has brought profiteering private contract firms into NHS hospitals, and a wave of brutal cutbacks in staff, wages and services as a result of cost-trimming "in-house" tenders.

Privatisation is cuts by another name. Patients receive less adequate care; nursing staff get lumbered wth extra unpaid ancillary tasks; and experienced ancillary staff — in London mainly women from ethnic minorities — find themselves on the dole or their pay packets savagely cut.

Yet privatisation has not been widely understood or challenged outside the ranks of the health unions. Since NUPE's deliberate abandonment of the courageous women strikers at Barking Hospital there has been little action even by health unions. This year's NUPE conference retreated even further from any fight against contractors or job-slashing "in-house" tenders.

In an attempt to break the silence on privatisation and encourage campaigns to take up the issue, a new 41-page London Health Emergency dossier explains the background to competitive tendering; surveys its impact in each of London's health districts: gives profiles on some of the main firms; and gives comparative information on "in-house" tenders as well as other information. It costs £3.50 plus 50p postage, from London Health Emergency, 335, Grays Inn Road, London WC1 (01-833 3020).

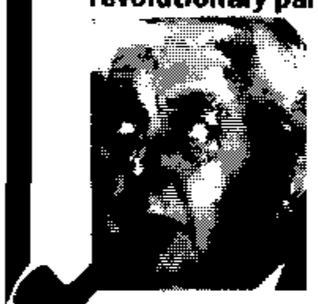
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★Harry Wicks on the **50th anniversary of the Moscow Trials**

★Andy Zebrowski on **Libya—Gadaffi, his friends and his foes**

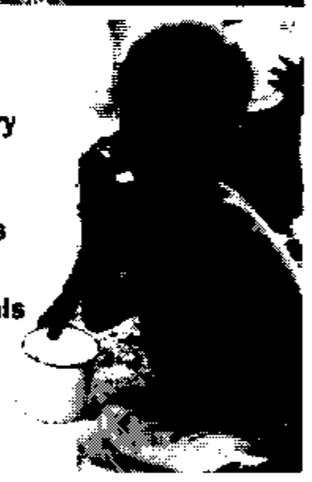
★Raymond Williams on **The socialist novel**

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IT'S BEEN Labour's year at the ballot box. But the cost has been high.

■The red flag lowered as more and more right wing policies cascade from the leadership.

■The witch hunt against Militant that bodes badly for everyone else on the left.

■Workers' struggles all but abandoned for the sake of Kinnock's electoral victory.

Yet at the same time the need for socialism has been highlighted like never before.

Reagan's bombing of Libya, the catastrophe of Chernobyl, the continuing famine in Africa, all show the horror of capitalism and the need to overthrow it.

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■Can a revolutionary party be built?

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WOMENS CONFERENCE '86

Rothesey is a very beautiful, very peaceful town on the Isle of Bute, just off the coast of western Scotland. The presence of a gunship in the harbour during the weekend of 17th-18th May therefore came as something of a surprise. Could it be that they were there because the Navy feared trouble from the dangerous hordes who converged upon Rothesey that weekend – the 61st Conference of Labour Women?

Malicious rumour has it that the Conference was held in Rothesay in order to limit press coverage in case Labour Women voted for policies which would embarrass their leaders. If that was the ploy then it was certainly successful. The national press didn't make it to Bute, and there was virtually no mention of the conference in the media.

Embarrassment

Probably just as well for Neil actually. Bit of an embarrassment these Labour Women. Passing resolutions condemning the witch-hunt and challenging the Chair when she refused to allow Felicity Dowland (expelled member of Liverpool District Labour Party) to speak in the debate. And then they all walked out when that nice man, Larry Whitty, tried to tell them what they should be doing to win the next election. (Being sisterly to the men apparently). Why can't they stick to making tea and sandwiches?

Labour Women decisively rejected the politics of the witch-hunt, the resolution opposing the expulsions and the suspension of the Liverpool District Party was carried by 279 votes to 171 votes on a card vote. Women are again leading the way in the fightback against the right in the party.

One theme ran throughout the Conference. Women want socialist policies and active campaigns on the issues which concern them, and this was reflected in all the debates. In the debate on the National Health Service the necessity of rebuilding the NHS after the Tory cuts was stated, but it was stressed that we must have a health service which fulfills women's needs in an accessible manner. Similarly with the Welfare State – women know what services we need and men must listen to our demands. Issues of low pay and part-time workers' rights, along with women's place in a socialist economy must also be a priority.

International affairs figured prominently in the debates. An emergency resolution condemning Reagan's bombing of Tripoli and the use of British bases in this operation was carried. Support was also given to demands that the next Labour government get rid of the American bases in Britain, as well as carrying out Party policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Ida Jimmy of SWAPO addressed the Conference and in an intensely moving speech called for Labour Women to support the struggle of their black sisters in Namibia and South Africa.

Resolutions giving support to the ANC and COSATU and calling for sanctions against the South African government were passed.

John Cunningham came under attack for his refusal as a front bench spokesperson to oppose nuclear power, and a message of sympathy was sent to the families of rescue workers who died at Chernobyl.

One glaring omission from the agenda was that there was no resolution on the current print dispute. Coverage of trade union issues generally was poor, and a resolution expressing support for the mining communities only just got onto the agenda. There was an attempt to get a debate on an emergency resolution condemning the policing methods used at Wapping but even this (extremely mild) resolution was refused a hearing on the grounds that it wasn't an emergency!

Problems with venue

There were problems arising from the conference venue. Although the decision to hold a major Labour Party conference in Scotland is welcome (and not before time), there must have been more accessible venues available. The ferry journey out to the island made things particularly difficult for women with disabilities and there were no disabled facilities in the Pavillion where the conference was being held. If the Labour Party is serious in its policy of equal rights for the disabled, then we must have a commitment to finding venues which are accessible to people with disabilities.

The standard of debate was very high, much higher in fact than in many of the debates at National Conference, where many of the speeches are intended not so much as a contribution to a debate, as striking a posture. Ironically, because Women's Conference has no policy making powers and receives little attention from the media, there is more chance of issues being properly debated and given the consideration which they deserve.

Women lead fightback

Once again, women in the Labour Party have supported positions well to the left of established party policy. On questions such as nuclear power, the Welfare State, the Health Service, the economy, Ireland, lesbian rights, women are making demands upon the leadership. We want socialist policies and the political will to implement them. Women have rejected the 're-aligned' policies of the soft, so-called left and Kinnock. The fightback begins here!

Labour Briefing Women

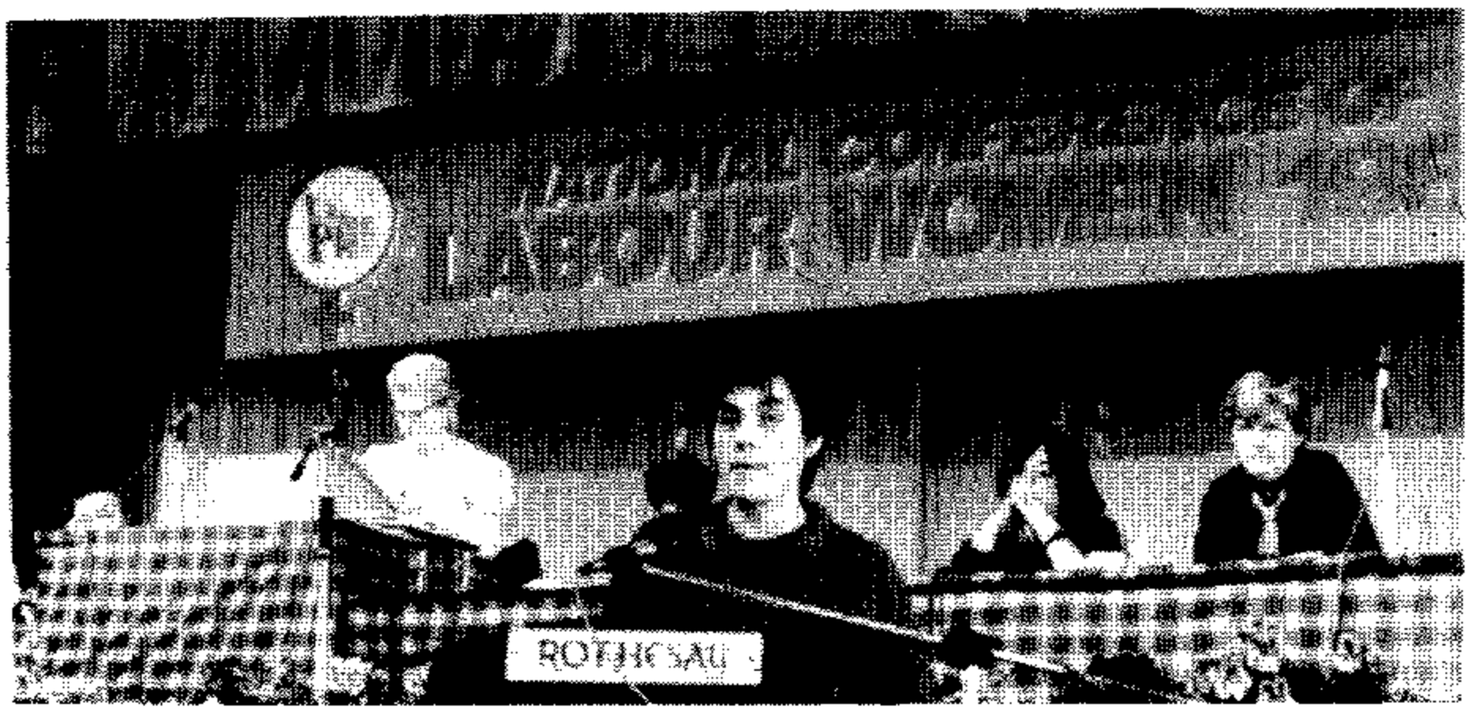
BLOCK VOTE CONFLICT

Signs of a worrying, and potentially deeply damaging, split between women from the Constituency Labour Parties and women trade union delegates were apparent at the Rothesay Women's Conference. It is the first time in several years that the division between union and CLP women has been so visible and expressed in such acrimonious terms. It is therefore worth considering the reasons behind it in some detail.

Many union delegates at National Women's Conference have said in previous years that they feel as if they are treated like "poor relations" or "second class citizens" when compared with the constituency delegates. Much of this problem centres around the issue of the block vote. There is no block vote at Women's Conference: each delegate has one vote.

It is clearly ridiculous that a delegate from a women's section representing the views of 600 women should have one vote, while a trade union delegate representing the views of 6,000 women should also have only one vote. This has led to union delegates feeling resentment against the CLP delegates, and also to a feeling that the women from the CLPs patronise them.

This feeling was given expression in Rothesay in an argument which centred around a resolution put forward by NUPE on women's organisation, which was opposed by the Labour Women's Action Committee on the grounds that it was a backward step from policy previously passed by Women's Conference. Women in NUPE had drawn up the resolution without having detailed knowledge about LWAC's aims: however, they believed that their



WOMEN SUPPORT LESBIAN RIGHTS

For the first time this year Labour Party Women's Conference took a debate on Lesbian and Gay rights. It is in some ways ironic that this conference is the last to discuss the issue: the TUC Women's Conference, TUC and Labour Party Conference all passed resolutions last year. Indeed, the motion passed in Rothesay was framed in the context of pushing for the real implementation of party policy; specifying within that the role that the National Labour Women's Committee should play in the run up to the General Election. It is undoubtedly the case that there will be a pressure within the Party to drop policy on this matter — or at least be silent on the issues in public.

Within the women's organisation there has not been sufficient discussion of the demands that are crucial for Lesbians or the operation of heterosexism within the Party. It was clear in Bute that many women supported the debate at a gut level although they had not particularly thought through its implications. Lesbians who were fighting to make sure the debate didn't fall off the end of the agenda had delegates coming up to them in the coffee bar and on the conference floor offering solidarity.

Organisation around the resolution brought together a number of lesbians within the Party and gave us increased confidence and visibility. A number of women spoke in the discussion who were stating their lesbianism publicly for the first time. Sharing these experiences amongst ourselves and on the floor of conference will hopefully give impetus to the implementation of the resolution — locally and nationally. It also again raises the issue for the strong organisation of lesbians within the Party to push these developments forward.

Terry Conway
Islington North CLP

Jane Prust
Labour Briefing Women

resolution was broadly sympathetic to these aims. They had attempted to contact LWAC in order to discuss the resolution, and apparently they had received indications that LWAC would support it.

When they arrived in Bute, the NUPE delegates were faced with a leaflet from LWAC calling for remittance of the resolution, and advising delegates to vote against the resolution if NUPE refused to remit it. They were particularly angered that LWAC had made no attempt to contact them before putting out the leaflet.

The situation was further inflamed when trade union delegates heard that women in LWAC were saying that Tom Sawyer, the NUPE General Secretary, had really written the resolution. The inference was that women in NUPE were being used as dupes by Sawyer and that they were too stupid to have drawn up the resolution themselves.

There were indeed problems with the NUPE resolution: not least that it watered down the demands made by Women's Conference, and, basically, put the task of implementing them in the lap of the NEC

Not surprisingly, feelings were running high, and when an emergency meeting of union delegates was called on Saturday night women expressed anger at what they saw as LWAC's divisive tactics. Right wing union women were able to use the opportunity to launch an attack on LWAC, feminists, *Militant*, CLP women and the left in general. LWAC were accused of being anti-men and of not doing anything for the rank and file women in the Labour Party.

The next day, NUPE's resolution was defeated on a card vote by 256 votes to 202. A speech delivered from the platform by Ann Pettifor, a leading LWAC activist, replying to the debate on behalf of the National Labour Women's Committee, was unable to heal the breach. Rightly or wrongly, trade union women said that they had felt patronised and treated like little girls — given a pat on the head for effort, but then told that they hadn't got it quite right yet because they didn't understand the issues!

It is of vital importance that the women's organisation acts immediately to build bridges with the union women. If the situation continues the right wing will use it as a chance to attack LWAC and left feminists in the Party generally and none of us will benefit from this. One way forward is to tackle the question of the block vote at Women's Conference as a matter of urgency. *Briefing* women have alway supported the introduction of the block vote, but any block vote must be representative of the views of women in the unions, and not open to cynical manipulation by a few male bureaucrats. There are now unions which have women's structures which are accountable to their women members. We must look for a way of introducing the block vote which would be decided upon and controlled by the women union members.

The division between trade union women and CLP women is a false one. We are all involved in the same struggle and fighting the same battle. Splits between us will serve the interests of nobody except the right wing of the Party. We must face our differences, and go forward together in strength and sisterhood.

SHADOW ELECTIONS

The National Labour Women's Conference has elected five women whom they would like to see representing Labour Women on the NEC. The National Labour Women's Committee are now committed to campaigning in the Party and the trade unions for the election of these five women to the women's section of the National Executive Committee.

The trade unions in particular are crucial if the campaign is to stand any chance of success. The trade union block vote virtually decides the women's seats, it is therefore vital to gain their support. At present it seems as if this will be an uphill struggle. Many union delegations at Women's Conference voted against the shadow elections and refused to participate in them. Margaret Jamieson of NUPE described the elections as 'a gimmick', irrelevant to the real needs of women. The campaign around the five women for the NEC must be used to build bridges with trade union women. It will be a good opportunity to carry WAC's demands into the trade unions and to raise WAC's profile again in the Labour Party generally.

The women elected in the Shadow Elections for the women's seats on the NEC are:

Dianne Abbot
Joan Maynard
Mandy Moore
Clare Short
Frances Morrell

Briefing supporter Sarah Roelofs was second runner-up after Margaret Beckett. It is important that the women receive as many nominations for the NEC as possible, so please try to nominate them through your CLP or union branch if you are able to do so.

Jane Prust,
Labour Briefing Women

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

On attending the conference for the first time, we were aware of a relaxed, friendly, but yet "informal" gathering throughout the three days, not to mention the fringe events which were of equal importance. There was a great feeling of solidarity and sisterhood linked with common struggle, which encourages us to return to future conferences and to initiate more women into the Labour Party. We felt conference was important from an educational aspect: because of the liberal platform, it clarified points that we were unsure of but did not feel confident enough to question.

Julia Dawson
Alison Morris
Deptford CLP

TRADE UNION BRIEFING

NUPE CONFERENCE

"Keep your head down, or we'll knock it off!"

This year's NUPE Conference saw a major acceleration in the rightward drift of leadership and delegates. It left the Union, despite a well-respected industrial tradition and many progressive political positions, as a solid base for the LCC/ Kinnock project, and at the helm of the witch-hunts in the Labour Party.

Many of the Union's 'political' positions went undebated this year. NUPE is unilateralist, fights for positive discrimination and a woman's right to choose. This year, Conference was addressed by a speaker from COSATU, declared total opposition to the march against Bernie Grant in Haringey, and, following one of the best debates of the week, voted to launch a new anti-racist offensive within its own ranks. But in the economic and industrial battlegrounds, NUPE has shifted dramatically away from constructive leadership.

In the face of Abolitionism, rate-capping and privatisation, resistance has been kept isolated in the localities. Pay campaigns have not been organised, despite Conference decisions, since the National Strikes of 1979 (Council) and 1982 (NHS).

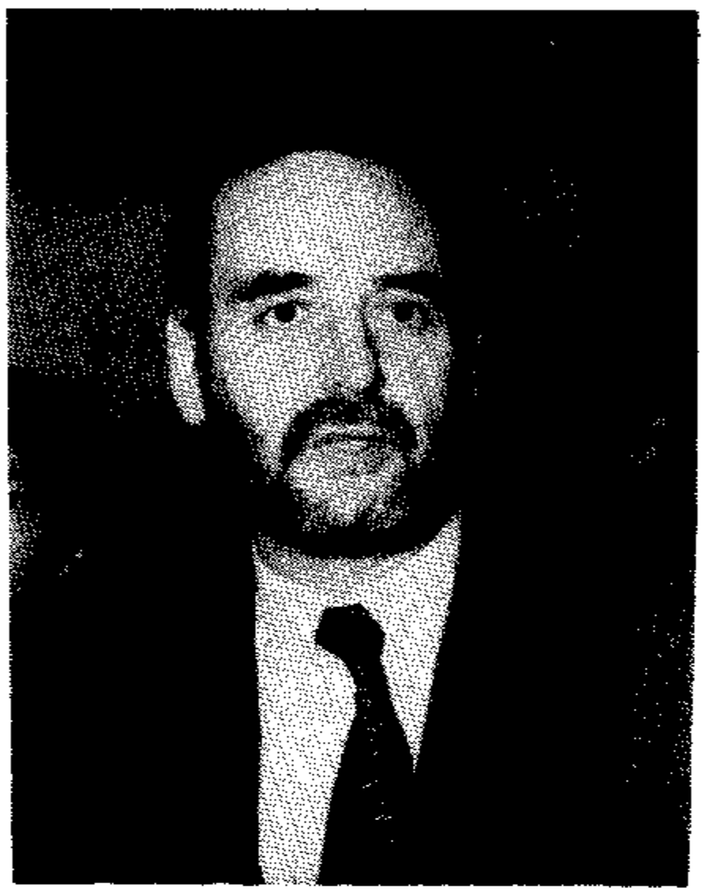
Local action has been deliberately counterposed to national action and this was the perfect backdrop for the 1986 Conference, whose motto was quite clearly: 'Heads down for the election of a Kinnock Government.'

TOM SAWYER

This mood was most marked in the debate on Liverpool and the witch-hunt Deputy leader Tom Sawyer, LCC member and a leading light on the NEC of the Labour Party, attacked not only what he called 'Militant members', but also 'Militant supporters' and 'Militant front organisations, such as the Broad Left'.

The debate ended with resolutions opposing the witch-hunt being routed by 800–100, and by the anti-Militant secretary of the Liverpool City NUPE branch, who had refused to ballot her members on strike action in support of the Council's stand against rate-capping, being hosannahed to and from the rostrum.

Another major casualty of this 'heads down for Kinnock' project was the



L. P. Photo Library.

Tom Sawyer.

Union's policy on fighting privatisation. NUPE will now formally encourage involvement in tendering for members' jobs. Although many a full-timer has been doing this already, the fact that it has never been policy has prevented it from becoming a first priority. But since the Union has never adopted a national approach to the fight, local campaigns have always been under great pressure. Now the first energies are to be spent in tailoring bids or negotiating preventative deals – in either case the cost to jobs and conditions will be horrific. Accompanying campaigns will be less aimed at stopping privatisation than instructing an impotent public whom to vote for at the next General Election.

This must all be cheering news for the many Labour-controlled authorities who would prefer to comply with Government tendering orders rather than encourage rebellion amongst their own workers.

SHAKY ALLIANCE

But despite the success of the 'Kinnock project', NUPE Leaders must know that the scheme is built upon a rotten and fairly shaky alliance – from the right wing, through the Stalinists, the LCC, to the anti-Militant independent left.

The Stalinists, in particular, prove to be embarrassing bedfellows for Sawyer and Bickerstaffe these days. One Scottish full-time Officer, closely associated with a sexist and racist slander-magazine circulated 'under wraps' at all recent Conferences, physically assaulted Glynn Jones, a Socialist Action supporter from Swansea. Another, of similar rank, politics and nationality, punched and floored Danny Deedes, a leading Irish member of NUPE's Executive Committee.

These disgraceful acts reflect heavily upon those who welcome thugs into their unholy alliance. And the duration of that alliance will clearly depend on the 'soft left's' appetite for outrageous political opportunism.

AGAINST THE DRIFT

The organised left, having totally lost the Conference to the Kinnockites, did reasonably well in acting as an attractive pole against the general drift.

The SWP interventions were constructive, particularly on the issues of racism and the witch-hunt. The Broad Left pulled together an excellent fringe-meeting of 200, in which Derek Hatton ably fended off a fierce challenge from yet more 'tired and emotional' Scottish Stalinists. Militant's own fringe meeting attracted over 100 people. There were also very successful gatherings organised by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and London Health Emergency.

But, although the rightward drift possibly increases the prospects for the organised left, it would be foolish to underestimate the difficulties that lie ahead.

The SWP's position on the Labour Party restricts the organisation's effectiveness in following through their positions into the battleground of the witch-hunt itself. The Militant's excessive centrism and positions on self-organisation and Black and women's sections, pose major problems in winning independent activists away from Sawyer-type caricatures of the organised left.

Yet the Broad Left, led in NUPE by good, non-sectarian Militant comrades, is the most hopeful means of establishing a united left in NUPE. And it can be built if it stands:

i) by the traditions of struggle that led to NUPE's growth in the 70s
ii) as best fighters for the political campaigns already established in NUPE (against racism/ sexism, for unilateralism)
iii) by a united front against the Kinnock project and the witch-hunt.

This will lay the foundations for it to emerge as a major force within the Union when Sawyer dumps the Stalinists, and when Kinnock dumps Sawyer.

By our NUPE Correspondent

C.P.S.A. CONFERENCE '86: MIXED RESULT FOR THE LEFT!

The CPSA Broad Left made substantial gains at this year's CPSA conference, pushing the Kinnockite BL 84 group into third place, but socialists face a continuing battle against the splitters and the right wing in the coming months. The atmosphere at Conference was tense as the witch-hunt against the Militant Tendency reached previously unseen heights, as Alistair Graham gave the Left his parting gift of promising to hand over a list of all known Militant supporters to the Labour Party NEC to assist the present wave of expulsions. When presented with a petition (organised by the Socialist Workers Party) protesting against the witch-hunt, Graham taunted the Left further by promising to hand over the names on the petition to the NEC as well.

However, the right wing, despite maintaining control of the NEC, did face a revival of the traditional Broad Left. In the various Section elections the BL did well, maintaining control of the DHSS Section with a convincing majority, and for the first time taking control of the Home Office, the latter being the equivalent of Labour winning control of Brighton. In the Department of Employment the BL 84 group tightened its grip in the elections, but failed miserably on the conference floor. The battle is now on for the Broad Left to regain control in 1987.

The national election results turned out to be a very mixed bag indeed. Following the split in the National Moderate Group, it was hoped that this would prove beneficial to the Broad Left. However Marion Chambers, the "moderate" candidate, won the presidency with in excess of 20,000 votes, though Broad Left candidate Kevin Roddy came a good second (despite the split left vote) wih 17,326 votes, pushing the Communist Party's candidate Ray Alderson into third place with only 14,000 votes. The combined vote of the left thus exceeded the combined vote of the right wing. BL 84 are now shown up for what they really are – moving to the right and destructive to the rank and file of the CPSA.

NEC Elections

The NEC elections saw a modest revival of Left fortunes as Doreen Purviss, a Militant supporter, was elected vice-president, and three other BL candidates were elected with her. The Guardian reported that four Militant supporters had been elected. In fact Eddie Spence (the BL candidate for the forthcoming General Treasurer elections) is an independent and Phil Ashill is a member of the CPSA Socialist Caucus (a 'Briefing' type formation within the union).

BL 84 saw its two main leaders (and ex-socialists) Micky Duggan and Stewart Mclennan knocked off the NEC. The 'official' Broad Left is now definitely beginning the process of pushing back the Kinnockites in the CPSA, though there is no place for the complacency that appeared in the pages of Militant recently.

Despite some gains and the pushing of BL 84 into third place, where they will remain, the problem of the Kinnockite left will not go away. On the conference floor there is not a Broad Left majority as yet and BL 84 lined up with the right wing time and time again to defeat the left on key issues such as the overtime ban and ban on casual staff which was pushed through by Alistair Graham and his acolytes in BL 84. These issues showed a definite rift in the ranks of BL 84, however, with substantial sections of the BL 84 group (particularly within the DHSS London South region) not being happy with the situation at all. The DHSS section will continue its overtime and casuals ban despite the NEC. That is what our members want. The strategy of the Broad Left must now be turned to building a rank and file fightback in the branches in the coming months.

The first major opportunity will be arising during the campaign to elect a new General Secretary. John Macreadie is the Broad Left candidate, with running mate Terry Adams for deputy. It is vital that the CPSA elects a General Secretary that will fight for the members, something neither the right wing's candidate, John Ellis, or the BL84 candidate, Geoff Lewtas can be trusted to do. John Macreadie has pledged to live on a member's salary and not accept the excessive wages of the General Secretary. This is a major step forward for an accountable union since the post has attracted the wrong type of person in the past. We want no more Alistair Grahams!

One important aspect of this year's conference was the growth of the Socialist Caucus, an alliance of rank and file activists who now form the second largest component of the Broad Left. With one member on the NEC and seven members of the DHSS Section EC, the group will provide an input into the CPSA that can be linked up with the left in the Labour Party.

Finally the Broad Left launched its campaign to affiliate the CPSA to the Labour Party with Tony Benn speaking to the largest fringe meeting seen in years at conference. Over 500 people attended, including large numbers of rank and file BL 84 supporters. The message to them must surely be: reverse your strategy now and rejoin the Broad Left!

The Broad Left can be contacted via Martyn Jenkins, c/o 48 Elsinore Road, Forest Hill, London SE23.

The Socialist Caucus can be contacted via the following addresses:

CPSA: Alistair Wallace, 139 Boleyn Road, London E7.

SCPS – The Caucus is being relaunched this summer and details can be obtained via Howard Fuller, 41 Rupert Gardens, Brixton, London SW9.

By Howard Fuller,
National Organiser,
CPSA Broad Left 85/86

YORKS MINERS FIGHT PIT CLOSURES

Sue Owen

In the wake of the defeat of the miners' strike, many people must be secretly wondering if it's even worth trying to fight pit closures.

As the Yorkshire Miners' Campaign Group leaflet says: "Jobs have been lost by the thousand, members have voted to shut their own pits. The NUM is no longer effectively able to bargain nationally because of the UDM split. The rightward drift in the labour movement is influencing all of us... the pressure is on for us to be 'realistic' and just about everything seems to be sacrificed to the sacred cow of electing a Labour Government."

The Yorkshire Miners' Campaign Group started when a number of rank and file NUM members came together in the last months of the strike to try and halt the decline of the strike. They now see their fight as being within the NUM, to rebuild the fighting strength of the union. They aim to do this by bringing together activists still keen to fight, to boost morale, share ideas and organise against continuing management attacks, such as pit closures.

In the successful fight of Darfield Main against closure last year, the Campaign Group threw its weight behind the campaign of the branch and the community, offering resources, contacts and publicity. For example the entire route of the Yorkshire Miners' Gala march was flyposted with "Darfield's Not Done" posters.

Similarly in today's campaigns against closure at Kinsley Drift and Cadeby: the Campaign Group can reinforce what Branch activists are doing, organising Yorkshire-wide publicity and support and helping to put pressure on the NUM Area leadership to take action.

The meetings of the Campaign Group are organised by miners for miners and are democratic and unintimidating. Women from Women Against Pit Closures and a few other supporters attend. Inevitably various left tendencies are present and get a fair hearing, but none is allowed to domineer or dominate. Speakers have attended from the NUM in Kent and Notts, from other disputes, e.g. the printers, and other struggles, e.g. South Africa and Broadwater Farm). The Campaign Group were the main mobilisers in Yorks for the 2nd March march for the sacked miners and they have sent busloads to Wapping.

At the last meeting I attended, about 50 were present, mostly rank and file miners, including some new faces, and about ten women. The meeting heard Billy Etherington and Ed Fredenburgh from the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign and there was a lively discussion showing strong feeling in favour of a high campaigning profile for the sacked and imprisoned miners and against confining activities to fundraising. The contrast between the rank and file enthusiasm at this meeting and the sterile bureaucratic rhetoric at the NJFMC's national council meeting the previous day was remarkable. As the Campaign Group leaflet says:

"The evidence is clear... the network of activists that was thrown up by the strike still exists if only in patches and without a united voice. A handful of committed union members can begin to turn the tide at each branch and help rebuild the fighting spirit of the union as a whole."

Briefing National Supplement page 16

HISTORIC BLACK NATIONAL NALGO CONFERENCE

A historic meeting of Black trade unionists took place in Leeds on 31st May. This was the biggest gathering of Black workers in Britain with delegates from many branches including Bristol, Cardiff, Aberdeen, Ipswich, Birmingham and Sheffield.

These Black trade unionists were members of the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO). The conference was started by an inspired address from Karen Choru who said: 'As Black trade unionists we must force NALGO to recognise the vital role it must play in fighting against exploitation and equal rights for all.' She made conference aware of the fact that Black workers joined ttrade unions in higher proportions than white workers ie 56% of all Black workers join unions compared with 47% of white workers. The problem of institutional racism meant, however, that only 4% of Black workers held union positions compared with 11% of whites.

This was not the first National Black NALGO meeting, as previous conferences were held in 1983 and 1984. This was the first that was backed and funded by NALGO. The groundwork for this was due to the history of the various and continual struggles by Black members in NALGO for the right to self-organisation. It is not self-organisation for the sake of being separate, but to ensure that anti-racism and Black rights are addressed by NALGO and the labour movement.

THE PRESS

The conference, was, as usual, viciously attacked by the capitalist media. The *Daily Telegraph*, and the Yorkshire papers tended to concentrate on the fact that only Black journalists were allowed in the conference. The Murdoch press were not allowed in even if they had a Black journalist. This so incensed the *Sun* that it had to carry a nasty editiorial. The Leeds Tory MP Dr Keith Hampson and the right-wing John Carlisle MP foamed at the mouth because of our challenge to the media to employ Black journalists. The conference kept to their policy even though NALGO tried to get us to change our position.

ISSUES RAISED AT CONFERENCE

The trade unions in general and NALGO in particular have evolved structures which do not meet with the needs and aspirations of Black workers. Their style of work, meeting procedures and bureaucracy need massive change if oppressed Black workers are to find them relevant in meeting their needs.

Black workers are willing, able and ready to work in trade unions to fight racism and exploitation, but unions always try to marginalise or create barriers to this involvement. Black workers see the importance of self-organisation as the means to break this tendency to prevent Black participation.

Racism means that NALGO must tackle its own structures, but more importantly make links with struggles in the community. Struggles against racism in the labour market, deportation campaigns, internal control, and police racism are issues that the unions must see as essential in the fight against racism.

White NALGO members who worked in housing and Social Services departments and in other service providing agencies had an added role to ensure that the services they provide must be anti-racist and they must be ready to fight racist practices. Racism was a trade union issue.

DECISIONS TAKEN AT CONFERENCE

Conference agreed to aims and objectives which committed itself to find ways to eliminate racism in the workplace, NALGO structures in the community and internationally. It saw self-organisation of Black workers in branches, districts, and the national level as a priority. Links between community struggles and the labour movement were seen as an integral and vital part in the fight against racism.

Secondly it agreed to build on the 60 Black NALGO groups and to create a support network for Black members in the process of starting a group in their branch. To build a strong national network of support with bigger and stronger branches helping newer ones.

It was agreed to hold regular seminars and training sessions at the local level but to have two national ones which should be held over a weekend to enable greater discussion.

The conference had various ideas on a national structure. There were lively debates on the type of national structure needed. Should it be branch or district based? How do we have accountability and avoid bureaucracy? Does NALGO's structure have to be used or should we use other organisational forms? There were sharp differences on these issues and it was decided to have a full discussion on this when we meet again in 6 months time to approve a constitution. Some delegates were disappointed that we could not have agreed on a structure at the conference as we could always change structures later, if it were not suitable. Time however, did not allow for a conclusion on this. In all these discussions it was the conference's overriding strength that unity of purpose was always prevalent.

The steering committee was re-elected and given the specific task of finding structures and policies in the next six months to put to another national Black members conference. The conference was a huge success and racists had better beware.

Gulam Mayet
National Steering Committee Member and GLC/ILEA delegate

N.C.U. ANNUAL

One of the Tories' tasks of the '84 Trade Union Act was to install right-wing leaderships throughout the labour movement. To that extent they gained a resounding victory in the National Communications Union. In the Engineering section, the left dominated executive was replaced with 22 out of 23 seats by supporters of 'NCU 1st', a newly created right wing bloc led by John Golding, the new General Secretary.

Golding, voted in by a workplace ballot, made it clear at the NCU annual conference, recently held in Blackpool, that we have to learn to live in the 'real world' – this means changing policies with regards to job security, renationalisation and to outside competition such as Mercury.

The tasks for the left, organised through a strong Broad Left, was to defeat these moves and on the whole succeeded, but was unable to provide a clear way forward.

Threat to job security

The most immediate threat is job security. Since 1981, 18,000 have been lost through 'natural wastage' and as new technology progresses, with the introduction of digital exchanges, engineers required to run these exchanges will be less than a quarter of the present number. This has already started and will reach a peak over the next two to three years. Fearing the worst, a number of branches wanted to establish a redundancy agreement with BT but once again failed to get majority support although increasing numbers are looking for such a deal. In order to combat this and to provide an alternative way forward, conference mandated the incoming executive to campaign for industrial action in support of the 'Broad Strategy', a document produced by the past executive concerning new technology and its effect on jobs. In particular, the main demand is a 32 hour/4 day week to be achieved by April 1987. Whether Golding will be prepared to take this on or to start furtive negotiations will be seen.

Delegates remained in a militant mood during the discussion about proposed changes in the Post Office. There, management wants drastic changes in engineering staffing levels but the confer-

BLACK SECTIONS CAMPAIGN IN TGWU

The Black Section campaign took the fight for self-organisation to the heart of Britain's largest union on June 17th. A motion from a Birmingham branch of the Transport and General Workers Union supporting our demand went before the union's special Rules Revision Conference in Aberdeen.

Currently the T&G is opposed to Labour Party Black Sections. But this position has been reached as a result of views expressed on the General Executive Committee without any debate at rank and file level. New deputy general secretary Bill Morris spelt out the executive's opinion on Black Sections in a long article in the union journal. He attacked Black Sections as being 'narrow', 'divisive' and 'sterile'.

But the T&G's ill thought out position on the subject is littered with contradictions. For instance, despite being a big supporter of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, which has championed the 'Right of Reply', the T&G have refused to print the Black Section's response to the Bill Morris salvo. Furthermore, a NALGO motion in support of Black caucuses was backed by all the large unions, including the T&G, at the TUC in 1984. This encouraged all affiliates to set up appropriate structures – like Black members groups – to adequately represent Black workers. In the same year, the T&G delegation to the London Labour Party regional conference voted in favour of Black Sections. And, later at national party conference the Agricultural workers and Dyers and Bleachers trade groups supported us. The T&G executive has since imposed its will on the huge block vote wielded by delegates.

A resolution in favour of Black Sections was on the agenda of last year's T&G biennial delegate conference (BDC). Yet the leadership did not see fit to get it debated. This decision could not even be defended by Bill Morris. He admitted the union's position on Black Sections lacked 'moral legitimacy' until it had gone before a BDC.

BLACK SELF-ORGANISATION

The emergency resolution passed by the Birmingham branch, which went before this year's Rules Revision Conference, gave the union such an opportunity to come clean. It supported the setting up of Black caucuses in the T&G and Black Sections in the Labour Party. Bill Morris' recent reverse when he failed to get on the TUC's General Council, despite the backing of T&G general secretary Ron Todd, proves that if you are Black you cannot build a base on an all-white union executive. You must have a base among Black workers who are the lowest paid and least represented and you must fight for a mechanism called Black self-organisation which gives them a voice and a means of articulating their grievances.

The NALGO Black workers conference in Leeds last month proves that large unions are finally waking up to the need to help their members defeat racism. Indeed, TUC general secretary Norman Willis told a special Black workers conference unions should not see 'unofficial Black members groups' as a threat to their constitution. He warned that if Black workers felt unions did not care about their problems they would turn to other organisations.

We argue that the establishment of Black caucuses within the provision for T&G constitution is a logical extension of the union's support at the TUC for 'black members groups'. Black self-organisation allows a group of the oppressed to come together and formulate demands on how the general principles and organisation of the struggle for socialism within the union shall be applied in the Black community. At present women and youth are allotted specific representation within the unions, Labour Party, the National Executive Committee and the annual conference. Black people are not. Yet the structure of the Labour Party also finds space for societies such as the Labour Lawyers, the Co-op Party, Labour drinking clubs and a Jewish Labour Party called Poale Zion. To be consistent, the T&G hierarchy would also have to call these groups and indeed the trade unions themselves 'divisive' and 'sectarian' to the Labour Movement as a whole.

COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION

The T&G leadership has suggested, a commitment to racial equality is part and parcel of good trade unionism, then the Labour Movement should be at the forefront of the fight for our modest demand. It should be giving a full and fair hearing to the Black Sections movement instead of trying to muzzle the debate. Our experience is that when Black workers are allowed to decide for themselves as in NUPE, they support Black Sections.

Ashley Patel
T&G Co-ordinator
Labour Party Black Sections

CONFERENCE REPORT

ence called for a ballot in support of industrial action within six weeks if negotiations fail to make progress.

Renationalisation 'untenable'

Despite these gains the political nature of thngs to come was illustrated around renationalisation of BT. Although the union's position was for nationalisation without compensation, and this is still the case, Golding made it clear from his point of view that such a policy was politically untenable for a Laboûr government and instead a government 'bond issue' should be considered. This was accepted by conference as it seemed, by a sleight of hand, that the original policy still stands, albeit just on paper.

Howerver, Golding received two political setbacks during the main conference when the Clerical and Engineering sections were together. They instructed him to resign his parliamentary seat, now that he was general secretary and proceeded to scold him in his frequent utterances to the right wing press. He defended himself by saying that he was often misquoted but the proposition was easily carried.

Abortion

A further, very important, gain was the affiliation to the National Abortion Campaign. Considering the patriarchal attitudes in this male dominated union, this was a considerable victory for a proposition supported by the minority clerical section, predominantly women. Also, conference decided to give financial support and arrange speaking tours for COSATU, the newly formed trade union organisation in South Africa.

Although the conference went on to support left slates for TUC and Labour Party delegations and chose Phil Holt, a prominent supporter of the Broad Left, as the Union's Labour Party NEC nominee, there remains a lot of work to be done in the branches. There is no doubt that the 'NCU 1st' bloc will campaign and organise in the workplaces to undermine the large metropolitan left-wing branches in the coming period. The Broad Left has suffered a real defeat in recent ballots and has to address itself to local organisation, which it has generally failed to do, and to take its policies into the membership and campaign for them vigorously. A national ban on overtime, 32 hours/4 day week, rejection of any redundancy agreements, renationalisation of BT without compensation and industrial action in defence of jobs are clear policies for the membership to rally around.

R. Kramer,
NCU (Engineering) and
Brent South CLP

Briefing National Supplement page 18

TEACHERS MARKING DOWN

The teachers' pay campaign has moved – temporarily – behind closed doors. The NUT is now participating in the talks set up by ACAS on pay, conditions of service and negotiating machinery. Alongside it, to its right, sit representatives of unions – most of them not affiliated to the TUC – who are to various degrees willing to make a deal that would toughen up conditions, increase management control through compulsory assessment, abandon the demand for a return to 1974 pay levels, and set up a body which, in negotiating pay and conditions simultaneously will turn every pay claim into a 'productivity' issue.



Photo: Ian Swindale

Rank and file teachers lobby the Burnham Committee.

Unity?

The situation is serious: the longest pay campaign in the history of state education could terminate in a deal which would set in concrete a new and inadequate pay structure, as well as submitting the teaching force to new kinds of discipline. Yet the longer the ACAS talks go on, unaccompanied by large-scale industrial action, the more fatalistic some teachers will become about the inevitability of some such outcome. It is the responsibility of the NUT – particularly of the left of the NUT – to revitalise the campaign. Industrial action is central to this.

But there are other considerations too. First among them is the need to build alliances at school and local level between the NUT and members of the other TUC-affiliated union, the NAS/UWT. This point is vital – for the NUT is now (nationally, if not in London) a *minority* union. Unless it can develop an appeal to members of the NAS/UWT that undercuts the strategy of its national leadership – a strategy of buying pay increases with concessions on conditions – then the NUT's position will be difficult.

But the NUT executive chooses not to see this. It pins its hopes on its own tactical adroitness in negotiations. Locked into mutual denunciation with an NAS/UWT leadership that is tougher on the NUT than it is with the employers, the NUT executive could, through inactivity, help create a situation in which a trade off of conditions for pay seems inevitable.

Action and alliances

The issue is an important one. A left strategy for teachers can no longer be based simply on developments in the NUT. But there are other issues too. The NUT cannot afford to let the negotiations take their gentle course towards a sell-out. It must campaign massively among teachers to set out the demands it is fighting for: improved conditions, maximum class size, a single salary scale, a return to 1974 pay levels. It must draw up plans for the early relaunch of industrial action: reimposing the ban on voluntary activities, restarting strike action. It must turn a new attention towards the Labour Party, since it is now the Labour majority on the employers' side which is promoting the kind of linkage between pay and conditions which has underlain Tory strategy towards the teaching force for the last five years. There is at present not the level of awareness in the party that can impose limits on the bargaining fervour of the employers. And the union must lastly step up its efforts to convince parents that its position is a correct one.

Consequences

There is a danger that without an urgent emphasis on these issues the impetus of the last two years could slacken decisively. Already the unions' abandonment of opposition to GCSE has been a blow to teachers' morale. That is why the question of action needs to be again placed on the agenda, and why all those forms of action – including 'no cover' – which NUT members are continuing to take in the aftermath of the last pay round must be maintained.

Ken Jones,
(Socialist Teachers Alliance & Hackney South CLP)

SOCIALIST TEACHERS' ALLIANCE

AGM

Saturday July 5th

11 am to 5 pm

Central London Poly

New Cavendish Street

For details contact: Martin Allen, 29 Greenhill Park, NW10. 01-961 6503

SILENTNIGHT — FIRST ANNIVERSARY

The Silentnight dispute is now a year old. The core of strikers remain solidly committed to forcing the company to agree reinstatement and agreed national rates of pay. Behind the scenes the company's hardline stance is weakening as falling trade and the boycott campaign squeeze Silentnight profits. The power to turn the screw lies very firmly in the hands of the Labour and Trade Union movement.

Thirty per cent of Silentnight outlets for their beds are in the various branches of the Co-op. The loss of this trade would force Silentnight to the wall. Some of this Co-op work has been lost where elected Co-op boards have terminated contracts. But these are very much the minority and the pressure of the boycott campaign must be turned on by Silentnight Strike supporters. With Silentnight turnover down for the year from £78 million to £71 million, the company are vulnerable to economic pressure and greatly fear the loss of the major Co-op outlets.

The strikers have appealed for delegations to visit every Co-operative branch to lobby for an end to the contract. Local labour Councils and USDAW delegates from the Co-operative stores should join these delegations and back up their demands by threats of action against the Co-op stores. Where Co-ops are affiliated to local Labour Parties, their delegates should be mandated to take the issue up as a matter of urgency.

The often sentimental links between the Co-ops and the Labour movement have been questioned for many years. The elected boards should be asked to make clear which side of the dividing line they are on. Commercial criteria and Tom Clarke or the striking FTAT workers and their families is the choice that the Labour movement should be forcing into the open.

Boycott Silentnight beds!

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

APARTHEID — THE RUPTURED SOCIETY

The Botha regime in South Africa is facing a situation which it is increasingly unable to control. It now has to grapple, not only with the continuous mass violence in the Black townships but also with the rapid growth of the white reactionary back-lash which had its clearest manifestation when the openly fascist Afrikaner Weerstand Beweging (AWB – Afrikander Resistance Movement) prevented Foreign Minister 'Pik' Botha from speaking at a National Party meeting in the Northern Transvaal in May.

The white National Party came to power in 1948 and since then has steadily consolidated its rule. It was able to maintain its governmental hegemony because it could rely on the overwhelming support of the all-white electorate, especially the Afrikaans-speaking section of the white population; and because the largely British and foreign big business and financial institutions were content to sit back and allow the Nats to get on with the job of governing. As the advent to power of the National Party and the introduction of apartheid coincided with a sharp upturn in the economy, apartheid was equated with increased profits. Because the army is largely made up of white conscripts, the regime could also rely on the support of the military and the predominantly white police force.

Now all this is shattered. With the government unable to bring the growing revolutionary movement in the townships under control, it began to lose the confidence of big business, both at home and overseas. Botha attempted to meet the situation with his programme of 'reforms', but by this time the Black youth and workers were no longer willing to accept any palliatives in the oppressive apartheid regime. The whole system had to go!

Emergence of the Right

Within the context of South African politics, it is difficult to conceive of a political organisation to the right of the ruling National Party. After all, who could be more right wing than Verwoerd, the principal architect of apartheid, or his successor Vorster, who was interned for his pro-Nazi sympathies during World War II? But, while Botha's 'reforms' have failed to stop the violent resistance of the Blacks and have not satisfied South African or imperialist big business, it has raised fears in a section of the white – and especially Afrikander – population. They see any concession to the Blacks as undermining their privileged economic and social standards. This was first shown by the break-away of a section of the ruling National Party by two far right wing parties – the Conservative Party and the Herstigtee Nasionale Party. Both these parties, which have so far confined their opposition to the parliamentary field, have shown substantial gains in recent by-elections.



L. P. Photo Library

P. Botha.

Botha's response has been two-fold. By his raid against alleged ANC installations in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia, and his increased support for the Unita counter-revolutionaries in Angola and the MNR in Mozambique he is trying to show that when it comes to strong-arm stuff, he plays second fiddle to no one. Internally he is introducing new repressive measures by amending Section 50 of the Internal Security Act.

Furthermore, there is more than a suspicion that the police are actively promoting 'faction' fights in Black communities, such as Crossroads. The so-called 'vigilantes', led by Johnson Ngxobongwana, are set on driving progressives out of the townships.

Democratic socialist

While Botha and his cabinet, which itself is split on how to deal with the issues which confront it, wrestle with these problems, seeking a solution which will go part of the way to satisfy interest groups in the capitalist world and his backwoods electorate, the Black masses are no longer looking to the government or 'consultations for their own way out. More and more "the liberation movement has switched from what was essentially a liberal capitalist discourse to what has become a democratic socialist discourse". (Neville Alexander, New Internationalist No. 159, May 1986, p.10).

What will South African socialism look like? According to Neville Alexander: "Nobody here has a blueprint, and I think that's one of the most exciting and exhilarating sides of the South African struggles . . . Leaving aside those people in the Communist Party who would agree to some form of Soviet model – and they're a very small minority of activists in South Africa today – I think people are still sorting out what they mean by socialism . . ." (ibid).

Charlie van Gelderen,
(Brent South CLP)

TASS RENEGES ON KITSON

Widespread concern has been expressed about the treatment of David Kitson by TASS – which has decided to 'review' the funding of his lecture post at Ruskin College, Oxford.

TASS have reneged on their 1969 promise made to David Kitson, who served nearly 20 years in apartheid jails, to offer him a 'job for life'.

David Nellist, Labour MP for Coventry and TASS member, has written to Ken Gill:

'It seems to me that the sacrifice made by Comrade Kitson of 20 years' imprisonment in a South African jail, justified the original promise of our Union to help him build a new life. His refusal to denounce the City of London Anti Apartheid Group should not be the grounds for introducing a political test as to whether or not that promise should now be honoured . . . I feel he has proved his commitment to the struggle of the working class internationally by putting his life on the line in South Africa. Continuation of our Union's financial support is scant reward for his life's struggle and sacrifice – removal of that financial support amounts to victimisation at work on political grounds.'

David Kitson has said:

'I want TASS to stand by their promise made to me and repeated for over 15 years. I have been in retirement for 20 years and am eager to get down to work at Ruskin without the restraints and stresses which have been placed upon me since I emerged from jail. After all, I am responsible to the students at Ruskin College and I want to be able to devote my time to them. I have always supported the African National Congress and shall continue to do so. At this juncture while South Africa is in flames, it is diversionary for the left in this country to get bogged down in this in-fighting. I certainly do not wish to be a party to it. Instead, I call upon all British people to turn out in full force on 28th June to March from Hyde Park against apartheid in South Africa.'

In addition, City Group, one of the most active anti-apartheid organisations in this country, has organised a non-stop 24 hours-a-day picket of the South African Embassy in Trafalgar Square. This event, called to demand the release of Nelson Mandela, is now in its 60th day. All are welcome.

For further information contact: 38 Lothair Road North, London N4 1EW, or Steven Kitson, 01-354 5556.

KICK THE US BASES OUT

This year, Labour CND is calling for a straight-forward commitment from the Labour Party to get rid of all US bases. If we get a massive vote for this policy, it will strengthen the party's support for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

• We have to spell out that all US bases must go, which means nuclear, conventional and communication bases because some Labour Party leaders think that only the nuclear bases have to go. This would mean that Reagan could carry on as before with facilities for FIII's to fly out to another Libya bombing and for the essential NATO communication centres to continue their work as operational HQs for nuclear war planning from the US bases here. Let us be clear – all US bases must go. They are part of the special relationship between the UK and America which keeps us tied to the US foreign policy of global aggression. And we have to formally end that subordination by kicking the bases out as a first step on the way to an independent socialist foreign policy. This should be a popular policy. Labour CND calls on all CLPs to get resolutions and amendments into the conference.

• We are also pressing the party to adopt a policy to get out of NATO. It is no secret that NATO is a nuclear alliance dominated by America committed to a nuclear war fighting plan against the USSR in which nuclear weapons will be used first in a major conflict.

As a non-nuclear country, we should get out of the nuclear club. If we did so, the division of Europe into two armed camps would begin to break down as other countries have strong anti-NATO movements. Our fight for international peace cannot begin while we belong in NATO. We participate in the US aggression towards Nicaragua, we sell-out the Palestinians, we profit from apartheid, we give a pittance to the Third World and squander our resources in preparing for war – here and in space.



S. Cagnoni (IFL).

CND Demonstration, Bayswater Road, 26th October 1985.

• In order to win the party to change the policy from total support for NATO to total rejection, Labour CND has published two resolutions for conference. One asks the party to look at the issue of UK membership of NATO with the option of withdrawal. The other calls for total withdrawal from NATO. We hope that both will be debated at conference. We must win the vote this time at the least for a debate on the option for withdrawal.

Last year we had a massive vote for a public campaign for the policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. So far there has been silence. Once more conference will be asked to make the same demand. Our leaders must not be allowed to get away with it this time. We demand a public campaign for disarmament as agreed by massive votes at conference after conference. How about it Neil?

Joy Hurcombe
Chair Labour CND (personal capacity.)

Labour is already committed to closing down all nuclear bases. After American aggression against Libya there is growing support for a commitment to close down all foreign bases.

US bases – like membership of NATO – lock us into the American power bloc. They are a threat to the people of this country because:

1. **They make us a target even after nuclear weapons have been sent back.**
2. **American nuclear operations in Europe are controlled from communication bases in Britain. Labour is not yet committed to close them down.**
3. **After nuclear weapons are sent back, America can easily move them back in a crisis – even without British consent – as long as she has bases here.**
4. **A British veto over America's use of the bases does not exist. We have only the right to be consulted. But our views may be ignored.**

Walter J. Wolfgang
(Vice-chair Labour CND)

THE MOURNING

President Reagan's announcement that the US would cease their 'technical compliance' with the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty never ratified by Congress, has provoked a predictable fury from the adherents of detente in East and West, and on both sides of the Atlantic. If the Pentagon goes ahead with the equipment of the modernised B-52 bomber with air-launched Cruise missiles this autumn, another relic of the 1970s era of US-USSR co-management of the arms race will have been destroyed. The formal demise of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, due for review in 1987 and already seriously eroded by the US decision to go ahead with the 'Star Wars' Strategic Defence Initiative, is then bound to follow. The entire arms control edifice of the detente phase in East-West relations will have been dismantled.

One thing missing from the hostile reactions of the protagonists of detente was surprise. Nobody who has followed the evolution of US foreign policy under Reagan and Weinberger could have been under much illusion that SALT II was for the chop. The only element of surprise was in the timing of its announcement in the middle of delicate negotiations to prepare the second Reagan-Gorbachev summit. Presumably the British parliamentary delegation in Moscow was none too pleased with it either, having just delivered a letter from Thatcher urging strict compliance with agreed treaties!

As always with Reagan, Weinberger and Perle, however, there is method in the apparent madness. What better way of making clear that if there is be another summit – and few tears would be shed in Washington over its cancellation – it would be a summit on Reagan's terms, what better way of scuppering any developing diplomacy between the West Europeans and Soviets on a territory which Washington claims its own? As one leading West German Christian Democrat

DIVORCE REFERENDUM IN IRELAND

Irish women's lack of democratic rights is a clear example of the "carnival of reaction" James Connolly predicted following the 1916 Easter Rising defeat and the ensuing Civil War.

In the 1920s the Southern government passed socially repressive legislation — including on divorce. Cosgrave, Cumann naGael leader, explained "the whole fabric of our social organisation is based on the sanctity of the marriage bed and anything that tends to weaken the efficiency of that bond strikes at the root of our social life."

During de Valera's Fianna Fail government women were a special target. Women were barred from becoming teachers; the sale and importation of contraceptives were made illegal; the Conditions of Employment Act restricted female employment in other areas. All this led to the 1937 Constitution. It prohibits dovorce, contains deferential references to the Catholic Church, and firmly states that a woman's place is in the home. The family is the basis of the Republic: the state recognises that "by her life within the home, woman gives to the state a support without which the common good cannot be achieved."

The Catholic Church influenced and dominated state policies due to its historical political association with the struggles of the Irish people. The combination of Church and State has had a massive numbing effect on the consciousness of women, and profound impact on women's ability to struggle around questions in relation to the family.

Divorce Referendum

If passed, as is likely, the Divorce Referendum will make divorce available only to couples who have been separated for at least 5 years, and obtained a judicial separation at least 2 years ago. Special family courts will be established to deal with divorce applications.

The campaign has been brief, deliberately timetabled by the government, which has hampered feminists from taking the lead in the pro-divorce lobby. The issue splits the constitutional nationalist parties, Fianna Fail effectively siding with the Catholic Church to oppose divorce, Fine Gael attempting to gain background from the new Progressive Democrats, who have shot to popularity with their combined policies of right wing economics and left wing social issues.

The pro-divorce campaign has been led by bourgeois nationalists and bourgeois feminists, in an attempt to head off anti-imperialist women who support divorce, but oppose the Church and State's control of their lives. The Progressive democrats epitomise this new attempt to co-opt the women's movement on a non-class, non-nationalist basis. And Fine Gael's record does not make it the champion of women's rights. The Referendum serves a political purpose for them. Legalising divorce will be seen as a gesture to the Protestants. If the Referendum is passed, social legislation in the South will be far in advance of that in the North. Divorce is then seen in the context of the re-alignment associated with the Accord, making the Catholic South a more acceptable proposition for Britain, Europe and the USA.

Sinn Fein

Sinn Fein's relative absence from the divorce campaign is a worrying sign that they will not take on board the recent gains won on women's issues, and raises yet again the debate between feminists and the republican left on women's liberation.

But there is no guarantee that the Referendum will succeed. The campaign conducted by the Church and the far right is frightening. The Catholic hierarchy has issued a 16-pgae pastoral opposing divorce, distributed to every home. Archbishop Kevin McNamara, the most outspoken opponent, has compared the introduction of divorce with the Chernobyl nuclear diaster! And every priest is instructed to speak on it every Sunday until 26th June.

The anti-divorce campaign is run by a small group of powerful people, who formed the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign, linked to the Knights of Columbanus. PLAC were jubilant over their victory on abortion and encouraged by leaders of the US pro-life movement that there was more work to be done: that the "contraceptive mentality" had taken hold in Ireland and would further erode the social and moral values.

Feminists and socialists in Britain welcome a relaxation of the Divorce laws in Ireland, but we should be in no doubt that the initiative comes as another pawn in the Southern bourgeoisie's play for a stake in Europe and the western alliances, not to further the liberation of Irish women.

And we should not be complacent. The House of Lords has just approved an amendment to the Education Bill to provide that sex education should include "moral considerations and the value of family life."

Stephanie Grant
Islington South and Finsbury CLP

OF SALT II

by Gunter Minnerup

put it: 'The fate of the US-Soviet treaty is too important for a decision to be taken by Washington alone'. But for Washington it is too important to have the West Europeans meddle with it. NATO is expected to endorse, not to debate, criticise and modify Pentagon decisions: despite all the dissent, the NATO foreign ministers' conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia was not even allowed to refer to SALT II in its final communique.

Moscow used to share Washington's desire to exclude the West Europeans, and especially the West Germans, from any decisions on these important matters, but the turn in American foreign policy is gradually forcing it to be bolder in seeking to mobilise Europe against America. But what can the Europeans do? The reality of the situation is that any open break with Washington would have to be paid for at an unacceptably high price in terms of economic and ideological destabilisation, so a change in Washington is the only hope. The Soviets 'know that Reagan's plans on Star Wars, on underground tests, and on SALT II can still be frustrated by a Congress which clings to the more rational views of former Presidents', writes Denis Healey in the 'Observer'. Of course they can, but will they? And what if they aren't?

Yesterday's men in Europe are tied to yesterday's men in America. But it is unlikely that there will be a return to yesterday in international politics, a return to the era of detente as not only Healey and Co., but also many in the peace movement are still hoping. The signs today are pointing to war tomorrow. Winning the peace requires bolder initiatives than reading the entrails of Congressional manouevres in Washington.

OLD BAILEY SHOW TRIALS

The systematic abuse of defendants and their rights, media bias and police attempts to intimidate and silence peaceful protests, especially around Irish issues, has been highlighted once again in the Old Bailey trial of four people accused of conspiracy to cause explosions and of Patrick Magee who was convicted of the "Brighton bombing".

Since last July, two of the defendants – Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer – have been subject to constant harassment while on remand in Brixton prison. They have been denied proper medical attention and are each strip-searched an average of 50 times a month. Despite the fact that this is clearly designed to degrade and humiliate the women before and during their trial, the High Court refused to rule that this level of strip-searching was unlawful. All the defendants are strip-searched before and after court visits and after visits from relatives.

The refusal to grant a separate trial to the defendants not accused of the Brighton bombing has meant that press and TV coverage continue to link the cases, as does the prosecution who is not restrained by the judge. On the third day of the trial, the Defence asked for the jury to be changed because the media coverage would affect their impartiality, but this request was refused. Protestors outside the court have been subjected to constant police harassment since the first day of the trial. Many arrests have been made, despite the fact that all the protests have been peaceful and the police appear to be determined to intimidate people into not demonstrating on similar issues in the future.

Frank Gillon,
Hackney N. and Stoke Newington
CLP (in personal capacity)

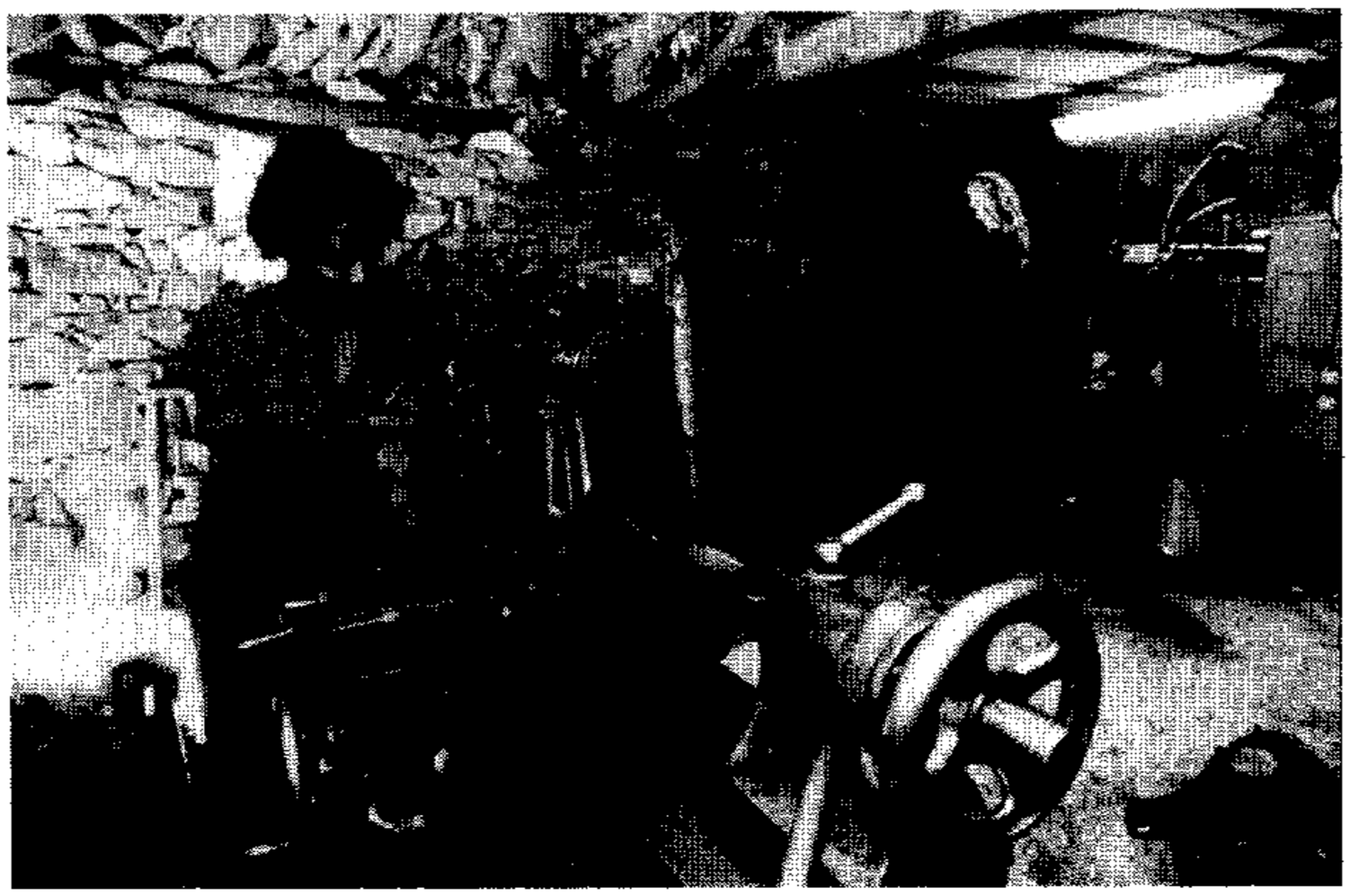
SPORT AID: THE ATTITUDE OF THE LEFT

Steve Reicher
(Exeter Briefing)

Around the world it is estimated that some 30 million people participated in 'Sport Aid' events. In Britain the participation was equally phenomenal. London saw 200,000 people running, and for each runner several more were watching or sponsoring. Even in Exeter, a city of 100,000 people, nearly 14,000 people covered the 10km. It is clear that 'Sport Aid' is a mass social phenomenon that cannot and should not be ignored. But what does it represent and how should we in the left orientate towards it?

The ostensible purpose of the events was to raise money in aid. The target was 100 million pounds. In this country, by the beginning of June, 5 million had been collected, with much more expected. Now of course such sums can do some good and will save some lives. But in global terms they are of infinitesimal significance. At present the accumulated debt of the 88 'Third World' countries stands at 900 billion dollars. The annual interest payments on this amount to around 45 billion a year. To estimate the total amount which is sucked from the 'Third World' to the Imperialist centres you probably have to add as much again for clandestine capital exports and repatriation of profits. Even were 'Sport Aid' to reach its target, the sum would be no more than 0.2% of that which, every year is taken from the 'Third World'.

Ngugu wa Thiongo, the Kenyan writer, referred to the response of the West to starvation in Africa through a story. He said it is like a thief who comes in the night and steals all ten shirts that you possess. In the morning he returns and sees you freezing in the cold wind. Here, says the thief, I see that you are cold, take one shirt to keep you warm. Then the thief expects your thanks and to be treated as your saviour. This story raises the crucial point at issue. What is significant is not whether or not the single shirt will keep one warm, but rather whether the 'gift' will succeed in covering the original theft. In other words, the real significance of 'Sport Aid' lies not so much in the sums it raises but rather in whether it results in a legitimation or an opposition to Imperialist domination of the 'Third World'.



Eritrean Relief Association

Underground metal-shaping workshop for spare parts for trucks at Sheab, Eritrea.

DISTORTED PICTURE

The answer to this question is not straightforward, for different sources have sought to harness 'Sport Aid' to different ends. To focus on any one to the exclusion of all others is bound to lead to a distorted picture. One must, at the very least separate out the actions of the government, the media and the event organisers. The position of the government is very clear. Margaret Thatcher meets Omar Khalifa, Geoffrey Howe calls for support for 'Sport Aid' at the same time as refusing to increase the amount given in official 'aid' from 0.3% of GNP. In fact the amount which the Tories have withdrawn in aid outweighs all the money donated through Band Aid, Sport Aid and all their spin-offs. For this government, then, Sport Aid is complementary to increased exploitation. It is used to avoid the responsibilities of government and big business, as well as to promote the Victorian values of self-reliance.

The response of the media has been to provide an ideological cover for the official reaction. The images with which we have been fed portray Africa as a starving child in need of the West's helping hand. It is up to us to save Africa. No clues are given as to why the child is starving, no-one shows images of the wealth stolen from the child's land. In this way the image can only be read as Africa, incapable of looking after itself, and the West as benevolent, coming to its help. The imagery reproduces the essential core of British imperialist ideology. It is the 'white man's burden' all over again. It isn't that we want to be in Africa, it's just that they need the benefits of our system since they get into such a mess left on their own. Ron Pickering encapsulated this myth of benevolent capitalism in commentating on the run itself. 'These are', he said, 'market forces put to their very best use'. Thus the media collude with government in using Sport Aid to cover up the real causes of starvation and even to paint the villain as hero.

RACIST PATERNALISM

The position of the 'Band Aid/Sport Aid' organisers themselves is more ambiguous. Certainly there are elements of paternalism and ethnocentrism in their actions. One need only consider the title 'do they know it's christmas' to be aware of that. Indeed, as has been pointed out, the very symbol of Band Aid displays cultural ethnocentrism – a plate with knife and fork ignores the fact that most Africans eat with their hands. On the other hand the overt political statements have mixed good with bad. There are few people who could get onto the front page of national papers by referring to a minister's speech as 'crap' – the word used by Geldorf to describe Howe's refusal to increase British aid to Africa. Geldorf has even suggested that 'Third World' debts be written off. In this way he has pointed to the responsibility of governments and bankers in perpetuating under-development.

At the same time, however, Geldorf seeks to be even-handed by laying blame on African governments, branding them as 'thugs'. While few would want to defend, say, the actions of the Ethiopian government in Eritrea, to make everybody equally responsible only clouds the issue. It obscures the primary responsibility of imperialism for the economic destitution and consequent political instability of many African countries. It also feeds back into racist paternalism by suggesting that it is true that Africans can't look after themselves and that we still must intervene.

His trip around Africa bore an uncanny resemblance to the many Tarzan films in which the white man, in a day, solves the problems that primitives have wrestled with for the ages. He is nothing but positive when he uses his iconoclasm to expose British and European imperialism. When he tries to sort out Africa he plays a very dangerous role.

What, then, of the actual participants in Sport Aid? Are they moved by paternalism or by anger at what our politicians and capitalists are doing? The answer remains open, yet it is probably that both elements are included – not simply in the sense that there are some people on either side, but in that the consciousness of individual participants is contradictory. Whether it remains contradictory or resolves to one position or the other will depend on the specific initiatives which can guide peoples action. One thing is for sure however, were but a fraction of those involved in Sport Aid mobilised around political demands to cancel the 'Third World' debt and in support of the economic and political liberation of African

WHAT ABOUT LEFT AID?

John Lister (Oxford NUJ)

People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

For the hard left to slag off the Sports Aid and Live Aid attempts to answer starvation and poverty in Africa (and, by impliction, to separate themselves from the millions who support these efforts) invites the obvious question: *what are you doing instead?*

Of course it is easy to score cheap points over Bob Geldof's political naïvety; off the comfortable, mostly white, celebrities who have backed the fundraising schemes; off the bizarre spectacle of the American offshoot — with its gaggle of posing millionaire has-beens claiming in schmaltzy style that "We are the world"; and off the generally uncomfortable feeling that the cash raised is only a drop in an ocean of hunger opened up by imperialist exploitation.

But the limitations are not all of Geldof's choice or making: many reflect the backwardness of the British workers' movement.

When Geldof uses public platforms and the mass media to denounce Tory aid policies as "crap", and call for the cancellation of Africa's $175 billion debts to Western banks, he strikes a popular chord: people ask *why haven't our union and Labour Party leaders been as forthright?*

The deafening silence from the official labour movement has been largely matched by an absence of any serious campaigning by the hard left for any alternative form of international solidarity or anti-imperialism policy to fight the famine.

Of course some Live Aid support is patronising, even cyncial support from middle class liberals content with their place in the system. But to reduce it to this alone is to miss out an important aspect of *solidarity* and genuine concern.

Do those who denounce the campaigns as patronising feel it would somehow be better if people *ignored* the starvation of millions in Africa? Is it a serious "internationalism" which refuses to take a view on this horror, and makes some kind of principle of not getting involved?

Should the striking miners have rejected the "conscience money" chipped into collections from guilt-ridden liberals? Doesn't every appeal for solidarity seek to persuade us to identify emotionally with those in the front line?

Live Aid and Sports Aid have succeeded brilliantly on this level: they have made no attempt to provide a rounded political answer. But they have shaken the thinking of millions: the rest is up to us.

My NUJ branch moved a successful resolution at the 1985 NUJ conference calling for an initiative by the European trade unions to link up and establish their *own* policy for labour movement action on famine. One reason this was never implemented was because no other unions have taken up the issue. They have all left it to Geldof.

How about a campaign to raise the voice of the organised British working class against the starvation of millions by British bankers and monopolies?

Let's *do* something to build on the present public awarenes: then if Geldof and company attack us, we could have some real basis to slag them off!

countries it would be a movement of key domestic and international significance.

So far the left has polarised around the question of Band Aid/Sport Aid. It has tended to either reject it out of hand or support it uncritically. Both orientations have excluded an effective intervention. As argued at the start we cannot ignore the phenomenon, we must get involved but on the basis of exposing the role of paternalism in perpetuating exploitation and addressing the movement to the role of British Imperialism in Africa.

Time to Challenge Your Racism

Dear *Labour Briefing*,

Thank you for printing my article about Third World First and our conference on aid on July 12th. It was unfortunate that you chose to illustrate it as you did. It was a picture of African people as passive victims, exactly the kind of imagery we are trying to get away from. Yes, refugee camps are a large fact of life in the Horn of Africa, but it is not the only fact of life there, though from the media it would be hard to believe.

Hardly anyone seems prepared to show pictures of Africans at work, tackling for themselves the problems that face them. Pictures of action where they do occur are usually of white agency workers. Do you really think that Africans sit back in the face of hardship waiting for a white angel to rescue them? Is that what you do in your struggles? And would you illustrate an article about men's stereotyping and misconceptions of women with uncaptioned pornography or a picture of a battered woman?

Yes, that's life too, but surely you would want to promote a more positive image of women. Why does the left think it can get away with turning African people into objects of pornography? Come on, you so-called radicals, it's time to challenge your racism (as I said in my original article) and find out — if you don't know — about the work of the liberation movement in Eritrea and Tigray and other parts, against the oppressive Ethiopian government, which is the main perpetrator of famine in that area — and highlight African people' achievements for once, rather than their degradation.

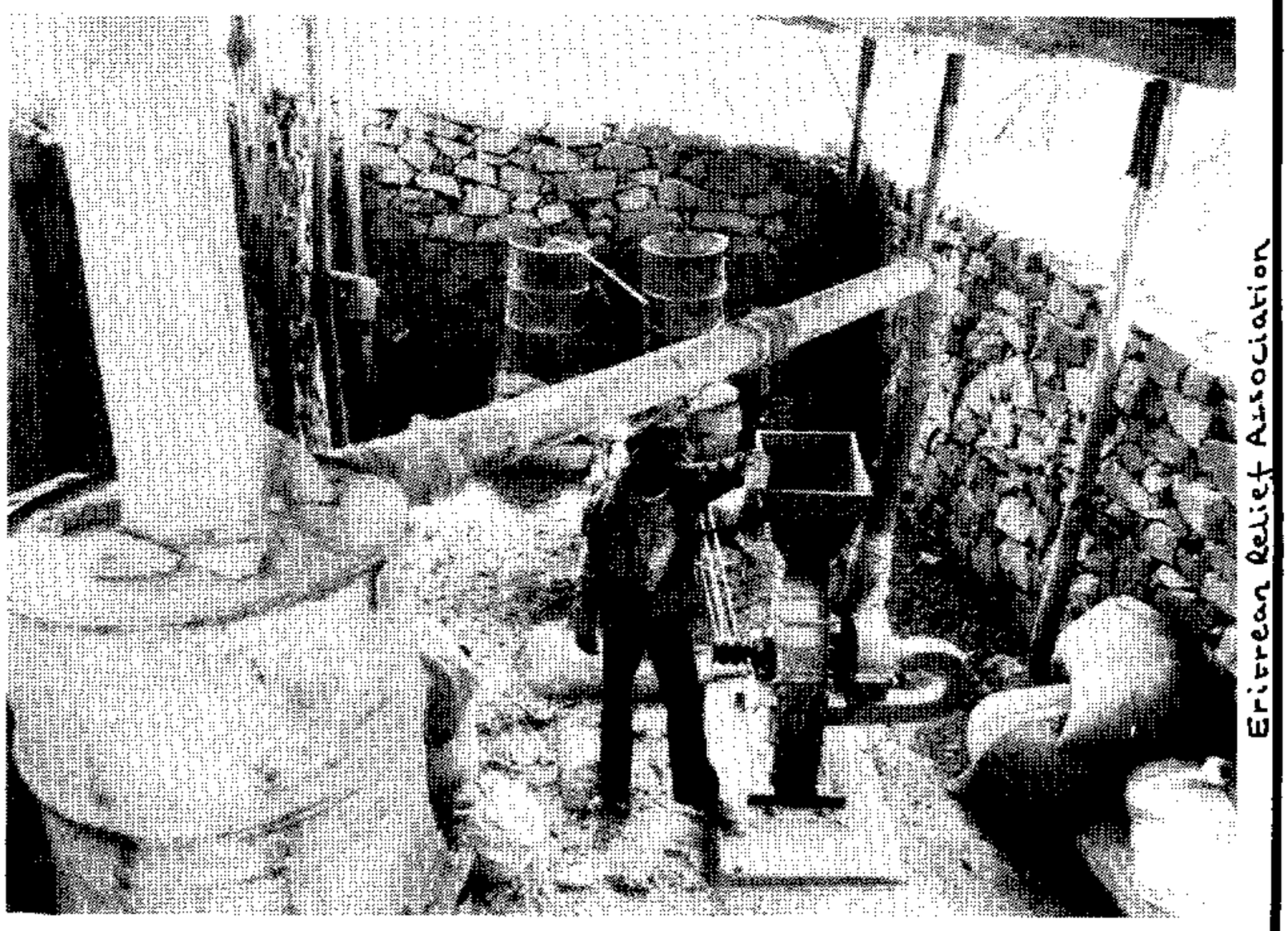
(More information — 3W1, 8 Lower Clapton Rd, London E5. 01-986 4800).

Mary Wright
Homerton Ward
(Hackney South CLP)

PS: Please use as many of the photos as possible. All of them should be credited to the Eritrean Relief Association.

Could you add a general caption to all of them that these activities go on in the face of enormous hardship, with scanty financial resources and constant bombardment by the Ethiopian army — but that morale is high, and commitment to the struggle strong.

Editor's comment: Thank you for correcting our error. Other authors should take note, though: please send your own graphics with articles. Don't rely on us!



Grinding mill for grains in a liberated area of Eritrea.

TURN BACK THE GREY TIDE!

The right wing of the labour movement has been getting away with murder: policies and principles have been slaughtered. Kinnock, Hattersley and a cabal of union bureaucrats have been setting the agenda and setting the pace towards a new witch-hunt.

New alignments have helped the "new realists". Urging on the process of ditching and diluting Labour's policies have been:

- The new *Tribune*
- The new Livingstone
- The new *New Socialist*
- The new *Marxism Today*

All these elements are central to the new grey election campaign (never mind the politics, feel the breadth!).

But beneath the thin veneer of "new" politics lurks the same old reality: Kinnock's gang are limbering up for a period of Wilson-style Labour government pledged to capitalist policies, and certain to attack the working class.

We can't yet stop the careerist bandwagon which Kinnock is driving, or stop some former left wingers jumping aboard. *But we don't have to concede the initiative to the right wing.*

We can begin to organise the hard left to fight back in defence of socialist policies, class struggle methods, and the demands of the oppressed.

That's why we need the new, fortnightly paper to be launched in the autumn, which will expand and improve upon the present *Labour Briefing*.

The new *Briefing* will argue for the policies which the labour movement needs to fight back against Thatcher and combat Kinnock's retreat.

Our aim is to stop the rot. Our allies and audience are the most militant forces in the trade unions, the Labour Parties, women's campaigns and struggles, black struggles, the Lesbian and Gay movement and among young people — anyone committed to the fight for a socialist solution to the crisis.

The new paper will be tighter in focus, harder-hitting in its line, but broader in scope than the present *Briefing*. It will still be democratically run, and offer a forum for debate as well as a basis for organising the left. It will be basic reading for activists, but understandable to workers on picket lines and first-time readers.

The campaign for the new paper was launched at a 200-strong conference in May. Now we need YOUR support to help raise the funds and assemble a network of sellers and supporters.

If you agree that it is time we fought back against the witch-hunt and the right wing rampage, we urge you to:

- **Join our "500 Club" scheme: pay £1 per week towards the Launch Fund of £8,000 — and be entered for a weekly £25 Draw! (See standing order form alongside)**
- **Make a donation to the launch fund: send cheques (payable to Labour Briefing No. 2 account) to: Launch Fund, 162 Millfields Rd, London E5.**
- **Pledge a regular sale of the new paper in your workplace, Labour Party or neighbourhood. Order your copies of our Pilot Issue (out July 15th) from Millfields Rd.**
- **Tell your local comrades about it: organise a Launch Meeting, with a speaker from *Briefing* (write in, or tel. 01–533 2593).**
- **Subscribe to the paper — £12 per year.**
- **Order copies of our *Turn Back the Grey Tide* leaflet to spread the word and promote the new *Briefing* from 39, Talia House, Manchester Rd, London E14 9HB.**

CONTACT US for any further details. TOGETHER WE can Turn the Tide!

Briefing 500 Club

Help us build the fortnightly *Briefing*

Win £25 in a weekly prize draw!

Pledge us only £1 per week, £4 per month for the Fund to launch the new fortnightly *Labour Briefing* newspaper. Our aim is to enlist at least 500 supporters, to enable us to launch the new paper by Labour Party conference 1986, and to sustain its regular publication as the paper of the hard left in the labour movement.

As soon as we have 200 supporters signed up, we will begin a weekly draw for a £25 prize payout. When we reach 400 supporters we will double the prize money to two £25 lucky number prizes.

To enter the draw, simply complete the Bankers Order form below and send it to Labour Briefing. As soon as we recieve it, your number will be entered for the first draw: we will forward the form to your bank. A Supporters' Club card will be sent to you in acknowledgement, showing your lucky number.

This money is entirely separate from other *Labour Briefing* finance, and will all be earmarked for the launch fund target of £8,000 to set up the fortnightly paper.

Sign up now: and when you join the 500 Club why not order extra forms to take round your local Labour Parties, trade unions and other campaigns. Help us build the base for the fortnightly!

.....

Bankers Order form for Labour Briefing 500 Club

Please complete every section of this form, and then return it to: **Labour Briefing, c/o Jane Kelly, 26 Crofton Rd, London SE5.**

Bankers Order

To: .....

..... (bank name, sort code)

At (address) .....

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From: ..... (your name)

(your address) .....

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My account number is: .....

Please debit from my account each month the sum of £4, in favour of Labour Briefing No 2 account,Co-operative Bank, Stratford E15, Code 08–90–76, Account No. 50349957.

Starting on .....(date)

Thereafter on .....(date) of each month

Signature .....

Dated .....

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

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