

BRIEFING

with NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 5 FEBRUARY 1985

OUR JIM'S JOB JOKE

Exeter's Mayor, Mr Jim Pollitt, has shown his true blue colours with his 'Family Work Sharing' joke. Under this gimmick scheme parents would split their hours of work with their children and employers would receive money equal to the young persons benefit, to be added to the parents wage. Parents would then be expected to share this extra money with their children!

Mr Pollitt suggests that this would "take young people off the streets" and that "family ties would be strengthened and family arguments would be greatly reduced". This can only be taken as an indication of Mr Pollitt's severe lack of understanding of young people and his distance from the real world in general.

The sad reality is that Pollitt's scheme could only INCREASE family tension and arguments. Young people would be robbed of what little financial independence they already have, while being forced to work effectively for nothing under the very people they wish to be independent of!

Pollitt's claim that the scheme is "non-political" is equally disturbing. No socialist could ever possibly support a scheme which conditions young people to accept low wages in line with Thatcher's 'voodoo monetarist nonsense'.

This scheme must be seen in it's true light, as merely another way of misrepresenting the size of unemployment figures. 'Family Work Sharing' clearly ranks alongside the other misleading Tory farces (ie YOPS and YTS schemes) which have already exploited large numbers of young people.

If 'our Jim' is so deeply concerned about the shadow of unemployment, he would be better employed tearing up his scheme and calling on his friend Tebbit to halt the wholesale destruction of industry, education and the public services in general.

This, of course, would be too much to ask of 'our Jim', who has instead sent his pathetic little scheme off for Tebbit's approval. Meanwhile the Council have just squandered £28,000 on a brand new Daimler for our caring Mayor to travel in, enabling him to stay well out of reach of the ordinary people of Exeter, especially the young and unemployed!

Neil Todd,
Exeter C.L.P.



WHEN DO I GET PAID, DAD?
'SHUT UP AND KEEP WORKING, YOU'VE GOT TO SWEEP THE ROAD FOR THE MAYOR'S DAIMLER!'

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Editorial

Though this Briefing concentrates on two matters, which are taking place in Exeter, they have implications for the whole Labour movement. One is Labour's 'working arrangement' with the Liberals in the City Council which has been in force since last May. The other is the exclusion of Mr C. Churchward from the Exeter Labour Party.

Historically, the Labour movement has opposed governmental, electoral and administrative pacts with bourgeois parties. But why is this so? How does it apply to Exeter? And how does it affect practical issues such as the position of women, the struggle for peace and the Miner's strike?

The attempt to expel the editors of the then Exeter Labour Briefing gave rise to an article titled "Coalitions Mean Witch Hunts" in 'Socialist Action' last June. Regrettably, coalitionism has claimed another victim, the veteran socialist campaigner, Mr C. Churchward, who had his membership blocked in December by a procedure which no civilised mind could accept.

Finally, we would like to apologise for the non-appearance of the January Briefing.

3 SELL OUTS

1

MINERS' COLLECTIONS

"This meeting urges the Leader of Exeter City Council to use any pressure and power he can exert in order to secure licences for the Trades' Council and any other representatives of the NUM to collect for the NUM in the City of Exeter every Saturday'm

The above emergency resolution was put to the meeting of the GMC of Exeter Labour Party, January 4th.

The resolution followed a number of instances of police harassment of LPYS members, and others joining them in the miners' cause, while collecting on Saturdays (the most lucrative day). While recognising that to make a collection without a licence was their own decision and responsibility, the collectors felt that, in the context of the single most vital struggle of the working class today, they had to continue. It was also felt that since the Labour Party, through the council has some power to influence and change the system under which licences are issued, a resolution to the GMC would be an appropriate way to encourage the leader of the council to exert this power.

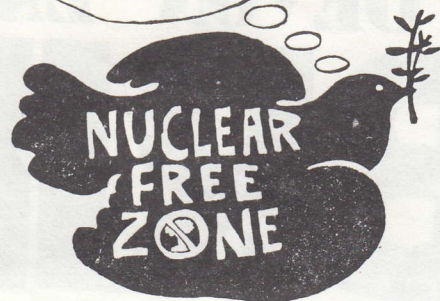
The resolution was defeated by a considerable majority. Much was made of the fact that LPYS members had not made an application for a Saturday licence; this, however, would have been a matter simply of obtaining a formal refusal. It was pointed out that many charities clamour for such licences; yet the NUM is not a charity - it is the current spearhead of working people's resistance to Tory social deprivation, and so cannot rightly be treated in the same way as a charity, however good the cause. Behind the meeting's decision lie the contradictions inherent in the position which the Labour Group on the Council has adopted. Unwilling to endanger Liberal support, they are unable to propose socialist measures of which the Liberals would (or even might) disapprove. To see the Leader of the Council exerting influence in the way the LPYS has proposed would receive no such approval, and so is unacceptable to the Labour Group as a whole. The Group is therefore obliged to adopt a political profile which is barely different from that of the Liberals. Labour's potential to be seen as a campaigning socialist party, committed to real change, is wasted.

Street collections for the miners will continue in Exeter regardless of the reception afforded to the LPYS resolution. Let us hope that the leader of the Council will continue, as he has so far done to argue against the prosecution of any collectors arrested, and that he will do what he can to obtain licences for anyone wishing to support in a practical way the most important political struggle of the day.

Mark Wilkinson
(Exeter CLP)

2

DOES EXETER
WELCOME ME?



Exeter City Council recently passed a resolution which forms the basis of claims by the Labour Councillors that Exeter is now a 'Nuclear Free Zone'. This resolution basically consists of the first clause of the original Manchester City Council NFZ resolution, along with the important 'conscience clause' which enables City Council employees to opt out of civil defence exercises.

By far the most important purpose of an NFZ declaration is, however, to publicise opposition to nuclear weapons and show the absurdity of civil defence. Exeter's resolution has been accompanied by virtually NO publicity and the people of Exeter are not even aware of their supposed nuclear free status. In fact, the resolution did not even include the phrase 'Nuclear Free Zone' and some of the Liberal Councillors who voted for it did so only because they knew that the resolution would not make Exeter a NFZ. A close look at the resolution also reveals that the Council is NOT opposed to nuclear weapons being placed in Exeter in war-time, but only in peace-time. This puts our Council in the ridiculous position of opposing nuclear weapons but still wanting to go down fighting and nuke the 'enemy'!

Exeter Young Socialists recently put a motion to the General Committee of the Labour Party in an attempt to clarify this matter. They called upon the Labour Councillors to move a new resolution unequivocally declaring Exeter to be a 'Nuclear Free Zone'. (ie using the phrase NFZ).

Needless to say, the General Committee rejected the resolution, claiming it would damage the Labour Councillor's precious relations with the Liberals. It was also stated that Manchester's original resolution did not include the phrase 'NFZ'. However Manchester's resolution was accompanied by a huge publicity campaign based on the phrase 'NFZ', the absence of any such campaign in Exeter clearly shows the importance of the phrase 'NFZ' being included in our resolution itself.

Therefore, we have in Exeter a group of Labour Councillors who are prepared to put a pact with the Liberals before the struggle against nuclear weapons. A letter from Fred Barker of National CND clearly states that "a NFZ resolution by a local authority is essentially a symbolic statement expressing opposition to nuclear weapons". What is the point of Exeter's symbolic statement that no-one has heard? He goes on to state "...sadly, it is often the case that a NFZ local authority does no more than pass the resolution..." and that "...the test of whether a City Council could become an active NFZ is to see whether sympathetic Councillors are willing to work with Exeter CND to pursue some concrete NFZ initiatives." The reaction of the Councillors present at the General Committee to proposals to take any more action demonstrates the remoteness of the above statement becoming reality in Exeter. Even the practical and simple idea of erecting a NFZ motorway sign was scorned and laughed at.

Finally, one of the people Mr Barker suggested I contact to help campaign for a real NFZ was MR C. Churchward, whose treatment by Exeter CLP is shown elsewhere in this Briefing. The irony of this advice is bitter, as are the feelings towards the Council from those committed to peace and socialism alike!

Paul Gibliir,
Exeter CLP

3 GIVE US A WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

"This meeting notes that the Labour City Council manifesto committed a future Labour Council to 'set up a women's committee with adequate staff and backing to oversee and co-ordinate (and act as a source of ideas in) areas where women are particularly concerned'. This meeting invites the Leader of the City Council to present a comprehensive written report to the next GMC on the actions taken towards that objective."

The movers of the resolution had two intentions. Firstly, to see if anything were being done by the Labour Group, and secondly, if so, to obtain the details to circulate to feminist groups: most of which are sceptical of Labour's commitment.

Rather than defeat the resolution, the right wing moved an amendment which rendered the resolution worthless by jettisoning the report, written or otherwise. Amended, the resolution was passed, but several key right wingers still voted against it.

Dr. Shepherd defended the procedure in a speech to Exeter Labour Party Young Socialists. He argued that Heavitree/Wonford did not have to provide any reasons for their rejection of his application, because each member of the branch who took part in the vote had his/her own reasons for rejecting the application. The same argument justifies the lack of formal reasons for the rejection of the application at the General Committee.

The Labour Party constitution, however, says that an applicant has the right of appeal, if his/her membership is rejected by the local branch. But surely one can only appeal against a decision supported by a justification? Nobody can make an appeal against an arbitrary decision.

I have argued, as I think the Labour Party constitution intends, that the onus is on the rejecting branch (ie, Heavitree/Wonford) to make out a case against the applicant's membership. In effect, the branch's case against an applicant is a charge at the General Committee which the applicant must answer. Dr. Shepherd argues, however, that the branch's decision is arbitrary, and the only point in a rejected applicant appearing before the General Committee is to make out a case for his/her membership. Yet, I cannot see how this could constitute an appeal. It is nothing but a fresh hearing within the context of the same arbitrary justice.

Let us sum up the effects of Dr. Shepherd's interpretation of the Labour Party membership procedure. If you decide to join Exeter Labour Party and your branch decides to reject your application for some reason which you will never know (it could be that they just don't like you), you can speak to the General Committee of our Party for five minutes, if you have the courage. You will then be dismissed and we will discuss your application at some point in the meeting. If we don't want you, we won't tell you why; but remember even if you don't get in, that the Labour Party stands for justice.

J. Sukthanka
(Exeter CLP)

CHURCHWARD REJECTED

On the night of December 7th, Mr. Christopher Churchward appeared before the General Committee of Exeter Labour Party. A month earlier he had applied to join the Party, but had been rejected by his local branch Heavitree/Wonford. The Labour Party constitution, however, gave him the right of 'personal appeal' to the General Committee; a right which he exercised, but with little success. By thirty-five votes to eight with nine abstentions, he was denied membership of Exeter Labour Party.

It is not the point of this article to suggest substantial reasons for or against Mr. Churchward's membership of the Party, nor can I say what transpired in the Heavitree/Wonford branch where his application was initially considered. I intend to consider only the manner in which his 'personal appeal' was handled by the General Committee.

The chair of the meeting, John Shepherd, ruled that Mr. Churchward would have five minutes to state why he should be admitted to the Party. A delegate from the Pennsylvania/St. Davids branch protested that Mr. Churchward could not logically appeal against the Heavitree/Wonford decision, if he did not know the reason for that decision. The meeting over-ruled the objection, so Mr. Churchward was forced to appeal against a decision which he did not know the reasons for.

The second cause for concern is the order of business as decided by the chair. Dr. Shepherd ruled that Mr. Churchward would be heard at 9.30pm, but the matter would not be discussed until the membership report which was much lower down the agenda. This meant that over twenty minutes lapsed between Mr. Churchward's speech and the discussion about his membership with the obvious result that many delegates must have forgotten much of what he said.

Thirdly, speeches for and against Mr. Churchward's application were heard in his absence, which meant that he was unable to answer 'evidence' which was given against his application.

Finally, the actual resolution to reject the application gave no reasons for the decision. Consequently, Mr. Churchward is denied membership of Exeter Labour Party either without reason or on account of secret reasons.

PSSSST!

DID YOU HEAR WHAT HAPPENED
AT THE G.M.C.?

At the Exeter General Committee when the question of Chris Churchward's admission to the party was discussed a great deal of resentment was expressed by some delegates towards one of the editors of DLB that proceedings of the committee were no longer confidential and that he was drawing a fat salary on the strength of the revelations imparted by the Briefing.

Apart from revealing some pretty amazing misapprehensions among experienced delegates these exchanges revealed some very significant views about the nature of General Committee meetings.

The Chair of Exeter CLP, Dr. Shepherd, took the view that the Constitution of the Party included various unwritten practices and conventions, one of which related to confidentiality. An inspection of the 'Rules for Constituency Labour Parties and Branches' reveals nothing relating to this subject at all, yet he suggested that anyone who was dissatisfied with his ruling would have to take an amendment to the Rules to Party Conference. In fact, the writer would submit that there are good grounds for rejecting the importation of nebulous notions of custom and practice into the Rules in the way that has been suggested.

General Committees are delegate organisations. This fundamental principle, which seems to be little honoured, has a number of important consequences. Firstly it must be clear to an organisation before it decides to affiliate and send some delegates what the rules of the organisation to which it is committing itself are. This becomes even more crucial when national organisations are considered. Secondly delegates must be free to communicate with their delegate bodies. In many organisations the only feasible means of communication is some type of newsletter. Such newsletters are not generally confidential. Indeed samples are often used as recruitment material to show the involvement of the organisation in local affairs.

This is not to say that there is no place for confidentiality in Party affairs, but only that confidentiality is a political and not a confidential issue. No-one can legitimately expect that unwise remarks made at the General Committee will not be used against them by their enemies. Equally if their is

general agreement inside the Party that some matters should not be raised among outsiders there is no constitutional sanction against a delegate who deliberately or accidentally breaks ranks. There are however political sanctions. Delegates are answerable to their branches and organisations, and if the committee is unhappy with their behaviour it is the delegating organisation which must be challenged.

In Exeter the notion of introducing politics to the functioning of the Party may seem strange to some members. It was again apparent in the debate about Churchward's admission that the real complaint against him was that he had been an unruly and unmanageable member who disturbed the atmosphere of what many seem to regard as a social club.

Martin Rathfelder,
Exeter C.L.P.

THE CHURCHWARD PROTEST: POSTSCRIPT

Many people inside Exeter Labour Party feel that Mr. Churchward has not been treated fairly and are compelled to act. At the time of writing the Pennsylvania/St. Davids branch and the Young Socialists have passed the following resolution addressed to the NEC.

NOTES: that Mr. Churchward...applied for membership of Exeter CLP; that the November 1984 meeting of his local branch...rejected his application; that the December 1984 meeting of the GMC heard Mr. Churchward for five minutes and rejected his application.

COMPLAINS: (1)According to the Constitution Mr. Churchward was making an appeal against the Heavitree/Wonford decision. Yet the GMC refused to allow Mr. Churchward to know the reasons for the rejection of his application. This is a violation of natural justice. (2)In the discussion which followed Mr. Churchward's speech (and in his absence), GMC delegates gave a variety of reasons for and against his membership. Yet the rejection of his application was not supported by any resolution which stated formal reasons for the decision.

REQUEST EITHER: that the NEC overturns the Exeter GMC decision and orders Exeter CLP to accept Mr. Churchward's application to join the Labour Party.
REQUEST OR: that the NEC orders the application of Mr. Churchward to join the Labour Party to be considered again by the Exeter GMC in a manner which could not give rise to the two above mentioned complaints.

It is understood that Mr. Churchward has appealed to the NEC against the arbitrary decision and procedure: we understand further that the NEC has ordered the regional Party organiser to mount an enquiry into the matter.

LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS

The Exeter LPYS meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 26 Clifton Hill. Meet 8pm in the bar. NEXT MEETING 20th FEBRUARY 1985

What is the Young Socialists ?

Exeter LPYS (Exeter Labour Party Young Socialists) is made up of all members of the Labour Party who are under twenty-five, though any young person is invited to the meeting.

What are we trying to do ?

FIGHTING FOR YOUTH

Every school leaver shall have a job, with full rates of pay
End the 'slave labour' youth training schemes
Expand education and training; all students to get full grants

FIGHTING FOR SOCIALISM

Take over the 200 biggest firms and banks to give Labour power
Full employment linked to a mass programme of public works: full wages
Rights for women and blacks
Ditch the bomb. Get rid of all nuclear weapons

DEFEAT the TORIES, BOSSES and POLICE

How will we do it ?

FIGHTING through the Labour Party for these things and making the Labour Party fight for them.
ORGANISE and educate youth into fighting for these goals

LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS LPYS

Miners in Exmouth

On Thursday 24 January a public meeting on 'Coal in Exmouth' was held in Exmouth. About 60 people turned up and the speakers included Steve Reicher of Exeter CLP who delivered an excellent speech on the government's importation of South African coal to try and break the miner's strike. A group of South Wales miner's were also present, along with an Exmouth resident's association who have had to put up with a constant stream of coal lorries churning up their roads. A collection at the meeting raised £100 for the NUM and everyone who attended thought that the event had been a worthwhile one.

BRIEFING

THE STATEMENT BELOW IS BEING DISCUSSED BY SUPPORTERS OF DEVON LABOUR BRIEFING. SEND US YOUR VIEWS.

Briefing represents a unique opportunity in Exeter and Devon to build a bridge between the Labour Party and progressive groups, such as the women's and peace movements. We believe in the construction of a non-dogmatic progressive alliance, which fights through the Labour Party for the replacement of capitalism by socialism. For us, socialism is not a reformed capitalism, but a different political order.

To realise this objective, the Labour Party must be transformed from a predominantly social democratic party to a socialist one, which is willing and able to struggle for its objectives in every social institution. The method of exclusive electoralism must be replaced by a coherent strategy of socialist intervention in all spheres of social life. The existing objective of partial reform, as in the now redundant and failed post-war consensus, must be jettisoned in favour of a commitment to structurally transform society. In place of the theoretical vacuum of traditional Labourite politics, we must introduce a marxist analysis of society, because only by an understanding of society can we hope to change it.

In Exeter Labour Party, as a first step, we are forced to fight the present conditions of "passive radicalism", "theories of inactive expectancy", "bureaucratic suffocation" and "municipal careerism". This fight is no easy task and we require help.

We call on all progressive groups, who value the power of political organisation, to work through the Labour Party and in association with Devon Labour Briefing.

BRIEFING

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