

DEVON LABOUR 30p

BRIEFING

with NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 16 APRIL 1986

MAY DAYSCHOOL

SAT. 3rd MAY 10.30-4.00

CORNWALL HOUSE - EXETER UNIV.

£1.50 waged; 75p unwaged



The beginning of May has traditionally been a time of celebration in the Labour movement. Consequently supporters of Devon Labour Briefing have chosen to mark this period by organising a May Dayschool.

Since the defeat of the miners we have seen many shifts on the left. We have also seen Neil Kinnock taking the Labour Party further and further to the right while failing to support the brave stand made by the socialist councillors in Liverpool and Lambeth.

Now, more than ever, we need to strengthen our links with other progressive groups. Sexism, gay rights, racism, nuclear disarmament, nuclear power, membership of NATO, youth unemployment and nationalisation are among the many issues on which we must establish coherent policies.

A vast number of people are suffering as Britain sinks deeper into crisis. Our experiences must be used to create radical policies capable of transforming our unjust capitalist society into a caring socialist community.

Dayschools provide an important medium both for exchanging personal experiences and mobilising our collective thoughts in workshops and giving us the opportunity to hear speakers otherwise unavailable in Exeter.

If you are interested in helping to develop real alternative policies while having an enjoyable time, come along to what promises to be a very lively event. Our previous Dayschool last November was very well attended and featured some excellent discussions. Make sure you get to grips with the issues that matter by attending the May Dayschool.

What better way to celebrate this traditional socialist occasion?

★ THE MAY PARTY ★

THOSE BUYING DAYSCHOOL TICKETS ALSO GAIN FREE ADMISSION TO 'THE MAY PARTY' (venue to be announced) WHERE THEY WILL NO DOUBT BE THRILLED BY THE EXPLOITS OF THE SOCIALIST JUGGLER AND THE MARXIST FIRE-EATER ALONG WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER IDEOLOGICALLY SOUND ACTS.

★ VEGGY MEAL ★

WE ARE ALSO PLEASED TO OFFER A THREE COURSE VEGETARIAN MEAL AT GAIA RESTAURANT FOR A MERE £3.50. GIVE YOUR STOMACH A REAL TREAT AS WELL AS YOUR MIND!

THE MAY DAYSCHOOL

Morning Session

10.30 Introduction

10.45 PAM TATLOW (Woman's Action Committee speaker)
- to be followed by questions

11.30 WORKSHOP SESSION ONE

*Economic policy (Ray Davison, CLPD,
Graham Bash, London Labour Briefing)

12.30 LUNCH

Afternoon Session

1.30 WORKSHOP SESSION TWO

*Lesbian and Gay Rights (Tobie, Labour Campaign for
Lesbian and Gay Rights)

*The future of the Family (Stevie Jackson)

2.30 WORKSHOP SESSION THREE

*Youth in politics (Fran Rayner, Youth Fightback)

*Policing (Jeremy Hamm, Sheffield Police Watch)

*Towards a Socialist Energy Policy (Piers Corbyn,
SERA)

3.30 REPORTS BACK AND SUMMING UP SPEECH

S P E A K E R T O B E A N N O U N C E D !

LABOUR-TAKE THE POWER!

BREAKING THE NUCLEAR CHAIN!

On March 28th, Good Friday, women from all over the South West gathered at Hinkley Point to demonstrate against the proposed construction of 2 more nuclear reactors, and to mark the seventh anniversary of the accident at Three Mile Island nuclear power station in the U.S.A. On that day in 1979, 150,000 people were evacuated or fled the area. A cloud of radioactive gas had escaped into the atmosphere from a near melt-down at the Pressurized Water Reactor sited at Three Mile Island. A total disaster was only just averted.

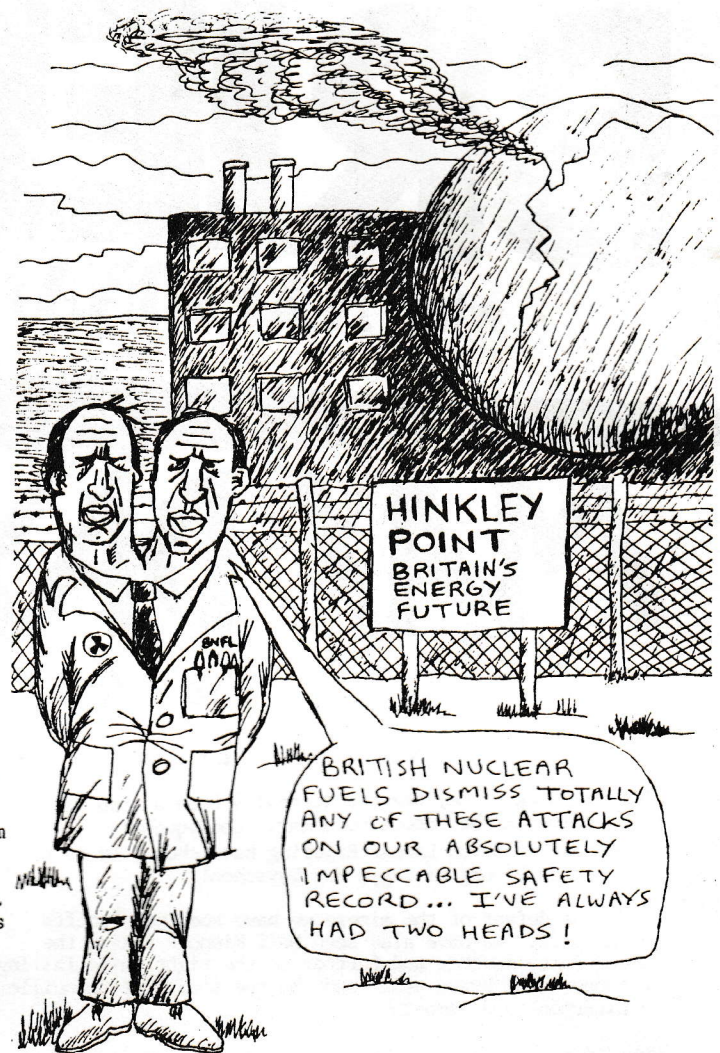
Now, the British Government has announced its intention to build PWR reactors in Britain. Sites under consideration include Sizewell and Hinkley Point. The programme will cost over £20,000 million.

These proposals continue - despite the acknowledged safety problems inherent in PWR's; despite the numerous leaks of radioactivity from the existing gas-cooled reactors at Hinkley Point; despite the fact that operator exposure to radioactivity is 10 times higher at PWR's than at existing Magnox reactors; despite the fact that in 1981 alone there were 17 serious faults or accidents at US PWR's; despite the fact that the report of the Presidents Commission on Three Mile Island said "accidents similar to those at Three Mile Island should be expected"; despite the fact that, in the words of Sir Martin Ryle, "if the money spent on a new nuclear power station was spent instead on insulation, three times as much energy would be saved as that power station would generate in its lifetime."

In recent months, there have been a succession of accidents at nuclear power plants. This year alone, four accidents have been reported at the Sellafield reprocessing plant in Cumbria. Hinkley Point had three accidents in the final months of 1985. In the third of these, last November, the escape of contaminated carbon dioxide gas led to a full scale alert at this site. For the first time in Britain, 500 workers were issued with potassium iodate tablets. BNFL assure us that these accidents pose no "significant" dangers to workers or the public, and try to pass off each successive accident as an isolated and one-off incident. But, simultaneous with this denial of significant danger, workers at Sellafield are being threatened with the Official Secrets Act and warned not to communicate with the press or the public about these leaks and accidents while keeping the real facts hidden, the nuclear industry is spending vast amounts of money on "school centres" and a proposed "nuclear shop" in Bridgwater, trying to convince us all that nuclear power is needed, is safe and is cheap (as far as the cost of nuclear power goes, it is important to remember we pay a large proportion of such a cost in taxes, and so, of course, it won't show on our quarterly bill). Given this government's commitment to nuclear power, while down other sources energy, the bait of "more jobs" is also being used. Power plants are often sited in areas of high unemployment where the prospect of a job seems more immediate than the risks of radiation. Jobs in the nuclear industry are created at the cost of redundancies in oil-fired stations and coalfields, the collapse of entire communities and the closure of pit faces. The Fraunhofer Institute estimated, in a study for the FEC Commission for alternative energy strategies, that implementing energy saving policies would create approximately 530,000 jobs by the end of this century. So much for the idea that nuclear energy is a job-creator.

The Women's Peace Action at Hinkley Point on Good Friday drew attention to all these factors, among the many other links in the nuclear chain. The response of women from all over the South West Region and beyond was superb, and showed both the media and the CEBG that, despite their claims to the contrary, local opposition to the expansion at Hinkley Point exists in force, (and its useful to remember that, in nuclear terms, Exeter is local to Hinkley. Given an average combination of accident and weather conditions at Hinkley Point, land 50 miles away might still be uninhabitable 20 years later). Approximately 300 women demonstrated along the roadside to Hinkley Point, highlighting the various links in the nuclear chain, from uranium mining to dumping, from interference with civil liberties to radiation leaks. Later in the day, outside the power plant, the protest continued: workers were leafleted, and at specific moments the gates were blockaded. All day, a series of exhibitions open to the public on the dangers of nuclear power, were on display in Unity House, Bridgwater, and Bridgwater itself was leafleted.

The action was a tremendous success, but much more work remains to be done. We must continue to investigate the alternative energy sources available to us. The money and resources that this government pours into nuclear energy needs to be re-directed into exploring an economically viable, ecologically



conscious and - above all - safe alternative energy supply. Saving energy creates jobs. The Policy Studies Institute report *Less Fuel - More Jobs* indicates that 150,000 new jobs could be created and 6 billion pounds worth of energy saved by a comprehensive energy conservation programme. The pressures of the nuclear industry, of the propaganda bodies associated with that industry, must be challenged. Any future government must be forced to plan for a nuclear-free energy programme - and a nuclear free future. The nuclear authorities will continue to put profit and power before lives and safety unless we act to stop them. Join us.

Exeter Women's Peace Group
c/o Women's Centre, Exeter

Women's Council News

Last month's Women's Council overwhelmingly passed a resolution in support of the right of Women's Conference to elect the women's places on the NEC. In a relatively large meeting (12 members present) the support was virtually unanimous for the proposal, a proposal that has been consistently rejected by National Conference. This year's campaign is aiming to get as much publicity as possible for this basic demand, by organising a shadow election for the five reserved places on the NEC. The elections will take place at National Women's Conference in May, therefore it is vital to set the publicity ball rolling as soon as possible. Branches and the constituency GC have to debate this issue and pledge their support for what is an essential step in ensuring women get the necessary voice and power in the Party.

The Women's Council also debated the forthcoming court case between the Party and the Devon Labour Briefing supporters threatened with expulsion, with reference to the finances involved in such a case. It was felt that the Women's Council and rank and file members had a right to know what costs the Party would incur and who would pay them and it was agreed to send a letter to the Officers of the Party requesting an answer to these points. Furthermore, the general consensus was that everything must be done to avoid a lengthy court action and restore unity within the Party. The secretary therefore was instructed to write to Region to urge intervention in this case.

The South West Regional Conference

A PERSONAL VIEW Paul Giblin, Exeter CLP.

On Saturday 15th March I had the dubious privilege of being one of Exeter CLP's delegates to the Party's South Western Regional Conference. To be let in to this momentous event I had to wear a yellow badge proclaiming my status as a delegate. I also had to sign a detachable slip declaring my loyalty to the Labour Party and its' policies. I must admit I was half expecting to have to swear a holy oath of allegiance to Neil Kinnock before the day was over.

Anyway, I arrived early to sell the Briefing alongside a motley crew of comrades hawking Militant, the Morning Star and leafletting for the obligatory fringe meetings. We played 'spot the bureaucrat' as thick-set, stoney-faced men with suits and red ties on barges passed us, refusing to buy papers and only grudgingly accepting leaflets.

I entered the Conference hall and almost immediately began to work out how to use our collective ballot papers with the other Exeter delegates. Unfortunately this confusing business meant that I missed a crucial part of the Conference. The Standing Orders Committee had decided that we couldn't debate a Transport and General Workers Union resolution referring to the Exeter witch-hunt on the grounds that it was 'sub-judice'. While we pondered our ballot papers the Standing Orders Committee report including this decision was accepted by the Conference.

As we have pointed out many times the High Court Injunction obtained by Neil, Peter and myself refers only to Exeter's GMC who are prevented from ratifying the EC's recommendation to expel us. The phrase 'sub-judice' simply means something is under legal action and applies to criminal court cases where reporting can be restricted to protect the accused and jury members from information which may affect the conduct of the trial. Our case will only be heard by a judge and no such reporting restriction has been imposed. Certain Party members have redefined 'sub-judice' to mean 'absolutely no debate'. This is a blatant trick the right wing Party leaders have used to stifle discussion not only on the Exeter witch-hunt but on the witch-hunt in general. As a possible compromise the TGWU even offered to delete the sentence in the resolution which referred to Exeter. The Standing Orders Committee even rejected this offer, clearly demonstrating the Party leader's determination to hide their purge from the rank and file at the Conference.

The morning continued with some mediocre debate on non-controversial issues. To be honest I could not find anything contentious on the days' agenda. In the mean time a long phone call to a solicitor confirmed that the Conference had been deceived about the 'sub-judice' nature of the resolution.

I returned to the hall to find the big-name speech for the day had begun. The speaker was none other than Chief Witch-Finder General, Party General Secretary Larry Whitty. His speech was slow but smooth and I began to cringe as a number of bitter ironies were unravelled. The man intent on persecuting the Liverpool District Labour Party had the cheek to launch an appeal for the surcharged Councillors. He attacked the Tory cuts and ratercapping and expressed sorrow and sympathy for the very people he had stabbed in the back while they were fighting those cuts. Larry also made a valid attack on the Alliance. He rightly criticised the SDP as traitors and lampooned the Liberals for the opportunism they have shown when power-sharing with Labour. On hearing this my mind turned to Exeter Labour Group's precious deal with the Liberals. At least Larry Whitty was exposing the Party Exeter had chose not to oppose in the 1984 St Leonards by-election. Mr Whitty generally tried to portray himself as a kindly uncle who had been pushed too far and was now helping the enraged father Mr Kinnock in telling off his wayward children. "The Party", he stated "must be run with a mixture of discipline and tolerance". I felt sick. His closing message was that we faced "a great opportunity if we all pulled together". I felt sicker.

At lunch time a fringe meeting was held by the Woman's Action Committee, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the National Justice for the Mineworkers Campaign and Devon Labour Briefing. By far the best speaker was Gwen McLeod, Chair of the Notts Women Against Pit Closures. She emotionally detailed the pressures facing those who remain loyal to the NUM in Nottinghamshire and how the Scab UDM is slowly losing support. There was an incredible contrast between

Gwen's appeal for help in a tense local struggle and Larry Whitty's unemotional Conference address. I also noticed that throughout Gwen's speech Bristol South MP Michael Cocks showed his disinterest in class struggle by filling in the Daily Telegraph crossword!

Pam Tatlow also gave a very good speech linking the struggle of women, gay men and lesbians with the fight against the witch-hunt; Ray Davison outlined the strategy of the CLPD; Steve Reicher recounted the fortunes of DLB; a SOGAT delegate gave a powerful appeal for help in the Wapping dispute and Dawn Primorola linked all these issues by ably chairing the meeting.

The Conference's afternoon session started with another Standing Orders Committee report, which gave us another chance to have the witch-hunt resolution debated. Regional Executive Committee member Anne Chesterton left the platform and took the floor microphone to call for a reference back to the resolution. She referred to the legal advice we'd received in the morning and stated how the Standing Orders Committee had been ill-informed about the nature of the injunction. Unfortunately the Chair overrode Anne by switching off the floor microphone. He re-stated the Party's "official legal advice" and said that everyone present could each get a different legal opinion. Anne continued to protest and the Chair said his ruling could only be overturned by moving that he stood down. Someone at the back of the hall then moved next business, which was almost immediately seconded and a successful vote taken. It was just like trying to get an LPYS resolution debated at the Exeter GMC! Throughout this incident Larry Whitty looked very smug, he was clearly confident that any debate would be stifled and his purge would remain uninterrupted and unmentioned.

The rest of the day passed rather uneventfully. Mediocre resolution after mediocre resolution resulted in mediocre debates and only one event served to reveal the struggles currently being waged inside the Party. Pam Tatlow moved an addendum to a motion on local authorities and linked the need to defend communities against Tory cuts with the way the Labour leadership have witch-hunted the most forceful defenders of the Party's policies. Her articulate speech exposed the hypocrisy of this action and was greeted with loud applause from about half the delegates. Unfortunately Larry Whitty had left the much depleted platform by this time, but Pam's efforts would have fallen on deaf ears anyway.

The agenda stated that the Conference would go on until 5.15pm but I left at about 4.30. A few constructive resolutions had been passed but my overall impression was one of a lack of direction or vitality. Britain is deep in crisis with massive unemployment, growing poverty and a rampant Tory government rapidly eroding all of the civil rights and liberties that the Labour movement has struggled to gain. The Labour Party should be fighting the Tories at every opportunity, forging links with the ever increasing ranks of the oppressed and putting forward strong socialist policies to defend the working class just as Thatcher looks after the interests of the ruling class. I came away from the Conference thinking about how the Labour Party is doing none of these things. The South West Regional Conference left me feeling numb and depressed.

SUPPORT THE PRINTERS

News International Boss Rupert Murdoch has recently sacked 6000 printworkers after provoking a strike by making demands which no union could accept. These demands include: no closed shop; no strikes; management veto over union representatives. SOGAT have had their entire assets sequestrated by Thatcher's anti-union law. It is vital that the whole Labour movement gives it's full backing to the printworkers because if Murdoch is allowed to get away with this attack it will set a precedent for every employer in the country. Anyone who is willing to give support can start by helping to leaflet Exeter newsgagents urging people to boycott THE SUN and THE TIMES. We meet every morning at 8.00am outside Barclays. There will also be a coach to Wapping in the next few weeks. For more information contact: Neil Todd, Exeter Printers Support Group, 91 Park Road, Tel. 219796.

DON'T BUY
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THE TIMES
THE SUNDAY TIMES

The Injunction - the facts

The proposed expulsion of Peter Bowling, Paul Giblin and Neil Todd from Exeter Labour Party and the subsequent legal action have left much of the local Party bewildered. Confusion centres, in particular, around two issues; the scope of the injunction which the three won in the High Court, and who will pay the Labour Party's legal fees.

The injunction was sought by Peter, Paul and Neil in order to prevent what they saw as their probable expulsion from Exeter Labour Party following an unfair hearing at the Executive Committee. On February 7th, Mr. Justice Evans agreed that the three had a prima facie case and granted them an injunction, which prevented the General Committee proceeding to expel them or considering their case.

A hearing involving Exeter Labour Party was scheduled for February 14th, but Exeter Labour Party solicitors felt that they did not have time to prepare their case, so it was agreed between the two parties to postpone the case until May. In the meantime the injunction remains in force.

Though the injunction prevents consideration of the particular case by the General Committee, it does not prevent the General Committee from discussing the legal action in which the Party is involved. Indeed, the three are suing John Shepherd and Peter Hill not as individuals but as chair and secretary of Exeter Labour Party. In other words it is the General Committee which is empowered to instruct the Labour Party solicitors and, therefore, the Committee must discuss the issue. It is nonsense for anybody to suggest that the matter is in the hands of the national Labour Party, for it is Exeter Labour Party which is being sued.

The proposed expulsions and the subsequent legal action is a matter which the local Labour Movement should be discussing. At the Labour Party Regional Conference on March 15th, the chair of the meeting enforced the view that because the matter was under legal consideration expulsions from the Labour Party could not be discussed. Nothing could be further from the truth. In Exeter, too, senior Labour Party people have said that the Party has been gagged and so forth. Let the point be restated: apart from the Exeter General Committee discussing the particular proposed expulsions of Peter, Paul and Neil, nothing has been banned by the injunction. Furthermore, the Exeter Labour Party should consider its own legal case.

The second area which is causing local Party members concern is the funding of the Exeter Labour Party's legal costs. John Shepherd, the CLP Chairperson, gave the General Committee on February 7th an absolute assurance that the national Labour Party would bare all the costs. Clearly this is no light matter as the costs for employing senior council and so forth runs into tens of thousands of pounds. A telephone call to a left wing member of the National Executive Committee revealed that it was minuted from the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of March 17th that no national money would be available for Exeter Labour Party. If Exeter Labour Party is contesting the case, where will the money come from?

Most of the grass roots of exeter Labour Party are against the witch hunt: the expulsion recommendations are coming from the top downwards: the rank and file are kept ignorant as to what is happening. In the branches and at the General Committee members should demand to discuss the witch-hunt and ask for the evidence which shows who is paying for it.

Peter Bowling Exeter CLP

Socialism and Participation

Trying to get more people involved in politics is a very difficult task. Women face particularly great barriers blocking their passage into the world of politics. At all levels on the left as well as the right we see the same white men clinging on to positions of power - and these are often men pledged to fight against sexism and racism! Unfortunately there is simply not room for everyone to participate in politics at the intense level at which most men currently do so. Equality necessitates men giving up their privileged positions and monopoly on 'socialist' debate.

Exeter LPYS recently organised a public meeting in support of the Wapping print workers. There were four speakers and even though only one was a printer, they were all men. This rightly gave rise to protest from women members of the LPYS. The next LPYS meeting promptly passed a motion resolving to have a woman speaker at any public meetings it organises. At the same meeting I resigned from my position as GC delegate to make way for Britt Holloway. From now on one of the two LPYS delegates should always be a woman. It is pointless and patronising for men to tell women to get more involved in politics without making way for this participation. Our precious male egos must be curbed, those already possessing political confidence must step back to allow women to build up what is still a very scarce resource.

Paul Giblin,
Exeter CLP.



Anti-Apartheid Action

The action of the Dunnes workers in Ireland has recently come to fruition in a way which provides the best possible encouragement for similar struggles in this country and internationally. The Irish government is now involved in passing a bill that would effectively ban all South African goods from entering the country. Such progress is due in no small measure to the stand taken by the shop workers. Theirs is an example for trade unionists everywhere to follow.

Indeed this lead has now been taken up here by the Portsmouth health workers. Their action in refusing to handle South African goods forms a courageous and unprecedented step in Britain that must be supported and copied elsewhere. However, the breakthrough has not come without its price for those involved. Already underpaid, the workers are suffering further sanctions from the authorities in the form of wage deductions.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement and NUPE have now launched a national appeal for support and Exeter and District Anti-Apartheid have been quick to respond to this. At the recent AA Benefit, £50 was raised in a collection and pledges of regular support have also been made (Further pledges can be made via E&DAAM; tel. 219378; the appeal continues...)

Meanwhile, the significance of the present trade union activity is a central focus of the coming 'Month of Action' organised by the AAM in conjunction with the TUC (peaking 14th-21st April). Locally, on the 17th of April, a speaker from SACTU HQ in Lusaka will be in Exeter throughout the day and address interested trade unionists and others at an evening meeting (details to be arranged).

The importance of local trade union solidarity action (and indeed TUs initiating direct action of their own), cannot be underestimated. The Dunnes dispute has shown that one small action can force governments to change the ways of a whole country. The same can and must happen here if we are to fulfil our responsibility to the oppressed people of South Africa. We should remember that the most draconian action of Dunnes was eventually overcome by trade union potency - now is the time to exercise this power; the Portsmouth workers must be joined not isolated! As the Irish experience demonstrates governments will not act until workers take the lead.

On the local scene the EDAAM have been active in other ways that provide support for the health worker's struggle. A boycott campaign centred on Tesco's and Sainsbury's stores and the launch of an 'Apartheid-Free Shopping Guide' have both received the most widespread and positive media coverage yet (eg. Flying Post) Such action can only complement the action taken by our comrades within the workplace. The dialogue between AAM and trade unionists must be strengthened and action intensified if we are to help smash apartheid and truly liberate trade unionists in South Africa.

By Russell Spears, Exeter CLP

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