

BRIEFING

with NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT

No 18 JUNE 1986

NO NUCLEAR NONSENSE



In February 1986 the Ukraine's Minister of Power, Vitceli Skyldarov, stated that "the odds of a meltdown are one in 10,000 years the plants have safe, reliable controls that are protected from any breakdown with three safety lines". This sounds very similar to what we are being told by the British nuclear industry, yet a major disaster did happen, with horrific results. It is quite clear that no nuclear power is safe. How many more disaster such as Chernobyl and the Three Mile Island accident do we need to make this plain?

Yet this Tory Government, despite the risks and the growing public concern in the wake of Chernobyl, is pressing ahead with its massive expansion plans for the nuclear industry. Having just destroyed sectors of the coal mining industry it is intending to build another ten Pressurised Water Reactors (PWRs) in line with the Sizewell Inquiry Report. These plans include one or possibly two PWRs at Hinkley Point, only 40 miles from Exeter. Remember, Kiev is not as close as this to Chernobyl! In the case of a major accident at Hinkley the citizens of Exeter would be exposed to a very serious health risk.

The case against nuclear power is overwhelming. Apart from the occasional major disaster killing hundreds (and possibly thousands in the long term) and leaving regions inhabitable, we have an almost continuous flow of radioactive materials into the environment due to leaks and "minor" accidents at our nuclear installations. We have high incidence of leukaemia around Britain's nuclear plants, although the CEBG claim that there is only circumstantial evidence! Plutonium is used for nuclear weapons and with the immense secrecy surrounding the nuclear industry it is hard to believe the present denials from the Government and the CEBG that this is not still the case. We have a problem which will probably stay with us for thousands of years - what to do with the highly radioactive nuclear waste. Nuclear power is expensive it will probably cost over £35 billion just to build the 10 proposed PWRs (this compares to £10 billion for the cost of Trident). Coal powered stations are cheaper to run and employ more people and it would even be cheaper to save the energy produced by nuclear power by properly insulating homes and thus again creating many jobs. (We have enough coal to last us 300 years; coal still generates at least 80 per cent of the electricity going into the national grid).

At least year's Labour Party Conference the anti-nuclear power composite 70 was passed with just short of a two-thirds majority. Yet since then, John Cunningham, the Shadow Environment spokesperson, has consistently supported nuclear power, with the support of Neil Kinnock. Recently the Welsh Labour Party Conference gave a two-thirds majority against nuclear power and Women's Conference similarly showed its overwhelming opposition to nuclear power, demanding that John Cunningham be replaced by someone committed to implementing Conference policy on this issue.

All of this is encouraging, but we still need a two-thirds majority at the next Party Conference to ensure that the anti-nuclear policy is inserted in the manifesto. For this reason, Exeter LPYS has submitted an anti-nuclear power resolution to Exeter's GMC and hopefully this could become the local Party's resolution to national Conference. Exeter was one of the first Parties to oppose nuclear power, and it should show its commitment to this policy by choosing the LPYS resolution.

Exeter's Labour-led City Council could also follow this up by joining with Somerset County Council in objecting to the proposed Hinkley 'C' PWR. They could also go further in calling for the closure of Hinkley Point 'A', which is already operating beyond its twenty year design.

Dave Parks, Exeter CLP.

END NUCLEAR POWER NOW

Support Labour Party Policy!
Support the Exeter Safe Energy Campaign.
Contact Chris Hillyer, Topsham 5952.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

ANTI-APARTHEID: Agenda for Action

As the crisis in South Africa intensifies Anti Apartheid activists face a busy programme of action (June is AA 'Month of Action') This is especially true in Exeter. Listed below are a number of events organised by Exeter and District Anti Apartheid that should receive the widest possible support:-

MONDAY JUNE 16th: "10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE SOWETO UPRISING" ; "SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH DAY"

- 1.00 PM : Handing in of sanctions petition to Tesco's (Meet outside Tesco's at 12.45)
- 1.30 PM : Handing in of petition to Sainsburys (At Guildhall, Sainsburys)

Over recent months Exeter and District AA have been leafletting and petitioning outside Sainsburys and Tesco's in Exeter. Sainsburys and Tesco's are two supermarkets that have declared a policy of seeking alternatives to South African produce. However, there has been no apparent diminution of such products on their shelves suggesting that this declaration was more of a PR stunt than a promise. Nevertheless, the fact that these businesses are prepared to make public statements of this kind, indicates that they are sensitive to consumer opinion and do not want their profit margins to suffer. Indeed this is evidence enough for the potential of sanctions! Meanwhile the petitioning continues (meet 12-2 at the bank entrance to Sainsburys on Saturdays) These petitions may help to convince these stores that they cannot have it both ways and that their shoppers are increasingly aware of the disparity between their 'good intentions' and their actual practice.

SATURDAY JUNE 21st

Sponsored Walk and Cycle Ride to Trago Mills

E&DAAM have organised a sponsored walk and cycle ride to 'Trago Mills'. Cyclists leave from Cathedral Green at 10 AM, walkers meet at Newton Abbot train station to depart at 11 AM. There will be leafletting and a 'picket' picnic on arrival.

Anyone who reads the 'Exeter Weekly News' will be aware of Mike 'Trago Mills' Robertson's rabid racist and pro-Apartheid views (many of his cut-price products are imported from South Africa). As well as being a fund-raising event, this action will therefore provide a long overdue protest against this champion of Apartheid.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 25th & THURSDAY JUNE 26th: "SOUTH AFRICA FREEDOM DAY"

An all-day 'banner-making' vigil will take place on both these dates from 8.00 AM to 6.00 PM outside Barclays.

SATURDAY JUNE 28th

This is the date of the National AA demonstration in London: 'March for Freedom in South Africa and Namibia' (Hopefully Exeter will have a prominent new banner for this event.) Coach(es) will leave Exeter at 7.45 AM. Tickets cost £6 waged, £4 unwaged. For these, or more information on any of the events ring 219738 or 79531

Anti-Racism in Exeter

Although much of the furore following the now notorious 'I am a racist' article by Trago Mills proprietor Mike Robertson in the Exeter Weekly News last October, not everyone has given up hope of seeing Robertson's adverts removed from the EWN. In particular, Chris Churchward has been pursuing a campaign aimed at persuading Exeter City Council not to advertise in the EWN while it persists in accepting Trago Mills adverts. At first City Councillors seemed impervious to the blatant double standard in the Council pledging "to do all in its power to disengage from contact with apartheid" and continuing to advertise in a paper which provides a platform for racist and pro-Apartheid views. However, there is good news at last. Chris has had a letter from DWL Humphreys, City Solicitor, stating that in the light of repeated racist and pro-apartheid views expressed in the adverts the City Council will now be reconsidering using the services of "a newspaper which indirectly and by implication appears to be giving support to racist views" (quote from Mr. Humphreys). The matter is going to Committee.

So much for the political will to change!
Let's see the action!

WAPPING HELL!

On Saturday 24th May the Exeter Printers Support Group organised a mini-bus to Wapping.

My nervousness during the long journey increased on arrival. The side street where we parked was ominously barricaded by policemen and vans filled with riot shields, batons and helmets. We were forced to turn back on foot and walk the long way round. I could feel the eyes on us from the vans. The policing methods there seemed typical of those used during the Miners strike and some of the recent peace demonstrations against the Libyan bombing.

The enormous police presence by the main gates reinforced this, but the feeling of solidarity amongst the pickets instantly reassured me. I had been the only woman on the mini-bus from Exeter, yet already I could hear the voices of many women joining in the shouting. One small group of women were describing the last few weeks of the strike to a journalist: "No, they don't care if women and children are there. They just come in and club everyone over the head. They don't care about the kids."

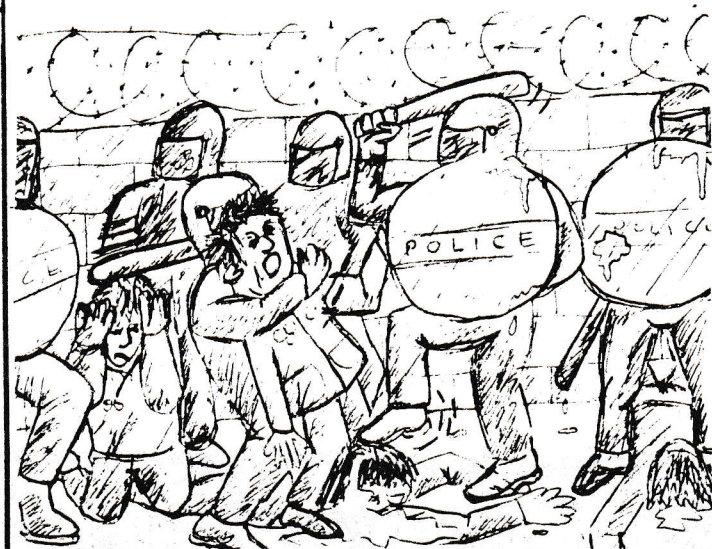
The lorries started coming in and suddenly everything was moving, particularly on the side streets where the police presence had increased tenfold. Men in riot gear on huge horses seemed to appear around corners from nowhere. Pickets started moving in towards the high fences and razor wire and by now the shouts of "scab" were really loud. There was no sign of any violence, yet the police were becoming more threatening. As we moved about the restless horses were being brought onto the main road behind us and I found it difficult to stand my ground. Talking to the pickets seemed the way to relieve my anxieties. I spoke to a woman who had experienced police violence first hand with a head wound from a police baton.

Several men were impressed that we had come so far and contrasted this with the lack of solidarity from some of the local workers. They had obviously become disillusioned after months of struggle, continuous police violence and Brenda Dean's apparent back down. Nevertheless, we were warmly welcomed by all the workers, and their courage and solidarity made me return home feeling much strengthened. They were clearly aware that the struggle is not in vain.

Murdoch has now made a final offer to the printers of increased redundancy money for those who have been sacked. This is totally inadequate and falls short of the printer's demands for trade union representation and reinstatement of sacked workers.

The attack on the printers is just one example of the Tory government's total opposition to trade unions and civil rights. This opposition has been clearly shown in the destruction of the mining communities, in the recent sacking of the railway workers and is even as far reaching as the extensive police violence and intimidation towards the 'hippy' convoy at Stonehenge. The next Labour government must reverse all the Tory anti-union laws and restore all civil and trade union rights crushed under Thatcher's evil rule.

Britt Holloway, Exeter CLP.





WOMEN'S CONFERENCE '86

Alison Daun and Jo Shaw, Exeter CLP.



The weekend of 17th - 19th May was National Labour Women's Conference held in the idyllic although inaccessible Rothesay on the Isle of Bute. Unfortunately, the Conference was almost entirely ignored by the national media, with the Guardian preferring to devote a long article on its Women's Page to Emma Parkinson, the Tories' National Vice-Chairman. However, those who went recognise the importance of this event in the calendar of socialist women. A selection of debates demonstrate the progressive stance of Labour Women.

shadow elections

The results of the Shadow Elections to the Women's places on the NEC were that the WAC slate of Abbott, Maynard, Moore, Morrell and Short was elected. 75 trade union delegates expressed their opposition by spoiling their ballot papers and the Militant boycotted the whole event.

This puts into sharp relief the core of the conflict which persists between, on the one hand, the so-called middle-class feminists of WAC and the CLPs and, on the other hand, the union women who see themselves both as underrepresented at Conference and as the authentic representatives of working class women. In fact, to judge by appearances, that is far from being wholly accurate. The most interesting development at this year's Conference was a detailed resolution from NUPE calling in the main for better representation of women within the Labour Party hierarchy, but at the same time diluting the longstanding commitment to direct elections from Women's

Conference to the NEC. The most distasteful aspect of this resolution was a rumour circulating the conference hall that it originated not too far from Tom Sawyer, NUPE's NEC representative and a chief acolyte of Neil Kinnock. Men, it seems, will go to any length to undermine the power of women.

The NUPE resolution seemed to catch WAC on the hop. They failed to use any of their best speakers for the debate and did not exercise their right of reply on a Shadow Elections resolution. The day was saved by Ann Pettifor on the platform who replied for the NLWC recommending remittance (which was refused) and then opposition. She drew attention to the under-representation of Trade Unions on the NLWC, to the fact that the NUPE resolution was the first on this subject from a TU with a majority of women members and to the fact that women's voice in the Labour Party is in fact growing. But this is a double-edged sword, as we can see. As soon as women's power begins to develop, men seek to influence it and to limit its exercise. In this case, at least part of the answer must lie in supporting the struggles of Trade Union sisters to ensure a) that women are adequately represented within the unions and b) that the hierarchy reflects the needs and wishes of the rank and file. As Brenda Dean has shown, having a woman in charge is not the whole answer.

The resolution fell but the debate will continue.

welfare state

Against the background of Thatcher's Britain, it was not surprising that the Conference was dominated by resolutions from the CLPs and the Unions alike on the future of the Welfare State. Although some resolutions concentrated on reversing cuts in social provision already inflicted, many looked to go much further than the now discredited vision put forward originally in the Beveridge report. In particular, Conference called for an end to humiliating means tests, an end to rules on cohabitation which hit women hardest, for democratic control of the DHSS with trade union and claimant involvement and for benefits to be paid from the wealth of society as a whole. From there we moved to the often disregarded question of provision for people with disabilities which set the scene for perhaps the most stimulating debate of the whole conference. It was an occasion for reflection when an overwhelmingly able-bodied conference was told by a woman in a wheelchair that she had been forced by the pathetic facilities provided to use incontinence pads. The resolution called for an end to reliance on charity, a fully integrated housing programme and a research and development initiative for disabled needs. The most powerful statement came from a Liverpool woman who emphasised the ability of capitalism to marginalise disabled people by classifying them as "unproductive individuals".

racism

The racism debate brought together the pro- and anti- Black Sections arguments with a vengeance. Women's Conference policy has for two years been to support the demands of Black sisters for Black Sections within the Labour Party. This was reaffirmed. In supporting a pro-Black Section amendment to an anti-Black Section Militant resolution, Diane Abbott spoke forcefully about how Black Sections gave Black comrades a platform from which they could combat racism in the Labour Party. The parallels of self-determination in the face of oppression between Black Sections and Women's Sections are overwhelming. Diane Abbott also attacked the Militants for saying that Black people should be "encouraged to develop". The pro-Black Sections amendment was carried overwhelmingly as was the now amended resolution. Its only remaining failure was an undermining of Black consciousness by dividing Black people into "black and Asians". Its demands were oriented specifically towards repeal of immigration laws, socialist policies to end poverty, an end to all discrimination and organised opposition to the growing resurgence of the National Front.

expulsions

Women's Conference opposed expulsions from the Labour Party by a two-thirds majority. Two resolutions supported by Briefing, WAC, the Militant and the National Labour's Women Committee took a broad view of a purge of socialists and urged everyone in the Party to stop diverting valuable resources of time and energy and instead direct them against the Tories and the Alliance. Allied to this is, of course, the need to support the Councillors surcharged for pursuing socialist policies. The most powerful contributions emphasised that we should look beyond the narrow Militant "threat" towards developing a coherent socialist alternative where Militant can be challenged and debated rather than pathologised. Conference pledged its support for the Conference against the Witchhunt to be held later this month.

These are just snippets from a busy two and a half day Conference. Watch out for further coverage of housing, education, the NHS, privatisation, Northern Ireland etc. etc. in the next National Supplement.

FRINGE events

The fringe events taking place throughout the Conference are too numerous to mention individually, however there were two we found particularly interesting.

The fringe meeting organised by the SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) Solidarity Campaign was one of the most stimulating and moving events we have ever been to. The fight for freedom in Namibia was linked up with the fight for socialism in Britain and highlighted by Martha Osamore from the Broadwater Farm Community Defence Campaign.

She held the audience spellbound with her simple, vivid descriptions of the build up to the Tottenham riots and a political social analysis of the reasons behind them. Diane Abbott added to this and Ida Jimmy (SWAPO) recounted her experiences in occupied Namibia. Her description of giving birth to her son in jail, aided only by other women inmates, made us all feel humble.

The Chile Solidarity Campaign fringe meeting again showed up the courage of women under oppression. Women have become the spearhead of the movement against Pinochet, as men are picked out by the authorities as potential leaders and systematically murdered. We were shown a horrifying video of the break up of the March on International Women's Day by Chilean Women, with tear gas and water cannon. The Women's message "democracy in the workplace and the home" is gaining strength and will not be stamped out by jackbooted fascists.

Both events stressed that help of a verbal and practical nature is required; in particular sanitary wear and simple medical kits were cited by SWAPO as one means of giving practical aid. Our sisters in other countries need all the support we can give them, while they direct their own struggle.

FEED THE WORLD (without meat)

Exeter LPYS entered a team in the recent Sport Aid Race Against Time. Our four runners completed the course with varying degrees of exhaustion and raised some money for famine relief.

As Socialists we realise that Third World poverty is caused by the world capitalist system. The direct destruction of Third World economies which began with nineteenth century imperialism has been more subtly extended by the activities of modern multinationals. Therefore while every penny Bob Geldof and his many friends can raise is desperately needed, famine relief charities are not actually attacking the root of the problem.

The massive wealth enjoyed by Western consumers and the grinding poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America are two sides of the same coin. Fund raising alone can never really help poor countries while they remain locked into an economic system specifically designed for their exploitation. This point can easily be illustrated by the fact that the Third World has to give the West £10 billion every year in so-called debt repayments while Sport Aid aimed to raise a mere £100 million, one per cent of the debt figure!



Instead of pretending we are helping to relieve famine and feeling self-righteous we should support progressive, nationalist and socialist movements in the Third World and build links between their oppression and conditions in the West. 'Benevolent capitalism' is merely an attempt to hide rather than solve the world famine problem. Internationally, socialism requires confronting all exploitation and allowing the people of the Third World to build and control their own economies after smashing the chains of dependency.

Socialists, then, should use Live Aid, Band Aid and Sport Aid as platforms to highlight the real causes of world famine. At least some of the public concern can be channelled into developing an increased understanding of the international capitalist system. This should hopefully lead to more support for the various Third World solidarity groups such as Chile, Nicaragua and Namibia, rather than just giving money to patronising 'helping hand' charities.

We should also take every opportunity to stress that world poverty is our problem and not that of individual countries. Bob Geldof's recent descriptions of certain Third World government's as "thugs" serves only to cloud the issue and is very dangerous. The real "thugs" are to be found in the West, as the whole history of the West is drenched in the blood of the Third World.

Finally, there is one easy way in which we can help the Third World every day, rather than just participating in one-off events, however large. The Western diet is largely based on the consumption of meat and this forms an incredibly wasteful part of the capitalist dependency chain. Grain which could be used to feed people is instead used to fatten cattle which are then slaughtered.

Whether or not you object to killing animals (which I do) it is impossible to argue with the fact that land and resources used to create meat for one person could have been used directly to feed at least eleven people. If everyone who had participated in the Live Aid, Band Aid or Sport Aid events became vegetarians then farmers would be forced to divert their resources into the production of useful crops with which we could really feed the world.

Like most good ideas, vegetarianism is painfully simple and constitutes a permanent form of communication and protest against poverty. I hope those people who are planning to vote for the anti-famine resolution to National Conference are not going to eat any meat beforehand!

Paul Giblin, Exeter CLP.

No Sell (Out)

Exeter City Council has yet again put itself in the position of being attacked by the national campaign for the homeless, Shelter. Despite Labour Party policy of trying to increase or maintain the present Council owned housing stock, the Labour-led City Council is about to sell an empty five-bedroomed house. Not only is this empty house being sold, but it has even been left empty for six months. With the ever-present need for emergency accommodation we should be doing our utmost to ensure that such houses are kept in public ownership and in use.

BRIEFING

Devon Labour Briefing exists to enable Labour Party members express their views on current local and national political issues and so further debate within the Party. It aims to support the working class and various political movements in their struggle against capitalist, racist and sexist oppression.

This month has seen incredible solidarity within two such groups. The sense of sisterhood seen at Labour Women's Conference, the shared experiences of individual women's struggles from many parts of the world has proved that the women's movement is alive, kicking and is posing a threat to capitalism.

The solidarity at Wapping of printers and left-wing groups throughout the country has proved that working people are uniting and building links to threaten rich bosses and the Tory government.

What we now need is a future Labour Government to turn these feelings and struggles into concrete socialist policies rather than the flimsy social democratic policies of the present leadership.

DEVON LABOUR BRIEFING
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