

# BRIEFING

with **NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT**

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## EXETER, APARTHEID-FREE?

It is now a year since Exeter City Council declared Exeter to be an 'Apartheid-Free City', and to do all in its power to "break links with Apartheid". However the citizens of Exeter are likely to be as aware of this as they are of our Nuclear-Free Zone status; the pledge has received little publicity or action from the Council to date. The first event organised by them to mark this declaration, in which Steve Garwe of the ANC addressed a public meeting, was therefore a welcome step in the right direction. Despite much talk over the last year, plans to rename a road or landmark after Mandela, or to highlight our policy in some other way, have not yet materialised. Steve Garwe gave strong support for such proposals and it is now up to councillors like John Lloyd to get the ball rolling.

MAVERICK MAYOR

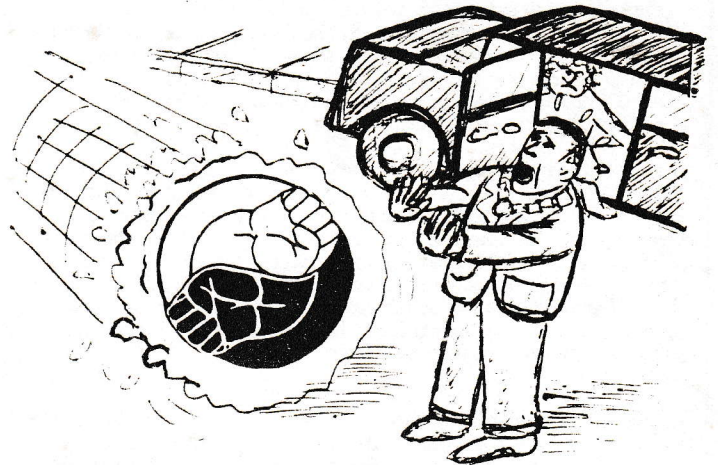
However, the Council has shown another face in its position towards the liberation struggle in South Africa in the person of the new Mayor, Alan Williamson. As part of Anti-Apartheid's 'month of action' the local group organised a public banner-sewing vigil outside Barclays, with the intention of the Council displaying the banner prior to it being paraded at the National Demonstration. In line with Council policy then, Williamson agreed to make a presence at this event and give it public support. Members of Anti-Apartheid were therefore astounded to find the Liberal Mayor backtracking on his promise, prompted not by the ranks of his own party, but by Joan Richardson, Tory councillor, and herself an ex-Mayoress. In an article in the Express and Echo, she declared: "This Mayor is a law unto himself". Apparently, Williamson had not known that the banner might be supporting "sanctions"; he said he could not be associated with this activity because it might be seen as 'political' and the Mayoralty is supposed to be above politics! The fact that Richardson now claims she was misquoted and actually said "The Mayor is a law unto himself" would seem to have very different implications to those originally swallowed by Williamson, suggesting that the position of the Mayoralty is open to the interpretation of its incumbent. Thus we have the ridiculous situation of a Liberal Mayor bending over backwards to placate a Tory councillor by conforming to something she didn't even say. This would seem to be spineless behaviour at the best of times, but now Richardson has corrected herself will Williamson be consistent and dance to the new tune?

It is no surprise that the Tory media and its Tory Party allies should want to stir up trouble for those who want to implement effective measures against Apartheid. Tories have never been ones to neglect their own interests. What is surprising is that the Liberal Mayor lacks the courage to stand by the democratic policy of the

Council and bows to pressure from a single right-winger.

But perhaps the most surprising aspect of the whole affair is that Williamson, presumably a seasoned political campaigner, was apparently unaware that the central plank of Anti Apartheid's campaign since its inception has been to call for economic sanctions against South Africa. This seems at the very least naive for a Liberal whose colleagues boast, both nationally and locally, of having a far sounder record of opposition to Apartheid than the Labour Party (although they have never been in a position to implement their radical policies, of course).

It is worth exploring the implications of Williamson's refusal to get involved in 'politics'. In the Express and Echo he declares that he is opposed to Apartheid (a political belief?) but he cannot support sanctions. But in doing this he is endorsing precisely the official Conservative Party policy - namely by making vague statements while committing himself to nothing. In this way he has set himself apart from a growing caucus within the Tory Party, not to mention the other main political parties, all of whom are calling for economic sanctions. This led to an almost absurd juxtaposition of articles on the front page of a subsequent Express and Echo. The first column contained a piece with the Mayor again explicitly confirming his dissociation from policies such as sanctions, while the main article reports a long statement from Sir Peter Emery, a local Tory MP, criticising Thatcher, and advocating the implementing of economic sanctions! The irony of this must not be lost on a rather embarrassed Liberal group on the Council. Whose side are they on?



STOP! APARTHEID IS A POLITICAL ISSUE  
AND I'M ONLY THE MAYOR!

**LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!**

# EDITORIAL

On this page is a list of articles published in DLB during the last year and on the back there is a review of the past year and perspectives for the future.

It is apparent from this, and from the current agenda of Labour politics that the continued existence of a left alternative to Kinnockism (and its synonyms) is vital. Writing for DLB gives those in the Labour Party uneasy about the present submergence of class politics and the inadequate coverage given to the specific oppression suffered by groups such as women, Black and gay people an important forum for debate. Many issues which should be debated fully at the GMC fall off the agenda for lack of time by the continuing pressures of electoral success. Discussions of politics could then be taken out to Labour Party branches, as happened at a recent Rougemont/St. Leonard's Branch Meeting where a short talk by two Briefing supporters led into an interesting discussion of socialism.

In our experience, such discussions happen all too infrequently within political organisations where mundane organisational activity can preclude political debate. But oppression under capitalism is not going to disappear simply because we forget to talk about it. Important questions need to be posed in the Labour Party today if we are to avoid following the path pursued by the last Labour Government, but this time under a crisis in capitalism which makes the compromise positions of welfare capitalism even more difficult to maintain. It may be unpopular at the moment to suggest that Roy Hattersley's National Investment Bank is not going to solve our economic ills. That is precisely why we need Briefing as one means for ensuring that views which may currently receive little notice do not become forgotten.



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Of course, the fact of the matter is that the Mayor is perfectly able to adopt a 'political' stance, and this should be the one decided by the democratically elected Council. To retract from such a position is profoundly 'political'. In most instances, then, taking 'no' position is to support some of the most reactionary Tory policies in the land. The Queen occupies a ceremonial position and yet she still makes speeches written by the government of the day. Likewise in other areas the Mayor acts as a mouthpiece for the Council and not as a law unto himself. Indeed Mayors have been arrested for protesting outside South Africa House! Yet here in Exeter our first citizen has gone to enormous lengths to dissociate himself from the local Anti Apartheid Group and has treated its representatives in a disgraceful fashion in the process. One is left to ponder the reaction of the blacks dying in South Africa if they were to witness these pedantic debates. Is this where the true Liberal conscience lies? (In the end, Cllr John Lloyd accepted the banner on behalf of the City Council and displayed it outside the Civic Centre)

Amid this local furore, the case for economic sanctions is now stronger than ever. Even ex-Tory Minister Anthony Barber of the Eminent Persons Group sees sanctions as the only way to avert a bloodbath. As a result, the government is showing clear signs of buckling under the pressure. Their notion that sanctions will not have any effect is totally undermined by South Africa's own threat of imposing 'sanctions' on the Front Line states by repatriating immigrant workers. Clearly Botha believes in the effectiveness of sanctions!

In the Labour movement then, it is important that we keep up the pressure for comprehensive economic sanctions. Moreover, we should not be doing this to protect Western Imperialist interests as some people, even in the Labour Party seem to be saying, but to help facilitate the national liberation struggle for its own sake. Furthermore, comprehensive economic sanctions mean a complete disinvestment from South Africa and not just a ban on new investment

(who wants to invest in South Africa now anyway?). It also means a boycott of South African goods at all levels. Here the Labour and trade union movement can be very effective if they follow the lead taken by the Dunnes strikers and Portsmouth health workers. The worst scenario would be for Thatcher to implement some superficial measures only to claim later that sanctions have not worked. For this reason the people such as Kinnock, Hattersley and Healey should spell out explicitly that sanctions must mean a complete disinvestment and a breaking of all links with Apartheid. So far there are clear signs of fudging on this issue. The Party must hold them to a firm commitment to comprehensive sanctions to avoid any backsliding later.

Meanwhile we have to decide how to respond to the Mayor's renegeing on Council policy. This policy means nothing if prominent city dignitaries can repudiate it with impunity. For this reason, Exeter and District Anti Apartheid are asking people to gather outside the Guild Hall before the next City Council meeting (July 8th - 5.15pm onwards) to call on the Mayor and the City Council to give clear support for economic sanctions. All members of the Labour Party should try to attend this gathering. No more pandering to the Tories!

Russell Spears, Exeter CLP.

## We Are Two!

July marks the second anniversary of the appearance of Devon Labour Briefing. Below are listed the main articles that have appeared in DLB since July 1985. Back issues are available from 19, Cuiverland Rd., Exeter for 30p.

### DLB No. 10 July 1985

Women must be heard - A. Daun.  
We are One - A Year of DLB - P. Bowing.  
Male Aggression - G. Taylor.  
The Face of Violence - J. Salter.

### DLB No. 11 October 1985

Unfair Rents - D. Parks.  
Is Exeter NFZ? - N. Todd.  
Apartheid - Analysis, Action and News - M. Levine and D. Parks.  
What can Students Do? - T. Parry and P. Bowing.

### DLB No. 12 November 1985

Building Socialism in Devon - S. Reicher.  
Nazi Front and Racism in Exeter - Anon.  
Personality Politics? - R. Apears.

### DLB No. 13 December 1985

No to Cuts, Yes to Fair Rents - D. Parks.  
Socialist Councillors? - P. Bowing.  
Women Unite! - A. Daun, B. Holloway, V. Kahani, J. Shaw.  
QND - Labour's Dilemma - N. Todd.

### DLB No. 14 February 1986

The Issue is Democracy - S. Reicher.  
Clause 33 and Accountability - N. Todd.  
Women and Local Government - J. Shaw.  
Media Madness - R. Spears.

### DLB No. 15 March 1986

Gay Rights - Here to Stay - B. Holloway.  
Media Machiavellis - S. Reicher.  
Nuclear Free Fiasco - P. Giblin.  
No to Kinnockism - N. Todd.  
International Women's Day - A. Daun and J. Shaw.

### DLB No. 16 April 1986

Breaking the Nuclear Chain - Exeter Women's Peace Group.  
South West Regional Conference - P. Giblin.  
The Injunction - the Facts - P. Bowing.  
Socialism and Participation - P. Giblin.  
Anti-Apartheid Action - R. Spears.

### DLB No. 17 May 1986

May 8th - Labour Take the Power - P. Bowing.  
Expulsion Update - J. Shaw.  
Reagan of Terror - R. Spears.  
MSC Rip-Off J. Salter.

### DLB No. 18 June 1986

No Nuclear Nonsense - D. Parks.  
Wapping Hell! - B. Holloway.  
Women's Conference '86 - A. Daun and J. Shaw.  
Feed the World (without meat) - P. Giblin.

# DLB - a year on

## WHERE WE STAND POLITICALLY

The publication of this issue of Devon Labour Briefing marks our second anniversary. For two years DLB has attempted to take relevant issues in the struggle for socialism and discuss them in the context of Devon's politics. At times this has meant criticism of Exeter CLP which has periodically adopted opportunistic stances or has shied away from key issues. We have been - and still are - victims of a witch-hunt carried out by the leaders of Exeter CLP aimed at expelling Briefing supporters from the Labour Party. At this point it is vital to make clear where we stand.

We believe that in order to replace crisis-ridden capitalism by socialism we need to build alliances with all those who are exploited and oppressed in capitalist Britain; by which we mean in particular the working class, women and blacks. We need further to transform the Labour Party into a democratic, representative and campaigning vehicle for socialist advance. Our outlook involves the adoption of the following positions.

- (1) that the issue of class must be brought to the fore in the explanation of all social phenomena.
- (2) that socialism can only be achieved by the overthrow of capitalism whereby the main instrument of transformation is the organised working class led by a workers' party.
- (3) that social democracy, aiming at social reform without challenging the rule of capital, cannot realise workers' interests against those of the capitalists. While the temporary and limited reforms of social democracy are supported, marxists campaign against social democracy as a means of realising workers' interests.
- (4) that progressive demands concerning gender/sexuality, peace and racial politics are dependent on class politics for their practical and universal realisation.
- (5) that the capitalist state cannot be transformed into an instrument of socialism; it must be 'smashed' or pulled apart.

In no way is the above list exclusive of Briefing's analysis, it is merely an indicator of that which unites us. What distinguishes Briefing from other left groups is that analysis and organisation is not under the grip of "democratic centralist" orthodoxy. Consequently, Briefing is better placed to build a socialist alliance and to avoid degeneration into sectarianism.

## CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES

In the two years of Briefing's existence the whole Labour movement has suffered significant defeats: most notably with the collapse of the miners strike and the Liverpool and local government revolt. While Thatcher and the Tories might be on their last legs, Britain has been re-structured by Thatcher's politics. Every day the Kinnock leadership adopts more of the axioms of Thatcher's Britain, such as the impossibility of full employment and the desirability of legislative control of trade unions.

The rightward march of the Labour Party has not passed Exeter by. Without any real discussion inside Exeter Labour Party, class politics has been abandoned. The motion at the 1985 National Labour Party Conference to reimburse the NUM the fines that were imposed upon it and to reinstate the sacked and jailed miners was opposed by Exeter. In an attempt to gain 'support' Exeter CLP backed a move to make squatting illegal. The philosophy of the Party was 'attacking the homeless who squat wins votes, supporting the miners lose them.' This corrupt and reactionary narrow-minded electoralism is described as 'new realism' and 'making Labour responsible and fit to govern'. In fact it is a recognition of failure, and can at best be seen as an escape from political reality with the belief that such politics will bring back the consensus politics of the post-war settlement. Yet sadly for the Labour right only they and not the ruling class are interested in consensus.

## COALITIONS MEAN WITCH-HUNTS

Exeter has championed Kinnockism: you claim that you are socialist, radical and creative and end up in coalition with the SDP and Liberals in running the City Council. That is more or less what has happened in Exeter. If you reduce the demands of workers in struggle (miners/printers), those of women, youth and the disabled to the slide-rule of electoral advantage as dictated by the capitalist press, you are left with nothing, not even

genuine support. Once the whole of your propaganda boasts about a Labour led Council, forgetting that only the Liberals make that possible, you must cling to office. To stay in office means appeasing the Liberals, it means abandoning the campaigning socialist edge of the Labour Party; it means purging socialist elements from the Party to make that appeasement possible.

It is clearly the case that the leaders of Exeter CLP have found the socialist outlook of DLB a constant thorn in their sides. In 1984 an aborted attempt was made to expel the editors of the then Exeter Labour Briefing on the pretext that the publication's name usurped that of the Exeter Labour Party. In the end that attempted expulsion was foiled with the aid of Tony Benn and others.

In December 1985, given the impulse of Kinnock's attack on Militant, the Whipton/Pinhoe branch tried again. But this time a whole mish-mash of complaints were levelled against us: we reported what happened in Party meetings in DLB; we brought the Party into disrepute; we did not conform to the principles, policies, constitution and rules of the Party: DLB had a bank account.

Six comrades were interviewed by the Executive Committee in January to answer these charges. Three were found 'guilty'. Recommendations were made to the GC that they be expelled. Yet in their haste to 'purify' the Party of our ideas they had trampled on every rule of natural justice, enabling the proposed expellees to obtain an injunction preventing the expulsions.

For the ruling right-wing it was vital that Briefing be silenced. The ideas argued by writers in DLB which were winning ground in the Party threatened the strategy of the leaders of Exeter CLP. They knew that if they proceeded with the witch-hunt they would be involved in a legal dispute, which would cost the Party more than any election campaign. They were prepared and willing to pay.

We believe it is vital that we protect democracy in the Labour Party and especially the rights of the socialists. The witch-hunt, from our point of view, is a costly distraction: yet it must be won.

## WOMEN AND YOUTH

The orientation of the leaders of Exeter CLP does not favour either the struggle or the autonomous organisation of women and youth. Messages sent to the Exeter Women's Council and the Young Socialists remind them that their struggle against their particular oppression is under the control of the General Committee.

A demand by women comrades that the constituency should endorse those women who have been chosen by the National Labour Women's Conference for the women's section on the NEC was thrown out by the GC. The right are quite prepared to support a state of affairs where the constituencies, trade unions and Young Socialists elect their representatives on the NEC, but where autonomously organised women have no such right. How can the Party be sincere in backing a Women's Committee for the City Council and not give women power inside the Party?

Youth have been attacked by a resolution at the June GC to support the lowering of the upper age limit of the Young Socialists from 25 to 21. Such a policy would have the effect of destroying the power of the Party youth movement.

## LOOKING FORWARD

Briefing is not blind to the failure of the left of which DLB is as much part as the leaders of Exeter Labour Party. We know that there are no easy answers in exclusive electoralism and compulsory optimism. What is necessary is to unite and to build the "real left" in this period of socialist realignment. Nationally, socialists supporting the journals "International" and "Socialist Viewpoint" have aligned themselves with the tasks of Briefing. Locally, those raising the question of Apartheid in South Africa have found the support of Briefing. The improving of understanding and the linking of class struggle with progressive demands strengthens the labour movement. Socialism is the product of working class struggle: all Briefing can do is help that process. In no institution, social relation or geographical region is the question of class struggle irrelevant. What we start to build today is easier to complete tomorrow. We must build and fight to win because the price of failure is too great.

Peter Bowing, Exeter CLP.

## Sexism in Education

The British educational system is riddled with sexism. From nursery schools to polytechnics and universities, we have a structure which uses and trains women primarily as "carers", "providers" and "servicers" (nursery nurses, Scale 1 teachers, contract research staff) and men as "deciders" and "doers" (headteachers and senior staff, professors and senior lecturers and administrators). Although there is a growing public awareness of sex bias in education, little has yet happened to alter the status quo. Depressingly few educational establishments operate an overt "equal opportunities" policy and recent empirical evidence (Observer, 28 June 1986) suggests that far more women (25%) are still the subject of discriminatory questioning about their private family arrangements than are men (6%).

So long as the career structure of teaching vastly favours the advancement of men over that of women, it is difficult to believe that the education handed down to young people is going to be free of the sexual (or other) stereotypes which foster patriarchy, capitalism and imperialism. The evidence is that both the overt and the "hidden" curricula in schools teach the majority of young women to expect less than their male counterparts. And when they leave school, and perhaps become teachers themselves, they are stuck in a discriminatory system with few workplace nurseries, pitiful parental leave facilities and a belief that fundamentally very few women are fit to make decisions. Which in turn educates the next generation to believe in the inferiority of women....

A socialist education system must break out of this vicious circle of oppression. Somewhere along the line the educators themselves have to be educated. Steps are being taken. The ILEA, for instance, has made vast strides in increasing the gender and ethnic awareness of its teachers. The Labour Party too now seems to have woken up to this vital plank in the business of furthering equality, and is promoting a pack for Labour governors entitled "Equal Opportunities for Boys and Girls - what every Governor needs to know".

It is refreshingly direct and witty in the way it presents its subject matter. It gives practical guidance on how to spot hidden biases, and how to put questions and issues before staff who may be so overworked they have never themselves had time to question the supposed gender-neutrality of the education they are providing. Even more to the point, how many women Governors, having finally overcome their conditioning that women should not speak up and push their views onto people, are patronisingly put down by a compacent Headmaster; safe in the knowledge that he is doing alright by "his girls". Armed with well researched suggestions in this pack, any Labour Governor can put all manner of educational establishments on the spot about what they are actually doing to change matters. In fact, the pack could not present a greater contrast with the Labour Party's new grey image of "Freedom and Fairness" complete with its glossy brochures and unsubstantiated statements of principle.

Of course, the education system does not exist in isolation from the sexism which forms part of every woman's life. Looking at how young people in schools and colleges are treated, we cannot avoid confronting the question of how each and every one of us treats other people on the basis of their sex. How we hold and touch babies because we believe them to be male or female. How we draw different interpretations from the questions we ask men and women (see the cartoon). We are perpetually regaled by the phenomenon of the "FWT" as the Feminist Dictionary would call the "first woman to". The Women's Training Roadshow to be held on July 10th and 11th at Exeter College is a useful tool in challenging this sort of conditioning. How dare people be "surprised" at what women and girls can do (in the patronising words of one Labour Party Ward newsletter)? Nothing surprises women more than the ability of men to look at them through blinkered eyes.

Education lies at the heart of every society's present and future self-image. Many people would observe that our schools represent no more than a training ground for producing a subservient class of semi-skilled and semi-educated workers to serve the interests of the capitalists. It should not surprise us, then, if women end up at the bottom of the very lowest pile, subject as ever to a dual oppression. Socialist feminists seek always to analyse and locate the pervasive combination of patriarchy and capitalism which determines the economic and social dependency of so many women. We can do much worse than to start the fight by challenging what is happening in and through our schools and colleges to perpetuate these oppressions.

Jo Shaw, Exeter CLP.



## FREE FESTIVAL OR POLICE STATE?

For the second year running we have seen the full force of the state being used both to prevent a summer solstice free festival at Stonehenge and to persecute the so-called peace convoy.

The convoy was attacked on June 1st 1985 at Stonehenge in a way that only striking miners at Orgreave and youth in the inner cities have experienced. Five hundred riot police dressed in rain-capes concealing their identity numbers literally smashed the convoy, its vehicles, men women and children leaving many hospitalised including children needing stitches and a pregnant woman who subsequently lost her child due to a kick she received to the stomach from a police officer. Since then through the campaign of hate waged against them, they have had their homes petrol bombed; they have had their livelihoods removed by the continuous banning of festivals at which they sell jewellery, paintings, food, etc. Then again on June 9th 1986 they were 'decommissioned' at Stoney Cross in the New Forest in a relatively peaceful operation at 4am by 500 police officers from four different police forces, in which almost all of the vehicles were declared 'unroadworthy' and compounded.

Meanwhile Stonehenge is surrounded by razor wire during the summer months and Wiltshire is becoming virtually a 'no-go zone' for many people who cannot get through the police road blocks.

All this shows the slide in our society towards intolerance and movement towards a police state. Hysterical remarks from government, police and media figures towards the 'hippies' can be compared with Nazi attacks on the gypsies. Richard Westlake, the Labour councillor for Polsloe/Stoke Hill should think again before he demands state action to prevent the 'hippies' from coming to Devon.

Dave Parks, Exeter CLP.

# BRIEFING

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