

DEVON LABOUR BRIEFING

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**'It's really a wonder Anne Frank
that I haven't
dropped all my ideals...'**

Anne writes this in her diary on July 15th, 1944. For two years now she has been in hiding with her father, mother and sister in a secret annexe at the back of a canal house along the Prinsengracht in Amsterdam. Holland is at war. The country is occupied. Freedom has become a thing of the past. Especially for the Jews.

A motion before the GC of Exeter Labour Party calls on the Labour Group on the City Council to investigate the possibilities of bringing the Anne Frank exhibition to Exeter. The exhibition, already shown in other cities around Britain, demonstrates, through the experiences of Anne Frank, the horrors of fascism in Hitler's Europe. The exhibition also addresses the contemporary threat posed by fascist and racist forces.

The workers' movement should never forget their leading role in the heroic struggle against fascism. In response to the internment and deportation of Jewish people, Dutch workers undertook a courageous but unsuccessful strike on February 22nd 1941 in defiance of the Nazi occupiers of their country.

During the War, the legitimate government of the Netherlands took refuge in Britain, which along with the Soviet

Union, was the only non-occupied country fighting fascism. Indeed, just as the common struggle against fascism remains the basis for Anglo-Soviet friendship - see the article by D. Roberts in this volume - so does that common struggle form a basis for Anglo-Dutch friendship - particularly for the workers movements of the two countries.

Exeter Labour Party should be advocating such friendship instead of supporting the William of Orange celebrations, to be held in Exeter in 1988, which are organised by establishment people in Britain and the Netherlands. Because of his seventeenth century role in Ireland, King William of Orange has become a contemporary symbol and figurehead for Protestant bigotry and domination of Northern Ireland. For that reason, the fascist National Front have said that they will come to Exeter in force to participate in the William of Orange celebrations. It has also been suggested that Dutch fascists could come to Exeter.

What the ruling Labour Group on the City Council should do is (1) drop their £60,000 support for the fascist William of Orange celebrations and (2) bring the Anne Frank exhibition to Exeter and thus promote anti-fascist and anti-racist education, on the basis of a constructive Anglo-Dutch friendship.

LABOUR-TAKE THE POWER!

Unilateralism

It would seem that unilateralism is the sole remaining policy of the Bennite surge that has not completely lost all shape to fit the Kinnock package. Two main reasons will explain this. First, unilateralism, as a policy, has a strait forwardness that is not easy to dilute by slight of hand. Second, there is the remaining power in the Labour Party of the coalition, which brought unilateralism about. One part is the moralist tradition, which has its roots in the Independent Labour Party and pacifism; this tradition sees socialism in terms of moral proclamation, and thus perceives nuclear weaponry with its capacity to kill millions in seconds as fundamentally immoral. Such thinking acted as the base for mass support in the early eighties which CND received when the Anglo-American alliance sought to escalate the Cold War by deploying Cruise missiles at Greenham Common. The other part of the coalition, smaller but more theoretically articulate, saw unilateralism as an element in the campaign against imperialism and militarism, and thus linked the issue with NATO membership.

Unilateralism, I contend, has a greater radical potential than many of its protagonists believe. Its realisation would severely weaken the British state, rupture the Anglo-American alliance and undermine the imperialist strength of NATO. Though many observers have pointed to successful capitalist countries such as Canada and Denmark, which have no nuclear weaponry on their soil to prove the compatibility of "unilateralism", NATO membership and capitalism, this line of argument ignores first, the meaning of Britain's possession of nuclear weaponry and second, the overall effect of Britain under a Labour government becoming non-nuclear.

THE BRITISH STATE

Both the decision to develop British nuclear weaponry and to support the formation of NATO was taken by the Atlee government. The military linking of Britain to post-war world capitalism and imperialism, along with an attempt to retain super-power nuclear status was taken by the Labour elite as part of its agreement with the ruling class on the need to maintain a militarist and capitalist state; both parts of which were viewed as essential. The "threat from the East" and Britain's front line position in the defence of "free Europe" were stressed as ingredients of Cold War consensus ideology. Indeed, this officially sponsored militarism sought to galvanise a reactionary jingoism amongst the working class, which was so amply employed for the right's advantage in the colonial war with Argentina in 1982. Thus today, Kinnock's reluctant acceptance of unilateralism has to be presented in terms of an unconvincing military logic, which recognises the "Eastern

threat" and legitimises conventional rearmament.

Within the British social formation nuclear weaponry forms a military and ideological prop for the capitalist order - supported universally by the bourgeois parties and historically by Labour - which is even more vital in the 1980s as the economy grinds into deeper crisis. Labour administrations as part of their de facto deal with the ruling class have agreed never to tamper with the political and military super-structures of the British state. Unilateralism, however, hits the heart of the military establishment and the state's populist claim to "super power status" and the role of the bomb in the defence of liberal democracy. Bourgeois parties are not afraid to say these things aloud. The Labour leaders, if they argue for unilateralism at all, attempt unsuccessfully to hide from the consequences of their policy.

THE ANGLO-AMERICAN ALLIANCE

From the dark months of 1940-41, if not before, British capitalism and imperialism was linked as a junior partner to that of the United States. Atlee abandoned Imperial Preference, when it was demanded by the United States and handed over to the United States spheres of imperial interest which the British state could no longer control, such as Palastine, Greece and Iran. The "special relationship", military, political and economic, between the two capitalisms gave the United States its European island base.

The military alliance was nuclear with technology moving Eastwards (the latest example being Trident) The US was content with Britain's high military spending and her complete loyalty to American interests. The removal of Britain from the independent nuclear club is a loss, but much more important is the termination of America's oldest and securest European nuclear outpost. However much Neil Kinnock patronises the US and however many times he visits that country, the fact cannot be altered that unilateralism damages American imperial interests and ruptures the Anglo-Saxon alliance. For Kinnock to say that American conventional weaponry can remain is as meaningful as saying that Red Indian bows and arrows can be kept in the UK. If US aggression against Nicaragua is to prevent the spread of an example, then what Labour proposes is a far greater example against American militarism and imperialism.

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION

NATO, the brainchild of Truman and Bevin, is the military cement that interlocks all the major advanced capitalist countries on both sides of the Atlantic. An attack on one capitalist brother is an attack on them all. As part of the politics of Post War reconstruction, some working classes did not resist the Alliance; others, notably in Greece and Spain, saw through the guise and protested.

Four decades after its foundation, cracks are beginning to appear in major countries: the Greens in the Federal Republic and the Labour Left in Britain. The carte blanche for US nuclear occupation of the West European peninsula is increasingly questioned. Though Kinnock may preach the virtues of NATO membership and the continuing "Eastern threat", he cannot escape the fact that a unilateralist Britain would be the biggest boost to the Anti-NATO movement to date. A carried through unilateralism would dwarf the French disengagement of 1966.

We can say, therefore, that a unilateralist Britain would severely undermine NATO, rupture the Anglo-Saxon alliance and weaken the power base of the British state. Bourgeois parties and their leaders oppose unilateralism precisely for those reasons. Socialists, on the other hand, should support unilateralism not just for its own sake, but in order to bring about those consequences.

LABOUR'S CONTRADICTIONS

For the Labour right the real problem with unilateralism is its revolutionary significance. Owing to rank and file pressure the Labour right are not able to abandon unilateralism, though they would dearly like to. Their only answer is to package the unilateral commitment with support for conventional rearmament and try to present British unilateralism as part of the logic of NATO militarism. This argument is obviously contradictory even when explained by the best propagandist.

First, if unilateralism is to make sense on a political as opposed to a purely moralist basis, it must be coupled with the rejection of the "Eastern threat" thesis. Were it indeed true that "free World" were under constant threat from the nuclear East, there is obviously a case for Britain retaining nuclear weaponry, if only to supplement NATO. The Labour leadership, deeply anti-Soviet and pro-American, thus reinforces the Cold War ideology that legitimates nuclear weaponry in Britain.

Second, everybody knows that unilateralism was won in the Labour Party on moral, anti-American and anti-NATO grounds. The shadow cabinet argument that the prime case for unilateralism is a military one sounds neither true nor genuine.

The Labour Party elite before the 1983 general election and again now attempted to square the circle by linking unilateralism to East/West negotiations. Clearly, this compounds the contradictions rather than solving them, because if unilateralism is tied to the outcome of negotiations, the policy is not unilateralism. Yet the Labour leadership have preferred to become tongue-tied on this red herring rather than admit that the policy attacks Western imperial interests.

CND is embroiled in Labour's contradictions. Though CND has a significant "non-political" element, in reality it is welded to Labour's politics, and thus faces two clear choices. Either it refutes Kinnock's packaging, realises the full consequences of its policies and develops its anti-NATO resolutions, or it will become a small bureaucratic adjunct to Kinnock's current pragmatism and will enjoy no mass base.

For the Labour left, the significance of the leadership's nominal commitment to unilateralism should not be underestimated by focusing only on the NATO question. Unilateralism is the trojan horse in the social democratic camp: we should use it.

Peter Bowing
Exeter CLP

Education

The state education services have been badly hit by the Thatcher Government over the last eight years. This is true for all sections of the education service from nursery provision to schools, from the youth service to the universities and from apprenticeships to adult education.

The Tory assault has, as one would expect, met with opposition. Perhaps the most obvious arena for this struggle has been the school. Even Conservative voters have become aware of the state of our schools as they go to pick up their children, or find that the parents evening has been cancelled as the teachers resist the attack on their pay and conditions. But the struggle has been fought in other areas, making bed fellows with the unlikeliest people - as when the government tried to do away with student grants. Sadly, for the most part, these struggles have been fought independently of each other.

It is against this backdrop, in what promises to be election year, that an attempt is being made to form a fairly broad alliance of people with differing interests in education to campaign for education in Exeter. The initiative for "Exeter For Education" has come from the Exeter Trades Council but it is hoped that membership will include Parent Teachers Associations, Governors and others with an interest in education. The first meeting was at the Central Library on April 29th.

The Trade Union representatives who initiated this meeting have a view that a large public meeting should be organised before the election, that leafletting should take place and that an on-going campaign to keep the profile of education high in the local media, particularly countering misinformation, should be the priorities of "Exeter for Education"

The election should not signal the end of the campaign: whoever holds office after it will face real problems in education. Already the Tory plans to further extend their control over schools have received much publicity. From a socialist perspective, a long hard look needs to be taken at ideas such as a centralised curriculum. The shape of "Exeter for Education's" campaigning needs to be carefully argued out, the issues need to be clarified and the campaign must be sensitive to the need to gain the support of as many people as necessary. This does not mean that the politics should be hidden or that blank consensus should be obtained. But it does hold the promise of a difficult task for what should be an easy campaign; Education is a popular issue. It could come onto the centre of the stage at election time. And yet the Labour leaders do not seem to have grasped that fact. Nor have they realised that Baker was wrong in expecting that the "innate conservatism" of parents would defeat the teachers.

In the absence of a national Labour lead, "Exeter For Education" offers the chance to put one of the major concerns of all voters at the top of the agenda. It will then be up to the prospective parliamentary candidates to respond to our pressure. In Devon the Alliance inherited the crumbling education services from the Tories and have barely had the grit to put on a fresh coat of paint, let alone replace the rotten timber. The fight for better education services must be fought, the time is ripe.

Tim Price
Exeter CLP

SHARON ATKIN

So, Sharon Atkin has been suspended as candidate for Nottingham East by the National Executive Committee because she stated her opposition to a "racist Labour Party" and affirmed that her allegiance is not to a leader but to the people she represents. It is a disgraceful decision by the NEC. Not simply because it is electorally disastrous, nor because it reveals one law for the rich and another for the poor in our Party; an MP, it seems, can throw away party policy or even call for Alliance votes with impunity, while the rest of us face suspension or even expulsion for not toeing their line. No, the real problem is that what Sharon Atkin said was absolutely correct, and that by rejecting her, the leadership lose any chance of being able to address the problems of racism.

First of all, Atkin suggested that our Party is racist. This evoked a display of horror, with even the Daily Express declaring that only a "sick extremist"



could it be otherwise? We live in a country that is racist to the core, a country based on slavery and on imperial domination. We have a culture which reflects ideas of racial superiority in school text books and novels and racist jokes and television news. How could we escape all this? There are bound to be racist beliefs, racist practices, even racist policies. Indeed, even Roy Hattersley admits that the hasty barring of Kenyan Asians in 1967 was discriminatory and wrong.

However, it is crucial to realise that an admission that the Labour Party is racist does not mean that it cannot combat racism, both within itself and within society. In fact, precisely the opposite is true. To be anti-racist does not mean to deny one's own racism but rather to expose it so that it can be challenged. Those who are genuinely committed to opposing racism should not be scared of having their assumptions and practices challenged. They should welcome it, for in that way alone can problems be identified and dealt with.

A precondition of being anti-racist is to admit that there is a problem of racism in the first place. By trying to deny that reality, Kinnock and his allies rule out the possibility of our Party developing a serious anti-racist practice. In one sense, we are simply reliving history; 25 years ago people denied that there was racism in Britain, they accused those who raised the issue of stirring up trouble. But you can't make a reality go away by refusing to look at it; you simply allow it to be perpetuated.

As for the argument that it will discredit the Labour Party to admit to its racism, that would only be true if the statement were an assertion of pride rather than part of a commitment to deal with the problem. In the latter case, we would be displaying an honesty and an

openness which could only win support from those who oppose oppression. Of course, the Daily Express and its ilk might be less happy; they only defend Labour because to expose the endemic nature of racism would threaten them far more than us.

Sharon Atkin also said that she wanted nothing to do with a racist Labour Party. This has been interpreted as a blanket rejection of the Party, but such an interpretation is ludicrous - if she felt that she wouldn't be such a long-standing member of the Party. What she was arguing was that she wanted an end to processes that exclude Black people, that she would fight for a genuinely open and representative Party. Anyone who is genuinely committed to the ideals of Labour must agree with Atkin, must combine their belief in the Party with a determination to root out the blemishes.

Finally, Atkin pledged her allegiance to the people she represents, not to her leader. I suspect that had she been pledging herself to supporting poor people or disabled people there would have been less excitement, but in this case the commitment was to benefiting Black people. What is wrong with what she said? Labour exists to help the mass of people, not vice versa. Our policies are only meaningful to the extent that they improve peoples' lives and our leaders only relevant to the extent that they carry policies through. To hear such people talk, one would think us an autocratic organisation set up to support a few mens' aspirations. Certainly, Neil Kinnock seems to regard himself above everything, to give himself the right to decide policies and priorities over Conference decisions representing millions. If Neil Kinnock wants to keep Cruise, wants to ignore gay rights, wants to silence Black people, then he can go hang. He is there to represent us, not to dictate in spite of us.

If the NEC want to reject Sharon Atkin they will have to reject every anti-racist in the Party. Because anti-racism starts from a recognition of the scale of the issue and the honesty to confront it in oneself. Until we are seen to take racism seriously in our own midst how can anyone take us seriously when we pontificate on the matter to the wider society?

Steve Reicher
Exeter CLP

VAT

Exeter Labour Women's Council has a motion on the agenda at the Women's conference this year against VAT on sanitary wear. The Women's Officers of the Guild of Students at Exeter University are petitioning and campaigning on the issue. The main arguments for this campaign are discussed in this article.

Sanitary protection is taxed at the rate of 15% and sanitary protection is used exclusively by one gender for hygienic and medical reasons.

There is no other case of a product which discriminates against one gender for VAT purposes and no other case in which at least half the population has a regular physical experience which makes protection necessary.

Women's groups, unions and MPs have supported the move to change the law and the European Commission has given examples of how the 6th Directive Article 13a, on tax exemptions, could be used. This states that certain items could be provided free of tax in areas which provide medical care.

There is also a good case for including sanitary protection on the prescription list, which would enable women on low incomes to receive free protection. Many women explain that supplementary benefit does not cover the menstrual needs of a family.

Women after childbirth who cannot afford protection for (often) prolonged bleeding, are making use of rags according to midwives in low income areas, which can lead to infection.

One male MP has said, however, that women should provide their own protection and he would not support an attempt to stop female children being taxed either. Nevertheless 74 MPs supported the Early Day motion in 1983, more have come forward since and the Labour Party included it in its last manifesto. 124,000 people have signed a petition, which is still available and will eventually be handed to the Prime Minister.

VAT on sanitary wear is another form of discrimination against women, but is often treated as a joke. (Back copies of Hansard show how the issue is treated or not treated at all.) Newspapers seem to treat the matter as unmentionable. It is not hard to realise why this is so, for both Parliament and the press are dominated by men who are also on high incomes. Women on the other hand have to pay twice for their privilege of menstruating!

By supporting the campaign for the abolition of VAT on sanitary wear, we can bring about a change to free women from another penalty which they suffer for being female. The larger liberation is made up of such apparently small changes. If we are serious about equality, we should ensure that this issue is debated and that the abolition of VAT is advocated. You can help by putting a motion to your branch to ensure that the Labour Party gives its active support and practical weight to ending this form of discrimination.

Fran Jenkin
Exeter CLP

USSR

TIME TO RENEW OUR FRIENDSHIP

Readers of Labour Briefing will not need to be reminded of Britain's wartime alliance with the Soviet Union. Neither will they need to be reminded of the herculean efforts of the Soviet Red Army in driving back Hitler's Nazi war machine on its Eastern Front. The sacrifice of 20 million Soviet lives in the cause of this victory is now well documented and, quite properly, often repeated.

British publications of the period, even from government Departments, spoke of our "Soviet Comrades" and the official attitude towards the USSR was warm and friendly. Immediately the war ended it was no longer expedient to continue this relationship and there began a lengthy period of hostility to the first Workers' Socialist State; a period normally referred to as the Cold War. Here is the origin of the "Soviet Threat" myth and the portrayal as our enemy of a nation which has never declared war or expressed enmity against Britain, or indeed the USA. Here is the origin of the arms race and the dash to nuclear obliteration.

Thatcher and Reagan have gone on record as professing to be multilateral disarmers. For years they have insisted on nuclear balance while not publically disagreeing with the need for disarmament. The whole range of recent proposals made by Mr. Gorbachev has failed as yet to produce a positive response from the West. Nevertheless, it has achieved a most important result. These proposals and the Western response to them have stripped away the sheep's clothing of peacemaker and laid bare the hypocritical wolf. Thatcher now proclaims that nuclear weapons are our safeguard to peace. Such cynicism! Who are the peacemakers?

For years CND and many other peace organisations have exercised a "plague on both your houses" mentality regarding the USA and the USSR and their respective responsibility for the arms race. Now that the world can see these embarrassed Western leaders floundering for a way out of being caught for the hypocrites they are, surely we can expect an acknowledgement by peace groups that the militarists are in Washington and London and that the USSR has made compromise after compromise in order to safeguard our planet from nuclear extinction.

The time to renew actively our friendship with the people of the USSR is long overdue. Ways have to be found to break down the Government and media representation of the Soviet Union and her people as our enemies. This is a product of "Sun" type hysteria and serves only to make our people suspicious of socialism in general. Thus, the promotion of

British-Soviet friendship is of political importance in terms of consciousness raising as well as being vital in the struggle for peace.

This is the essential *raison d'être* of the British-Soviet Friendship Society, which is non-sectarian and non party political. Its aims are to work for peace, friendship and greater understanding between the people's of the USSR and Britain, to develop friendly relations and to promote trade to the benefit of both countries and to exchange factual information about the USSR and Britain on a reciprocal basis.

The experience of the Exeter branch of the BSFS has underlined the timeliness of the need for this work. The branch, in six months, has had meetings on religion, international policy, education, peace and the internal changes in the USSR. All the events are enthusiastically supported and have attracted considerable interest and coverage in the local news media. What is more, the branch membership has increased more than fivefold in the same period and continues to grow.

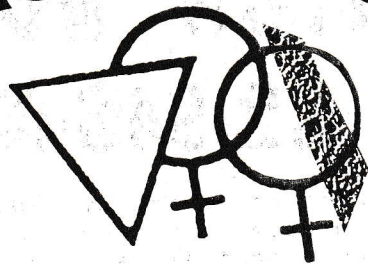


Also, with the Society for Cultural Relations with the USSR (SCA) and the University of Exeter Russian Circle, the branch has promoted a conference to initiate proceedings towards the eventual twinning of Exeter with a city in the USSR. A twinning association has been formed and work is well underway towards expediting the necessary formalities. Representation from the USSR Embassy suggests that Yaroslavl, a beautiful and historic city north of Moscow, might be a suitable twin. The work continues and, given the political need for promoting friendship already outlined, the value of city twinning is self-evident.

David Roberts
Secretary, Exeter BSFS

SMASH THE

BACK LASH!



In many ways, the last few years have seen considerable advances in the promotion and protection of full citizenship rights for lesbians and gay men. Among the most important was these was the passing of a Resolution at the 1986 Labour Conference which made it a Manifesto commitment for the Labour Party to campaign for lesbian and gay rights.

And yet, just as recognition of the specific oppression of homosexuals is beginning to be recognised by the Labour Party, and just as progressive Labour local authorities and education authorities are beginning to promote positive images of lesbians and gay men, the backlash has come from the Right. The fear of Aids, and its characterisation as a gay plague inflicted by "dirty" homosexuals on "pure" heterosexuals, has allowed many on the Right (as well as those ostensibly of a more progressive bent) to express neo-fascist views about the "evil" of homosexuality. Doubtless the newspapers of Exeter, which have seen abusive letters and reports of abusive statements by Councillors and others about the degradation of homosexuality are representative of the tone of the debate throughout the country. We may find Dr. Rogers offensive, but he is certainly not unique in his views. Remember the Nottingham Councillor Brownhill who stated that 90% of gays should be gassed.

Sadly the Labour establishment is offering no defence against the backlash, either verbal or physical. Patricia Hewitt, who surely reflects the views of Neil Kinnock, has described the "lesbian and gay issue" as a "vote loser". Oh dear, if only these nasty homosexuals would go away, stop making demands, and leave Labour to get elected on a platform blander than the SDP and more patriotic than the Tories, so that they can then start to take care of the "real" (white) working people, who live in neat heterosexual nuclear family units and who aspire only to greater material comfort. Lesbians and gays make demands which are almost as inconvenient and strident as those dreadful divisive Black Sections.

What is significant about the campaigns of lesbians and gay men in recent years has been the fight to make homosexuality a public and visible matter and reject the reduction of homosexuality simply to a form of sexuality, devoid of other aspects of culture. Hence, the "positive images" campaign in Haringey, and the efforts of the ILEA to ensure that homosexuality is shown in schools as a fruitful and rewarding way of life, without at the same time leading children to believe that homosexuals do not face considerable discrimination and oppression in British society, despite official claims to the contrary. What is more demeaning to a person's self-image than to be regarded as a security risk, simply because one is gay. To say that gays are more vulnerable to blackmail than straights is simply to make lesbians and gay men carry the burden of the paranoia of those who fear that alternative forms of sexuality and culture will bring into question the patriarchal and capitalist basis of society.

And so, once the dreaded divide between public and private has been breached, and once homosexuality comes out of the bedroom and into the classroom, the façade of liberalism collapses to reveal the Labour Party's desire to protect the fabric of a society based on oppression through patriarchy, heterosexism and racism as well as class, and to maintain a rigid distinction between private vices and public virtues. Tory MPs too are quick to attack the corruption of homosexuality if it is given a positive image in schools, but are even quicker to leap to the defence of one of the number, Harvey Proctor, whose only "crime" was to have been found out.

The fightback is taking place, and it is based on broad alliances between oppressed sections of society. One example is the national demonstration in Haringey on May 2nd organised by Haringey Black Action and Positive Images. This is a concrete example of the links made between the oppression of Black youth in Broadwater Farm and the oppression of lesbians and gay men in Haringey.

See also the work of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which has produced an impressive manifesto for legislation and which is organising a Conference on May 23rd and 24th in Camden to discuss "Laying down the Law". Of course, as we have seen in the case of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act, the law alone will not change attitudes, but it can provide some lever whereby oppressed people can sometimes defend themselves effectively, and can gain some respite and some protection.

Progressive forces everywhere should mobilise to support the fightback.

Jo Shaw
Exeter CLP

KAMIKAZE KINNOCK!

The strategy of our leaders is a disaster. Not only does it attack, weaken and demobilise the working class; but even in electoral terms - which is the only justification given to it - it is a total failure and plays into the hands of the Tories.

Now there is every danger that the Tories will win the election.

People will vote Tory not because they are attracted by industrial decline, decaying public services, unemployment and Cruise missiles - but because of the absence of any alternative.

Instead of disowning the class struggle we must base ourselves on it. For that is the only road to office and power. Whatever the defeats, there is still a willingness, a determination to fight back. The print workers, the British Telecom workers, the teachers, the workers at Hangers - all have shown that all too clearly.

Instead of disowning the struggles of the oppressed, we must unequivocally identify with and support those struggles. The experience of the GLC, however limited, shows the enormous reservoir of support we can win if we do that. By going on the offensive in support of their policy of dialogue with Sinn Fein, support for the Black Community, for women, lesbians and gay men, the GLC transformed the terms of debate, won massive electoral support and vindicated our policies as a huge electoral asset as well of being a better way of running London. After the debacle of Greenwich, these lessons should be engraved in our memories.

Instead of hiding our commitment to peace and disarmament and apologising for Party policy, we could win enormous support if we believed in and argued for our unilateralist policies. The Tories could be put on the defensive as the Party of nuclear arms race madness, and our defence policy could be transformed from a massive vote loser into a crusade for peace - involving millions - which could yet win the next election.

And instead of apologising for socialism, we must fight for our movement to speak with its own authentic working class voice.

Far from being an electoral liability, a programme of action that escapes from the economic impasse, that defends the living standards of our people, that confronts the crisis of capitalism, that fights the power of the capitalist system and its state machine - this is a precondition for our mass popularity and becoming a pole of attraction.

Graham Bash
Labour Briefing

Briefing

WITCH HUNT

£2,946-00

In the closing months of 1985 the Executive Committee of Exeter CLP launched a witch-hunt against six people, Peter Bowing, Paul Giblin, Steve Reicher, Jo Shaw, Neil Todd and Mark Wilkinson who had written articles in Devon Labour Briefing. In January 1986 the EC "summoned" the five to a Kafkaesque trial in which no charges were laid, hearsay evidence was used and the right of cross-examination denied. The committee acting as prosecutor, judge and jury, without explanation, found Bowing, Giblin and Todd "guilty" as "charged", and called a special General Committee meeting to endorse the decision to expel the three.

The unacceptability of these proceedings were made clear by the three in letters to John Shepherd, the Chairperson of the Party and Peter Hill, the Secretary. Neither replied. In response the three obtained a High Court injunction to prevent the EC carrying on with these proceedings. At first the EC pretended that they would contest the injunction, but by July, in response to legal advice, they dropped the action.

Witch-hunts are a costly business. John Shepherd has said that all of Exeter CLP's costs are being paid by the national Labour Party, but Denis Skinner and Audrey Wise who sit on Labour's NEC have been given assurances that no national Labour Party money will be available for the case in Exeter. Who has paid the Exeter CLP's legal costs remains a mystery.

Bowing, Giblin and Todd paid £2,946 in legal costs. Not only was Exeter CLP in the wrong, but had indicated that it was contesting the injunction when it had no intention of so doing, thus increasing the expensive legal work. In April 1987, after considerable delay and under threat of further court action, the full costs of Bowing, Giblin and Todd were paid.

Two questions should be asked by Party members, first, how much money in total was wasted on this witch-hunt, and second, who paid all this money?

BRIEFING