

DEVON LABOUR BRIEFING

No. 28 January 1988 20p

REINSTATE STEVE WARWICK

STEVE WARWICK, MINIBUS UNION OFFICIAL, HAS BEEN SACKED FOR NO REASON. THE UNION IS DRAGGING ITS FEET.

Exeter NUR 2 branch, representing Devon and General busworkers, is facing a severe crisis following the dismissal on November 25th, 1987 of committee member, Steve Warwick.

Steve was called off the road into his unit manager's office and dismissed without any reason being given and was given 60 seconds to vacate Devon General premises. Management broke the existing disciplinary procedure by acting in this manner.

Steve Warwick was dismissed after 20 months at Devon General as a minibus

driver. He had become the leading fighter to improve the conditions and pay of all drivers. He was the red minibus liaison officer, the assistant branch secretary and an NUR 2 delegate to the Exeter Labour Party General Committee.

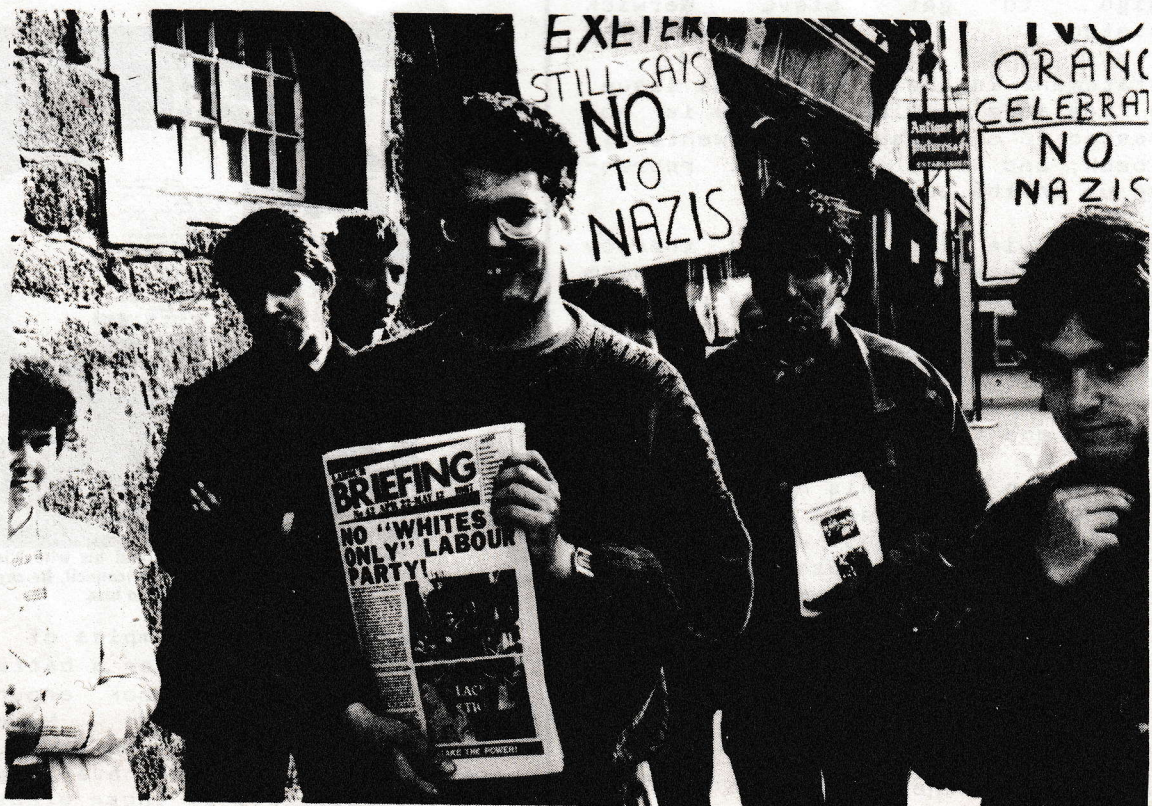
It is no exaggeration to state that the union faces extermination as an effective independent trade union branch over this issue.

Warwick appealed against this decision and lost. Not surprising, since the adjudicator was the managing director, Mr. Harry Blundred.

A special meeting called for December 4th to discuss the issue had to be

Continued on page 2

see
back
page



called off at very short notice because Blundred refused to allow Warwick onto company premises, where the meeting was due to be held. The rescheduled meeting was finally held on Sunday, December 6th in the transport club, where motions calling for immediate reinstatement and a ballot for industrial action were backed unanimously.

A further meeting between union representatives and management on Monday, December 7th made no progress. Warwick was not reinstated.

One of Thatcher's reactionary laws means that people have no right to an industrial tribunal, until they have had two years service in one job, except where a union branch official is dismissed for union activity, which is, of course, what happened in this case.

On Friday, December 11th, Steve Warwick won his interim tribunal by three votes to nil, which sat to see whether he had a good chance of winning a full tribunal.

The company is now forced to keep Steve on full pay until the full tribunal on January 8th. But again they refused to reinstate him and even a victory at a full tribunal cannot force the company to reinstate him.

This is an enormous issue for the trade union movement as a whole, and will undoubtedly have repercussions for years to come. Despite this, the right wing Labourites, who hold the top posts in NUR 2, and provide one of the major props for the right wing in Exeter Labour Party, are stalling and dragging their feet and holding up an effective campaign to get Steve Warwick reinstated.

Reinstatement is the crux of this issue. Steve has made it clear that he is not interested in compensation; he wants his job back; and we want him back representing us in the union.

Either we win this issue and thereby inflict a severe blow for trade unionism against Thatcher's headlong rush to crush unionism and introduce total management control, or, we lose and the union will sink without trace leaving Blundred with absolute control over the membership and their working conditions.

The manner in which this dismissal was carried out, the drivers' rep, whom it was carried out against and the fact that the company has refused point blank to reinstate Steve on a number of occasions leads us to believe that even if he wins the full tribunal, Blundred will not reinstate him, but will be happy to see him down the road with a few thousand pounds in his pocket.

We are concerned that the union leadership is happy to see this as well. We

are not. There must be no compromise on this issue; and we demand that the union leadership locally and at head office the initiative and the action necessary to defend Steve Warwick up to and including strike action.

We are asking for your full support in this campaign. Bring a resolution to your trade union or Labour Party branch demanding the immediate reinstatement of Steve Warwick.

City Licensing

IS THE LABOUR GROUP ON THE CITY COUNCIL PROGRESSIVE OR REACTIONARY? JO SHAW EXAMINES TWO ISSUES...

The City Council's licensing sub-committee goes from strength to strength. The Express and Echo on December 23 reported an unholy alliance between Labour and the Tories, in which a resolution proposed by Cllr. Burt of Rougemont which would force the City's Night Clubs to close before midnight was passed on the casting vote of the Labour Chair, Celia Shepherd, having received the support of that great advocate of freedom, tolerance and democracy, Dr. Adrian Rogers.

At the same time, the people running the jewellery stall on the High St. are faced with the loss of their livelihood, because of the City Council's refusal to continue to designate the High St. as a highway where such stalls can be set up.



Help... Mr Martin Hawkins and his wife Nina with their protest petition. The council, he says, has refused to talk to him.

These are two more examples of Labour's policy of making Exeter a better place to live in, ("just look around you", exhorts the Members' Newsletter). Undoubtedly, Shilhay and the Quay area are absurd places to have nightclubs, and the residents of those areas, and of

How Democratic is Exeter Labour Party?

MASS MEETINGS AND NEWSLETTERS ARE NORMALLY BENEFICIAL FOR ORGANISATIONS. BUT IN EXETER LABOUR PARTY THEY ARE USED TO CURTAIL DEMOCRACY, STRENGTHEN THE BUREAUCRACY, AND SUPPORT SELL OUTS BY THE RIGHT WING EXETER CITY COUNCIL LABOUR GROUP. PETER BOWING EXPLAINS...

On Friday, November 6th, the Executive Committee (EC) of Exeter Labour Party took the unprecedented step of inviting the whole membership of the Party to a mass meeting. In its letter of invitation, the EC stated that one purpose of the meeting was to enable the EC to hear the views of the wider membership, which could be interpreted as an admission that the EC has become dangerously distant from the rank and file. Yet, any move in the direction of democracy by Exeter Labour Party is to be welcomed.

Those of us who write in Devon Labour Briefing, who have been threatened with expulsion, witch-hunted and selectively barred from meetings for expressing our views, found it difficult to believe that the EC had changed its spots and was genuinely concerned to extend democracy. We were proved right.

Fifteen people on the left put forward a set of proposals, which we hoped the meeting would be able to consider. I was told by the chair of the meeting, Mr. Duff, that only EC proposals would be considered, but that I would be able to speak. Mr. Duff allotted one hour to the meeting overall. For a mass meeting this was painfully inadequate.

Mr. Long, the Labour leader of Exeter City Council, introduced the debate by spelling out the offensive that the Tory government had launched against local government. I was called on to speak and I presented the proposals that the fifteen of us had put forward, although there was no way that the paper could be considered as such.



Labour's rightwing city boss?

Overall, the debate was highly constructive. One speaker mentioned the need for a Labour newspaper; another spoke of the political questions concerning child care. Much debate centred on whether Labour councillors would in the future just become local administrators of Tory central government policies. This raised in turn the question of whether, in the new circumstances, there was not a clear choice between defiance on the one hand and collaboration on the other.

The chair was sufficiently worried by the direction of the debate to "remind" the meeting that it had been called to discuss the EC's proposals. Not only did the remark reveal the anti-democratic nature of the meeting, but it was also illogical, given that at that point we had not heard any concrete proposals from the EC. Soon afterwards, the meeting came to an abrupt end with many people still wishing to speak.

Dr. Shepherd was called to sum up for the EC. His job, it seemed was to deflate the meeting. After dismissing or ignoring what people had said, he informed the meeting that the EC had already decided that there would be several city wide leaflet drops, informing electors of Tory policies, but not discussing any possibility of a campaign against them. The EC would write the leaflets and had already vetoed any campaign against Thatcherism, and was now 'involving' the membership only as leaflet deliverers, (that being, of course, the one activity that the EC was not willing to undertake alone).

After Dr. Shepherd's speech a vote was taken to approve the EC leafleting proposals. Given that it was the only motion on the table and that, in itself, it was not a bad idea, nearly everyone voted for it. The meeting was rigged in such a way, so that the action of voting against could be interpreted as voting against the party. That is the problem and purpose of one motion mass 'debate' meetings. (It is interesting to note that one of the charges against the Liverpool Labour Party was that it held "unconstitutional" mass meetings which took votes)

What, then, was the purpose of this meeting other than to encourage Party members to deliver leaflets?

The central point is this; the Thatcher government is restructuring local government into being little more than a tool for its policies. Thus, the ruling right wing Exeter Council Labour Group is in great danger of being seen throughout the town as an unpopular,

irrelevant and ridiculed group of collaborators with the Tory government. On the ground, it will be Labour who enforces the poll tax, sells the council houses and grinds down the unemployed and poor through rent rises. I do not believe for one minute that they relish the task that the Tories have set for them, but nonetheless, we shall hear the Kinnockite "dented shield" argument that a Labour knife in the back is better than a Tory knife in the front.

The accommodation of the local Labour leadership with Tory plans will undermine Labour's political base in the City. How can Mr. Long go canvassing and say: "We'll be putting your rent up and selling your council house to private profiteers, have you considered voting for me?" In the minds of ordinary workers Labour will be irrelevant to the onslaught they face.

The only way out of this dilemma is for Labour to become a campaigning socialist party and a party of struggle. If Exeter's workers and other oppressed groups see Labour fighting for principles which are in their interests and which involve them in struggle - and thus in the process reinvigorating the party and providing it with popular power and respect - then Labour would be seen as serious and would win support. Such politics involve a tactical and strategic combination of confrontation and manoeuvre, legality and illegality, and as a starting point require an unconditional ending of the coalition with the Liberals on the City Council.

It is often contended as part of the case against this view that the Labour councillors would face the full consequences of central government reprisal alone. The wife of one of the Labour councillors said at the mass meeting that she was not prepared to lose her house as a result of her husband being surcharged, but this misses the whole point of class struggle politics. Illegality is not undertaken lightly but only in conditions where it advances the struggle; if the people are behind the councillors and the party, as is always asserted by Exeter Labour Party, it is the people and their organisations who share the pains of battle. Thus in Liverpool the surcharged councillors have not faced personal ruin, precisely because of the solidarity of the labour movement. Isolated and homeless councillors are of little help in the struggle for socialism.

Yet even explained in this way the socialist politics of campaigning and class struggle contradicts the whole practice and ethos of Labourism in Exeter, with the councillors geared to municipal careers and running after a 'status' that their lives otherwise would never give them. True socialists are not invited to establishment dinners. Equally,

the Exeter Labour Party, if it were to become a party of campaigning and struggle, would have to rid itself of its bureaucratic approach which suffocates initiative, dialogue and interest in its rigidly enforced makeshift rules and hierarchy of committees with reports flowing down the structure and very little flowing up. Were the party to meet the socialist challenge, it would have to abandon its exclusive electoralism, the timidity of reducing its politics to an electoral calculus based on a half-baked psychology of the floating middle class voter in the marginal ward. Yet in the current period the holy trinity of municipal careerism, bureaucratic suffocation and exclusive electoralism form the staple diet of a complacent body about to be torn apart by Thatcherism. So far the forces of the socialist left have done little more than scratch the surface of the rotten edifice.

The purpose, then, of the mass meeting and the planned leaflet drops was not to mount a mass struggle against Thatcherism or to extend party democracy, but on the contrary to limit the political damage that Tory policies will have on the Labour councillors. Dr. Shepherd's speech of deflation was to convince the wider membership that struggle against Thatcherism is neither possible nor helpful. The leaflets will no doubt give the same message to the electorate of Exeter. If the EC are successful in convincing the working people of Exeter that exclusive electoralism and inactive expectancy are the only 'solutions' to the problems they face, the Labour councillors' collaboration with Tory central government plans will be seen as inevitable, and the interests of municipal careers, not of working people, will have been served.

We must recognise, however, that the interests of the municipal careerists run directly counter to the needs of the struggle against Thatcherism. We need to build up a campaign of struggle and resistance based on an alliance of the exploited and oppressed; they, on the other hand, need municipal peace and depoliticisation for their municipal careers. This is the fundamental contradiction that runs through the limbs of Exeter Labour Party and, indeed, other progressive organisations in the town where this contradiction manifests itself in other forms and through other issues. We cannot run away from this contradiction: we must confront it.

POSTSCRIPT: "BRANCHING OUT"

I completed this article in November, before the appearance of the new Exeter Labour Party newsletter "Branching Out" (BO). Initially, I thought I might have

to revise the article in light of the more detailed EC statements and opinions contained in the newsletter, but BO, on the contrary, tends to reinforce the central points of the article.

For years Exeter Labour Party has desperately needed a newsletter, although it is unfortunate, yet hardly surprising, that BO is only to be a mouthpiece of the EC, and will contain none of the real debate inside the party. Even in the BO account of the mass meeting, no mention is made of the proposals put to that meeting that Exeter Labour Party becomes a campaigning socialist party of struggle. Instead BO tells us there was "a demand for a better flow of information from the Party to its members", which was hardly the central point of the meeting, but more likely represented the wishful thinking of the EC that the flock needed a shepherd.

Just as unfortunate is the patronising style of BO (and indeed most other Exeter Labour Party publications) Of the political situation we are told, "The title of the newsletter says it all". Small pieces of information are "Shocking fillers" and just in case we cannot understand the achievements of the Labour Group on Exeter City Council we are told "Just look around you". Why are we talked down to in this manner by an author who employs childlike simplicity, blandness and the depth of political analysis of the "Sun" newspaper?

There is, of course, a need for information, but in a democratic party information is coupled with debate, so that readers can be educated and take a meaningful point of view from contrasting arguments an idea quite alien to the EC. In a campaigning democratic party the first paragraph of the first issue of a newsletter would not say "The main aim is to keep you informed, so that as members of the Labour Party you may be better placed to respond to questions about the Party's aims and policies" Here in a nutshell in their own words is the EC's conception of the Party: the rank and file are "informed" about the Party's policies and are to recite them when questioned. No initiative is granted to the flock; no policy making role is acknowledged. Our role is policy reciting, not making; the EC's role is informing, not involving. The only participatory role conferred on the membership is when they are called on to fill in a form saying "I would like to help with the distribution of leaflets..."

The disdain for democracy is revealed in BO's account of the mass meeting which "endorsed the need for a campaign". The EC thus acknowledges that the meeting was called not to debate and decide, but to endorse the "unity of view" that BU tells us that exists in the EC. The mass meeting for BO was "a very significant event. In addition to the delegates from the branches, trade unions and other

affiliated organisations, all other members of the Party were also invited". Here is the version of democracy preferred by the EC: the wider membership assembled to be informed and to "endorse" the "unity of view" of the EC. Thus the stage is set for members to recite policy and to deliver leaflets. Perhaps these authoritarian methods could be forgiven, if the reciting and delivering were, however mistaken, part of a struggle for socialism. But they are not; rather they are to do with excusing the the right wing Labour councillors, who will inflict without opposition Tory policies on the people of Exeter.

Several times, when being threatened with expulsion, I have attended EC disciplinary "hearings", and have been told that I have been attacking the party. The accusation has soon slipped to one of disloyalty. Yet, real loyalty is not giving unconditional endorsement to the party as it is, but being true to conceptions of what the party can and ought to be.

Continued from page 2

large areas of Rougemont and St. Leonard's wards do suffer from the effects of rowdiness and vandalism. But it is naive to suppose that in a city with a population of almost 100,000 people, and a large rural catchment area where little or no entertainment for young people is available, that the problem is going to be solved in this way. Can we not expect to see street gangs prowling around late at night looking for trouble and making the streets even less safe for women to be out on their own? What alternative plans does the City Council have to make Exeter a better place to be, not for the tourists, but for the young people who actually live here and who are condemned by Thatcher's policies to a life on the dole, on the YTS or on some other poorly paid "training" scheme? They too deserve some diversion in the evening. It should not just be available to those with cars who will always be able to drive to Exmouth or Willand for their late night boogie-on-down. Until such time as an alternative is developed, it would seem unwise and unnecessarily authoritarian to close the Clubs prematurely.

As for the jewellery stall; well, it along with the other "alternative" retail outlets that occasionally spring up on the High St. have hitherto represented the only relief from the tedium and homogeneity engendered by the endless chain stores (all owned by the same monopoly capitalists) which fill the High St. Once again, it seems unnecessarily authoritarian of a "caring" Labour Council which prides itself on striving to defend and develop employment in the City to be removing other people's livelihood in this apparently arbitrary way.

Tory Law

LAW IN BRITAIN IS CLASS LAW. THE LEFT MUST CONFRONT THE LAW, IF IT IS TO CONFRONT CAPITALISM. TIM PRICE EXPLAINS...

It is less than 200 years since the law kept the majority in poverty and punished transgressors with death or deportation for crimes which we would consider minor today. Those who broke the law did so, in many cases, because starvation threatened them and/or their families. Faced with their choices what would we have done?

In those times there was no doubt about the fact that the law was made by one class. The other class, in which the majority of people were, did not participate in the process. Its members did not have a vote and were not entitled to sit in Parliament. Today those privileges are open to the majority of people. Yet, while arguably, starvation is not a daily threat for nearly everyone in Britain we still have a society in which there is a great divide in wealth between a small minority who own most of it and the majority who own very little. Indeed, for those towards the poorer end, conditions are deteriorating, while the wealthy get even wealthier. This is coming about partly through the control over law which the wealthy have. It seems strange that this imbalance is sanctioned by the majority. The fact is, of course, that it is not sanctioned by the majority but rather that the electoral system has worked in favour of the political face of the rich; the Conservative Party. Opposition to the Tories in the recent elections has been greater than support, but the division in the opposition has allowed the Tories to be elected with a huge majority of parliamentary seats.



Orgreave

However, it is not just the parliamentary system which works in favour of the owning class. The powerful organs of influence that comprise the media are owned or controlled by that small class which I shall hereinafter refer to as the capitalist class. This results in the conning of sections of the majority and aids the capitalist class in the dividing of the majority so that it can retain its control. How many of us see Britain as a country divided into three classes: ruling class, working class and middle class? The fundamental split is much more crucial than most people are willing to admit. The wealth of the so-called middle classes is small in comparison to that of the capitalist class. In reality, the middle class are just a section of the working class. The idea of the middle class exists to help divide the working class. They are as expendable as individuals as other members of the working class, and their limited wealth will not be of great help if they are cast aside. There may have been, (and may even continue to be) movement within the working class in terms of what mainstream sociologists used to define as class position, and usually in an upward direction. But there has been less infiltration by the working class into the capitalist class.

The improvement in conditions and expectations of working class people in Britain improved after the Second World War. This war was a result of the internal contradictions of the capitalist system which had manifested themselves in the nineteen thirties in dire material conditions for many working class people throughout the world and had given rise to the horrors of fascism. All of these things posed a threat to the system, and so after the war concessions were wrung out of the capitalist class by the working class. In Britain, throughout these years, poverty did not disappear. But even so the concessions were more than could be tolerated by the system, and a restructuring began for real in the mid-seventies, manifesting itself in the rise in unemployment to levels that had not been seen before the Second World War.

In terms of the parliamentary system, its limited use to the working class was demonstrated by the Labour Government of the seventies. Faced with the crisis of capitalism, the Labour Government did not move towards socialism by making bold moves, but rather set about resolving the crisis on behalf of capitalism in capitalism's own terms. In retrospect it seems ironic that some members of the capitalist class were trying to do away with the parliamentary system around 1974/5, training their own armies etc. The irony is that the Labour Government did the real job for them as well as could be expected and in so doing discredited itself to the extent that we now have a third Tory Government on the trot, led by that symbol of capitalism, Margaret Thatcher.



Wapping

While official unemployment statistics point to a reduction in the numbers out of work, the increase in law paid and/or part-time work, the plethora of increasingly financially unworthwhile government schemes, and the attack on benefits have all meant that many people are far from feeling the effects of what the Tory media describe as a boom economy.

On top of this, the activities of the MSC, and the proposed alterations to the education system are certain to help continue to tighten the grip the capitalist class has on the system. The NHS crumbles and the threat of death and ill health becomes increasingly serious for the less well off. Housing will become even harder to obtain. Many socialists in the past have put their faith in local government to ameliorate the conditions resulting from a Tory Government, but this faith is becoming ever more misplaced as Labour-controlled council after Labour council gets on with doing the Tories' job for them. While the poll tax is an essential part of this, it also provides the icing on the cake for the Tories.

Meanwhile, as many people are on the brink of saying "enough is enough", what plans does the Labour Party have? The essence seems to be that we have to wait four years, not idly but actively electioneering to ensure that we get in next time ... and then things will be put right.

But does this strategy really have a chance? The Tories have said that they want to do away with socialism. They are not, however, about to make the Labour Party illegal, but they are surely setting the conditions for the Labour Party to destroy itself. By forcing local government to carry out their unpopular policies, and by limiting local councils' room for manoeuvre they are aiming to discredit Labour in the areas where they currently have large support. The response to this has been to say to voters "we think that this is

wrong but we have to do it. Have patience, vote for us at the next election and we will put things right." But will this wash? If people have voted Labour in to govern locally and they are not doing the job they were voted in to do, what guarantee is there that they will do any better if they are voted in to govern nationally? Then it will be the IMF or some other group representing capitalism which is calling the shots. At least, that is what history suggests.

We have had Labour councils talking about implementing "caring cuts". The suggestion is that Labour will be less ruthless than a Tory administration. The irony is that because of close links between the unions and Labour, Labour are often in a better position than the Tories would be to carry out cuts. They know where the weaknesses are, and can play one section of workers off against another with much more effect.

Of course, it is in times like these that workers turn to their unions for protection. Again over the years of Tory rule, laws have been drawn up to limit the effectiveness of the Unions.

The Labour movement as a whole has been bound and gagged by Tory law.

Surely enough is enough?

Would there have been Tolpuddle martyrs if the oppressed of Tolpuddle had respected the Tory law? Where did obeying the law in Nazi Germany lead to? Where is obeying Thatcher's law going to lead?

Surely enough is enough?

That does not mean that refusing to obey the law should be taken lightly. However, there must come a point at which bad laws are actively resisted; a point at which defiance is clear.

Effective strategies are needed now. Labour has no real chance of success if it follows its current path, meekly trailing Thatcher and handing out leaflets saying what a bad thing the poll tax is or how evil are the plans for education. The issues are there to take a stand on. Labour needs to seek the active support of Trade Unions and those at the receiving end of the assault. It needs to say: "If you are behind us, we will not do the Tories' bidding." With careful thought about a strategy and a sincere desire to win, victory could be obtained. It could be obtained in less than four years, if not at least come the next election people might be able to believe in Labour. Martyrs are not needed. People who do not want to take risks should not be in the frontline. If support is properly marshalled, then those in the front line will know that they have nothing to fear. It is only real opposition that the Tories fear. They have done much to make any real opposition illegal. Are we with them or against them?

Catch 22

THATCHERISM IS CHANGING THE WHOLE TERRAIN OF BRITISH POLITICS, WHICH AFFECTS ABOVE ALL THE LABOUR MOVEMENT. PHIL HEARSE ANALYSES THE SITUATION...

In this third term of Thatcherism, the Tories intend to complete the job they initiated eight years ago. This amounts to nothing less than the destruction of the post-war settlement in British politics, which under the Atlee government reordered British society around limited welfarism and government intervention to address the worst effects of the market.

This broad consensus is now being swept away, including the whole panoply of institutions and practices designed to integrate the labour movement, and especially the trade union bureaucracy, into the running of the capitalist economy.

The changes at a political level will have a profound impact on the lives of ordinary people, and on the structure of our society. In other words, Thatcher's political revolution is part of an economic and social revolution.

A few examples suffice to give us a whiff of what the next five years have in store:

* The social security system will be ended. Payments to claimants will be replaced with loans from the "social fund". Even deeper and more desperate poverty in Britain will result.



Is that 3 million or 5 million unemployed?

* In the health service there will be private medicine for those who can afford it and a run-down skeleton public system for the poor.

* Housing policy aims to destroy public housing, and to create a private renting market with unrestricted rents. Zooming property prices will drive working class people out of the newly fashionable inner-city areas threatening Labour's political base.

* Education will be totally restructured and centralised with the reintroduction of grammar schools and other forms of elitism, and an end to free schooling.

* Local government will be progressively dismembered and put into private hands, again attacking an area of Labour influence.

* The poll tax will enhance inequality, penalise Labour local authorities and threaten the universal franchise.

* Denationalisation will continue with the privatisation of electricity and the introduction of water meters in private homes.

* The powers of the police, the courts and the judges will be progressively strengthened.

* New anti-union laws will be introduced.

These are just a few examples. Thatcher has set her face against the policy of "consolidation" urged by the former leader of the House, John Biffin. No, she wants to push her counter-revolution to its logical end.

But what is that end? And what should the socialist response be?

Thatcher's aim, which she has pursued more consistently than her critics like John Biffin, is to alter significantly the relationship of class forces in Britain, by introducing social political and economic policies which would weaken the organisations of the working class, divide the working class and create a new social and political "settlement" with the scope and permanence of that of 1945.

The post war settlement lasted for thirty years. Thatcher's settlement is meant to last for the foreseeable future, well into the next century, to enable British capitalism to restore its profitability and overcome its historic crisis. Essentially, she is the executive of British capitalism's make or break survival plan.

Thatcher is not aiming at the destruction of the Parliamentary system, fascism or anything like that. The logical end

to which she aspire is a free market economy, an authoritarian but not fascist state and the locking of the working class into a permanently subordinate and powerless position.

If the working class and the oppressed can be broken, if they can be rendered denfeceless on the factory floor and in social and political life in general, capitalism can weather the current crisis and survive. This is the reality behind the cunning rhetoric demanding a "leaner, fitter more competitive British industry."

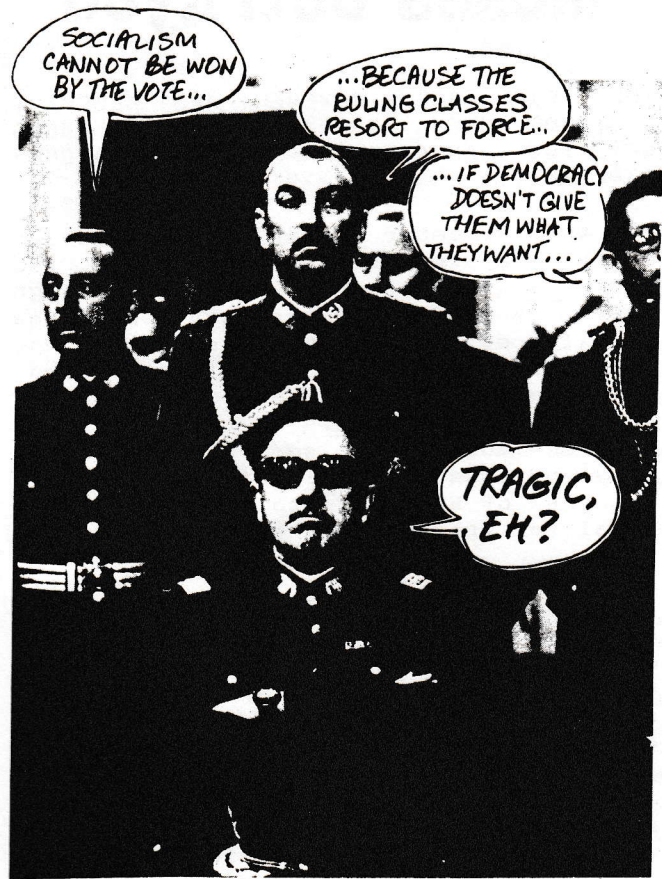
The boldness and scope of the scheme, breath-taking and far sighted by comparison with anything the Labour leadership even dreams of, has thrown the labour movement into its worst crisis since the second world war. The Kinnock leadership is thrashing about trying to work out how the Labour Party can deal with Thatcher by being "moderate". The answer is, of course, that one can't.

A Labour government would have to embark on a massive programme of nationalisation and restoration of the welfare state - of the same scope as the Tory changes have been - just to return to the situation before 1979, let alone go forward to socialism. Such action would lead inevitable to sharp conflict with the big business interests which back Thatcher.

Thus the fear of challenging big business, which usually holds Labour back from making real strides out of post-war



CATCH 22 FOR KINNOCK



consensus towards a socialist transformation of society, will now act to deter even a challenge to Thatcher's post 1979 changes. A Labour government which accepted the Thatcherite restructuring of society would be colluding in the operation of British capitalism's survival plan.

Here is the "Catch 22" that Thatcher has got Kinnock into. She has said to him, effectively, "if you want to moderate in politics, then you have to accept the basic changes of my counter-revolution". Bryan Gould eloquently announced the surrendered of the Kinnock leadership to this "Catch 22" when he made his speech on wider share ownership at the Labour Party Conference.

Only really radical action both in fighting Thatcher's plans every inch of the way, and at government level in the future (with rank and file labour movement support) can undo the handwork effected by Thatcher and pave the way for socialist transformation.

There is, then, no alternative, but for the minority who are prepared to resist Thatcher's onslaught and Kinnock's treachery to organise the struggle and fight now. The more a tradition of resistance is created now, the easier will be that transformation in years to come.

Moses Betrayed

THE EXETER LABOUR MOVEMENT HAS RECENTLY DIVIDED OVER THE ISSUE OF MOSES MAYEKISO. AN ANTI-APARTHEID CAMPAIGNER EXPLAINS...

At the December GC of Exeter Labour Party, a resolution supporting the "Friends of Moses Mayekiso" campaign (see the article in the last DLB) was heavily defeated. This resolution was originally passed unanimously at a Pennsylvania/St. David's Branch meeting, where the seriousness of the plight of Comrade Moses Mayekiso, General Secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, currently on trial for treason, was highlighted.

So what happened to this apparently unexceptional motion of solidarity?

First of all, at a subsequent Penn/St. David's branch meeting, after the resolution had been to the GC as a notice of motion and was coming back for discussion at branches, the Chair of the meeting felt "compelled" to inform the members that he had subsequently been in contact with the South African Congress of Trades Unions, and that we had been instructed from on high that on no account should we support this resolution. Apparently, the Friends of Moses campaign is a sectarian "ultra-leftist" grouping which has attracted the displeasure of SACTU and the ANC by campaigning on behalf of a leading socialist trade unionist on trial for his life. Other leading members of the Branch had also had such high level and wide ranging talks with SACTU. However, like all good politicians, they refused to reveal their sources.

At the GC, the resolution was opposed on much the same grounds. Apparently, precisely those "ultra-leftists" (in this case the SWP) who have set up the campaign for Moses Mayekiso are solely responsible for the fate of the comrade. Literature supplied to Mayekiso when in Britain before his arrest was found on him when he was detained on return to South Africa, and this is said to form a major part of the treason charges against him. This serious allegation of irresponsibility seems unfounded, however, when one remembers that a) Mayekiso had made it clear that he expected to be arrested on his return to SA and therefore must have realised that anything he had with him was likely to be confiscated and b) it would be naive to believe that the SA Government, given the draconian legal powers at its disposal, could not have based its case on any number of statements about workers' and union power which Mayekiso has made.

Moreover, at the GC, the same statements from SACTU which had been mentioned at the Branch meeting were revealed as providing authoritative information on the evils of the Friends of Moses campaign. Indeed, one member of the GC displayed his in-depth knowledge of South African solidarity politics by talking repeatedly and at length about the centrality of the African National "Council" as the focus for our solidarity. Members of Penn/St. David's were accused of dishonesty, for failing to "reveal" to the Branch that the campaign was not supported by the Anti-Apartheid Movement, or by the ANC, two organisations which apparently represent the sole yardstick of the acceptable face of campaigning against the evils of apartheid for the Labour Party.

What is sad about the fate of the Moses Mayekiso resolution and about the rhetoric which was used to oppose it, is that it has apparently become disloyal and dangerous to suggest that the complexity of the forces operating in opposition to apartheid in Southern Africa today, some based on an explicitly socialist revolutionary platform, requires us to show our solidarity at times, not just with the ANC and SACTU, as the most important representatives of the people in the liberation struggle, but also with other organisations which are allied with the ANC in the same battle, but which might not see eye to eye with them on every point. Thus any organisation in Britain which organises its solidarity campaigns around a recognition of these differences and these complexities can be automatically marginalised as "ultra-leftist".



RELEASE MOSES MAYEKISO

RELEASE ALL SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DETAINEES

HANDS OFF COSATU

END BRITISH COLLABORATION WITH APARTHEID

DLB Answers Shepherd

DR SHEPHERD, THE VICE CHAIR OF EXETER LABOUR PARTY, WROTE TO THE REGIONAL PARTY SUPPORTING THE CITY COUNCIL SPONSORED WILLIAM OF ORANGE CELEBRATIONS. DLB RESPONDS...

Roy Hill
Regional Organiser of the Labour Party.

4th October 1987

Dear Roy,

I understand from Jeff Skinner, the Exeter CLP secretary, that some members of the Regional Executive have expressed concern about Exeter City Council's plan to commemorate in 1988 the tercentenary of the English revolution of 1688.

It might help to avoid misunderstanding, and allay fears, if you would provide members of the REC with copies of this letter, which is, however, written in a personal capacity only.

At the heart of the issue is a clash between two views as to what is the chief historical significance of the events of 1688.

The first view, which appears to be the most commonly held (by Marxist and non-Marxist historians alike), is that the chief significance of the English Revolution lies in the ending of the absolute power of the monarchy (as epitomised, for example by the judicial murder, by Judge Jeffries on behalf of James II, of more than 300 people in Taunton alone alone in 1685), and the beginnings of our present Parliamentary democracy and constitution.

The second view, propagated in particular by the Orange Order, the National Front, and, more recently Labour Briefing, is that the chief significance of 1688 lies in the events which followed in Ireland after James's retreat there, and in the fact that a century later, an order was founded that chose to take its name from William of Orange.

Orange Order and National Front members will certainly be descending on Devon in 1988, with the aim of implanting in the public mind, as forcefully as they can, their highly ideosyncratic view as to what constitutes the chief significance of the events of 1688. They are coming for this reason, and this reason alone, and certainly not because of the flower festival, concerts or exhibitions being sponsored by Exeter City Council!

Indeed, if Exeter City Council were were to cancel its programme (including the planned Conference on the Bill of Rights and the parliamentary exhibition on the Constitution), not only would members of the Orange Order and the National Front

still come to Devon in 1988, but we would also be allowing the National Front/Labour Briefing interpretation of the events of 1688 to go unchallenged and would be allowing the Orange Order to hi-jack the tercentenary of the English Revolution entirely for their own, bigoted purposes.

Despite these points, I should say that I sympathise with those REC members, who have expressed concern, especially if they have fallen victim to some of the outrageous lies being circulated (for reasons that are not yet entirely clear) by some of those currently campaigning against the tercentenary commemorations. (...)

Yours fraternally,

John Shepherd (Vice-Chair, Exeter CLP, writing in personal capacity)

Several points need to be made about Dr. Shepherd's letter.

1. Dr. Shepherd has shifted his own opinion on the celebrations. Initially he argued that what was needed was a "quiet word" to stop the celebrations, which would never have been promoted by the City Council Labour Group, had they realised their implications. Now, Dr. Shepherd is arguing that the celebrations should go ahead, lest the "National Front/Labour Briefing interpretation" of the events of 1688 go unchallenged.

2. Dr. Shepherd descends into the gutter when he equates the view taken by Labour Briefing on the celebrations with that of the National Front, particularly when the Labour leader of the City Council has been congratulated by the National Front and Labour Briefing supporters have been sent hate mail.

3. Dr. Shepherd writes about "a clash of two views as to the chief historical significance of the events of 1688". The heart of this matter is not an academic debate about history; whether the actions of William were more significant in Ireland or Britain. The living legacy of William is certainly greater in Irish politics than in Britain, and the wish of Dr. Shepherd and other celebration supporters to marginalise or ignore that living legacy in Ireland is a symptom of imperialist attitudes within the Exeter Labour Party. Nobody doubts that William of Orange played a central historical role in defeating feudal absolutism and bringing about a protracted bourgeois revolution in Britain; yet, it is hard to see why socialists should seek to promote and celebrate these events, particularly when (i) William of Orange is a symbol of present day imperial bigotry in Ireland, and (ii) the working people in Britain played no part in the events of 1688.

4. Dr. Shepherd writes about 1688 bringing about "the beginnings of our present parliamentary democracy and constitution" which the City Council is supporting a conference to celebrate. It ill becomes a socialist to show such an obsequious attitude to the far from democratic, archaic British capitalist state. (It is hard to believe that Dr. Shepherd claims to have been Exeter's leading Bennite in the seventies)

5. Dr. Shepherd writes that "Orange Order and National Front members will certainly be descending on Devon in 1988" Is he unable to see that the City Council sponsored William of Orange celebrations provide the focus.

6. Dr. Shepherd is kind enough to "sympathise with those REC members who have expressed concern, especially if they have fallen victim to some of the outrageous lies being circulated...by some of those currently campaigning against the

tercentenary celebrations" To whom is Dr. Shepherd referring? What are the lies? His only "evidence" is a letter of protest against the celebrations by somebody in Scotland, who exaggerates the City Council's actions. Does that prove that anti-fascists in Exeter are telling lies? Dr. Shepherd goes further in saying that Exeter anti-fascists are telling lies "for reasons that are not yet entirely clear" So Dr. Shepherd "knows" at least in part why anti-fascists are "telling lies", but were this indeed the case surely he would mention the "evil motives" in his letter.

7. Dr. Shepherd is keen to stress that the letter is written in a personal capacity, which could mean one of two things; either he is keen to write secretly, so that the Exeter Labour Party is kept in the dark, or the EC of the Party agrees with some of the points we make against the letter and would not support it.

ORANGE UPDATE

1987 SAW THE GROWTH OF A MASS CAMPAIGN LED BY EXETER ANTI-FASCIST ACTION AGAINST THE CITY COUNCIL SPONSORED WILLIAM OF ORANGE CELEBRATIONS. THE LABOUR-LED COUNCIL IS STUBBLY PUSHING AHEAD. PETER BOWING TAKES STOCK...

1988 is the tercentenary of the landing in Brixham in Devon of William of Orange. The Labour-led Exeter City Council have linked with the "William and Mary Tercentenary Trust" and have allocated £60,000 towards civic celebrations in his honour.

William of Orange, following his victory over the Catholic Irish in the Battle of the Boyne in 1691, became the historical figurehead for the Protestant political and economic domination in Ireland. And, the name of William of Orange was taken by the masonic Orange Order in 1795 to justify their campaign to maintain Protestant hegemony in all spheres of Irish life. Today, William of Orange remains the dominant symbol of Protestant hegemony, with his victory of 1691 still being celebrated.

Initially, the Labour Group on Exeter City Council was too politically ignorant to realise what they were doing. But following a broad based campaign against the celebrations, in which even Exeter's Conservative MP expressed his reservations, the Labour Group became well informed on the matter; yet, they still decided to press ahead.

Matters have now moved ahead:

* The National Front have congratulated the Labour Council leader, Chester Long,

for promoting the celebrations. They say that they intend to "bring their supporters from all over the country to Devon". Threatening mail has been sent to the press officer of Exeter Anti-Fascist Action which is leading the fight against the celebrations.

* The Orange Order has booked part of the University of Exeter for a major conference in September 1988.

* National Anti-Fascist Action have made opposition to the William of Orange tercentenary celebration one of their three major campaigns in 1988.

* Many branches and Constituency Labour Parties, including the Regional Party in Bristol, have condemned the Exeter City Council Labour Group's promotion of the celebrations. The Exeter Constituency itself initially opposed the celebrations, but reversed its position under pressure from the Labour Group.

The action of the Exeter Labour Group reveals the imperialist attitudes, particularly towards Ireland within much of the Labour Party. They claim that the Irish connection of William of Orange can be forgotten, although this is hardly logical given that the National Front and the Orange Order intend to come to Exeter precisely because of the Irish connection.

The campaign against the William of Orange celebration in Exeter must be stepped up; the celebrations are an insult to the people of Ireland. The campaign in Exeter is being led by Exeter Anti-Fascist Action, 1 Parliament St. Resolutions and letters opposing the celebrations should be sent to Exeter Labour Party, 26 Clifton Hill.