

# DEVON LABOUR BRIEFING

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## Socialism Is The Message

Devon Labour Briefing welcomes the visit of Tony Benn to Exeter. It remains to be seen how successful his leadership campaign will be, not in terms of his winning the actual leadership of the party but in terms of re-establishing socialism in the party.

Kinnock seems almost certain to retain the leadership in spite of his guffs and his commitment to managing capitalism. In the process of winning over the middle ground, (to what?) Kinnock has followed hard on the heels of David Owen, who has followed hard on the heels of Margaret Thatcher. At least Owen was more honest about abandoning socialism when he left the Labour Party with others of his ilk to form the SDP. Kinnock has been less honest and has set about transforming the party into the sort of social democratic organisation that Owen aspired to.

It was in this context, as Kinnock pushed successfully on, that the Benn and Heffer campaign was launched. Benn has pointed to what amounts a 'new front bench

consensus'. Each day the list of agreements grows to include;

- \*NATO and its nuclear umbrella
- \*US bases in Britain
- \*High level of arms expenditure
- \*ECC- moving to a federal Europe
- \*British occupation of Northern Ireland
- \*The irreversibility of privatisation
- \*Entrenchment of market forces
- \*Legislation to control trade Unions
- \*Continuation of the House of Lords.

By this consensus Kinnock hopes to get to number 10 through merely pointing to the incompetence of the Tory leaders. The fact that he has led the party to this consensus rather than rouse meaningful opposition and hold up the alternative shows that the Tories have proved

**LABOUR-TAKE THE POWER!**

competent; Thatcher's desire to smash socialism becomes ever more a reality with the help of Kinnock & co, (plc.) The crises of the capitalist economy are bound to occur. Kinnock is waiting for the one that Thatcher cannot handle. When the voters perceive this, and Thatcher's class recognise it, they will be more than willing to allow Kinnock in and let him do their dirty work. And do it he will; he has shown no signs of following the socialist road!

utopian socialist. He recognises the need for 'extra-parliamentary action' but only to support a Labour Government. He recognises also the 'extra-parliamentary' nature of the machinery of the capitalist class but does not address how this should be overcome.

In spite of this Benn and Heffer should be supported in the



Tony Benn addresses the Second Socialist Conference



leadership campaign. Kinnock's march down the blue road must not go unchecked. A rallying point for socialists within the Labour Party is sorely needed. Kinnock's carefully invited audience in Exeter and his stage-managed tour shrouded in secrecy as far as most rank and file party members were concerned typifies his politics. In the same way Benn's openness reflects his more democratic tendencies. No-one should be fooled by Kinnock's rhetoric. Even at its most tortuous it is not an apology for socialism which is by nature democratic. Benn is open and clear; let's get socialism back on the agenda;

**Vote for a  
socialist Leader**

**Vote Benn and  
Heffer!**

Benn wishes to re-establish socialism as the direction of the Labour Party. This clearly needs to be done. Benn also recognises that socialism has to be restored to the wider agenda. To this end he has played a part in the Socialist Conference, in which socialists within and outside the Labour party have discussed how to do this. In order for the Socialist Conference to continue there has been much fudging of the central point of departure for those outside the party, ie can socialism be achieved by parliamentary means. It is in this area where Benn's own politics are flawed. He is essentially a

# Defy The Poll Tax

CHRIS CHURCHWARD WRITES ABOUT  
THE NEXT STAGE IN OPPOSING THE  
POLL TAX

Stage 1 of the campaign; opposition to the passage through Parliament of the legislation, was doomed to failure. It had great potential publicity which was barely exploited. Locally, as nationally little was done. The tiny branch of the New Communist Party presented a petition to John Hannam, M.P., USDAW, (the shop-workers union,) organised a march and rally (which was marred by atrocious weather,) and the Labour party distributed a leaflet saying that the poll tax was a bad thing.

Although many Conservative M.P.'s, (including many of yesterdays men like Ted Heath,) expressed 'reservation' and even outright opposition, not enough of them were prepared to defy 'mighty Maggie' by taking their opposition to the voting lobby. This 'flag ship' of the Government's programme limped into port with the mutiny suppressed. The Government's majority of 25 was only a quarter of the normal in the House of Commons.

In the 'upper chamber', unelected members were rounded up including the backwoodsmen whose attendance in the House is so rare that they hardly know how to get there. A respectable majority was thus enough to send the Bill on for Royal Assent. just before the Summer recess.

That's now in the past. We need now to look to the future; the plan for stage 2 of opposition to this regressive legislation which redistribute wealth in the wrong direction needs to be drawn up.

So far the Labour leadership has been an ineffective opposition and there is little to suggest that the Labour Party can be expected to organise effective resistance. The possibility of bringing many disparate groups together in opposition needs to be examined, although there is not space in this article so to do.

## RUIN THE REGISTER

I would suggest that stage 2 involves attempts to frustrate the implementation of the legislation. It cannot be levied until the register is compiled and in that process there all sorts of perfectly legitimate forms of action available to us. These mainly involve gumming up the bureaucracy and harrassing the canvassers collecting names.



It is my view that people should not lose their votes; they must continue to register on the roll of electors.

The register for the poll tax is another thing. This will be compiled between April and October in 1989. In Scotland they are experiencing this now, as they are being used as the guinea pigs. We can learn from their experiences.

Many people have declared that they will not pay and face the prospect of prison instead. Some may have no choice as all must pay at least 20% even if living at subsistence on social security benefits; they simply do not have the ability to pay this tax which is both feared and hated.

But we should not be looking for martyrs. Defiance must be all, (not at least most,) together. No-one should take risks unless they know that they have the support of their neighbours, trade union comrades and political allies.

A campaign to organise support is needed. I would urge Labour Briefing to take the lead—the local politicians seem loathe to do so. After all the defeats of the last 9 years at the hands of Thatcher's devious Government the Axe the Poll Tax campaign offers the best chance to turn the tide.

## Where the far right are up to

In the mid 1970's the National Front, (NF,) boasted a membership of more than 17,000. In 1977 GLC elections they scored spectacular results with nearly 20% of the vote in some boroughs. A combination of Anti-Nazi League activities and the election of a Tory Government led to a rapid decline after 1979—partly due to to Mrs. Thatcher's speech in which she said that people were feeling "swamped" by immigrants.

Arguably, the decline in popular support for the NF was less to do with the rejection of their ideology and more to do with support for a Tory party who could implement racist immigration policies. This is not to deny the success of the Anti-Nazi League in exposing the hidden fascist agenda to some supporters who had been taken in by their popular racist

image. Indeed, racism is no less rife with an estimated racial attack every 7.5 minutes in England and Wales.

The post 79 election decline in support for the NF led to a series of splits. The first major split occurred in 1980 when their ex-chairman, John Tyndall left to form the British Nationalist Party, (BNP,). The second split came in 1983 when the old-guard NF, dominated by the then chairman, Martin Webster, were expelled by a new, younger, grouping of the so-called 'political soldiers' led by Michael Walker, Patrick Harrington, Nick Griffin and Derek Holland.

This group adopted the strasserite or 'third position' of "neither



BNP chief John Tyndall.

capitalism nor communism, but nationalist revolution." However, this led to a further split in 1986 when a faction including prominent members such as Joe Pearce, Martin Windfield and Jon Anderson, (who had helped in the expulsion of the old-guard,) were ousted by the 'political soldiers'. They formed the 'Flag' group. Essentially, their chief worries were around links with groups like the 'Armed Revolutionary Nuclei, (NAR,) a group of Italian fascist terrorists were responsible for the Bologna railway station bombing in 1980 in which 85 people were killed. The 'Flag' group were denounced as a "reactionary Tory element". However, they formed the National Front Support Group, (NFSG,) and claimed that they were the true

National Front. (The NFSG is responsible for most of the fascist activity around Exeter.)

This last split occurred following a major article in League of St. George's journal 'The National Review' by Colin Jordan. Jordan was a former leader of the 1960's National Socialist Movement and, later, the BM. In the article he called for a re-alignment of the fascist movement between legal and illegal activities; ie. between a political and military wing of the movement, something which seems to have been happening: The 'political soldiers' of the 'third position' have been increasingly been adopting a pro-terrorist position and forging links with groups like NAR and loyalist terrorist groups in Northern Ireland.

They themselves have moved to a classic terrorist cellular structure. Meanwhile the NFSG and BNP announced a 'nationalist alliance' in 1987 in which both parties agreed not to stand candidates against each other and to mount joint campaigns. The separation of political and military wings, NFSG/BNP and NF, is not completely clear cut; Steve Brady of the NFSG was instrumental in forming links with NAR and the Ulster Volunteer Force, (UVF,).

One effect of the diverging directions of the 2 factions which split in 1986 was the development by the NF of a UDI for Ulster policy in opposition to the traditional keep Ulster British policy retained by the NFSG. The NF believe that the European nationalist revolution will start in Ulster. This places them outside the mainstream loyalist Orange movement, although there have been signs of similar rifts within the Orange movement.

The third position NF also have policies which seem quite bizarre, such as support for black separatists like the American anti-semitic muslims led by Louis Farrakhan. There have been meetings with Libyan and Iranian muslim fundamentalists and reports of black people selling pro-Khomeini papers alongside NF street-sellers. What may appear as a drift from

racism is, of course, no such thing, but the remorseless pursuit of global racial separation which would mean compulsory repatriation.

## FASCISTS IN FRANCE

The French situation shows how quickly there can still be a rise in popular support for fascists.



Aryan Nations 'political soldiers'.

Indeed, the French situation provides several lessons. The French presidential elections saw Jean Marie Le-Pen of the National Front gain 14% of the votes, (over 4.4 million!) The votes came from across the whole social spectrum including 15% of students and 21% of workers. The rapid rise of support can be likened to that in Germany which led Hitler to power. One lesson is the that left parties need to pursue radical policies when in power and not to disillusion their supporters as did the French socialist and communist parties, thus creating a vacuum which the fascists can occupy. The failure of these parties to deal with the material conditions, such as mass unemployment encourage the circumstances in which fascism can breed.

Another lesson is the need for these parties to confront the fascists, particularly over racism, rather than to make concessions to the drift.

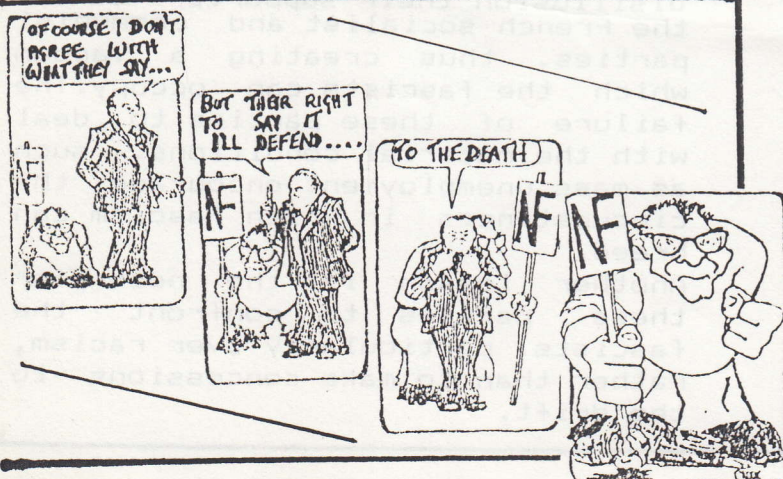
## ARE THE FASCISTS A THREAT?

Will the decline of the British Fascist movement continue? Membership of all groups is estimated to be less than 6,000. A recent NFSG rally attracted less than 100. Election results have not been so good. Although these facts point the an end to the fascist threat we need to display caution and recognise that they should not be dismissed:

On the electoral front, they have not fielded so many candidates since the deposit rose to £500 in parliamentary elections.

In Britain today the fascist movement is small and divided. The apparent boom is so fragile that circumstances could change rapidly and provided the conditions for the likes of the NF to make rapid gains. The lack of a real alternative from the Labour Party could lead to the sort of disillusionment on which fascists feed.

Opposition to fascism and racism need to be clear. Keeping quiet on immigration issues etc. in order to win a few votes will only aid the racists and fascists. The crass behaviour of local Labour city councillors in encouraging the Orange order and not mounting active opposition, or even aiding those who are is part of the classic set of conditions which help the rise of fascism. Fascists cannot be ignored; there is little chance that they will go away. There may be times when there are less of them and they are less effective but the threat will always be there until we have a truly socialist society.



# Orange up date

On September 17 the Orange Order, with Paisley to exhort them, will march through Exeter. The police are taking what appears to be the libertarian position that to ban the march would be an infringement of civil liberties. John Shepherd supports this position claiming that banning the Orange Order would be a step towards the future banning of Anti-Apartheid, CND, etc demonstrations. That the police with its links with the RUC should adopt their view is not surprising. That John Shepherd should elaborate this argument in writing shows a complete abandonment of political analysis and with it a refusal to challenge his leaders.

## LIBERAL FOLLY

Meanwhile, the police have given provisional permission to Anti-Fascist Action to hold a counter-demonstration on the same day, presumably wanting to be evenhanded. Although we might not expect the police to make political distinctions between the Orange Order and Anti-Fascist Action we might be led to expect more of Celia Shepherd. She has put in writing that although the Orange Order and National Front are extremist and racist, because they are legal organisations they have a right to march. She further believes that any trouble is more likely to come from supporters of AFA. The best response, she claims, to the Orange Order and NF march is for everyone to leave the streets and ignore them. People in Germany in the 1930's no doubt believed that by ignoring the Nazis they would go away. In fact they flourished just as ignoring the Orange Order and NF now would give them a free hand to parade their sectarianism and bigotry, allow them to recruit and spread their racism and ultimately lead to an increase in racial attacks and violence.

The Shepherds' views illustrate the moral and political bankruptcy which is symptomatic of the Exeter Labour Group and the ruling clique of Exeter Labour Party. For by taking a so-called 'even-handed' approach between the Orange Order and the National Front on one hand, and Anti-Fascist Action on the other, they are in effect equating anti-fascism and anti-racism with fascism, racism and bigotry. Such an analysis ill-becomes a Labour council. One of the basic tenets of socialism is a commitment to end all forms of discrimination on the basis of class, race, sex, colour, creed or sexuality. The Council and its officers further maintain the "even-handed" approach by refusing both the Orange Order and AFA the use of council grounds for assembly and rallying. That the Council takes this line is a disgrace when a genuine socialist council should actively support groups such as Anti-Fascist Action. Chesterfield Council to their credit, despite the fact that they have sponsored the official Tercentenary Celebrations, gave permission to the Campaign Against Loyalist/Fascist Parades to use council grounds. In fact the Leader of Chesterfield Council even took part in their march on 18 June!

## FASCISTS AND BIGOTS HAVE A BROTHER IN LONG

Anti-Fascist Action has the support of a wide range of groups and individuals including the British Labour Group in the Euro-Parliament; ten Labour MPs who recently wrote a letter to the Guardian; and world renowned historian on the seventeenth century, Christopher Hill. His comments in a recent letter to Chester Long, leader of Exeter City Council, best sum up reasons why Exeter Labour Group has been brought into disrepute by their actions: "One cannot separate the historical contribution of William to the overthrow of absolutism in 1688 from the symbolic significance given to him by protestant terrorists and the National Front today. Both the latter will make great propaganda capital out of any celebration of William of Orange. It seems wrong for Labour to abet them."

Besides ignoring the broad based support for AFA, the Council is ignoring the interests of public order on the day. The practical effect of Exeter City Council's decision will be that it will force AFA to assemble on a highway on 17 September, thus increasing the inconvenience to the public, making it more difficult to maintain discipline and increasing the possibility of there being serious public disorder from National Front and Ulster Volunteer Force violence.

Neither the police nor the Council are taking seriously the contemptible nature of the Orange Order and the National Front and their complexities. Following a recent split between the Orange Order and the pro-UVF Lodge 200, which now calls itself the Orange Association, there will be three separate Loyalist/Fascist demonstrations in Exeter on 17 September: the Orange Order led by Rev. Ian Paisley; the Orange Association, which has links with



the protestant terrorist UVF; and the National Front, whose local fuhrer Mark Cotterill has promised to bring violence to Exeter (Western Morning News, 1 August 1988).

The intransigence of Exeter City Council, and in particular the arrogance and ignorance of Chester Long, has resulted in them committing an unforgiveable blunder, despite repeated warnings for the last two years, which will result in Exeter being swamped with fascists and bigots. They haven't even got the moral courage to admit that they might have been a bit naive. Unlike Chesterfield and Oxford, which changed its mind on

becoming better informed, Exeter City Council slips further and further into a Pontius Pilate role hoping to wash its hands of all involvement and implications. In fact Chester Long is going to be away from Exeter on 17 September leaving the fascists to get on with it. Exeter City Council will go down in history as the first Labour Council to be congratulated by fascists.

It is now up to the people of Exeter to defend our city against the Orange Order and National Front onslaught - join Anti-Fascist Action on 17 September at noon outside Bury Meadow.

Anti-Fascist Action

# MARCH AGAINST FASCISM

MARCH THROUGH EXETER CITY CENTRE -  
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 17th



POLITICAL SOLDIERS



*Friends of British Ulster parade their sectarianism through Bridgwater in 1986*



*The parade is soon used by National Front members to bring violence to the streets*

On Saturday September 17th the bigotted Orange Order will be celebrating the 300th anniversary of the landing of William of Orange in Britain by marching through Exeter. The Orange Order has close links with the National Front who have promised to "bring supporters from all over the country to Devon" on this day.

**Exeter Anti-Fascist Action are organising a counter-march. Make sure you help us show that Fascists are not wanted on our streets!**

Exeter AFA c/o Box No. 176, 1 Parliament Street, Exeter, Devon.