

DEVON LABOUR BRIEFING

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20p

ALL OUT!

Large sections of the labour movement are being faced with cuts in their wages, working conditions and rights to national negotiations with employers. As we go to press the dockers have just started an indefinite strike as a result of the repeal of the National Dock Labour Scheme; the rail dispute is going into the fourth week of one day strikes with ASLEF now joining the action by starting an over-time ban; nearly half a million local government workers are taking part in the first ever NALGO national strike; the engineering union has drawn up a "hit list" of companies to disrupt in pursuit of their demand for a 35-hour week; oil workers in the north sea have been striking for better pay and safety conditions; the dispute at the BBC continues.... The employers and the government have been trying to impose 7% pay "increases" (cuts) at a time when inflation, at over 8%, is eroding our standard of living and Tory policies are forcing up our rent and mortgage payments. Workers are starting to fight back!

For the first time since the miners strike the seemingly "unbeatable" Tory Government is looking decidedly weak, divided and vulnerable. The Government is more unpopular than ever with its continued attacks on the working class, the poor and the oppressed.

By Dave Parks (Exeter CLP)

Even large sections of the middle class are deeply concerned by the Poll Tax, the attacks on the Education and Health services and the privatisation of water. These policies must be defeated and the Tories thrown out! But what is the Labour leadership doing towards this?

At a time when more workers are taking action against the employers and the Government, Neil Kinnock through the policy review is adopting the self-same Thatcherite agenda that more and more people are rejecting. From public ownership to abolition of anti-trade union laws, from unilateralism to Lesbian and Gay rights, all are being abandoned on the altar of electoralism. With the Tories getting trounced at the Euro elections and Labour leading in the opinion polls, the sell out may appear to some to be justified. Indeed Labour is now receiving some favourable coverage in the editorial columns of some Tory newspapers. This will possibly continue whilst Kinnock crushes the last vestiges of socialism in the Labour Party, however when it comes to the crunch the employers, the City of London and the newspaper editors will always favour their Party (not Labour!).

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

The reason for the Tories poor performance has, however, far more to do with their immense unpopularity and not Kinnock's sell out of the century. This can be seen from the massive increase in support for parties who on many issues such as unilateralism and defiance of the Poll Tax are well to the left of Labour; from the Greens pushing Labour into third place in Devon to the swing to the SNP in Glasgow.

Despite Kinnock, we as workers, tenants, campaigners against the Poll Tax must fight to remove the Tory government. However this will only be the start. A Kinnock Labour Government, with no commitment to socialism, will be forced to carry out the wishes of the bosses. He will also cut back on public services, on our standard of living and on our rights, wages and conditions. We will have to make sure that there is a Socialist Movement, inside and outside the Labour Party, that is strong enough to remove Kinnock if he will not carry out a socialist programme.

See back page.

Bristol Docks

Organising solidarity

By Dave Amos

In Bristol local dockers and their supporters have set up a group to co-ordinate solidarity activity.

The group was formed after a joint meeting of Bristol East CLP and the Solidarity Network National Committee, addressed by a leading docks steward.

Afterwards, an *ad hoc* group of Labour Party and trade union activists met informally with dock shop stewards and agreed on a number of initiatives.

First, a public launching of a Dockers Solidarity Group on July 10th at Shepherds Hall, Old Market.

Amongst other things the meeting will take a report on how the dockers' fare at the TGWU Conference.

Secondly, it was agreed to seek affiliations from local labour movement bodies. A model resolution was prepared to that effect, which also made general arguments about the employers' offensive on national agreements and the right to strike.

Thirdly, to spread awareness of the dockers' case and to build the public meeting a newsletter sponsored by a local NCU branch has been produced.

In addition, a specific edition of the newsletter has been prepared for the TGWU Conference. This calls on TGWU leaders to give full support to the dockers in defence of national agreements on basic trade union rights.

It is signed by two delegates to the Conference (one from the docks) on behalf of the Solidarity Group.

It was felt to be important to show to dockers that there were comrades in other industries backing their strike who could help resource it if their own national union leadership would not.

Finally, as the Bristol docks are owned by the local (Labour) Council it was agreed to put pressure on the Labour Group not to try to derail the dockers' national fight by a local agreement and to get them to issue a public statement along these lines.

The Bristol Dockers Solidarity Group meets every Monday at T&G Hall, Gloucester Road, Avonmouth. Tel: 0272 823032.

Affiliations would be welcomed; speakers are available: contact: John Bees (Sec. Shop Stewards).

Labour Leaders In Bid To Break NALGO Strike At Arts Centre

On 4 July, the first day of Nalgos rolling programme of industrial action, staff at the Exeter Arts Centre went on strike picketing their workplace.

The workers immediately came under fire from the 2 Labour Councillors on the Arts Centre Management Committee, Martin Rich and the wonderful Saxon Spence. Rich and Spence claimed the workers were taking "secondary action" and got the management to use verbal and then written warnings, threatening to discipline any staff who joined in the next phase of the action, a two day strike. In fact, Councillor Rich even went on the radio saying the Centre would get an injunction to break the strike.

This attempt to intimidate the workforce failed and they stood firm. They had been balloted on industrial action and are employed on local government pay scales and conditions of service; there was no question of them taking "secondary action". Nalگو stood firm too, telling the workers to stay on strike with the backing of the branch and seeking a legal opinion to highlight what nonsense Spence and Rich were spouting.

At an Arts Centre Management Committee meeting on Wednesday 5 July the 2 Labour Councillors had backed off, the other members of the committee actually appeared sympathetic to the plight of their staff, and there didn't seem to be any problem regarding the next phase of the action.

Although this incident appears to be resolved, there is no excuse for this behaviour of Spence and Rich. They have used intimidation and threatened to use Tory anti-trade union law in order to break a legitimate strike. They have shown only contempt for the staff and their trade union. Both councillors should be deeply ashamed of themselves, particularly Saxon who is a retired member of Nalگو's University Branch. Is there no level to which these traitors will not stoop to undermine action taken by workers?

Paul Giblin

Devon Nalگو Branch Secretary (in a personal capacity)

STOP PRESS: The Devon County Solicitor has just made it clear to workers at the Arts Centre that their action is NOT "secondary".

Saxon Attacks Nursery Workers

Workers and trade unionists are used to having their pay, rights and terms of conditions battered by the Tories, but it gets a bit much when Labour Councillors join forces with the class enemy to do the same thing...

Earlier this year a national agreement (known as Circular 316) was made giving a long overdue pay rise to Nursery staff. These are some of the lowest paid and hardest worked staff in public sector employment, they are mainly women and notoriously difficult to organise, being isolated in schools up and down the country.

These workers, perhaps more than others, deserved a pay increase yet Devon County Council decided to break the national agreement by saying that it only applied to qualified Nursery Nurses, rather than to all Nursery staff, as stated in the text of Circular 316.

When this decision was made Devon County Council was still hung, and Labour and "Alliance" parties had the chance to overturn the County Manpower Services Officer's ruling and give all Nursery staff and classroom assistants the wages they more than deserve.

The nursery staff are mostly members of NALGO, who organised successful lobbies of County Council and urged workers to start lodging grievances with the employers. As leader of the County Labour Group Saxon Spence was targetted for lobbying, being supplied with the full text of the national agreement and (literally) masses of information on the atrocious pay and conditions of nursery staff. Saxon was expected to be particularly sympathetic as she is always pushing forward Labour's commitment to school care for the "the rising fives", a service for which adequately paid classroom assistants are essential.

Well, despite comprehensive lobbying Saxon led the Labour Group in voting with the Tories against the implementation of the national agreement. She did this not just once, but twice, in both the Education Committee and the full Council! There was no excuse for her behaviour as she quite blatantly chose to listen to the County Manpower Services Officer and ignore the trade union representing low paid workers. Even some of the Alliance Councillors managed to grasp the issue and vote in favour of giving Nalگو the chance to negotiate a settlement based on the national pay award.



The County Council is now Tory controlled but the nursery staff have not given up their fight. At a meeting on the 26 June they decided in favour of taking industrial action. They will be balloted on 3 one day strikes in the new term, the strikes coinciding with mass lobbying of the Policy Committee, Education Committee and full Council meeting. The County Manpower Services Officer has the summer holiday in which to come up with something decent for his most exploited staff.

While the resolve of the classroom assistants has been magnificent none of their action would have been necessary if Saxon Spence had one ounce of socialist integrity in her body. The nursery staff feel nothing but contempt for a Labour Councillor who can side with the Tories to keep wages down at an abysmal level in the face of a national agreement to raise them.

Needless to say, most nursery staff did not vote Labour in the County Council elections. In fact, many Nalگو members couldn't bring themselves to vote Labour either; with friends like Saxon who needs enemies?

Paul Giblin
Branch Secretary Devon County
Nalگو (in personal capacity)

Support NALGO

The present phase of Industrial Action is coming to an end. If there is no resolution to the dispute then NALGO should be Ballotting for an escalation of the strike. We call for a YES vote in defence of pay and conditions as well as local services. Don't cross the picket lines. SUPPORT NALGO.

WORKERS IN EDUCATION

NATFHE Dispute

At this time of year teachers assess the value which the Government and employers attach to them. The assessment this year is that we are undervalued, underpaid and under resourced.

In this year's pay claim teachers in Further Education have asked for a '3,400 flat rate to restore relativities and living standards. The employers have offered 5.3% which our union, the National Association of Teachers in Further & Higher Education (NATFHE), has rejected, for it would depress living standards even further than they have been already, and further erode relativities with other comparable professional employees.

We are also claiming parity for part-timers who are exploited and are often women who have had career breaks. The employers have rejected this and in addition propose that all part-time hours will be paid at the lowest grade (Grade 5). Managers may pay a higher rate for certain courses at local discretion. There would be no nationally agreed criteria for either the level of difficulty of such courses or the appropriate "higher rate". Our response is that hourly paid part-timers deserve good employment practices and equal opportunities. A national minimum rate for part-timers, based on category 5, would produce a cut in earnings of those doing higher category work. Local discretion would move us into chaos and the principle of casual labour, not flexibility.

The Employers also propose abolition of automatic progress to senior lecturer through teaching higher grade work and abolition of nationally agreed numbers of promotional posts, which would also depend on local discretion. We have claimed a removal of bars to progression from senior lecturer to principal lecturer, which has been rejected. The employers emphasise that they want to attract, retain and value high quality lecturing staff. We cannot see that high quality staff will be attracted to a profession in which opportunities for progression are curtailed and left to the idiosyncracies of local managers. It would appear that what the employers actually want is to cut their spending and apply the rules of business to education i.e. productivity, pay by performance etc.

The rules of business are inappropriate to education and the attitudes of government and employers display a pitiful lack of understanding of what we do.



Even lecturers are joining the class struggle ...

In the further education sector the expansion of our work load in recent years has been intense and invisible. Implementation of 100% course work in many syllabuses and continuous assessment means that we now do most of the work done by the examination boards for no extra pay and no extra time allowance. To serve these courses we have to attend moderation to standardise marks, after having marked sample scripts (approx. 180 pages a time) throughout the year; again no extra time or money given. We have to plan the courses, prepare, set and mark the assignments, record and report our work. In some cases assignments can be anything between 3,000 & 5,000 words and classes can be as large as 21 students. Of course we do continue teaching through all this, preparing the classes, marking work etc.

Innovations are good for the students but not if the staff are demoralised and ill through stress. Take for example the initiatives of the negotiated curriculum

WORKERS IN EDUCATION

and profiling which involve the students increasingly in planning and assessing their learning with staff. To do this effectively takes a great deal of time which is not timetabled. Furthermore staff have to develop new shifts for this work in their "free" time; that's when they're not writing reports, references, doing a huge range of administration, tutorials, responding to crises, needs, offering remedial help.... For some spells this may require working 14 hours a day, weekends, bank holidays, and almost all of those long holidays that people envy us for!

Employers and government want to measure and quantify our work, add up our teaching hours, league table our exam results but not notice our work as researchers, course designers, administrators, councillors, assessors, moderators. Is a manager paid only for the hours spent at board meetings, a judge only the hours in court?

It is not surprising that we do not feel valued as professionals, it is not surprising that lecturers are absent with stress related illnesses. The offers made in negotiations this year, far from attracting high-quality lecturers, will worsen our conditions and fail to give us the time and money we deserve. Once committed lecturers will be lost and the service impaired.

Support us in our struggle. If there is no resolution of the dispute soon then we shall be balloting for a one-day strike in next term. We shall need you beside us on the picket line.

Fran Jenkin. Exeter CLP.

AUT Dispute

It has been an exciting year at Exeter University. For five months, academics and academic staff were involved in industrial action over their pay. Meanwhile the students were taking action over the introduction of student loans. They picketed, demonstrated and even occupied the office of the Vice-Chancellor for two days.

Both campaigns had mixed fortunes. On the one hand neither achieve its objectives. The staff finally accepted a salary offer worth 6.5% plus a lump sum of 285 pounds over a two year period. While this more than doubled the original offer, it still represents a pay cut in the region of 10% given that the annual rate of inflation is currently over 8%. Similarly, the government still intends to introduce legislation on loans even if their case has been totally discredited.

However, on the other hand, both campaigns displayed a level of anger, organisation and action that has not been seen for many years. Despite extreme threats - including that of mass dismissals - in various universities, the National AUT action remained solid to the end. People saw that, in the face of unity, Vice-chancellors were forced to back off from their threats. They saw that the AUT can act as a union and that there is strength in united action. Likewise, the Guild of Students destroyed the myth that all Exeter students are apathetic or reactionary by organising some of the most effective action in the whole country.

Even more important, the Guild and the AUT began to work together. The AUT spoke at student rallies and marched on student demonstrations against loans. Students showed consistent support for staff throughout the five months of action - even though they stood to be disadvantaged by the examination boycott and the marking boycott. The reason was quite clear: they understood that the real issue underlying the salary dispute was the question of underfunding of education.

Salaries are low because the government refuses to give adequate grants to the universities. And, as salaries fall, so people are discouraged from entering the academic world unless they have independent means. If good people don't enter the system or leave it then standards will inevitably fall and the students will inevitably suffer. In supporting the AUT, students were putting the good of education before their immediate self-interest

But the issue of loans is also related to government underfunding. They hope to save money by refusing to pay students a proper grant. Once again the result will be that students will be put of universities by the prospect of the huge sums they will have to pay at the end of their studies - unless of course they are rich enough for it not to matter.

The fact that staff and students have shown a willingness to fight and the fact that they realise they are involved in a common fight for the funding of education is extremely important. All the more so because the issues will not go away. If anything they will become more intense next year. Staff will be expecting a substantial pay increase to compensate for the 30% erosion since Thatcher came to power. Students will continue to fight the introduction of loans. The unity that has emerged must be strengthened and deepened.

Steve Reicher. Exeter CLP

Refugee Crisis Hits Exeter



The Tory Government's record on refugees has been nothing short of barbaric. Out of several hundred Tamil asylum seekers between 1986 and 1988 only THIRTEEN were granted refugee status. With this record borne in mind, it was with a feeling of urgency that anti-racists in Exeter greeted the news on the 6th June, that 14 Kurdish refugees had just been transferred to Exeter prison and that 12 of them were on hunger strike.

The day after hearing of the Kurds being held in Exeter prison, members of Exeter Anti-Fascist Action staged a vigil outside the prison demanding that the Kurds be released and granted asylum. The protest achieved wide media coverage including TV and radio and highlighted the plight of the Kurds and the racist nature of the immigration laws. Thus the Exeter Kurdish Refugee Support Group was formed.

The Kurds, like the Tamils before them, were fleeing from army clamp downs and repression. The Kurdish people live in the border regions between Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. After the first world war a Kurdish state was to be carved out of the territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire, however the Kurds were double crossed and their right to national self-determination was denied. Ever since the Kurds have remained a minority in those countries fighting for democratic rights and an independent Kurdistan. In recent times they have faced barbaric repression. In Iraq they have been subjected to genocide through the use of chemical weapons by the Ba'athist regime. Over a quarter of a million Kurds on the Iranian border are faced with a programme of forced deportation to the South of Iraq. Many Kurds have fled from Iraq to South-East Turkey. In Turkey however the indigenous Kurds, about one-fifth of the population, are not allowed to speak their own

language. Kurds in Turkey are imprisoned and tortured for speaking Kurdish. Amnesty International estimate that over the last eight years 250,000 Kurds have been arrested and tortured and 4,000 have been murdered. South-East Turkey is effectively a war zone and the recent crack down has led to about 3,000 Kurds fleeing to seek asylum in Britain, a country that is supposed to be committed to the UN Convention on Refugees.

As soon as the Kurds started arriving in Britain in May, the Home Office was claiming that they were "economic" and not "political" refugees. The statement from the Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture, saying that all 64 of the Kurds seen by them bore the marks of physical torture, did not deter the Government from imposing visa controls on travellers from Turkey after the 23 June; a move designed to prevent further refugees from getting out. Indeed, passengers from Cyprus and Turkey were being prevented, by British immigration officials, from disembarking if they identified themselves as asylum-seekers. On top of this Kurdish refugees were being turned back at Heathrow without any examination of their claims, in clear breach of human rights conventions as well as domestic immigration laws.

As for those refugees who managed to get into Britain before the visa restrictions, they were quite simply dumped on the Kurdish and Turkish communities in areas such as Hackney with absolutely no assistance to the voluntary organisations that had to deal with the ensuing crisis in terms of housing and so on. These Kurds however were the "lucky" ones, they hadn't been sent straight back to imprisonment and torture or been locked up in British prisons, although they all effectively face deportation when the immigration authorities decide their fate.

The Kurds in Exeter prison remained on hunger strike for a week. Within two or three weeks all of them, with the possible exception of two who were reported to have been given asylum and one other a year "stay", had been transferred to Harmondsworth detention centre near Heathrow. Attempts to visit them in Exeter prison fell foul to bureaucratic obstacles; we could only visit named individuals, but it was against prison regulations to give out those names! The Support Group however kept up the vigils and raised £60 to send as a practical means of expressing solidarity; each of the Kurds received a fiver. In retrospect there might have been a way to overcome the obstacles to visiting. However there is no obvious national organisation to turn to with experience in dealing with such questions.

Yet again there has been shown to be a need for the anti-racist, labour and trade union movements to have a coordinated approach to the issues of racist deportations and immigration controls.

Dave Parks
Exeter AFA

Exeter AFA needs funds to keep up the struggle against racism and fascism. Please send donations c/o Box 176, The Flying Post, 1 Parliament St., Exeter.

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM IRELAND

TIME TO GO

**On the 20th Anniversary
of the Deployment of
British Troops in Ireland
MARCH AND RALLY**

**August 12th 1989
11am Whittington Park
Holloway Road
To
CARNIVAL
In Finsbury Park**

BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM IRELAND

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Unilateralism

The leadership of Exeter Labour Party wants to ditch unilateralism. This is despite the overlap between itself and CND and despite the previous assurance of the party leadership to CND that Labour was the electoralist vehicle for advancing unilateralism.

In a letter to the press the Exeter Labour Party leadership justifies its abandonment of unilateralism by saying: "Many people feel that there is now a new era in detente and perhaps a new strategy is required". To say that unilateralism has always been wrong is at least consistent, but to say that the arrival of Gorbachev requires the ditching of unilateralism is sheer nonsense.

Is Labour selling CND out? Of course it is, unless we believe them when they say: "CND is The Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament and not the Campaign For Unilateral Disarmament". They just forget that CND is, always has been, and always will be committed to unilateralism.

So what now? CND could try to fight for change in the Labour Party just as it did in the early eighties but now arguing against the very same people who argued so strongly for unilateralism a few years earlier. Some will gravitate towards the



Kinnock has ditched unilateralism

Greens and others will find that politics has left a very bad taste in their mouths. Yet political questions remain to be resolved: first, what is to be made of Exeter Labour Party's affiliation to CND? Does CND want a body affiliated to it which is fighting to oppose CND's objectives? Second, how will Labour now explain the City's nuclear free zone status?

Unfortunately, the only good thing to come out of Labour's betrayal is an enhanced understanding of the Labour Party.

Peter Bowing Exeter CLP

35,000 TO DEFY THE POLL TAX

The ever opinion poll conscious Labour Party should perhaps take note of a recent survey carried out by the Exeter & East Devon Anti-Poll Tax Union (APTU). A massive 70% said they would be prepared to defy the Poll Tax in some way, despite Labour's policy of compliance.

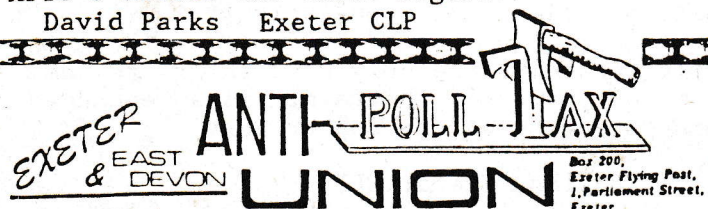
The survey, which was carried out between April and June, showed that 69%, over two-thirds of the public will lose out from the Poll Tax. The only gainers were about 40% of one-adult rented households, about 94% of one-adult owned households and about 8% of two-adult owned households. The survey showed that in terms of ability to pay there was clearly a massive redistribution of wealth in favour of a minority of better off households and individuals. A quarter of one-adult households were found to lose, which would obviously affect the poor, single parent families, the elderly and other groups.

The survey showed that there is massive opposition to the Poll Tax, including from many who would gain, with 88% of respondents disapproving of the Poll Tax. Of particular interest to campaigners against the Poll Tax will be the result that 87% favour a campaign against the Poll Tax with 62% and 59% in favour of non-registration and non-payment respectively. A clear MAJORITY favour the APTU's campaign of civil disobedience and defiance.

In terms of actually being prepared to carry out disobedience a massive 70% said they were prepared to delay registration to make it hard for the City Council to compile the register. In the case of non-registration 35% said they were prepared to do this. The APTU has pointed out that it is conceivable on this basis that 35,000 people in Exeter would be prepared to defy the tax by non-registration, and a similar number in terms of non-payment. This is not unrealistic considering recent reports that over half the population in some London boroughs have not registered, as well as a million people in Scotland having not paid the tax.

The Exeter and East Devon APTU has already made contact with nearly a thousand supporters. It is now looking to the formation of smaller community based APTU's in areas such as Newtown, St. Thomas and St. Davids and eventually to a federation of APTU's across the whole region.

David Parks Exeter CLP



BOOK REVIEW

Tintin's revenge on the yuppies!

Breaking Free, by Jack Daniels, *Attack*

International, £2.

Available from BM Box 6577, London WC1N 3XX.

Remember the adventures of Tintin and his intrepid partner Captain Haddock?

They travelled the world, righted wrongs, found hidden treasure, thwarted criminals...

Now they're back, in an exciting yarn that original author Hergé definitely did not write.

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

Jack Daniels of *Attack International* has ignored all considerations of copyright and produced *Breaking Free*, a 170-page cartoon story of how Tintin's investment in a building workers' strike tends to a national insurrection.

Fantastic? So was Red Rackham's Treasure. In fact much of *Breaking Free* is highly realistic, exploring the psychology that leads to industrial action and the

relationship of union officials to rank and file workers.

Tintin and Captain Haddock are essentially popular vehicles for raising central questions about racism, sexism, the united front, and the class character of the state.

Hergé's Tintin wandered around the world sorting out the problems of whole peoples who were apparently incapable of doing anything for themselves — the original cartoon cultural imperialist.

In Jack Daniels' revolutionary anarchist version there is still plenty of room for individual heroics (Tintin undertakes a bit of arson on a building site) but the emphasis is different, to say the least.

My favourite bit was the not particularly political episode in which Tintin and some of his friends from the football terraces completely wreck a wine bar in a frenzied reaction to the destruction of working class communities by yuppie invaders.

This story may not be politically perfect — what work of fiction can be? — but it is more compelling than some of the *Socialism for Beginners* series.

SOUTH WEST SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

The South West Socialist Movement has held conferences in Taunton and Bristol. It is intended that a conference will be held in Exeter on Feb 17 1990. It is hoped that such a conference will bring together anti-capitalist forces in Exeter and the South West to discuss issues important to the Socialist movement. The organisation of this event is open to ALL socialists. Anyone interested should get in touch via Devon Labour Briefing c/o Box DLB, The Flying Post, 1 Parliament Street, Exeter.