

# EXETER LABOUR BRIEFING

December 1983

20p

EDITORS: P. Bowing, G. Carroll, J. Clarke, M. Hingley, M. Wilkinson.

## THE TASK AHEAD

P BOWING

The election of Neil Kinnock to the leadership of the Labour Party must lead to a re-evaluation of the road to socialism in the next decade or so.

The pivots of socialist transformation, AES, EEC, CND, have been re-endorsed at the 1983 Party Conference which elected Kinnock. So how does Kinnock stand on the issues? Has Kinnock been promoting socialist public ownership and supporting up to the hilt the POEU in their struggle against privatisation? Has Kinnock been arguing clearly for withdrawal from the capitalist EEC? Has Kinnock been to Greenham Common and called for the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons, British and American?

We all agree on two things; firstly, that we cannot win without ordinary party members campaigning in the community; and secondly, that we cannot rely on the capitalist media to promote the Labour Party. So we must reject the view which locates success in brushing up Labour's media image and campaigning over the heads of,

### IN THIS ISSUE

SOCIALISM AND DISARMAMENT

HOW THE RIGHT STILL CONTROL THE PARTY  
IDEOLOGY AND ELECTIONS (OPINION)

PLUS: INFORMATION FOR SOCIALISTS



rather than through, the Party in the community.

Matters are put into perspective if we widen the terms of reference beyond Neil Kinnock. In practice, the shadow cabinet is by far the most powerful body in the Labour Party. Yet, despite a leftward shift in the PLP, sixty Percent of its members voted for Hattersley or Shore, whereas only twenty percent voted for Meacher. Despite a landslide victory for Kinnock, perceived as the candidate of the broad left, the right retain control of the party.

There is much talk of a new unity inside the party. Is the expulsion of the editors of Militant and Tariq Ali an example? We ask, unity with whom to do what? There is much talk of a new realism inside the Party. Is the abandonment of socialism an example? We ask, what does the new version of reality make unreal?

According to Alan Roberts MP, writing in the Labour Herald, the Campaign Group in Parliament consists of around forty. Yet the twenty nine PLP votes for Eric Heffer in the leadership election and a like number for Martin Flannery for Chief Whip do not bear witness to that number.

Some things are clear however; the forces of socialism are weak in British society, as the election result demonstrated, and socialist-democratic forces have to dominate inside the Party, if we are to reap success. We must struggle for a coherent socialist analysis and strategy inside and outside the Party. What we must never do is place the struggle for a consistent workable socialist strategy inside the Party in contradiction with the Labourite fight against the Alliance and Tories; nor must we repudiate the struggle for socialism in that fight.

In the last analysis, power rests on material organisation. This means having a powerful campaign group inside the branches and GMC, extending the campaign into the community and electing campaign councillors. It is to that end that we must devote ourselves.

## Editorial

Exeter Labour Briefing has been set up by members of the CLP who are particularly concerned to defend and advance socialist policies within the Party. There are many forces, both inside and outside the party, which are pressurising us to drop our socialist policies. These notions must firmly be resisted - their acceptance would mark a gross betrayal of our principles and commitments.

What we need to do now is BUILD on our socialist programme - as never before, we require a clear, credible and coherent set of policies which is capable of tackling the fundamental problems of our sick capitalist society. We must become IN REALITY the party which organises opposition to Tory attacks on the weak and the sick, the young and the old, the party which is dedicated to eliminating sexism and racism, and to advancing the cause of working people.

We hope this Briefing will be a useful information service to members of the party. But more importantly we seek to stimulate active, socialist debate in the constituency.

# Disarmament Socialism

J Clarke

The arrival of Cruise missiles in Britain offers us a suitable point at which to review the campaign against the siting. Last Spring there were high hopes that the peace movement, inspired by the example of the women of Greenham Common, would sweep all before it. Either a Labour government would be elected committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, or any other government which was elected would find itself under intense pressure to abandon the deployment of Cruise, Pershing and Trident.

Hopes are not so high now. Much of the blame has been focused on Labour's handling of the issue in the election campaign, and with some justification. The evident dissent among Labour's leaders about the Party's policy on the future of Polaris helped to contribute to the overall impression that Labour was out of touch with the realities of world politics. But the Polaris controversy was only part of the problem.

Labour's case for unilateralism both before and during the election, focused on the horror of nuclear weapons, and their indiscriminate destructive power. It presented an essentially pacifist case for nuclear disarmament. What was not presented

was the socialist case for unilateralism.

It is trite but true to say that the majority of working people in Britain are not pacifists. While they may have some awareness of the true horror of nuclear weapons, they also see the force of the Tory argument that Britain must have the means to defend itself. This argument was never countered effectively. Unless it can be demolished, neither Labour nor the Peace movement will be able to achieve a real political breakthrough. We can only take up this argument by linking defence policy with foreign policy.

What is the 'Britain' which must be defended, and against whom? These are the questions which must be posed and answered. The Britain the Tories want to defend is an imperialist power operating as the USA's junior partner, and to be defended against the Soviet Union and against national liberation movements in other parts of the world. The Party's problem is that traditionally the Labour leadership has taken the same imperialist standpoint. This is best emphasised by the argument that regardless of nuclear policy, Britain must remain in NATO.

The new leadership apparently shares the same point of view. It has drawn the lesson from the election that Labour should develop a non-nuclear defense policy. What is really needed is something quite different, an anti-imperialist defense policy.

As long as working people are led to believe that it is in their interests to be allied with the USA against the Soviet Union, nuclear disarmament - and this includes Cruise and Trident - will be seen as an irresponsible opting out of the Alliance. Arguments about the enormous cost of Trident do not resolve this problem, nor does restricting the arguments to a nuclear freeze. Limiting the argument to the immediate issues of Cruise and Trident unfortunately abdicates from combatting the rest of the Tory world-view. It appears to be accepting the 'realities' of the Cold War as set out in Tory propaganda, but wanting to opt out of the unpleasant bits.

## Ideology and Elections

M Hingley

In considering why Labour lost the 1983 general election we all realise that the mass media played an important part. The power of the mass media has grown over the years, as mass media themselves have grown. Quite apart from the newspapers which we know are bitterly opposed to radical change in our society this power has entered a new dimension with the development of television. It is not just that the media are owned and controlled by the capitalists who really run our country, although of course this is very important, but also that these media reproduce, largely unconsciously, the forms, values and preconceptions of capitalism, which are antipathetic to socialism. Everything which is discussed in the media is set in the context of a capitalist society and against a background of capitalist preconceptions. From this it is apparent that piecemeal socialism will

always appear inappropriate. Socialism can only be presented as a total alternative.

The educational system is also a major apparatus of ideological control. With a capitalist economic background, schools and universities concentrate on moulding people to take their place within that economic structure. In doing so they reinforce the values of the dominant ethos. Everyone is lulled into accepting the prevailing system as the best way, and indeed the only way. What we call education therefore, far from increasing the awareness by people of their condition, actually involves the stunting and robotisation of large numbers of people.

These two examples of the media and the education system are but two specific and perhaps the most obvious examples of a process of indoctrination which operates inexorably throughout the whole of our society. A process which drugs, dopes and churns people out of the contentment machine, learning to love what others love and hate what others hate. It is in this way that certain thoughts are unthought. The ideas of the ruling class are indeed the ruling ideas, and the instruments available for their inculcation are now more subtle and more efficient than ever before in history.

Bearing all this in mind, how should we view the elections held every so often, to which we give the name democracy. Quite apart from the fact that power operates largely outside the conventional political process, with control resting in the hands of those who own the productive forces, we can say that democracy only exists where people can make free and unfettered choices between real alternatives on the basis of as much knowledge of the alternatives as is possible. These conditions clearly do not exist at the present time. Firstly, as people are treated as objects, with their tastes in every area of life manipulated and controlled, consciously and unconsciously, they are not able to make the free choices of which the legitimacy of our society depends.

Secondly, people very rarely have real alternatives presented to them. In the US for example, it is often very hard to discern any real differences between the Democratic and Republican Parties. They agree on far more than they disagree on. In Britain there is a similar consensus between the parties, with the only real dissension occurring amongst sections of the left. Elections can thus be seen as charades with real alternatives never adequately presented.

Considering what has been said, some people might be surprised that Labour managed to achieve nearly 30% support at the polls in 1983. However, although the Labour manifesto was somewhat more challenging than in previous years, it cannot by any stretch be called a socialist manifesto. It is a sign for the better though, that recently the Labour Party, or rather part of it has tended in a more socialist direction. We must bear in mind however, that the Party is still largely consensual. It is up to socialists to change it.

## Right Control

P Bowing

Nobody can doubt that the shadow cabinet (officially the Parliamentary Committee) is, in practice, the most influential body in the Labour Party. Its members are appointed shadow portfolios, and thus trained for service in the next Labour government. A shadow parliamentary spokesman attracts greater media attention than the most dynamic sub-committee of the NEC.

It is claimed in the media that Neil Kinnock has a 'balanced' shadow cabinet; is this really true? Imagine a meeting of the fifteen elected members of the fifteen PLP elected members of the Parliamentary Committee and the leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party. Let us now consider the perspectives of various members.

Out of the seventeen members, six voted for Kinnock. It may be assumed that Heffer will support Kinnock against the right. That means that at a fully attended meeting Kinnock can count on six supporters as well as himself.

Yet it is clear that Kinnock represents the centre of the Party. Let us take Michael Meacher who is regarded as the standard bearer of the 'not so hard' Bennite left. If he were to raise an issue, (such as a piece of conference policy) he would have two supporters, if the voting went according to the deputy leadership election. The 'hard' left wing leadership contender, Eric Heffer, has no supporters in the shadow cabinet.

Now let us consider the position of Roy Hattersley. Eight of the seventeen voted for him as leader, and ten as deputy. If we consider Hattersley's right wing 'Solidarity' associates, Shore and Dunwoody, as Hattersleyites, then the figures are ten and twelve. This means that Hattersley can count on nine supporters. His faction thus has an absolute majority in the shadow cabinet.

Matters are worse when we consider the key posts of Economy and Finance, Home Affairs, Industry and Environment which are all in the hands of the right.

Though we may question his credentials, Neil Kinnock stood as the candidate of the 'Broad Left'. The combined votes of Kinnock and Heffer won the support of around eighty percent of the party; more at the grass roots. Yet we must face the fact that the Party leadership is still colonised by the right wing minority which have been morally and democratically defeated.

EXETER LABOUR BRIEFING  
11 Hillsborough Ave,  
Exeter  
tel. 56511

## Exeter : Direct Action

### P Bowling

The Exeter based Peace Action Group occupied the Civil Defence operations room in County Hall for a few symbolic minutes on Thursday 24th November. This action was just one in the struggle waged in Exeter by the Labour movement, CND and the Peace Action Group against the aggressive military policies of the NATO countries which are leading the world towards nuclear war.

The target of the Peace Action Group was "Operation Westwind" which is officially intended to deal with civil defence in the event of conventional war but is unrealistic since the stated "defence" policy of NATO is based on the first use of nuclear weapons. Indeed any war involving the possible invasion of Britain would be nuclear not conventional.

"Westwind" is an attempt by the government to continue "Operation Hardrock" which dealt with so-called civil defence in the event of a nuclear war, but which had to be cancelled due to the non co-operation of "nuclear-free" local authorities. War is nuclear war! No form of civil defence can begin to cope with megadeath. The BMA says the hospital system could not handle the casualties of one nuclear bomb. Nuclear war would destroy the ecological system and therefore humanity.

Civil defence makes war more likely because it fosters the notion that it is possible to survive or win such a war. There would be no survivors and no winners.

If, as it is claimed, "Westwind" is also designed to cope with natural disasters, then it is irresponsible to confuse preparations for war with peace time emergency planning. Several hundred councils plus many civil servants who are putting their jobs at risk, have refused to participate in the farce of civil defence.

## Socialist Theatre

### B Ballin

A local theatre company, Human Cartoon, are planning a tour of educational establishments with a production of Brecht's 'The Good Person of Szechuan'. This is a socialist classic about the bourgeois and religious expectation of morality, and opposed to the economic imperatives of the working class, and is both deeply perceptive and highly amusing. Comrades interested in further information or involvement in the organisation of the tour, can contact the company via 3 York Terrace or by telephoning Ian Clifford on 58692. Members of the company feel that the dialogue between the Labour Movement and the cultural efforts in the area has been a disappointment to date, and welcome the possibility of creating a fruitful relationship.

### Greenham

Mass demonstration for women at Greenham Common on December 11th. Tickets and further information are available from University CND group or CND shop.

### Week of Action

A week of non-violent direct action will be taking place in Exeter from 5th to 10th December as a direct result of the Tory decision to install Cruise in Britain. If you would like to know more about, or take part in, the week of action, contact Nick Tomery, Exeter 58692.