

NOTTINGHAM EXTRA

NUMBER 8 SUMMER 1987 40p

Post-Election Special



Allen interviewed; Simpson's diary; Anguish in East; Clough in Clifton; Moderate mineworkers; Inner city; Crown Court; Charlesworth hits back

HEARSAY

Writing off socialism

JOHN SHEFFIELD

'Lord Forte described the Prime Minister as "a wonderful lady whom God has sent from Heaven" (*The Observer*, 7th June 1987). (But then, she was opening one of his restaurants.)

ALTHOUGH NOTTINGHAM EXTRA is not a Labour Party paper, we are devoting a large section of this issue to Labour's performance in Nottingham in the General Election and some of the consequences of its defeat. We are also continuing the debate begun by Nigel Lee in the last issue on Labour's performance as ruling group on the 1983-87 city council, with contributions also from Brent Charlesworth and Betty Higgins. In future issues, we shall move on from all this navel-gazing to look at Conservative policies instead, and particularly at Bill Bradbury's new city council régime.

Dangers to democracy

In the last issue, we warned of the dangers to local democracy of a re-elected Conservative government backed up by a sympathetic Conservative city council. Unfortunately, many of our gloomiest predictions are already coming to pass.

The list is a long one: a government-imposed inner city task force; perhaps an urban development corporation (both weapons in what is routinely and revealingly called Mrs Thatcher's "assault" on the inner cities); enforced contracting out of local authority services; outlawing of contract compliance; restrictions on local authority publicity - misleadingly but astutely labelled "propaganda on the rates" (these last three in the current Local Government Bill, which if passed will be the 44th Act affecting local government since 1979); the poll tax; the removal of all but "welfare housing" from local authority management; the simultaneous centralising and fragmenting of education with the introduction of city technical colleges, 'grant maintained' schools, a national curriculum and national tests, reducing local authorities to a mainly administrative role (a county council issue which, if local democracy means anything, will surely be of major importance in the 1989 county elections).

There has been no attempt to conceal the real purpose of this sustained attack on local government - to destroy Labour's urban power base (and mop up any remaining puddles of damp Conservatism). "Thatcher aims at Labour hold on inner cities," said the front-page headline in *The Times* two days after the election: "Mrs Margaret Thatcher set out yesterday to drive through as quickly as possible legislation designed to destroy Labour's last stronghold, the inner cities ... Mrs Thatcher, who is pledged to eradicate socialism in Britain, plans to alter the political landscape by undermining Labour's political power bases in the impoverished urban heartlands and

recreating Tory support in the cities, especially in the North."

So if Labour wins back the city in 1991, it looks increasingly as if it will take control of little more than an assemblage of bureaucrats progressing diktats from Whitehall and Marsham Street, and monitoring the few contract conditions which can be imposed on an almost wholly privatised range of services, from internal council computing to emptying dustbins, from mending the road to repairing council vehicles.

This is not leftist fantasy. Much of it is already hitting the statute book, and the same fears have been expressed widely in local government. At the recent annual conference in Nottingham of SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives - the town hall bosses' trade union), the Controller of the Audit Commission, Howard Davies, not an especially radical figure, warned that, if current central government policies are projected forward, local authorities by 1992 could see their budget cut by 30% and their staff by 37%, and be reduced to controlling "sink schools and hopeless welfare-dependent estates".

So not only the scale of the defeat but its consequences are enormous.

And yet, from a Labour Party point of view, this was an oddly undemoralising election. Large numbers of Labour Party workers will tell you that, on the ground, it didn't feel like a defeat. So much so that, like a delayed shock reaction, the enormity of the 102 Tory majority seems hardly to have sunk in, to be barely credible. From ward after ward, with a few exceptions in Nottingham East, there have been reports of commitment, enthusiasm and sheer hard work, of a hundred people turning out for a single canvass, of "the strangest bedfellows" (as somebody put it) working uncomplainingly together. And, in utter contrast to the shambles which was 1983, a revival of the feeling that we were part of a wider, organised, dedicated, labour movement.

Like a victory

This is reflected strikingly in Alan Simpson's account of his campaign (see page 6), which was after all a defeat, but felt curiously like a victory. In fact, Alan seems more euphoric about his defeat than Graham Allen about his victory (see Graham's sobering analysis, in the interview starting on page 9, of the work which needs to be done over the next four years).

This local paradox reflects the national one, where, despite losing the war, Labour was widely felt to have won the campaign. Logical! But what the Walworth Road Show *does* seem to have done is (a) impress the professionals (politicians and media), (b) terrify the Tories for at least a day (and, if *The Times* is to be believed, provoke a radical, and successful,

redirection of their campaign), (c) win over a few Alliance voters (probably ex-Labour) at the start of the campaign and not many after, (d) make most of us feel better about ourselves (even those of us who prefer policies to the *Life of Neil*), (e) (and most significant) make no difference to the Tory vote whatsoever.

So what do we do about this seemingly unassailable 40 or so per cent - enough, with a split opposition, to propel Mrs Thatcher effortlessly 'on and on' into the third millennium and beyond. (A warning. Can you honestly see her stepping down without being pushed? Is it really in the beast's nature? There are plenty of precedents for octogenarian national leaders.)

Crystal-ball gazing

How will the Labour Party ever get elected again? Will socialism be destroyed in Britain? First, some crystal-ball gazing.

(1) The restructuring of the Labour Party and its policies in the Leader's own image will continue. Neil Kinnock is, as even Tory political commentators are beginning to acknowledge, a formidable operator within his own party. (That, incidentally, might suggest to the unprejudiced mind that he could be an equally formidable operator as Prime Minister - a logical step the pundits are less willing to take.) Moreover, he had a 'good election'. (The paradox again - to lead the party to a disastrous defeat and yet to have had a 'good war'. But the same could be said of Hannibal, Napoleon and Robert E. Lee.)

(2) The purge of the Trotskyite left will continue, though 'purge' is perhaps too strong a word. Apart from the more spectacular media events ('The Expulsion of the Militants,' said the biblical subtitle in *Kinnock the Movie*), 'marginalising' might be a more appropriate term. It is a process which seems to be gathering speed and directed not only at Trotskyites. The 'soft left' is ganging up with the centre right to squeeze out the 'hard left', and this is happening at all levels of the party. It can be seen in ward branches, in the city council and in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Some of the battles will be fairly bloody, but time and the NEC are not on the left's side. This is another consequence of the 'successful' campaign. Despite deep reservations about the packaging of the party and of the leadership (reservations shared by, among others, Roy Hattersley), most party members more or less approved of the national campaign. In consequence, those who didn't, the irreconcilables, those whose lexicon lists 'Kinnock' as an expletive are now swimming against a general tide of feeling in the party.

(3) Despite the best efforts of the *New Statesman**, there will be no accommodation with

*If Neil Kinnock, John Smith, David Steel and Paddy Ashdown were to sit down together with some bottles of good wine for a long summer afternoon in the hills of Tuscany, there is much they would agree on ... the main obstacle to co-operation ... is their parties.' (Peter Kellner, *New Statesman*, 19th June)

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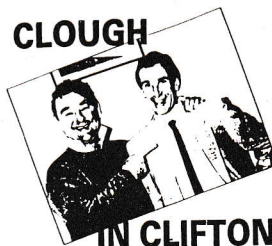
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Allen on
the Election
pages 6 & 9

CLOUGH



IN CLIFTON

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on the City
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pages 26-29



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the Liberals, still less with the SDP, which is now consigned to the wheelbin of history. No electoral pact, no plans for power-sharing. The mould has been chipped, not broken. Old-style two-party politics are back in business. There will be a shift in Labour Party policy to win back defectors to the Alliance; a new 'reasonableness', a new appeal to consensus: unite to defeat Thatcher - under the banner of the Labour Party (whatever colour that may be - peach and grey seem leading contenders).

Even more so

(4) Conclusion. The Labour Party will go into the next election very much as it went into this one, but even more so. There will be fewer internal rows than the right-wing press would wish, not only because of the leadership's growing control over the party, but because most members are heartily sick of internal disputes and want above all to see the party working together to win the next election. Packaging is here to stay. Fresh Kinnock relatives will be found and even more beautiful stretches of Pembroke coastline. Brahms will continue to vote Labour. But policies will be better articulated and more suitably attuned to voters who have bought their own council house, have a reasonably safe job in a sunrise industry, belong to a trade union but basically regard it as a form of insurance, are against poverty but not very much, and have £2,000 of shares in British Gas, British Telecom, British Electricity, British Coal, British Rail, British Post, British Airways, British Airports, British Air (metered breathing) and British Anything that-isn't-nailed-to-the-floor.

Sarcasm apart (and sarcasm comes distressingly easily in a world of Thatcher materialism and Kinnock glitz), the Labour Party will accommodate itself to the climate created by Thatcherism. It will purchase a smart new raincoat, umbrella and wellie boots and sing in the rain, and the membership will sing along with it. It will do with parliamentary socialism what most of us do with our everyday lives - it will compromise.

So that will make the party more electable?

Pass.

But there is a joker in the pack, a hint of which is given by that strangely high post-electoral morale; for along with this irrational optimism, there is on the left an urgent search for new ideas and a willingness to consider new forms of socialism. The influence of this on the party is unpredictable.

Take, for example, the liberating effect of discarding that state-centred model of socialism, particularly of public ownership, which for many of us has always been a travesty of what socialism really means - socialism being concerned with the liberation of the people, not their subordination to bureaucratic and managerial structures as inequalitarian and oppressive as those of capitalism itself.

This "big brother" version of socialism, so damagingly equated with its grotesque deformations in Eastern Europe, was always riding for the fall which Thatcherism has now given it. "Popular capitalism" may be pitifully limited and

impotent, but it nevertheless delivers *some* of the goods. You can actually touch it. What symbol of participation and ownership has a nationalised industry ever put in the hands of its customers or its workforce to equal the share certificate? I can't be the only Labour Party member who has noticed an increasing number of colleagues at work studying the stock market in their newspapers.

There is a splendid historical irony here. One of the chief architects of what an older generation of socialists - unrepentant fundamentalists - always complained was "state capitalism", and not socialism at all, was Herbert (later Lord) Morrison. His grandson, Peter Mandelson, is the Walworth Road media supremo largely responsible for the party's glitzy new media image. One of his hardest jobs is to uncouple Labour from all those unstylish old Labourist images bequeathed by his grandad. From too much content, and of the wrong kind, to almost no content at all - Labour's progress in three generations! (And here we go again, knocking the media campaign. No, really, it was great!)

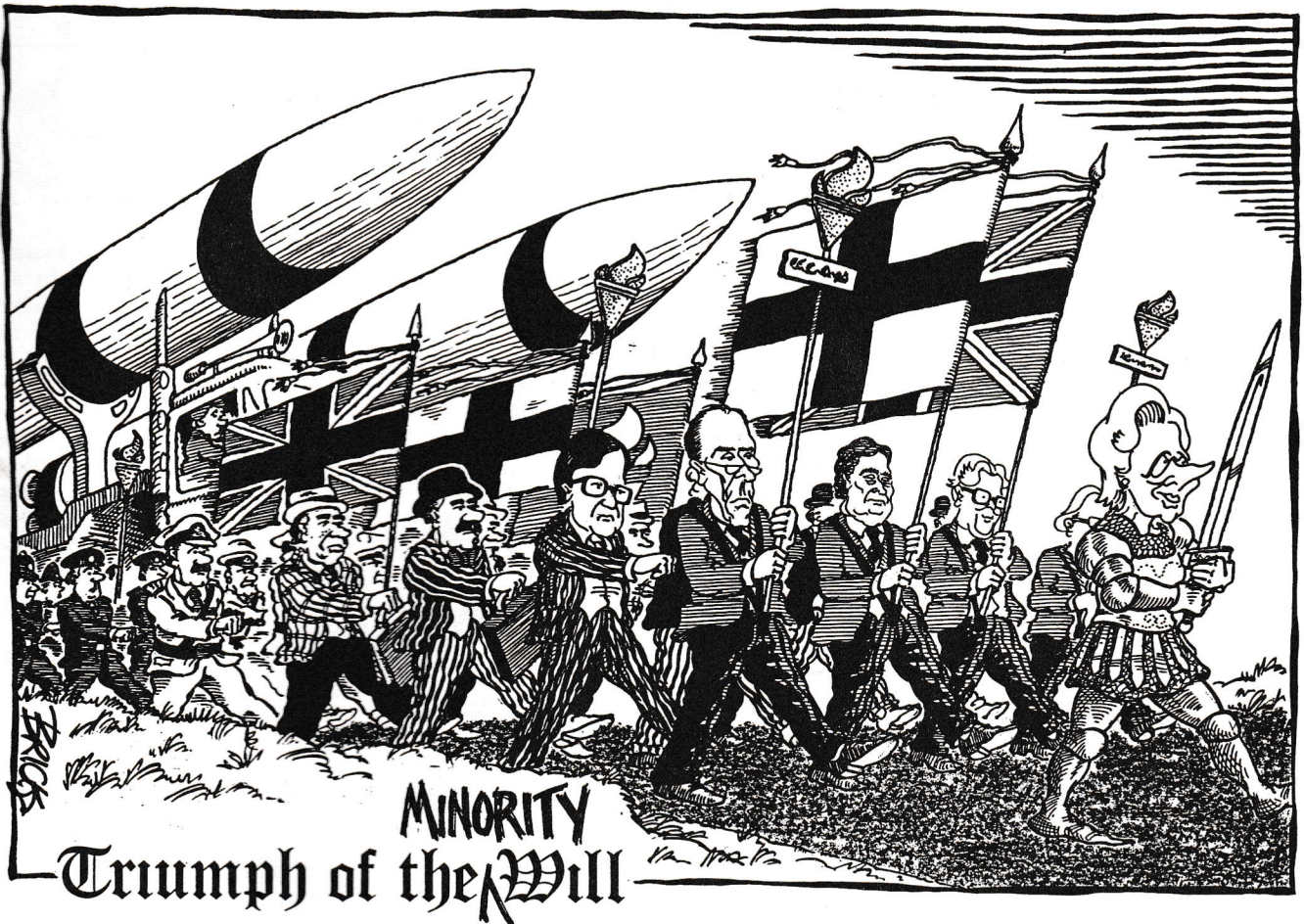
So what can we replace nationalisation with? "Social ownership?" As Nigel Lawson gleefully remarked, "it will be impossible to put the genie back in the bottle", and the Labour leadership seems tacitly to have accepted this. But the genie could certainly be made more accountable, and compelled to work in a more socially sensitive way.

We should be thinking creatively about how to convert a public limited company into a publicly responsible body with wide worker and customer participation, if not outright control - modifying the structures of share ownership, management and the board of directors, extending the rights of shareholders, reforming methods of accounting (to show real social costs, for example), strengthening the role of the watchdogs. Can we extend the boundaries of "popular" at the expense of "capitalism" so that "popular capitalism" begins to look like very much like socialism instead?

Call their bluff

There ought to be opportunities even in opposition to call the Conservatives' bluff on those favourite buzz phrases, "personal liberty" and "freedom of choice". Though incredulity is the natural response to their bare-faced theft during the election campaign of the old sixties slogan, "Power to the People", why not take it at face value and see whether they mean it?

Instead of a "hands-off" approach which excludes us from a whole area of possible engagement, perhaps we should, as groups of socialists, buy blocks of shares in privatised industries and use whatever power it gives us to expose socially damaging policies and campaign for more responsible ones. For example, the "popular capitalist" shareholders in British Telecom could surely be mobilised to demand the restoration of the free, immediate repair service for disabled people which a profit-dictated management recently withdrew. In a case like this, a majority would almost certainly put social responsibility above the needs of profit



Or do shares give the "People" no "Power" at all over company policy ...? Campaigning within privatised (and other) companies could be a practical means of educating the electorate in where power really lies in large capitalist enterprises and exposing the limits of a "shareholding democracy".

Likewise with "grant-maintained" schools. We must wait to see what conditions they are hedged about with - but if Tory "freedom of choice" means anything, it ought to mean not only the freedom of middle-class parents to recreate the old grammar schools, but also the freedom of any committed group of parents to set up schools on quite different principles if they want to. The same ought surely to apply to the government's inner-city initiatives and to the right to opt out of local authority housing management.

Opportunity lurks

In all of these there surely lurks the opportunity to develop a socialist culture in the void at the heart of Thatcherism - the void between the promise of individual freedom and choice, and the assumption that these will remain within controllable limits, constrained by government policy and the weakness and self-interest of the isolated "free" individual. Socialists should be able to argue their contrasting belief that individual freedom is often realisable only through collective action: trade unions are the classic example, where only collective action has won rights and freedoms

(and better wages) for otherwise isolated and powerless individuals.

In recent years we have lost the ideological battle. The initiative has passed to the Tories and we have always seemed on the defensive, defending old concepts of socialism which many of us never had much faith in anyway. The irony is that our opponents are now using the death of these to pronounce the death of socialism in general.

"Socialism does not work ... everybody in the Soviet Union knows that, and now someone has actually admitted it, while in Britain the Labour Party as a whole doesn't know it, and among those who do none has dared to say so ... Labour will go into the next election offering much the same as it offered in the last one, slightly tidied up, and the country will walk past, into an increasingly prosperous and liberated future, and leave socialism and its exponents unpitied to their fate." (Bernard Levin, *The Times*, 27th July)

We do not, of course, share dear old Bernard's vision of the wondrous blue dawn. But, in the face of that obstinate 40 or so per cent, it is up to us to prove him wrong: wrong three times over - wrong in his simplistic, malicious conflation of Soviet communism and British socialism (two very different traditions); wrong in assuming that the history of the British Labour Party has represented and exhausted all possible varieties of socialism; wrong above all about the capacity of libertarian socialism to renew and reassert itself.●

ELECTION SPECIAL

The joy of campaigning

ALAN SIMPSON'S ELECTION DIARY

The beginning of another day

It was the early hours of June 12th. Most of the city was asleep. Only the "heavies" were still in business - in bars around the city; glued to their own TV sets; or wandering round the "joint" itself.

The "joint" was in fact the Victoria Leisure Centre, where the final stages of the General Election count were just being completed. In Nottingham South, Labour was 2,000 votes behind the Tories - too much even for the most wildly optimistic supporters to be calling for a recount.

Yet there was an odd unreality about it all. I stood there waiting for the result to be announced and looked at the sea of faces around the hall. Why were our lot the ones who were smiling? Why were they still buzzing and full of life when the Tories, in victory, looked grey and bored? The victor's speech was greeted with polite applause, ours with a barrage of raucous cheers, blowers and hooters (God knows where they came from at 2 o'clock in the morning). Throughout the proceedings the Alliance candidate had wandered around clad in earphones and muttering things back into the "walkman" which was his only solace. It just about summed up the previous four weeks.

Face to face at last

Perhaps the strangest part of the evening was that it brought me face to face with Brandon Bravo. For the last four weeks (no, for the last two years) he had avoided me like the plague. He'd apparently told groups that he would not appear on the same platform as me because I made people laugh at him - a strange attitude for someone occupying an arena as public as politics. Still, here we were, together for the first time; not so much High Noon as high time. And what a disappointment it was. Gary Cooper would have opted for early retirement if he'd known that his great showdown was going to be no more than a brief handshake with a vacuum. At least the Alliance candidate had a good quality walkman to admire.

In fact the Beast of Barton in Fabis (for that's his "inner city" lair) and I could have

had a more dramatic encounter earlier on election day.

As the Tory fears of losing this seat increased, some of their tactics became desperate. So at 11.30 am on election day they tried to get us evicted from the Labour committee rooms in Clifton and the Meadows. The new Tory leader of the City Council had decided (without any bias) to end the practice of over a decade, and stop us hiring rooms in the Community Centre on election day.

Labour's response to this little administrative Exocet was equally non political. We said that we weren't budging and that the Tories would need to send the police in if they wanted us out. In the event they backed off, but just after I left the Clifton rooms Brandon Bravo apparently turned up in his Rover and crackled through his public address system, "This is an illegal occupation. You must vacate these premises immediately. You have no right to be here!"

Anyone who has a belief that Britain needs Cruise or Trident should have been in Clifton that day. From the inner depths of its committee rooms Labour unleashed its own awesome deterrent... Cllr Brent Charlesworth. Anyone who knows Brent would acknowledge that even in a thousand reincarnations he would never come back as a diplomat. He occupies that part of the emotional spectrum where short fuse and no fuse at all happily co-exist.

Brent's encounter with Brandon Bravo was, by all accounts, brevity personified... a few graphically phrased travel instructions, a brief splutter of exhaust fumes; then only the echoes of distant "Bring out your dead and vote for me" exhortations from his well-tired tannoy system reminded Clifton people that Brandon Bravo had at least been "down their way".

"D" Day minus thirty

Looking back over the month of intense campaigning makes me aware of the rich tapestry of dreams, ideas and inspiration that we put together. At the beginning of May it was clear that the autumn threat of a balance of payments crisis and a new series of *Spitting Image* would



"Gary Cooper would have opted for early retirement if he'd known his great showdown would be no more than a brief handshake with a vacuum."

be too much for the Tories. They had to do a runner and go for an early election (if only to spare us all from the grinding boredom of *more* months of press speculation).

Thatcher had her "War Cabinet" assembled; Kinnock had got Bryan Gould and co. revving on the blocks; and me, I'd got Ron. Red Ron was my agent - a doughty Scot with broad shoulders and short legs. The shoulders came from years of carrying the administrative weight of keeping the Labour Party organised, active and in one piece in Nottingham. The legs came from his father's side of the family.

Ron and I are compatible... we panic well together. And before the election was called we were panicking about all the things we hadn't done yet. To make matters worse I had a whole series of bizarre ideas about what I wanted to do in the campaign. Ron kept muttering about "costs" and "timetables" and I could see life was going to be harder than I'd thought.

The landings begin

The first week of the campaign was a whirlwind of activity. On a soggy Sunday morning we launched our assault on Clifton. A hundred people turned up to help and we leafleted the whole estate in an hour. I'd never seen so many people ready to get out and "do it" for Labour. Excitement and enthusiasm bubbled all over the place. I kept thinking to myself, "God, if I'd known we could get this many up and running at the start I'd have offered to take on the Tories across the whole county." But then one swallow doesn't make a safe seat.

The door to door canvassing soon highlighted the massive divides that exist in this city. The three car, two house parts of Wollaton and the no car, no garden, no hope walkways in the Radford flats are only a couple of miles apart, but it might as well be worlds. But even within areas there are serious schisms... and people want to know where you stand.

I know that society is polarised between those who love dogs and those who hate dog shit; that between the two there is little neutral ground that has not already been fouled or fenced off. I also realised that, of all the offences in this society, the only things I would retain the death penalty for are highly sprung letter boxes and stone cladding. During an election you can always tell "activists" because their nails are wrecked by other people's letter boxes. (The stone cladding is just a very personalised aversion of my own.)

Enter the big guns

We were determined to make this a very public campaign - actively taking issues out to people

and in ways which tried to be interesting and lively. This was where Brian Clough came in. Cloughie said he'd do a meeting with me in Clifton, but first I needed my photo taking with him for the advance publicity.

I went to the Forest ground armed with my camera, my kids (who were more interested in autographs than politics) and Mike, a really close friend for many years more than either of us would wish to count. I say this because I discovered afterwards that, if Mike isn't the world's worst photographer, he certainly aspires to it.

The photos were a disaster and I had to go back and grovel for a second sitting with Big Brian. Mr Clough, as half the world's press have discovered, is not a man to be trifled with, and he made it abundantly clear that he rated my organisational abilities somewhat below those of Mr Magoo. I was lucky to escape a free transfer to Tranmere Rovers.

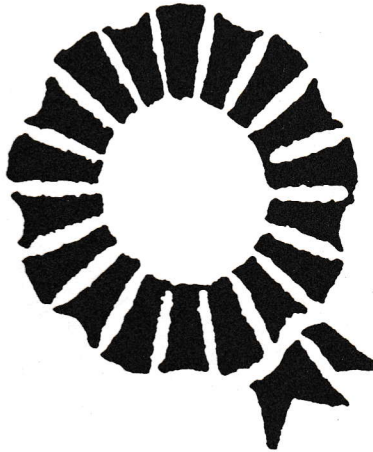
His performance at the meeting was no less forthright. With the television, assorted representatives of the local media and a few "real people" turning up to greet him, Cloughie did his stuff. I doubt that much of it could ever be shown on telly. There are no political masseurs to rub down the rough edges of Cloughie's speeches. He just hits you with all the rawness of what he believes is right. If only more people had been there to be

bruised by his conscience. But, as in football, even Cloughie was not enough to bring Nottingham people out in their thousands to bring about the sort of changes we so badly need.

Big Benn and busking

Well, if the crowds weren't coming to us, we'd have to find *them*. By mid campaign I realised that we had struck a rich vein of insanity that runs through our society. Loads of wonderful, crazy people were becoming involved, unleashing an equally crazy range of campaigning ideas. I was already "on tour" each day with assorted messages being delivered across our p.a. system (with the *Chariots of Fire* music rising triumphantly in the background). And we now had young people offering their help... as musicians. My throat operation had not left me with a voice like Frank Sinatra's, and I was dubious about what would be involved, but the show was already roadworthy even if we weren't. The "launch" coincided with Tony Benn's visit to Nottingham, and we spent an amazing day climbing in and out of the van, while the band busked (not for money, but to draw crowds) and then found the stage turned over to Tony and me for a brief "rant". It was one of the best days of the campaign, culminating in Benn opening the Park Branch shop.

Park did not have a monopoly of the spirit of excitement which was running through our



**"No political masseurs
rub down the rough edges
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He just hits you with all
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believes is right."**

campaign, but they certainly had more than their fair share of it, and they had done up an empty shop which was their base in the area.

We arrived to open the shop only to see a festering of Conservative students gathering in the rooms above, and festooning the road with literature from upper windows. I wondered if any of them had been part of the Tory "anti-litter" campaign which had been run only weeks earlier. Benn rose above it all and delivered an "opening" speech of such force and conviction that even Tory Councillor Angela Pink was seen emerging with a "Vote Simpson" lapel sticker on. (The photo of this gave rise to numerous witty captions during the long nights which followed.)

Showdown at the Ecumenical Corral

The only time Brandon Bravo and I crossed paths was a debate in Wollaton called by the Council of Churches. It was a strange affair. I had to agree not to arrive before 9.00 pm (the debate started at 7.30) so that he could avoid appearing with me. This was not my natural heartland but I didn't realise that the high voltage atmosphere I arrived in had been set by "The Beast". We had each been asked to answer three set questions in our set talk and then take questions from the audience. Brandon Bravo ignored the first bit and when the chair (the University Chaplain) asked him to address the question, he exploded. He (Brandon Bravo) was not going to be bullied... he would decide what was important... and he would decide when he would talk about it. He did... in total silence; doing more for my support than I probably did for myself.

But the worst part of the evening was that we all pretended it was democracy at work. No debate, as such, took place. We were rigidly kept apart by having the "neutral" buffer of the SDP candidate speaking in mid evening, and neither of us was open to much challenge in our views. I think that history will judge the greatest triumph of the Thatcher years to be the sense in which truth, honesty and openness were redefined whenever they became an embarrassment to her and her cohorts.

The final countdown

I don't think we could have run a much better campaign. We were streets ahead of the Tories - more ideas; more inventiveness; leaflets which were brilliant; the newspaper a knockout; and the street campaigning just getting better and better. On the final weekend we did a *Chariots of Fire* run through Clifton. Crazy. Some sixty to eighty people in long shorts, running behind the music cavalcade and delivering papers, leaflets and stickers to everything that moved. Some people

obviously thought we were loonies, but more came out welcoming us and saying it was like the "good old days" when "politics were fun". (Were there ever such days? My grandparents' generation seem to remember them but everyone since has seemed to write politics into a backwater of incredible tedium.)

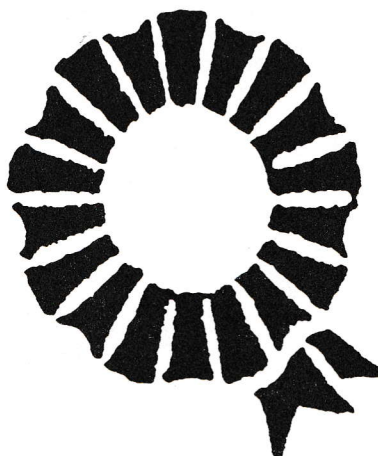
Our trump card was, in fact, to be Brandon Bravo's dole card - a huge six by five feet UB40 made out in his name. On it, in large letters, was his quotation: "Never again can we tolerate a society with 1½ million unemployed." We took it to the Conservative HQ and told Central TV about

it. Their filming of the event was a wonder. The Tories all came out to see what a TV camera crew were doing on their doorstep. Then we came round the corner. There was a moment's silence, then a cry of "Oh God!", and then they were gone... disappearing through the open door of their offices. We followed swiftly behind and, with all the courage that a witnessing TV crew gives you, I banged on their door. Silence. "Anybody home?" Silence. "Any Tory candidates in?" Silence. "Any Tory candidates left?" Silence. Eventually a voice from the bowels of the building (obviously its intellectual core) shouted out, "Go away!" It was the nearest we came to a full-scale debate.

Was this really what people voted for? A vacuum disguised behind little more than a

façade of prejudice and fear. Grab what you can today because tomorrow's been sold?

If that was what the election was about, then even in defeat I was still proud to be left standing amongst that motley collection of dreamers who made up Labour's campaign. The grey faces of the Tories said it all. They'd hung on today... but tomorrow belongs to us!®



"Benn delivered a speech of such force and conviction that even Tory Councillor Angela Pink was seen emerging with a 'Vote Simpson' sticker on."

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ELECTION SPECIAL

In a defensive mode

GRAHAM ALLEN is interviewed by IAN JUNIPER

JUNIPER: Firstly, congratulations on being elected. You predicted after the city council election that you would secure a two thousand majority. What went wrong?

ALLEN: I think that was a fairly accurate prediction. You've got to make some allowance for the wind direction, which I think accounted for the other four hundred. But it's a great disappointment that we didn't manage to secure all three seats in Nottingham. I think the campaigns that were fought in the other constituencies were superb, and if only the national trend had gone our way and kept running our way in the last three or four days I think we'd have had three MPs, good Labour MPs, for Nottingham.

JUNIPER: The recent television discussion on Nottingham's inner city problems had Kenneth Clarke in the hot seat, and he was able to say, after Paddy Tipping had been speaking on how the County Council was approaching Nottingham's inner city problems, that there was very little that he would disagree with. I was just wondering if Labour should be pursuing more distinctive policies in how to deal with the inner city problems.

Life blood

ALLEN: You're asking about an interview that I didn't see, so I can't really comment. I think as a principle what I would say is we are now in a defensive position in the Labour movement. Just three years ago the Conservative government attempted to assassinate the main opposition party by cutting off the political funds of trade unions, which is the life blood of the Labour Party. They were attempting to do away with the main opposition party, and that cannot be underlined enough. That's how ruthless they are. They now have another four years in which to plot the destruction of organised labour in this country, and my feeling is that our fundamental task has to be to maintain the integrity of our organisations both as a Labour Party and as trade unionists, because without that we will not be capable of fighting the next General Election. Now that puts us straight away into a rather



"Three years ago the Conservative government attempted to assassinate the main opposition party ... that cannot be underlined enough."

defensive mode and that's why I return to what you were saying about the County Council. The County Council, while they are actually in a Labour majority, nonetheless are bound by what the City Council will do in terms of allowing them to get on with the job, and the national government, the Tory government, in terms of what they allow the County Council to do. So, in the sense of imagining that any of us have a free hand to embark upon this or that particular project, we're obviously not in that particular game at the moment. I hope very much that we'll very soon be in that position by maintaining the pressure on the City Council. There may well be a by-election, and I think that we're better equipped now to win a by-election than at any time in the recent past. And also at national level, while we're not likely to win many straight votes in the

House of Commons, we have a role in continually harrying the government, exposing what their policies really mean and trying to cut through the mythology that overlays every Conservative government decision from the media coverage they get. So we've got a hardworking organisational job to get on with so that we are intact and capable of winning the next City Council election and the next General Election. Alternative policies must be practical and more than flights of fantasy and what we'd like to see in an ideal world. We've got to root them in people's real experience and make sure that they tie in with people's everyday lives. So I think we've got to get on with that job both at city and county, and at national level.

Political funds

JUNIPER: You yourself were centrally involved in the campaign to defend the trade unions' political funds, and all the union ballots that were held were successful in maintaining those funds. Given that success rate, why then did trade union rights have almost no profile in Labour's campaign nationally?

ALLEN: I think you're stringing two questions together. Yes, the political fund campaign was a successful campaign, and it was a successful

campaign because we took the message to trade unionists. I think that the Labour Party has not used that campaign and that precedent to actually get on and convince trade unionists about further political development and to get them to vote Labour. It's one thing, a very difficult thing, but it is one thing to convince trade unionists that they should retain a political voice and that their unions shouldn't be tampered with, which is essentially what we did in the political funds campaign. It is a further thing, just another stage up, to then very clearly work towards raising the political consciousness of trade unionists so they vote Labour. There are obviously stages after that, but it has to be taken stage by stage, and it's that second stage of getting trade unionists to, in effect, realise their own self-interest as to why they should vote Labour that in my view we didn't perform successfully in the eighteen months before the General Election campaign. And we still need to do that job and it still remains undone, and, frankly, unless we start now we will not be in any position to resist the next Tory offensive against trade unions. Again, just in a parliamentary vein, I have put my name forward, as you are entitled to do, for particular committees that you would like to serve on, I've put my name forward to serve on the trade union bill standing committee, and I hope to get on to that.

JUNIPER: *It just seemed to me that the issue of trade union rights could have been highlighted locally through trying to win wider support for the Trader print workers who, as you know, were sacked en masse just before Christmas. It seemed to be Wapping coming to the Midlands. Sometimes it seems as though workers in disputes are more a cause of embarrassment to the Labour Party rather than a rallying call. I don't know how you'd respond to that.*

Sold like chattels

ALLEN: I think that the Trader dispute was a very typical example of the way big employers work in print. We've seen with Eddie Shah and Maxwell to an extent, but above all Murdoch, the way the big employers treat their workforce. They are to be bought and sold like chattels and I think the dispute at the Trader was a local example of that sort of attitude. I certainly supported the Trader workers. I've addressed meetings on their behalf. I've boycotted the paper at the request of those workers and the fact that it's now drawn to a sad conclusion and the dispute is now officially finished is a source of regret, because it is lost, and once again we're in this position where the legislation put forward by the Tory government makes it virtually impossible, and in many cases illegal, to pursue legitimate trade

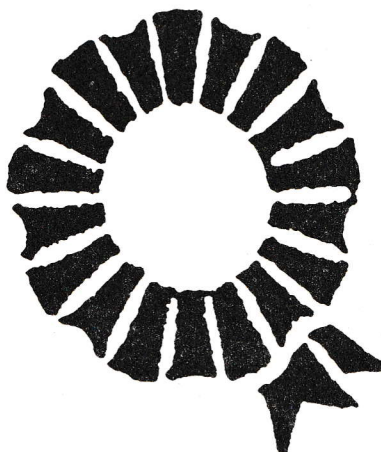
union disputes as you and I would understand the term. What we need to do is to again recapture trade unionists so that they appreciate the basics of why trade unions were formed, what trade union rights are all about. I think we need to come over very strongly on why individual rights are protected by collective action. It's a very obvious thing for people in the Labour Party to talk about, but it isn't a point that's made to the ordinary working person, and I think we have got some lessons that we've got to relearn.

JUNIPER: *Developing a bit, what do you now see as the prime areas that the government are going to introduce new legislation in as part of this ongoing process of carrying out their policies towards trade unions? What do you think are going to be the main targets now?*

ALLEN: Firstly let me say what we must do locally about the trade union situation. In the campaign that I waged, which was a two year campaign before the General Election, I visited almost sixty trade union branches at their invitation. Right across the board, from the BEPTU to my own union, the T and G, GMB, you name a union, I've visited a branch to put over this central connection that Labour and the trade unions have to fight as one, have to be unified, that our interests are the same, that we live together or we die separately, and I think we all

need to do that job in the Labour Party. Far too often the trade union connection is seen only as a source of money or as a source of delegates to management committees, and we don't get out, we don't campaign in the long term with trade unionists, and that's something I think we must do. I'm sorry to digress, but I think that's very important, and I think we've got to do that over the next four years.

To come more directly on to your question, the attack upon trade unions will come first very specifically through the trade union bills and acts, but also across the spectrum. I've had the dubious pleasure of listening to the Queen's Speech. Putting out local services to tender, right the way across the board to what's happening to the teachers, the destruction of trade union negotiating rights there, you name an area, schools, education, health, right the way through every facet of that Queen's Speech, there is an implication for trade union rights and the rights of people freely to get together and negotiate what they want with their employer, so that against that background the Armalite of the trade union bills themselves will pick things off. They'll have another go, in my view, at the political fund. At some point they will seek to ban strikes in essential services. They may even try and reduce the ability of trade unionists to pay their subscriptions through check-off. And we need to come back with some fairly positive proposals. We need to get back in touch with



"Far too often the trade union connection is seen only as a source of money ... we don't get out, we don't campaign with trade unionists."

trade union members. We need to use things like direct contact, direct mailing. The registers that we now all have to keep of trade union members can actually be used to our advantage in rebuilding our connections with the shopfloor and the office and the workplace, and I think we have to look at it in that light. We cannot just say, well, this is going to happen to us, and we've just got to close our eyes and hope the pain goes away. We've got to try and build now for the time when we can get back in the government and repeal a lot of this legislation. And governments can repeal legislation, but they have to do it on the basis of a consent and understanding among the population at large - I'm thinking in particular of trade unionists at large - that what we want to do will be right. We have to an extent lost the propaganda battle. People have been beaten over the head and they're saying, "You know, I quite like this, hit me again," rather than, "This is totally wrong, it's an attack on our individual and collective rights, and I can see it as such and I am opposed to it as such." So we've got a big propaganda battle to win as well as the big organisational battle.

JUNIPER: *If we go on to the lessons of the election. I know one area where the Labour leadership now seems intent on doing something is the introduction of one man one vote ...*

ALLEN: One person one vote!

JUNIPER: ... *(Laughs)* It's still referred to as one man one vote in the media! Where do you stand on that particular question?

Proper accountability

ALLEN: I think that we should have proper accountability of Members of Parliament, and I've been instrumental in the Parliamentary Labour Party in making sure that the Parliamentary Labour Party is more aware of its collective responsibilities to the Party at large. The other side to that is that Members of Parliament are only put into Parliament because of the efforts of their local constituency parties, and I think of the graft and just pure hard work that went into getting me into Parliament by all the people in Nottingham North constituency, a very small party, which had to work so much harder than others. My own view is that it's not for me to tell my constituency what it should do in these matters, and I think my record in terms of fighting for proper accountability over a number of years stands on its own, and I personally am perfectly happy with the current system.

JUNIPER: *There's been a lot of speculation in the media about the need for Labour to become a more*

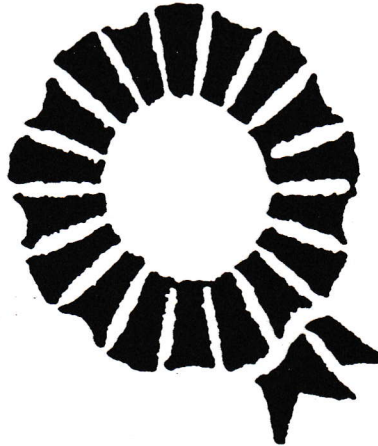
centralist party if it's ever to stand a chance of winning power again. Do you yourself think that it's a desirable or even necessary precondition?

ALLEN: No, I don't. I think that what is far more important is that we develop local activity and strengthen local organisation. If you as a branch secretary want advice on how to recruit members, or how to improve the Party, how to make meetings more enjoyable, you've actually got nowhere to turn. The Party itself as an organisation doesn't help the local parties in the way that I would like to see.

Every party, every branch, every member reinvents the wheel, rather than having some basic advice which they can turn to when they feel appropriate, and I would certainly feel that local organisation's got to be improved by local people, by local branches, by local members, with the advice at their back when they so desire to call upon it. I think we've tried to do that in Nottingham North. 1983 was the lowest ebb of the Labour Party in Nottingham North, and because of the efforts of the constituency, in which I hope I've played a part, we've rebuilt the local party. It's now doubled its membership, still not as high as we'd like it, but if we can double it again over the next three or four years

we'll be getting up to the sort of membership that the other constituencies have, and we'll be far better able to put our message over. And I think if we do that, then people in all our areas, in Bulwell and Strelley, Bestwood, Aspley, Bilborough, right the way across Nottingham North, will actually understand our policies, be aware of our policies. They'll be getting, if you like, a service from their party, their party will be listening to them and will be acting upon what they see. I think that way we'll rebuild the Party, and I think that's the way forward for the Labour Party. I congratulate the Party nationally on a brilliant four week campaign. It was superb, and having worked at Walworth Road in '83 I know how much better it was this time round than previously. But that in itself is not enough. That is only the icing on the cake, and the cake itself is hard, basic work in the constituencies, canvassing every week, not just when there's an election coming up. I think that's the way forward, and I think it'll be the way forward that Nottingham North will take, and the way I hope very much other friends and comrades will take in the other parties, and that way we'll end up with a Labour government.

JUNIPER: *Last year in Nottingham you spoke on a public platform with Amir Khan and Kevin Scally in support of their campaign against expulsion from the Party. Will you yourself continue to oppose such expulsions, including that of Sharon*



"It's not for me to tell my constituency what to do ... I am perfectly happy with the current system."

Atkin, if that is mooted?

ALLEN: I don't believe that our Party should be looking to reduce the numbers of people in it. Everything I've ever done in the Labour Party has been to draw more people in and to expand our membership base and the views and opinions that there are within the Party. It's a bit of a cliché that the Labour Party is a broad church, but it is true, and I think we can only operate that broad church on the basis of tolerance. That means that everyone in the Party must be tolerant of other views, and providing people abide by the constitution, then I can only see the Labour Party building and getting healthier and stronger under another four years of Thatcherism. I think we should direct our efforts towards that rather than looking internally and finding differences with people who are current members of the Party.

JUNIPER: I saw a report that you'd joined both the Tribune Group and the Campaign Group of MPs. Would that put you somewhere between the two constituencies of hard and soft left - somewhere in the fudge constituency?

ALLEN: (Laughs) I make a point of not discussing internal Labour Party matters on public platforms. I think we've got a job to do inside the Party to rebuild on the successful base, certainly, that we've got in Nottingham North, and I think my views about making the Parliamentary Labour Party an effective, organised entity fighting for Labour Party policies is very well known. But I don't think it would be helpful for me to discuss the ins and outs of other people's views or the finesse between terms used by the national media to denigrate the Labour Party. I think we've all got to be a little bit careful about the way we discuss our affairs. I will always discuss Labour Party matters in a Labour Party forum.

JUNIPER: As well as coming up with the campaign slogan for the next General election, which would have to be a successor to the "Thirteen Vasted Years" slogan which was used in 1964, should the Labour Party be merely fulfilling a constitutional role as Her Majesty's Opposition or actively organising resistance?

Maximum pressure

ALLEN: I think you fight where you are. It's very important that Members of Parliament should put the maximum amount of pressure on the government that is possible, and I think there's a lot more that can be done inside the Parliamentary Labour Party to make that opposition effective. We need to ensure that we've always got people there making the points, not just in the committees, which you don't see outside, but also in the chamber of the House of Commons where a lot of

the publicity and coverage can be obtained for our point of view. I don't think we've yet organised that to the extent that I would like to see it. Just as a little anecdote, I gave my speech, my maiden speech, on the first day of Parliament about an hour and a half after Kinnock and Thatcher had spoken, and there were about seven people on the Labour side when I spoke and about a dozen Tories on the other side. Now I think we should always have a given number, fifteen, twenty people, together who are there to make points on our behalf. I know a lot of that is because of the problems about getting called

to speak, but I think we can do it far better and make far more of an impression in Parliament than we have done previously. But that's my role in Parliament. But it's also for other people in the Party to fight where they are, and what I don't want to see is us relapsing into just having meetings with the same old faces, but actually directing organised campaigning throughout Nottingham to get our points of view over. It's no good saying, well, the General Election's over, now let's wait until the County elections, for example. I think we have to get out as I'm doing now, doing a surgery every Saturday morning, which hasn't been done for a long time in this area, in four different parts of the consti-

tuency. That in itself lets people know that the Labour Party's about, because my surgery's a Labour Party surgery, it's not just an MP's surgery. There's always a councillor and a Labour Party member present. But the most obvious example of constructive work is to continue to put out newspapers and newsletters, go to trade union branches, get out on a Sunday morning doing a canvass rather than just saying, well let's continue having our regular Party meetings, agreeing with each other or arguing with each other as the case may be, because that doesn't actually affect anyone, real people out in the streets in the constituency. So we've got to get on with that job as well.

JUNIPER: We now have a situation, as you were saying earlier, in Nottingham where both mass circulation local papers have smashed the print union organisation. One is virulently anti-union and, given that prior to the election campaign local pressure was instrumental in abandoning the Post boycott, what should we now be doing to fight for press freedom in this town to ensure that different political views get much fairer coverage?

ALLEN: We have to look to our own resources if we want fair coverage. We have to look to producing our own paper, our own leaflets on a regular basis, not just occasional one-offs here and there, and I think that's something we've got to organise, we've got to fight for, and we've got finance. That can be done, and I think in



"We've all got to be a little bit careful ... I will always discuss Labour Party matters in a Labour Party forum."

Nottingham North we've tried to do that in the run-up two years. In terms of whether we will ever get what you and I might consider total impartiality from the local or national media, I frankly think we'd better not hold our breath waiting for that, because I don't think it's likely to happen. But now the *Post* dispute is over, we have made every effort possible, knowing the nature of the political orientation of the *Post*, to get our message over in the *Post*, and to an extent we've managed to get issues raised on the health service, on schools, on job losses, which do get into the homes of thousands of people, and they do now realise the Labour Party exists, where perhaps had we not done that they wouldn't have been informed. That's something I think we have to keep doing, but it's something we keep doing without any illusions whatsoever about the long term political effect that that will have on the proprietors and the people that run these particular organs.

JUNIPER: Yes, because the tactics of the Post during the election campaign were to give the Labour Party quite a bit of coverage in the first weeks of the campaign, then coming up to polling day, in the final week, ten days, it gradually disappeared, and when this was taken up with them they said, well, you did have balanced coverage, but of course the concentration had, from the Labour Party's point of view, totally disappeared at the most crucial stage.

Two full pages

ALLEN: The point that I put to the deputy editor of the Evening Post was that at the next election, in that case, I wouldn't speak to the Evening Post for the first two weeks of the campaign on the basis that I would get two full pages in the last couple of days of the campaign, but he didn't seem to see the logic of that argument. But unfortunately that's the way things are. I don't think we can expect any different, but if we were waiting for people to come over and ask our views and waiting for the day that we had socialist newspapers, we would wait in vain. It's up to us to go out and get that message over using every means we can, whatever its bias or partiality. And that's something you've got to do in Parliament in a Tory controlled city council among an electorate most of whom don't vote Labour and amongst a media which is never knowingly in our favour. So let's not cry about it, let's get on with the job and try and do our best, but all the time looking to our own resources as well, both physical and financial, to produce things which can exclusively give a Labour Party point of view to people in Nottingham.

JUNIPER: Well, the very last question I was going to ask, Graham, was, are there any other questions I should have asked you but haven't?

ALLEN: The only thing I would leave as a final message is that we have clearly lost the election nationally, but in Nottingham we had a lot to be proud of, not speaking just about the Nottingham North campaign, but the way in which we campaigned in Nottingham South and Nottingham

East. Given any national swing in our direction at all, we will have three Labour Members of Parliament in Nottingham next time, and I think we should build on the firm base that we have in the labour movement in Nottingham, look outwards to our friends in the labour movement, bring them into the Labour Party, make the local Labour parties, if you like, the parliament of our movement in Nottingham. I believe that we can look forward with optimism to a Labour government, certainly that Nottingham will make a significant contribution to that, but in the meantime defending our base. Making sure that we keep our organisations intact under the onslaught that we're going to get over the next four years will be the top priority, and I think it's up to all of us to do our bit with practical action outside the Party as well as inside our meetings to make that a reality.®

ELECTION SPECIAL

No eastern promise

ROSS BRADSHAW

IF I'D BEEN A "DON'T KNOW", Labour would have got my vote because of the number of leaflets they shoved through the door. Unfortunately, several of them seemed to be the same leaflet, apart from the one which looked as if it was from the Tories. The SDP wrote to me, but I couldn't work out how to open the letter.

Actually, a lot of people I don't know wrote to me. Someone called Michael Knowles wrote claiming to be an MP and printed extracts from the five constituents he'd helped over the last four years. He also said he was in favour of hanging and something called "normal love".

The Maoists also sent me a leaflet. It said everybody was a heap of shit and the way to improve things was to write "revolution" on my ballot paper. Apparently Maoism is catching on in Peru these days (but then, as we always say, Nottingham East is not the same as Lima North).

Only spoke Gaelic

Finally, the Red Front called for me by name. Worrying. Fortunately I was out, which saved the trouble of pretending I only spoke Gaelic.

How many times did you see "the broadcast"? I adored it. I adored it the second time too. No, I'm not embarrassed to admit it. Well, not really. (I wish I could be an orator.)

Banging on doors. God. The main problems in persuading people to vote Labour were (in order): (a) Labour's perceived support for minorities; (b) the "loony left"; (c) defence.

The first was often expressed in terms of "I won't vote for no bleddy Paki" or "Labour used to be for the working man (sic), now it's just queers". Oddly enough, I think that this response was more genuine than the others. When pressed on the "loony left" few could be specific, other than mentioning blacks and gays.

On defence I found most people could be won round or steered on to safer ground like the

defence of the NHS or opposing the poll tax. In many cases, I felt that people were just saying "loony left" or "defence" because they had to say something. After all, a conversation going "Can we count on your support?" "No." "Why not?" "I don't know" would sound silly - but often it appeared people had no real reason for opposing Labour, or none they would admit to.

But the race and gender issues were real. (Ironically, the Alliance candidate was more progressive on gay rights than Mohammad Aslam, but no one mentioned that.) Several people brought up the "gay swimming sessions" issue. If there is any lesson from this, it is as Chris Smith (the only out gay MP) constantly points out - you have to take people with you, win them over, understand and overcome their fears and prejudices. That can only be done by patient

campaigning, not by resolutions at branch meetings or council decisions.

However problematic canvassing was, it was infinitely more pleasant than most Nottingham East constituency meetings. Indeed, the election came as light relief from the Sharon Atkin/Mohammad Aslam etc. etc. divisions. Actually, on the doorstep it was mentioned by only one of hundreds I canvassed, but nonetheless the whole dispute, and the history of Nottingham East, must have sapped the morale and energy of many constituency activists.

Whatever the rights and wrongs of the issues, the wreckage and hardship which will follow the loss of the city council will be a reminder of what happens if people don't get their act together.

Still, things can only improve. Or get worse.●

ELECTION SPECIAL

Forest firebrand

JOHN SHEFFIELD

"CLOUGH IN CLIFTON," says the headline on the A4 leaflet. Underneath is a photograph of the Forest manager with his arm affectionately round the Labour candidate. Both are grinning like Halloween pumpkins.

The text says:

"I'm sick to the back teeth of Thatcher, and it's about time we did something about it'.

"Brian Clough is backing Alan Simpson's campaign to win Nottingham South for Labour.

"Come along, I'll tell you what the score is and why you should be backing this young man.

"I'll be at Fairham Community College, Farnborough Road, Clifton on Friday 22nd May - I want a good crowd. Kick off at 7.30 pm ... be there!"

"We'll win with Labour."

The Clifton Estate is one of the places where the 1987 General Election will be lost and won, a natural habitat of the old Labour-voting classes, still Labour at the city council elections in May, but infected with home-buying and anti-loonyism. Built in the fifties, it hangs from the south west corner of the city like an enormous jam jar plonked on the rich agricultural land south of the Trent to catch the overspill from Nottingham's Victorian terraces. With a population of around 30,000, it is larger than many a great historic city, but electorally it is represented by five city councillors, two and a half county councillors and a quarter of an MP.

That MP since 1983 has been Martin Brandon Bravo, a canny, moustachioed self-publicist whose very name is a fanfare. He sits on a Conservative majority of 5,715 and works hard at it. It isn't one of the extreme marginals, but if Labour is going to form a government, it has to take Nottingham South.

Painted on an end wall of the shop units on Southchurch Drive is a technicolor idyll of old Clifton village, which is not part of the council estate but an infilled middle-class enclave perched above the Trent across the frontier

formed by the main road to the M1 and East Midlands Airport. Odd, then, that staring out at the council terraces is this mural of the heritage they never had - the medieval church, the dovecote on the village green, the eighteenth century hall and, for a subtitle, "Tenez le droit": not an election slogan but the motto of the Clifton family, who sold up and moved out when the estate was built, leaving behind this last instruction to the peasantry.

But the estate is no longer the harsh barrack town it looked when brash and new. Brick, stucco and tile have mellowed, gardens matured. One front garden has an apple orchard which manages to look almost immemorial. Much rarer now are the old horror stories of violence and vandalism, once a staple of the local media, and scattered about are the unmistakable designer labels of owner-occupation: plastic stone cladding, bottle-glass windows, neo-Georgian light oak doors with fanlights and carriage lamps; and, not far from the Community College, a gorgeous Black Forest fantasy in violent orange stucco with a monumental lychgate and heart-shaped holes fretted in the window shutters.

Half the average

With unemployment only half the city average and the more desirable end-terrace houses fetching as much as a traditional semi, Clifton is far from the stereotypical council estate. The Tories have real hopes.

Fairham College was named after the pretty little brook which still trickles semi-rurally round the edge of the estate. Flat-roofed and plate-glass-walled, it bears, like all the older public buildings on the estate, the indelible mark of the fifties. Almost any of the buildings on the Fairham campus could be church, library, health centre. (The pubs, on the other hand, are in opulent thirties style, with dark red brickwork and plunging eaves - the brewers

understood their clients better than the church and the planners.)

It's an appropriate place for a Clough appearance. As a comprehensive school of 2,000 boys (it's now mixed and takes adults in the sixth form), it had an outstanding soccer tradition. Its most famous ex-pupil is Viv Anderson, of Forest, Arsenal and Manchester United - the first black footballer to play for England.

The meeting is in the Peacock Theatre, which has a plaque in the foyer saying it was opened by Barry Hines in 1984. It seems to have been named after the nearby Peacock pub and is a pleasant little theatre, though neither as splendid as the bird nor as comfortable as the pub.

The front half of the auditorium has rows of stackable chairs on the polished wood floor. Most people ignore these and make for the back, which is more theatrical, steeply raked with tip-up seats. This leaves the floor dispiritingly vacant. There is nobody at all on the left hand side, and by half past seven there are only about sixty people altogether, including a dozen or so kids who are obviously there for the football not the politics. (But their votes may be worth something in the great anti-Thatcher crusade of the year 2000.)

Despite the thinnish audience, there is a genuine whiff of excitement, partly because of Clough, partly because Central TV and Radio Nottingham are here. This gives the meeting status. It is a media event. But at the same time subverts it. It is less an event than a pretext. Clough will appear on TV and radio supporting the candidate and slagging off Maggie Thatcher; a highly effective leaflet has been doormatted round the estate. Who needs a meeting?

Twenty to eight and still no Clough. The media commute restlessly between the platform at the front and the stewards at the back. They have an 8.30 deadline. "No problem," says Simpson, dark-haired, neat and pencil-slim in delicate shades of grey. His blood-crimson rosette glimmers like a frozen wound.

But the platform party is solemn. The pre 7.30 euphoria has evaporated. Small behind their long table with the gaping stage behind, they look momentarily diminished, like insects on the lip

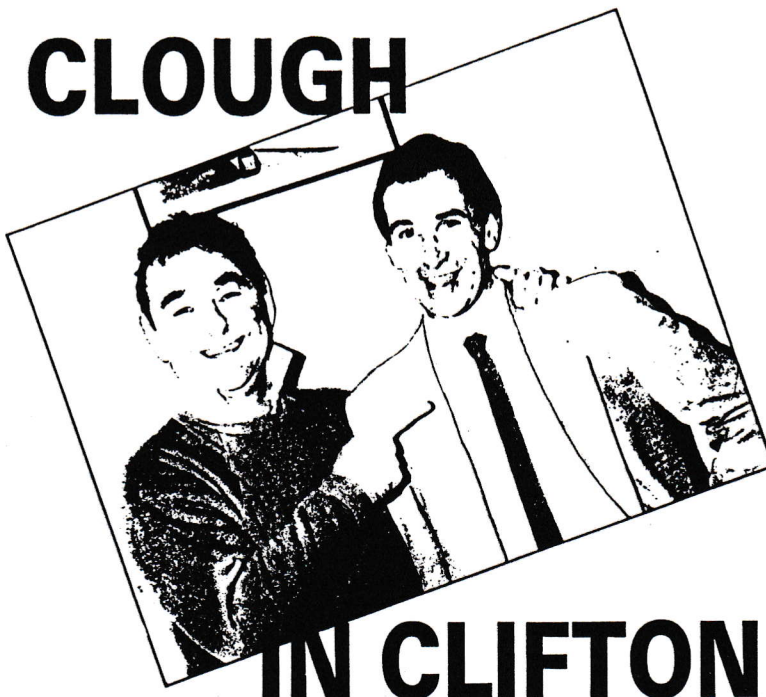
of a letter box. The crowd is more relaxed, reasoning perhaps that stars are always late. At a quarter to eight, people are still arriving and the chairman moves everybody down to the floor to fill the void.

Overheard conversations and the frequency of gladhanding suggest that most of the audience are Labour Party members. Mostly they are male, mostly working-class. There is an almost complete absence of the young, further-educated, middle-class stratum and the sprinkling of feminists found in an inner city bed-sit ward.

A voice from the back says, "He's arrived!", and the kids scamper to the door. Simpson's face eases into a smile and the chairman says, "When he comes in, could we have a round of applause, please."

"Alan!" shouts a steward, "can you come to the door? Brian wants to interview you." The audience chuckles. A few minutes later, there is an enormous cheer outside. "They've scored!" somebody

CLOUGH



IN CLIFTON

"I'm sick to the back teeth of Thatcher, and its about time we did something about it."

Brian Clough is backing Alan Simpson's campaign to win Nottingham South for Labour.

"Come along, I'll tell you what the score is and why you should be backing this young man."

"I'll be at Fairham Community College, Farnborough Road, Clifton on Friday 22nd May — I want a good crowd. Kick off at 7.30pm.....be there!"

"We'll win with Labour"

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says. Then Clough bustles up the centre aisle, followed by the media and their hardware. There is loud, long, uncontrived applause. They didn't have to be asked - Clough is immensely popular in Nottingham and, on a remote outer city estate, there is also straightforward appreciation that at least one of the rich and famous can be bothered to visit them.

And on their side he is in spades, raucous and unembarrassed from the moment he interrupts the chairman's opening remarks to promote himself up the speaking order. "They've been switched," he announces to guffaws from the floor. "I'm going first."

The media position themselves below, camera and mike peering up at him, camera lens veiled by a sheet of violet perspex clipped on with a couple of clothes pegs.

Barn-storming

It's a barn-storming performance. The voice varies between the more or less mellifluous croak familiar from TV and an astonishing, cattle-stunning bellow, customised to detonate on an erring winger at the far corner flag over a screaming Eurocrowd of 50,000. In the Peacock Theatre, the audience of 120 stirs uneasily in the blast.

He starts, characteristically, by having a go at the audience.

"I don't know what we're all doing here, really - not that there's all that many of you. I'm preaching to the converted. I'm a socialist. You're all socialists. WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING IS GETTING OUT THERE AND GETTING OTHER PEOPLE TO VOTE SOCIALIST!"

He turns, just as characteristically, to self-caricature.

"I've got a big fat house, a big fat car and a big fat job. Honestly I have. And this government have given me more! I'm doing all right out of them. BUT I DON'T WANT ANY MORE! That's the difference between me and them. I don't mind everybody else having a bit as well. I want other people to share in my good fortune. I want to share it out a bit. I want decent hospitals, decent schools, decent houses. THEY DON'T! THEY WANT IT ALL FOR THEMSELVES!"

The answer is simple

"I'll tell you why we lost in 1983. It's simple. WE LOST BECAUSE NOT ENOUGH PEOPLE VOTED LABOUR! I know it sounds daft, but that's what it was, and the answer is just as simple. WE'VE ALL GOT TO GET OUT THERE AND GET SOMEBODY ELSE TO VOTE LABOUR. Your brother, your sister, your husband, your wife, your grannie, your auntie, your mates. GET OUT THERE AND GET THEM TO VOTE LABOUR!"

"I've got an older brother who's out of work. Our Joe. He's fifty-eight and he's a plasterer. AND HE DOESN'T KNOW WHETHER TO VOTE LABOUR! When I asked him why, do you know what he said? He said, 'Well, I don't know. What about all those loonies.' I said, 'Look at me. I've got a lovely wife and three lovely kids, and I'm not so bad myself. I'M NORRA LOONY!'"

He sits down to wild applause and piercing

whistles from youths at the back wearing Forest scarves.

It's a hard act to follow. Simpson confesses he can't hope to equal Brian's political subtlety, so he'll talk about football instead. And he does. He waves the Labour manifesto and from inside it produces, white rabbit-like, another glossy booklet: "Forest - The Golden Years". This, he says, is the Forest manifesto and, donning the mantle of Clough, he tells us what qualities he's looking for in his team - everyone working for everyone else, no-one grabbing everything for himself, a good health service to keep everybody fit, everybody guaranteed a job.

Clough looks quizzical, reflecting perhaps that footballers (and football managers) have a very *unguaranteed* job, but by and large the conceit works well. It ends with a comic flight of fantasy in which the manager wonders whether to sell off three of his conventional defenders and replace them with a new-fangled system called Trident which you bury under the centre spot. What happens when the opposition break through and they've only got Steve Sutton to beat? Does the manager press the button and blow the whole stadium up? "The players wouldn't be too pleased. The spectators might be a little bit upset. And the ground staff would play merry hell!"

Ecstatic grin

This goes down well. A joyous grin has been creeping over Clough's face. It is now so ecstatic it almost climbs off the top of his head. Simpson is a Community Relations Council worker and sometime dissident county councillor who at first sight inclines most obviously towards the party's intellectual left, but the speech has been a skilful piece of populism, not too blatant, the aitches drooping rather than dropping, the vowels harking back unobtrusively to their Merseyside origins (Simpson was an Everton junior, and the soccer knowledge is genuine enough). There is warm applause and then Noreen Baker of COHSE, dressed in ultra-violet, speaks briefly on the devastation of the health service, and thanks Simpson for backing the union in its fight to save the General Hospital.

At question time Simpson warns about Tory plans to sell off estates like Clifton to absentee landlords, and Clough descends into the audience for more interviews with Central. A small, elderly man lends passion to his point by brandishing the *Morning Star* and the chairman asks anyone who can help to take leaflets and posters and sign on at the back: "If that man Brandon Bravo shows his face round here, I want him to see so many Labour posters that he takes himself straight off again."

In the car park, Clough is pressed back against his car door by autograph hunters. At the bus terminus round the corner, the West Indian driver of the newly privatised Nottingham City Transport Ltd double-decker is in no hurry to leave in this quiet mid-evening period. His radio is tuned to *Any Questions*. One of the panel makes a joke about Mrs Thatcher going on and on and on, and the half dozen people on the bus laugh.

At whose expense, it's hard to tell.●

ELECTION SPECIAL

Neither sacred nor free

JOHN SHEFFIELD

LIKE MOST LABOUR supporters, I've long accepted the *Evening Post's* right-wing bias as almost meteorological - persistent drizzle, with prolonged showers during elections. It hadn't seemed unusually monsoon-like this time - though there had been a bit of a downpour during the local elections. (Or maybe gay swimming sessions really were the most important thing the Labour council did in its four years of office.)

What prompted me to take a closer look at the general election coverage were the comments of Graham Allen and Ian Juniper in our current issue (see page 13). Both insist that Labour almost disappeared from the *Post* in the last two weeks of the campaign. True? Or another predictable leftie whinge about the wicked capitalist press?

Pretty conclusive

True, actually. Or as near as makes no difference. I don't claim the research was exhaustive (how much of one's life can one sanely spend running a ruler over the *Evening Post*?). But it's pretty conclusive. I've divided it into five sections, the first two deal with comment, the last three with news. ("Facts are sacred, comment is free".)

(1) *"Comment" column.* Editorials are where a newspaper's politics are legitimately worn on its sleeve. The *Post's* colours were unashamedly blue. The only criticism of the government was in the first "Comment" of the campaign, a month before polling day, which mildly queried the Tory record on the Health Service ("Patients ... will be seeking some very good answers ... We will be interested to hear them too"). After that it was "Ten more years" all the way.

Out of seven more election editorials, one, the next, on May 18th (still long before polling day) was a neutral preview. Of the remaining six, four were anti-Labour (one mildly, three vehemently) while two compared the parties and plumped emphatically for the Tories.

And it was noticeable, as Messrs. Allen and Juniper suggested, that the heat was turned up towards the end of the campaign. The final three "Comment" columns in the last eight days all attacked Labour. The June 4th headline read, "The hidden string of Mr Scargill," with content to match. On June 8th it was, "Sweet rose - and the prickly thorn" (an early job application to be next editor of the *Sun* - "bellicose ravings of influential Labour campaigners for gay rights, racial and sexual 'equality' and CND", "alien doctrines" etc.). Finally, on June 9th, the last word. No advice on how to vote (preserving the thin veil of neutrality?). Instead, a eulogy of the Tories (with minor reservations), and heavy criticism of the Labour Party, including the following profound contribution to political analysis: "Neil Kinnock ... A smashing bloke to have a pint with. But a Prime Minister?" *To sum up:* one (early) editorial attacked the Tories, two

strongly supported them; six editorials attacked Labour, none supported them.

(2) *Cartoons.* like editorials, are free comment not sacred fact. The *Post* used two cartoonists, the syndicated Jak (a notorious rightwinger often pilloried by *Private Eye*), and the home-grown Tom Johnston. There were ten election cartoons. Two of them (early on) poked fun at Edwina Currie and Harvey Proctor, two were mildly favourable to the Tories and one (the last, on June 10th) attacked Labour and supported the Tories. Of the remaining five, one satirised the two Davids and four attacked Labour, sometimes scurrilously ("We'll keep the White Flag flying here" etc.). *To sum up:* none of the cartoons seriously attacked the Tories and some supported them; five cartoons seriously attacked Labour and none supported them.

So much for "comment". What about "fact"?

(3) *News stories.* Measuring news stories in column centimetres is an imperfect indicator (it ignores presentation, for example), but it gives at least a general idea. The *Post's* bias was clear. Looking only at the crucial last ten days of the campaign from Monday 1st June (the period picked out by Messrs. Allen and Juniper), the Conservatives were given roughly twice as much space as Labour and three times as much as the Alliance. And, sacred or not, the way these items were presented was by no means neutrally factual. As a further indicator, I separated out main headline stories and photographs.

Favourable each time

(4) *Main stories.* Looking only at the story given most prominence on a page during the final ten days, the Conservatives led fourteen times, with favourable coverage each time (e.g. "Economy in fine shape - Lawson", "Asian votes swing to Tories - claim"). Labour led nine times, four with favourable coverage (e.g. "Benn attacks Mrs Thatcher over defence"), five with unfavourable (e.g. "Don't vote Labour says UDM", "Unions will pull strings"). *Summing up:* the Tories had fifty per cent more lead stories. All of these were favourable. Over half of Labour's much smaller number were unfavourable.

(5) *Photographs.* I calculated first the number of photos over the last ten days, then the area they covered. (I ignored the constituency profiles, which by definition included equal numbers of candidates.) The Conservatives had 29 photos, Labour 15, the Alliance 19. Of these, the Tories were in a lead position 18 times, Labour 6 times, the Alliance 5. The disparity in number (two to one) was even greater with area: the Tories occupied almost three times as much space as Labour, four times as much as the Alliance.

The conclusions are clear. "Free" means "free" to praise the Tories but never Labour, and "facts" - well, sadly, there just seem to be more Tory "facts" about than Labour "facts".

U.S. ELECTION SPECIAL

Different in San Francisco

RICHARD McCANCE



WHILE NEIL KINNOCK and his front bench were tactically pruning their manifesto, erasing any mention of lesbian and gay rights in case they frightened the horses, San Francisco was busy preparing for a Congressional by-election, caused by the death of Representative Sala Burton. This had important ramifications for the lesbian and gay communities throughout North America and beyond.

Disproportionate

Political strategists estimate that gays and lesbians represent about 15% of the city's eligible voters, exercising power vastly disproportionate to their numbers. A campaign worker told me that gay neighbourhoods have a turnout higher than any other minority group: "Many lesbians and gays come from places where they have no power, so once they're here they get out and vote because they feel they can make a difference."

The two Democratic front-runners had little in common save their party's tags. Nancy Pelosi, Italian American, party fundraiser and former Baltimore socialite, had never held elective office. She fulfilled the criteria of the American dream, slim, attractive, with five good-looking children and husband. And she had money too. After her campaign endorsement, she promptly

wrote out a cheque for £150,000. Her belief was that her connections in Washington would see San Francisco right.

Harry Britt was a former Methodist minister and out-gay City Supervisor (San Francisco City Councillor), tending to overweight. He lived on his Supervisor's salary of £12,000 in a co-ownership apartment in the predominantly gay Castro district, had been twice re-elected with popular support, and was a socialist. (He succeeded Harvey Milk, who was assassinated in 1977 by another Supervisor, Dan White.)

Both candidates did share one thing: they had inherited a mantle from their predecessors. Harvey Milk had tape-recorded a political will naming four people he felt suitable to succeed him. One of them was Harry Britt (though his first choice, Ann Kronenberg, had been passed over by Mayor Dianne Feinstein as too left-wing). Nancy Pelosi had been anointed by Sala Burton in a deathbed endorsement and had the backing of the Burton machine which had run San Francisco politics for over twenty years. She also had the endorsement of Mayor Feinstein.

Years of support

This had incensed lesbian/gay activists, who felt they were owed dues by the Democratic Party in return for years of support from the

lesbian/gay communities. The constituency includes the city's largest gay neighbourhoods and has always had a strong Democratic base. They remembered when Harvey Milk and Mayor Moscone were slain by the god-fearing WASP Supervisor Dan White, and the 80,000 San Franciscans, straight and gay, black and white, who held a candlelight vigil that night. They also remembered when the jury returned a verdict of Voluntary Manslaughter against White, how the lesbian/gay community took to the streets, police cars were burned, and City Hall nearly razed to the ground. A traditionally tolerant and liberal San Francisco was traumatised and shocked; never since the earthquake in 1911 had the city been so near the abyss. Gay power, long a nascent force, was on the streets and angry.

Equally angry

Equally angry with Pelosi's endorsement were three other San Francisco Democratic Councillors (two women, one of them black, and a white man), prompting them to line up against Pelosi. The field was completed by eleven other candidates ranging from the Socialist Workers party to the Humanist Party. From the outset, Pelosi had a substantial lead in fundraising and three weeks before the election had a strong edge in the opinion polls. The only joint appearance by all fourteen candidates turned into a collective assault on Pelosi, when three of Harry Britt's fellow Democratic San Francisco Supervisors contended that the thousands of dollars in contributions from big business would make Pelosi beholden to them rather than to the voters. But Pelosi insisted that her ability to pay for much of her campaign gave her an independence none of the other candidates shared. But the overwhelming message coming over from Pelosi was that, unless you're rich and well-connected, you're not competent to represent the voters.

Quickly countered

Though Pelosi had the endorsement of the Hearst newspapers, in a city that supports three lesbian/gay weekly newspapers there is a healthy distrust of the mainstream media, so that opinion polls in the straight press, claiming that Pelosi was way ahead of Britt, would be quickly countered.

In the event, Nancy Pelosi polled 38,021 votes (36%), Harry Britt 34,031 (32%), Bill Maher 10,000 (10%) and the remaining eleven candidates 17,948 (22%). There was a 45% turnout.

With an impressive track record, Harry Britt accumulated many key endorsements from unions, including the San Francisco Labour Council, and from women's groups, while the majority of his colleagues who did not run themselves endorsed his candidacy. He also had wide support from tenants' groups and conservation and environmental groups like the Sierra Club. But there were penalties, like, "No street posters, we're environmentalists."

However, Britt's opponents argued that, as an openly gay official, Harry Britt was a one-issue politician. In a city where the buses carry adverts for condoms, AIDS awareness is high

throughout the population, so a contender for political office who omitted AIDS from the political shopping lists would be unlikely to capture much of the lesbian/gay vote. Pelosi chose instead to push the line that "some of my best friends are Senators in Washington who will see San Francisco right".

The days of traditional power blocs have gone. San Francisco has opened its arms to Asians, Hispanics, gays and affluent whites who all compete for scarce affordable housing with an entrenched working-class and elderly people, plus a growing army of destitutes queueing in their hundreds at the soup kitchens not a block away from the City's West End.

The lesbian and gay community has grown in power since its first major political success when Harvey Milk was elected to the Board of Supervisors in 1977. There are three major political clubs in the city: the oldest, the Alice B. Toklas Democratic Club, which backed liberal presidential candidate George McGovern in 1972 and still wields clout; the Harvey Milk Democratic Club, Britt's organising base and more progressive; and the Stonewall Democratic Club, with less clout but an eye for publicity.

Hundreds of workers

With an AIDS death rate of three a day, once active politicians might have been distracted by the demands of dying lovers and friends (last year, Britt lost his own leading campaign manager). But the epidemic does not appear to have drained the city's gay clout, judging from the hundreds of campaign workers on the "Britt for Congress" campaign trail.

Pelosi may have had twelve paid workers, but when the straight press revised their "thrashing for Britt" to "A photofinish", Pelosi's paid workers blamed their dwindling volunteers, some of whom had already switched to Britt. He may not have had unlimited funds, but this could be more than matched by the hundreds of volunteers packing out the headquarters daily, many of whom were clearly not lesbian or gay - a testament to Britt's wide voter commitment. What this campaign showed was that it is not enough to have big business endorsements, friends in high places, unlimited funds and paid workers. Though Pelosi's campaign funds touched £600,000, Britt's £250,000 contained thousands of small sacrifices, fifty cents here a dollar there. Perhaps you need more than a pay cheque to keep morale high when things aren't going the way big business ordained.

Dress rehearsal

San Franciscans go to the polls for another four year term in June 1988, a little less than a year away. Whether Pelosi remains a caretaker Congresswoman depends as much on the broad lesbian/gay/straight political coalition holding up as on having got the dress rehearsal right this time ready for the First Night. It also depends on those thousands of invisible lesbians and gay men in San Francisco who didn't vote this time getting used to handling lesbian/gay power and using it.●

INTERVIEW

Two years on

GWEN MACLEOD is interviewed by GAIL SQUIRES

Gwen MacLeod is former chair of Notts. Women Against Pit Closures and was recently elected to the National Executive Committee of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers. Her husband, Ian, is an NUM member at Silverhill Colliery and was on strike for the duration of the 1984-5 coal dispute.

GS: *When did Notts. Women Against Pit Closures fold up?*

GM: I think the decision was taken about April time this year that they would fold the Notts. Women up, because basically there was a drop-off in attendance to meetings, and it was felt at that time that the organisation wasn't going anywhere. Women who'd previously been involved in Notts. Women Against Pit Closures had got involved more deeply in other issues, like Justice for Mineworkers, Anti-Apartheid, the Labour Party, CND and various other political groups, or even involved in the communities. Some women after the strike found it difficult to attend the meetings because of personal and domestic reasons, so the decision was taken to dissolve Notts. Women Against Pit Closures and hand over the money which was left to the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, where it was felt it would do more good.

Justice for Mineworkers

GS: *I should imagine quite a few women who were active in Women Against Pit Closures are now working for the national Justice for Mineworkers Campaign.*

GM: Oh yes. There's quite a lot of women who are involved in that. Most of the main women in Notts. Women Against Pit Closures are now involved in Justice for Mineworkers.

GS: *What do you think the role of the women in the strike was, because it seemed to me that Women Against Pit Closures changed the nature of relationships very often within the mining community.*

GM: Yes. Well, basically, at the beginning of the strike the role was quite simply to provide food and money for the families of the striking miners. But it became apparent within a very short time, especially within the Notts. Area, that the women were needed for far more than just washing pots and serving soup. There was very little difference between a Notts. striking miner and a miner's wife; the roles became virtually the same, they both really believed in the same thing. The men who were on strike in Notts. were totally committed to their beliefs. They had very strong ties with the NUM, and the women involved in the strike had the very same total commitment. One of the sad things I felt during the strike is I was classed as Gwen MacLeod, miner's wife, not Gwen MacLeod, supporter

of the NUM strike, and basically that's what we were. We weren't an attachment, we weren't there to do the washing, cleaning and etc. Our role in Notts. especially was the same as the men's. We went out fundraising. All the money we brought back was used for the children and the maintenance of the striking miners' families. We went out and politicised the different parts of the country that weren't aware of what was going off in Notts. We were fully aware of what was going on in our own communities: when there were strike committee meetings, which were held in Notts. with Henry Richardson and figures of the NUM, we took part in that. We weren't like some parts of the country, say like South Wales, for instance, where the men made the decision and the women were told of that decision. In Notts., it was totally different. We had a Notts. forum and that was the decision-making body, during the miners' strike, of the Notts. NUM. There were something like two or three representatives from each colliery in Notts. plus women's representatives, and the women made those decisions along with the men. I feel right up till the UDM broke away and the NUM in Notts. was re-formed and went back to this official type of union role, the women had a greater say in what went off.

GS: *So do you feel that the role of Women Against Pit Closures in the Notts. area was quite different to the role that women played in other mining areas during the dispute?*

GM: Yes. All over the country where the NUM continued its normal role as a trade union, then the women became secondary to the men. I mean that the decisions were made and they abided by those decisions. In Notts., there was no formal NUM, the NUM at the beginning of the strike was in disarray. The officials of the NUM had split; I mean, the only official who we had from not long after the beginning of the strike was Henry Richardson, and the rest of the officials were still up at Berry Hill. That was the official NUM, and the people running the strike were not the official NUM, so that gave us a greater say - basically, because they needed us. We don't think they thought, "Ah, this is a good chance to bring women into decision-making".

Needed all the support

GS: *They needed all the support they could get.*

GM: They needed the support of the women.

GS: *Do you feel that you changed as a person in any way during the course of the strike?*

GM: Apart from becoming more confident, no. I think basically I've always been the same, I've always believed in the labour movement. Maybe, I would say, I'm more resilient through the strike, and maybe I'm more confident. Before the strike, I believed that to actually achieve anything within the labour movement you needed a degree, you needed to be more clever than your bosses. I

believed that, say, to become a councillor, an MP or whatever, you needed to have this education behind you. Maybe what's changed now is I believe that the education is fine if you've got it, but if you've not, it doesn't exclude you. The most important thing in anyone being involved in a trade union or in politics is their beliefs. Before the strike I was intimidated by people who'd got qualifications and I felt inferior to councillors, MPs or whatever, and now I'm not. There's no way anybody with any education or degrees or whatever can dissuade me from what I believe in. I believe you should fight for what's right for the working class. I think that's come out of the strike.

GS: Do you think the strike changed relationships within the family?

GM: Yes, it did, some families more than others. Mine, not a great deal, though it did in some ways. Although I've always been involved before and Ian's always been quite happy to go along with that, now he accepts that more readily. I think before he felt it was strange maybe because I was more involved than he was. Now he doesn't. He thinks that's OK. But some families, they've had virtually a turnaround. One of our group in Ashfield, she was 45 when she lived here, she brought up six children - the youngest one was 13 during the strike, all the rest were married. She'd never gone out, she'd never gone to work, she'd been one of these women "tied to the kitchen sink", but now they've been set free. Well, there weren't many I could say were like that, but this lady was. I mean, all she did all her life was brought her kids up, did her housework and that was it. During the strike, she got involved, and at the beginning all she said was, "I'll come in kitchen and wash pots and things, but I don't want to do anything political."

For the first six or eight weeks she did, and then this day she said, "Oh Gwen, I'm sick to death, I'm fed up. I'm going crazy, I need summat to do." So I said, "Well, fine. We've got a woman going down to Brighton, and we need someone to go with her. It's a speaking tour. We've got five days and we've got about ten or twelve meetings set up. All she needs is someone to go with her." (We didn't like sending women off to all parts of the country on their own.) So I said, "Will you go?" She said, "Yes, anything to get me out. I need a break." Off she went down to Brighton, and the woman who was doing the speaking took ill and lost her voice completely, so Marie ended up having to get up and speak for the first time in her life. She'd never even been in a pub on her own. She told people what she believed in and what she was doing and that we needed the money

for whatever reasons, and she was a great success. That woman, from that day, I can't remember a week going by without she was somewhere speaking. She still goes to London and speaks now. Her life has completely changed, and her husband's has as well. Before that he didn't know how to stir his own tea. Now he does things, like Hoovering!

GS: That's obviously quite an extreme case of how a relationship can turn about, but do you think that kind of change took place in more subtle ways as well?

GM: Yes, I think it did. That was an extreme, but in most cases the women became stronger and the men accepted that the women were there for more than just being a wife and mother, and I would say it did a lot for some families, although it broke some families up as well, where the husbands after they went back to work expected roles to revert back to as before. The women couldn't adapt that way; once they'd realised that they were capable of doing more than washing and cleaning, there was no way they were going back to it. And we have had some divorces.

GS: Why do you think so many Notts. miners did carry on working?

GM: Bad leadership. Henry's (Richardson) not going to like it, but he's heard me say it before. I think it was total bad leadership. In most parts of the country the NUM membership were being educated, they were being told about pit closures and privatisation, it was going through branch meetings and they were getting literature explaining what was happening.

No leadership

When Cortonwood went on strike, Ian, my husband, had got no idea what was happening. The only reason he went on strike was because he wouldn't cross the picket line. I don't know how many miners there were at the beginning of the strike, maybe 140,000, with 110,000 on strike in other parts of the country and 30,000 from Notts. going to work, but he believed he was part of a national NUM and he wouldn't cross the picket line. He didn't at that time think about pit closures and economical pits. All that education came after, and that's why I believe most Notts. miners went to work - they just didn't have the education, the information. And they didn't have the leadership. It was as simple as that.

GS: Did you find it very difficult being in a minority in Notts. during the strike?

GM: At the beginning, yes, it was a strange feeling. We kept thinking everybody would come out next week or next month, and it never happened. I didn't tell anybody that Ian was on



strike for quite a few weeks because it used to create friction. The first two months of the strike, it was like ..., well, the nearest thing I can think of, it must've been like living in France when the Germans occupied. It was like an underground movement. There were secret meetings where strikers used to go from different pits. We used to have code names, like "Alligators"; we tried to get people involved and they used to go picketing. It was very exciting. Many a night you could look through this window and there would be an unmarked police van parked outside watching us, because they thought there were Yorkshire pickets down here. We felt isolated from our neighbours and people we worked with, but we met a lot of new friends. At the beginning of the strike, I didn't know anyone on strike apart from my brother. Now we've got loads of friends we didn't know before. There was isolation, but there was a really strong bond between people who were on strike. It's still there.

Worse than hostility

GS: What were relationships like with people who continued to work?

GM: Nothing. That was the hard thing about it. There weren't arguments, well, hardly. It was just that they ignored you, which was worse than being hostile to you, in a way. I mean, I'm the shop steward for 500 women at work, and if the strike was mentioned, they said, "Oh, we don't watch it, we switch it off." I'd got sisters whose husbands went to work, and they said, "No, we don't watch it." I think that was most daunting. It was like the most dramatic thing that was happening to me and my family, yet other people could totally ignore it as if it had never happened.

GS: What do you feel were the positive things about the strike? You mentioned how women's roles changed dramatically in the strike, and also the friends that you've made with people who were on strike. Did you feel a lot of solidarity with the people that gave you support from outside as well?

GM: Oh, yes. Very positive things when we actually made contact with people around the country - the support we got was fantastic. People who'd never seen a mine, and also people from different origins. I spoke to one or two black communities in London, and the solidarity was amazing. Yet for the first time in my life and for most of the miners who I knew who had contact with black people, we realised that the victimisation which we were experiencing from the police, these people had experienced all their lives. It was a revelation. We are not stupid people. We knew that if you're black you've got less chance of getting a job than anyone else, but ...

GS: You'd never actually experienced it.

GM: Yes, we hadn't experienced it, and to meet the people who it was happening to ..., well I think they're ..., I mean, just fantastic. They accepted us, and I always remember one of the things they said was, "I hope the miners don't forget us after the strike, again." And that's a sad thing, because I think they have. Some of them have, though there's four people working for

Anti-Apartheid.

GS: How did you feel when the strike ended?

GM: Well, I think we cried for about four weeks! Devastating. We just felt let down, we felt lost, we were devastated.

GS: Did you feel they should have continued on strike?

GM: Yes. Maybe it wasn't sensible. I mean, there's no way they could have gone on and on. But being in a minority in Notts., we couldn't understand areas like South Wales and Yorkshire saying, "Oh, there are so many going back to work." People in Nottingham felt totally left out, not by ..., maybe a little bit by the NUM, but mainly by the rest of the trade union movement. The TUC as far as I was concerned during the strike was non-existent, and I still believe that if the TUC had done as much for the miners as they'd tried to do for the GCHQ workers, although I'm not saying they've done a great deal, but at least they've made the public aware of the injustice of banning trade unionism at GCHQ. They've called for days of action, and they've actually backed rallies and demonstrations, whereas during the miners' strike, I can't honestly remember one rally where the TUC as a body backed it and said, "This is a day of action for the miners, this is a rally which the TUC backs." I think they were scared.

GS: How was it when Ian, your husband, went back to work? What was the atmosphere like at work?

More of a guilt complex

GM: I know he hated going back. The management were very hostile towards him. The men weren't, as far as I know. There were a few, they're still hostile, but basically, the men who worked had more of a guilt complex. There were more men saying, "If only, but ..." In Notts. with this UDM thing, it's not actually the men who're committed to it. It's management, pursuing it all the time, and that's how it was down in Nottingham. There was some victimisation, but mainly it wasn't by the men against men, but by the management against striking workers.

GS: How do you feel about the UDM? Do you think it's got a future?

GM: Well, we said two years ago we'll give it six months, and it's still going. I feel it's just totally a management union. It's been set up by the Tory Party and by the Coal Board. Because of privatisation, things will just go from bad to worse. But while we've got this government, there's this carry-on with the UDM. Anyone who's recruited into the mines now, it's part of their contract they join the UDM. They're not given a choice, they have to join the UDM to get a job. To join the NUM, they have to sign fresh papers. Most pits force men into having an interview with the manager, and if you're a new recruit, it must be very intimidating. We've had experiences where men have been kept hanging round the pit-top until they were late to actually go down the pit, the manager's seen them and threatened them with the sack. The men are told, "What's NUM going to do about it, they've got no recognition, what are they going to do if I sack you? They're not allowed to represent you." So if you've only

been there for a while, you might as well belong to the UDM, and that's happening day by day.

GS: *Nevertheless, you do hear reports of a trickle back to the NUM, and I'd have thought that would have been particularly true of some miners who maybe joined the UDM at the beginning but now recognise its true nature.*

GM: Yeah, well there's a hell of a lot of miners who would go back to the NUM if there wasn't so many barriers put between them. I think eventually the UDM is going to go, it's definitely going to go, but the longer we've got a Tory government, the longer we're going to have to put up with it.

Excuse wheeled out

GS: *How do feel about the issue of the national ballot, because that was an excuse that was wheeled out time and time again for the Notts. miners not supporting the strike?*

GM: No - personally, I don't believe it would have made any difference. When the Cortonwood men came out on strike, they had support from that area, because the decision was made some years before to take action if any pit was closed on "economic" grounds. The area went to the National Executive, and then it went to a one-day conference, which is the governing body of the union, which decided to back the strike. I can't see any reason to have a national ballot of individual members. I think if people know the workings of the union they would accept that decision. It was only the percentage in Notts. which didn't. As far as I'm concerned, it was leadership and greed by the individual in Notts. Can't see that a national ballot would have made any difference whatsoever.

GS: *What have you learnt from the dispute? What do you see the future for the industry being?*

GM: I'm just very suspicious of everything you hear! It's ridiculous really that the working class doesn't learn by its mistakes, because a few years ago Arthur Scargill was saying so many thousand men were going to be put on the dole, and everyone laughed. That's happened. Everybody accepts it - you even get newscasters saying that Arthur Scargill's predictions are right. But they don't blame it on the Coal Board, they blame it on the fact he lost the strike. I mean, that's ridiculous. Now they're talking about a six-day week, and the Coal Board is using the same scare tactics, the same divisory element, one area against another area. And they're actually falling for it. While we've got four million on the dole, people will protect their own. Only thing I can say is what Dennis Skinner said to me at the beginning of the strike, which is that the working class only win an inch at a time, but they lose it a foot at a time. I think the main thing we should learn is the old saying, "United we stand, divided we fall." But in this economic world, I can't see that happening again, not until the working class has been ground down a lot more, and then eventually, I think it'll dawn on them that maybe self-interest doesn't work. It might be your neighbour today, but it'll be you tomorrow, and I think it's just not sunk in enough yet.

GS: *Do you want to tell us about the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign?*

GM: Justice for Mineworkers is an organisation which was set up just after the strike by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs. It's a national organisation, but we do have an East Midlands group, which is mainly based in Nottinghamshire. The aims of the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign are: (1) to publicise the situation of the sacked miners in Notts. and nationally; (2) to raise money to help support the families of sacked and victimised miners; and (3) to push a bill through Parliament for the reinstatement of sacked miners. In Notts., at the end of the strike, we had 24 sacked miners. Unlike other parts of the country, where they have had some success with reinstatement, in Nottinghamshire the sacked miners' numbers have increased, and that's mainly due to victimisation by the Coal Board against NUM activists. In Notts., we've been running quite a few campaigns since the end of the strike, quite successful campaigns, and we had good campaigns this Christmas and the Christmas before. We've had a very successful campaign to send the sacked miners' families to Derbyshire Miners' Home for a summer holiday. They'll be going in August, and we've had a fantastic response to that. Thank you to everybody who's donated, not only in Notts. and the East Midlands, but from all over the country. Also, we're organising the second NUM Justice for Mineworkers Rally, which will be held on the 5th September. Last year was the first, and we had over 3,000 people turn up to the rally. The UDM condemned it, but we had a very good response, from not only Notts. miners, but miners and supporters from all over the country, which we're proud of.

All the publicity

We hope to increase on that success this year, because of all the publicity we can get for the sacked miners, to make people aware that what the men in Notts. and in the rest of the country were sacked for doing was what any normal trade unionist would do - that is going on strike in defence of his job and community. If there is a debt to society that needs to be paid, whatever that is, these men have already paid it threefold. Many of them have been to tribunals and won their cases through unfair dismissal, but the Coal Board's still refused to reinstate them. I think that people should be made aware that these men shouldn't be committed to the dole for the rest of their lives. We hope with the introduction of a Labour government some time in the future they'll be given their jobs back - maybe before that if there's enough pressure from the general public. These men have suffered enough. But until then, the Justice for Mine-workers Campaign will continue supporting them, helping the sacked miners and their families as need be.●

The NUM Miners Gala is on Saturday, 5 September at the West Notts, FE College in Mansfield. The East Midlands Justice for Mineworkers Campaign can be contacted via the following - Secretary: Mark Hunter, 28 Mount Street, Mansfield, Notts.; Treasurer: Terry Dear, 20 Broxtowe Drive, Hucknall, Notts. Tel. Nottm 634747.

UNION COMMENTARY

Quite tough negotiators

IAN JUNIPER

IT MUST HAVE COME as quite a culture shock to anyone who has ever done Mansfield on a Friday/Saturday night for it to have gained the "moderate" reputation that it has in recent years. This reputation was attested during the general election campaign by the flying visit to the Notts. coalfield of Papa Doctor David Owen to be "taken" on site sporting muck and pit helmet, and to bring his bedside manner to bear at this passionate hotbed of moderation.

Latent moderation

The deformation of the Mansfield-based Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the Moderate Labour Party have been represented in the media as the coming-out of the latent moderation in all of us - the silent majority finally speaking in tongues. And, as the organ of the Conservative Trade Unionists, evocatively titled *News for Trade Unionists*, put it in its July 1986 report of the "mould-breaking" UDM conference held in the Victoria Palace Hotel, Buxton last year:

"Without idealism the world would be an awfully grey existence, and believe me the very faith in democracy, British Democracy, which went into the formation of this union was in tangible evidence on each and every face around me here."

The *Financial Times* reporter seemed a little less uplifted in his account:

"This is terrific," said one UDM national council member this week, as he lolled back - for the second time that day - in the once-splendid Palace Hotel's jacuzzi. Another, climbing in, took a tumble, disappearing beneath the bubbling water, and knocking his leg. Up, for air and grimacing, he shook off the pain quickly: 'I won't get much sympathy from the lads back in the pit if I tell 'em I broke me leg in a jacuzzi.'"

And the NUM tries to put it about that these people aren't genuinely accountable to their members.

Indeed, the adopted slogan of the UDM is not "Every Good Boy Deserves Favour" but "Democracy Reborn 1985". The big sales pitch of the breakaway bosses was that, in order to preserve "democracy" within the Notts. area, it would be better to break away from the NUM, and that the area's independence and rights to local decision-making were threatened by the NUM rule changes in 1985. And, according to our big brother from the Conservative Trade Unionists, the working miners worked during the strike "not for the country, Government or Coal Board, but for Democracy".

Notwithstanding these high moral principles, the now retired UDM President Ken Toon called it last year by saying that the UDM would expect to be rewarded for its past services to the industry in keeping coal markets open throughout the strike when it came to the next pay settlement -

"Out It Slips", to plagiarise that memorable headline from one edition of *The Miner* during the strike.

According to Albert Wheeler, area director and architect of the eponymous plan to tear up the Five Day Week Agreement, Nottinghamshire's main strength lies in the attitude of its management and men towards the need to produce coal competitively. He describes the breakaway bosses as "quite tough negotiators" whose redeeming feature is their "realism". However, he has also stressed that, while there may be few union problems (sic), the area has its share of very difficult pits and unless their problems are solved, the eventual closure of some of them could not be ruled out.

One has heard of British Democracy before - and it is dripping with irony that, in having the presence of mind - or someone else's mind - to avoid the acronym DUM, the breakaway bosses should have settled on initial letters which are highly reminiscent of a Loyalist gang, albeit with their own particular loyalties. Arguing for stable, long-term pay deals, the UDM is backing the government and British Coal's wholly market-based strategy for the industry, and is eschewing conflict. The UDM has already adopted a policy of securing only long-term pay deals for two years or more, thereby endorsing the government's aim of pay deals running for longer than the traditional twelve months. John Bonser, the Notts. UDM vice president: the UDM's members would be "happier" if they were not faced with the prospect each year of an overtime ban or industrial action, "though that did not mean they would be Yes-men" (sic). One suspects that the majority of miners would be even happier if the demands for mineworkers of the National Union of Mineworkers were to be implemented in full.

Radical changes

Furthermore, the following appeared in the *Financial Times* on 23rd June:

"The introduction of radical changes to working arrangements in the coal industry came a step closer yesterday when the leader of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers said it was prepared to negotiate over the introduction of flexible shift patterns to allow six-day coal production."

Speaking at this year's UDM conference in Weymouth, during which he confused the UDM with the National Union of Mineworkers, Cecil Parkinson, the hi-Energy Secretary, assured miners that privatisation of the coal industry was not on the government's immediate agenda (Why, of course I'll marry you), but his aim clearly is that British Coal should aim to make profits so that it could fund its own investment. What this involves as put forward by Wheeler is widespread cuts in manpower, increased use of contracting out and new working arrangements,

including a six-day week and 24-hour working. Indeed, British Coal are intent on introducing longer production shifts to raise productivity at older pits.

The Labour MPs on the House of Commons Energy Committee believe the inevitable result of proposed closures, planned productivity rises and reduced output will be a mining workforce of 70,000 - the much derided figure put forward by Arthur Scargill on assuming the NUM Presidency. British Coal management refuse to put a figure on prospective job losses or manpower levels in the immediate future. Ken Moses, technical director, has said the only change to legislation required would be to the Hours of Work Act 1908 which limits the time a mineworker spends underground to 74 hours. BC (British Coal, not Before Christ) is intent on introducing 9-hour shifts - the eleventh commandment.

One of the most significant arguments put forward in the NUM's "Keep Notts. National Campaign" was that the threats to the Nottinghamshire coalfield came from a management which was dealing with a national industry, and that Notts. was being dealt with as a part of this management's national strategy. Correspondingly, the ability of the National Union to resist a plan about which Sir Robert Haslam has recognised there are "social, practical and cultural objections", but which has been widely propagandised as "modern" and "progressive", will be weakened by the institutionalised division which is what the UDM is "in reality" all about.

The straight fact is that a strategy to destroy the power of the National Union of Mineworkers and completely reorganise the coalmining industry was proposed as early as 1973. Among its main aims was to "limit the future manning of the industry, to restrict, to neutralise alien or subversive political influences"; and to "ensure that of those employed in the mining industry the maximum number should be outwith the NUM" ("How the NCB plotted to break miners' power": *The Scotsman*, 23rd February 1987).

Dave Douglas, a member of the Yorkshire NUM Area Executive, drew out parallels at the height of the strike between the partition of Ireland and the divisions that were deliberately engineered among the miners. The nationalists in the six counties are called a minority in the same way that the union men on strike in the Notts. coalfield were called a minority, when in fact both were part of a massive majority. In both cases, there was a deliberate design to give

privileges to the actual minorities and deny them to the majorities - the genuine hallmark of "British Democracy" the world over. The partition of Ireland has had disastrous consequences for the unity of the working-class movement in that country, and the same political tactic is now being applied here. What hasn't yet come to light

are the agencies which carried out this strategy underground - the very last thing the UDM represents is an outbreak of spontaneity; but it is very much a specimen of British Democracy.

During the general election campaign, the local Society of Socialist Lawyers held a pre-election meeting entitled "Towards a Police State", to subject the policies of the political parties to public scrutiny where they concerned civil liberties. The motivating speaker was the prominent barrister, Mike Mansfield (ironically enough), who put forward a case which concluded quite starkly that we were already there; and

he attributed this in large measure to the success of the British state in developing its methods of repression in Ireland and then implementing them in this country.

(A nation that oppresses another forges its own chains, republicans have told us - it's long gone time that the working class in this country forged its own links with the struggle of the Irish people for independence and socialism, if only for the sake of its own struggle.)

"New colonies"

But should we really be surprised at this when Manchester's Chief Constable has described mass picketing as "terrorism without the bullet and the bomb"; and when black people, and in particular Afro-Caribbean youth, Irish people, and others who have fought against British colonial rule, are criminalised in the pursuit of their political goals. Indeed, in the studio discussion which followed the recent Thames Television series on Nottingham's inner city, which otherwise plunged new depths of superficiality, it was significant to hear local black activist Leroy Wallace put forward the proposition that the government is treating the inner city as the "new colonies".

The existence of the UDM is part of the forcible repatriation to this country of the political armory which was previously used to maintain British rule throughout so much of the globe. What's different now is that it is white British people getting the treatment - plastic bullets, riot shields and the rest are only the outward symptoms of the political process.®

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Left to right: Mr Roy Lusk, President of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, and Mr Cecil Parkinson, the Energy Secretary, taking a break at Westminster yesterday during the union's conference. The Minister said that for many, the UDM was the true voice of the modern mineworker.

Coal privatization not yet on the agenda

By John Spicer
London Mining Affairs
Correspondent

Mr Cecil Parkinson, the Energy Secretary, said yesterday that the Government had no plans for an early privatization of the coal industry.

Speaking to delegates at the Union of Democratic Mineworkers' conference in Westminster, Mr Parkinson said: "There are no plans to privatize the industry at the moment; no plans, full stop."

But later, Mr Parkinson said he was prepared to say that in the year 2010 privatization would not have taken place. He was making his first major speech since becoming Energy Secretary nine days ago and had been

answering questions from some of the 100 conference delegates.

In his speech, Mr Parkinson underlined the Government's commitment to the coal industry. He said that since 1979, it had supported a massive investment programme worth more than £2 billion every working day - a total of £1 billion.

He said the country had been willing to make this huge investment, but it looked for - and it would deliver - a fair return. "The industry can only continue to make progress if we offer the facts and accept the need for further change," he said.

Mr Parkinson had not mentioned privatization in his speech, but taking questions afterwards it was clear this

was the greatest concern among miners' representatives.

One told him that privatization would create a wasteland in the north-west and would be detrimental to the country. Another questioned the need for privatization if the industry was such an asset to the country.

Mr Parkinson told reporters afterwards that the Government was committed to privatizing the electricity industry and that was his top priority. Coal was simply not on his agenda.

Later, Mr Parkinson said: "However large the investment, what really counts is the performance of the miners. British Coal has already given greater emphasis to rewarding miners by results."

"But pay is not enough by itself. A modern coal industry needs modern working practices. They must be flexible; they must benefit the miner; and they must make the best use of investment in modern machinery."

Mr Parkinson said working miners had got the message, and productivity records, at both UDM and NUM pits, were being broken. He said there could be no time to waste on internal squabbles.

In a aside to Mr Arthur Scargill's National Union of Mineworkers, Mr Parkinson told the moderate UDM that "for many people you are the true voice of the modern mineworker."

CITY COUNCIL

So where 's his beef?

BRENT CHARLESWORTH

Brent Charlesworth, Labour city councillor for Clifton West, answers Nigel Lee's criticisms of the 1983-87 ruling Labour Group in the last issue.

SINCE NIGEL LEE has now abandoned the Labour Group and has decided, as an ex-member of the Labour Group's Executive, to write a highly critical account of the 1983-87 Council, I thought it appropriate to challenge some of his rather jaundiced views and set the record straight. Unlike him, however, I am constrained in what I write by the danger of providing ammunition for our opposition in Council and our detractors in the local media. Our "enemies", in case we should ever forget, are the Tories, now hell bent on undermining eight years of work and making a good job of it too. It's a pity that Nigel does not use his prodigious energy to attack them and not us. He, after all, didn't make much of a job of it when on Council.

In short, I find his article consists of factual inaccuracy, distortion and occasional fanciful exaggeration. Little of what he writes accords with my experience of personalities and events on both District Party and Council during those years. I'm supported in my view by a wide cross-section of councillors, though in consulting them, I must confess to not having given them all a test of orthodoxy to ascertain whether they were Outside Right, Inside Left, Centre Back, or whatever the current criteria of political acceptability are.

In order to understand his particular - and some would say peculiar - analysis of the '83-'87 Council and after, his view of what constitutes the ideology of the acceptable Nottingham Left needs exploring. From this all his interpretation follows. To begin with, his article seems to imply that he does not mean by "Left" any of the 57 varieties of inner-city, bed-sit Trotskyism which occasionally interests itself in Labour Group politics, most often when its supporters aren't at each others' throats over some fine

point of Marxist orthodoxy. It is also clear that the Left is not to be found amongst the large group of councillors who live somewhat conventional lives in the outer city, who represent large working-class wards and who have developed their socialism through the Party organisation, a trade union or the Co-operative Movement. So where can the real Left be found, the one that failed to take over the Council?

We are given a clue when Nigel makes a hero-figure of that doyen of proletarians, the public school, university educated college lecturer, Eddie Ashbee, apparently the Ken Livingstone of Nottingham but yet another one who abandoned the Council when the going got rough. The key lies in one's *bourgeois* origins. The test of socialist orthodoxy is not classical material but bourgeois ideological and involves the prioritising of sexual politics and most particularly the advocacy of gay and lesbian issues. That is the message that comes home from the '83-'87 experience. That such a political stance is *still* regarded with incredulity and incomprehension by our traditional voting constituency is seen simply as failures of policy implementation and electoral communication. Our political opposition

had no such problems with communication. Indeed the first thing that Bill Bradbury, the new Tory Leader, did in Council was to thank us for the gays and Sharon Atkin! This leads into the style of government that this version of the Left usually pursue. Politics is seen as confrontation and making the big gesture whereas effective management of the business of Council, actually understanding and working through a programme, a Manifesto, is "machine politics". Thus Nigel attacks Betty Higgins, Bill Dinwoodie and Peter Burgess for having been operators of Dunnett-style machine politics.



Let us look more closely at this allegation. In the '83-'87 Council, Betty Higgins, for all her faults, held together a disparate group with a one, then three, majority and, in so doing, enabled the greatest part of the 1983 Manifesto to be fulfilled. Bill Dinwoodie, as Chair of Employment and Economic Development, by general agreement handled our economic programme in both committee and Council with an expertise that Nigel and others, including me, have never had and never will have. Peter Burgess, for all his sins and afflictions, as Chair of Equal Opportunities (a job, incidentally that neither Nigel nor any other councillor wanted) kept the disparate, often warring, elements of Equal Opportunities working and talking and did this in spite of a barrage of bad publicity that Richard McCance and others brought upon the committee. If my memory serves me right, Nigel opted out of the Race Sub Committee (one of his claimed areas of expertise). So, if it's "machine politics" to operationalise a Manifesto directly to benefit people, bring them into the orbit of the Council (look at what's happening to consultation at present), and, within the limited powers and finances of a district council, to do something to redress the grosser imbalances of power and reward that exist in the city, then let's have more machine politics. It's got to be better than the posturing and breast-beating that Nigel and friends all too often indulge in.

More say than some!

As I said earlier in this article, Nigel was a member of the Group's Executive and, as such, was able to arrange the business of the Group. He had a damned sight more say than some of us! So where's his beef? He complains about Malcolm Wood's handling of Housing - another area of Nigel's expertise - yet Malcolm led the attack both in committee and in Council against Tory housing policy. Nigel was happy to sit and watch him do it. But, not content with criticising the politics of those he didn't like, he has now turned on his old comrades whom he now calls the "soggy compromised Left". (Whatever happened to McCance and Harrison?) These people are now back in Council as Deputy Group Leader and Shadow Chairs of Planning and Community. John Taylor, for example, commands the full support of the Group, in that he has now committed his considerable talents to forging Group unity and attacking the Tories. This praise probably condemns him irretrievably in the eyes of Nigel and the like, including, one imagines, this shadowy character, Mark Charles, whom no one around seems to know.

Let us turn to the '87 Manifesto for which Nigel reserves so much hatred. It is District Party's responsibility to decide upon the contents of, write and publish the Manifesto. So who did the hatchet job and on what did they do a hatchet job? That brings us back to sexual politics and Nigel's consuming passion. But consultation documents, produced by special interest groups, are NOT a Manifesto, despite what the *Evening Post* said when it got hold of some draft working papers. A Manifesto should reflect what is possible, what can be achieved in

the life of a Council. It is not a compendium of specific promises to supply goods and services to those groups in the city that can shout the loudest. And well Nigel knows this or does he? The sort of political fundamentalism he argues over the '87 Manifesto displays a political immaturity, rivalled only by the far-fetched scenario he paints about the relationship of officers to members. How can a Manifesto be implemented *without* the co-operation of officers? And anyway it is the *members'* job to direct what officers do, like it or like it not.

Frankly, these inventions of Left and Right, of cabals, of plotting and so on, are largely nonsense and bear no relation to what's happening on Group. This fanciful and largely irrelevant activity Nigel shares with Mark Charles, yet another dabbler in political fiction. (One of these days this man may actually *talk* to councillors!) What can be said with some certainty is that such material produced will be used against us by our enemies and detractors. It's about time Nigel Lee and a few others broke out of their self-imposed ideological straitjackets, left undergraduate journalism to the students, and turned their energies, knowledge and talents to attacking the real enemies of socialism in this city.●

LETTER

No, Nigel!

From Cllr Mrs Betty Higgins, Labour Group Leader, Nottingham City Council.

I TAKE EXCEPTION at being called part of a machine - as ex Councillor Lee stated in his article in the Spring edition of *Nottingham Extra*.

Nigel - you are entitled to see things from your particular angle with a telescope to whichever eye you wish but I doubt if many Labour Party or Labour Group members would see it your way.

When the Labour Party gains control of an important City Council like Nottingham, its job is to implement the manifesto and provide as good a service as possible - this the Labour Group from 1983-7 did in a co-ordinated way, with most Group members putting in very long hours at great expense often to their jobs, their career prospects and their families, and of course you, Nigel, worked as hard as anyone else and I personally asked you to reconsider your decision not to stand again - as I did Gill Haymes - because of your contribution to Group policies and Council activities.

There was no plan in 1984 to cut £2m a year for 3 years - although there were a range of options available - and Nigel - you were one of the people who - as financial options became more difficult because of Government actions - took the initiative in cautioning against taking the kamikaze option as some other Councils did - and I think you were right.

Councillors always have to guard against officers making decisions by default - equally

officers have a right and duty to present members with options.

Your comments on Malcolm Wood, the Chair of the Housing Committee, are quite unwarranted. He has been very sensitive to members and the electorate's wishes, possibly with that one exception.

I make no comment on your crystal ball gazing - it's a luxury you can indulge in now that you are no longer faced with "unpalatable decisions". I am sure you will still flay us from the sidelines, but I do hope you will also join with us in attacking Conservative policy and actions vigorously.●

CITY COUNCIL

The failure was political

NIGEL LEE

Nigel Lee, ex Labour city councillor for Radford Ward, concludes his criticism of the 1983-87 ruling Group.

"THEY'RE NOT LOONY LEFT: they're just loony." That was how Tory councillor Andrew Hamilton described the last Labour City Council at our final meeting in April. Unfortunately, he was right.

He was speaking about Labour's proposal to buy the Albert Hall from property speculator Cedric Ford after the original developer had pulled out.

"They're just bailing out old Cedric," said Hamilton.

Written confirmation

That followed another decision to buy the Albert Hall Institute from Ford. In that case, I had to write to the Chief Executive to get written confirmation that the price paid was higher than the valuation made by the council's officers. (By contrast, the same officers had previously refused to pay above valuation to clear up a small piece of land causing a public nuisance in New Basford. It would appear that you can throw away tens of thousands of pounds to "Old Cedric", but not a couple of thousand to help local people.)

Cedric Ford has been a close friend of the Labour council over the years, assisting in many projects, including the Royal Centre and Turney's Quay, where the council and government gave an Urban Development Grant to turn an old leather factory into luxury flats selling at up to £90,000 each (the developer made a loss on this, according to Director of Technical Services John Haslam).

In November 1986, Ford made his bid to become Nottingham's inner city supremo in an article for the *Evening Post*. He explained that his methods were: "face to face meetings where decisions are made, and the telephone - not endless memos, letters, reports and committees". He admitted that "such bodies have been criticised for being unrepresentative of community views and undemocratic... but to a certain extent we have got to accept that these sorts of bodies are going to function as a benevolent dictatorship if anything is to be done".

Perhaps he will get his chance now Thatcher has been returned to government.

The Albert Hall purchase showed up a number of points where Labour's decision-making was bad and allowed Tory leader Bill Bradbury to make a

lot of well-aimed criticism:

(1) Bradbury said Labour was wrong to use part of the "Housing Investment" allocation to build offices for the Housing Department on the Institute site. While he was wrong to deny housing officers the right to decent accommodation, he was right to criticise the use of housing money - it should have taken its turn in the "Other Services" allocation so as to maintain the maximum housing programme.

(2) Bradbury said the Albert Hall should not have been bought until a report had been put to Committee showing the projected use for the proposed 600-800 seat hall, the effect on other venues, and running costs. We had failed as a Labour Group to make the proper analysis which Bradbury quite correctly called for.

(3) Bradbury complained at the way too much council land was being used to finance development of the Albert Hall. While approving the method of avoiding the government's restrictions on capital spending - by giving land for housing development to the developer instead of money - he pointed out that the value of one of the pieces of land (outside the city boundary at Bestwood) was sufficient to finance the deal and therefore there was no need to sell the Coppice Allotments as well. Again, Bradbury was correct.

I put this forward as just one example of a failure of the Labour Group properly to scrutinise proposals to ensure "value for money".

Let I give the impression of praising Bradbury, it should be said that all he cares about is cutting expenditure. He knows nothing and cares nothing about the value of services, which is the other side of getting "value for money".

Leading Freemasons

[Bradbury is one of three Tory city councillors who are long-standing leading Freemasons (the other two are John Carter and Bernard Bateman) - all of whom are listed in the last membership list to be published in 1971. At least another three or four Tory councillors are known to be Freemasons, as was the renegade Labour councillor, Dennis Birkinshaw, who tried to defect to the Tories in 1984 (which would have transferred power from Labour to Tory). One wonders whether the Brotherhood told him to get back to Labour in order to avoid the sustained campaign against Freemasonry which would have

ensued. As it was, we needed Birkinshaw's vote to stay in power and had to keep quiet about the Freemasons.]

The main failure of the Labour Group was not the failure to scrutinise land deals properly. It was a failure to assert political control. Councils are elected to carry out a political programme, and officers are paid to implement that political programme. But the attitude of too many Labour members was one of cosy non-political consensus between officers and members of both parties. Officers were effectively asked for their advice not just on areas of their professional expertise, but also on areas of political judgment. We were often told by the Group leadership that we 'should not do anything to upset the officers. There was a failure to understand that it is politicians who should give a political lead, not officers. (The officers understand it, even if they don't encourage it!)

There has been no such political failure on the Tories' part. It took Labour three years to set up a Campaign/Information Unit after it was first agreed between the District Party and the Group. It took the Tories just three weeks to have it promoting the sale of council houses, and three months to close it completely.

Acted ruthlessly

They have acted ruthlessly to break up a number of central policy units and remove them from the control of the Chief Executive - Employment and Economic Development, Inner Area Programme and Equal Opportunities.

The most ruthless attack has been on the Equal Opportunities Unit, with City Secretary Marcus Wakely and his Personnel Department Deputy Dr Kenneth Taylor enthusiastically acting the parts of the vultures tearing into the corpse.

In a confidential report to the Personnel Sub Committee, Wakely recommended that all the Equal Opportunities posts, except two Disabilities posts, be deleted. In other words, there will be no officers dealing with equal opportunities for women, race or gays and lesbians. Existing officers will, however, be redeployed into other jobs rather than being made redundant - obviously the Tories don't want to galvanise opposition from the unions, not yet!

The Disabilities Officer and his assistant are to be transferred to the Planning Department on the basis of a remarkably ignorant remark from Wakely that they are "significantly concerned with non employment matters". In other words, he thinks that people with disabilities are only

interested in issues of access to buildings. In fact, equal opportunities in employment is a major concern and requires a remarkable amount of skill and commitment, which the Personnel Department does not have, to ensure that necessary adjustments are made to enable people with a wide range of disabilities to take up jobs they are capable of doing, and to ensure that any problems are overcome and not used as an excuse to deny disabled people the right to a job. Wakely's comment is a very serious affront to the dignity of people with disabilities seeking employment;

Three of the redeployed officers and a clerical post are to be taken into the Personnel Department - the Head of Equal Opportunities, the Statistical Officer and the Training Officer - on a temporary basis. My belief is that Personnel wants to get hold of the Equal Opportunities data base, which has caused serious embarrassment to Personnel by exposing the

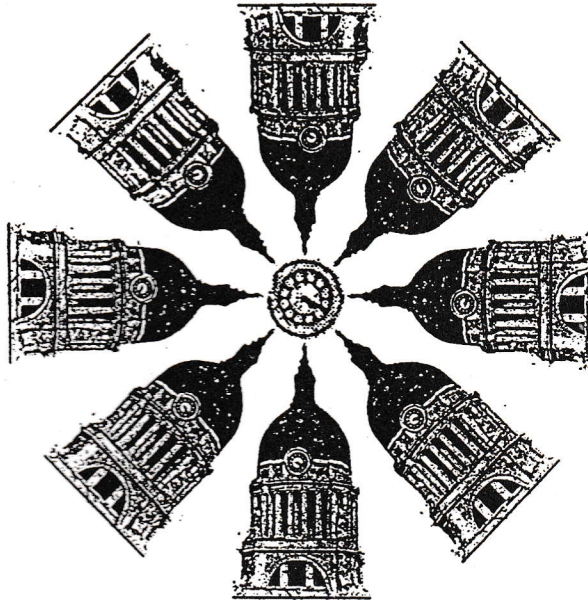
almost complete failure of Personnel procedures to improve the employment of disadvantaged groups by the City Council. Personnel has also been embarrassed because the Equal Opportunities training for City Council employees has been of a much higher quality than anything offered by Personnel. (The City Council is an atrocious employer as far as training is concerned, except where Departments like Housing have organised their own training programmes.) I predict that these officers will be sucked dry of their knowledge and then spat out.

Part of the problem

If Wakely wins this carve-up, it will mean that there will be no interest at all in equal opportunities in the delivery of services, except in relation to access for people with disabilities. And the Personnel Department will be in control of the council's equal opportunities policy even though they are clearly a very serious part of the problem.

(When I was a councillor, I remember discussing with Dr Taylor how to improve equal opportunities for women in employment. He told me that women's main interest was in the home and they were content to have low paid jobs because they expected their husbands to bring in the most important wage. Equal Opportunities for women was therefore satisfied by letting them have the low paid jobs they wanted, he said. This man is now in charge of equal opportunities policy!!!)

To end on a personal note: it's a great relief to get out!0



INNER CITY

Witness for the prosecution

JOHN CLARK

[John Clark is a community cartoonist who uses the pen-name "Brick". He has lived and worked in Forest Fields for fifteen years and takes many of his themes from the "inner city". He was one of the organisers of the Hyson Green festival "Rock & Reggae" during its first six years.]

THE TROUBLE WITH witnesses is they are notoriously unreliable. If they happen to work in the media they are the kiss of death. It might only have been a littering offence, son, but this witness will describe little old ladies smothered by bloodcurdling "sucker" wrappers. From behind the narrative the Royal Phil. will well up to a cymbal-crashing crescendo as it is revealed you dropped your lollipop stick 'n all! Gaspo!!

They are preoccupied by image, these yuppies. If reality fits, all's well and good. If not then change the reality, or at least the consumer's concept of reality. Christ, when the papers are kicking up a storm about the disease and pestilence sweeping into down-town Slumpsville on the back of windblown litter, they're not going to say the poor lad is a victim of a shortage of dustbins...

Folks in Montego-land

At best, *Witness: On the Margin* was libellous, but nobody will bust the producers. The folks in Montego-land believed every word of it. They are the majority. We lose before we get to court.

My DHSS visitor said her mother spent three solid nights trying to talk her into resigning or at least getting a transfer out. The milkman suffered jokers at the depot offering to ride shotgun. My father now travels three miles to post parcels to me. There are two post-offices closer, both run by ex-Nottingham mail clerks. One made a sarky comment when he saw the address.

This was the (emphatic Dimpleby pause) INNER CITY. Here, packaged in three sensational episodes, was the bluffer's guide to what the papers mean when they talk about the (pause) "inner cities". Up and down the country the ignorant now have a clear idea of what our great leader will be "attacking" in this, her Third Reich.

Like all warped evidence, there was a grain of truth in the series. Radford, Hyson Green and Forest Fields are seething with frustration and anger. There are problems, but they are not our problems. We are merely the victims. Inconsequential. By a neat trick of auto-suggestion, the symptoms of ten years of bad policies are seen by the world and his wife as our headache, not theirs. It's not the state of housing, it's the people who live in them.

The same Christian charity holds that God only helps those who help themselves, and thank Him that the media boys didn't get even close to what's really going on round here. The right Reverend Catchpole nearly blew the gaff, but

fortunately the cameras swarmed in on the Blues like flies round a honey-pot and didn't look any further. Otherwise we would be in more trouble than we already are.

Despite the ravages of demolition, unemployment, racism, inferior schooling and all the rest of the shit they throw at us, there is a resourcefulness that says, "I won't lie down and die." There is a blossoming subculture, a thriving black economy and a mesh of self-help circles that defy legislation. The only way to survive in any of the country's ghettos is to plug into them to a greater or lesser extent.

This is the heart and soul of the animal from whence the juices flow, but there is nothing romantic about it. It is hard-nosed, hustling and inevitably exclusive. Ironically those that find it most difficult to get a look-in are predominantly white, respectable and ex-working class, but this is slowly changing. The longer government continues to make it clear they are not invited to join in the mainstream of living, the quicker they will learn to adapt and join the disrespectful. This is our bond.

Perish the thought, but had Dimpleby & Co. caught this and all its ramifications on film, the whole scene would have dived for cover and gone further underground. Our lords and masters would retarget their forthcoming crusade and there can be little doubt people would take to the streets. There would be nowhere else to go.

As things are, I don't think we will, not in any meaningful way. It depends how much we get the feeling of being invaded. At present we lead a parallel existence which is damn tough but not impossible. What sweet-puss Kenneth Clarke blathers on about is not going to ease the struggle one iota. If the government makes things so difficult we can't move, the sparks will fly. Personally, I believe in the ability of folks in this area to turn the worm, but time will tell...

Fascinating viewing

What I don't believe in is the ability of the rest of the population to see wider than the end of their television screen. For all that the critics say, pimps and alkie, the homeless and deprived, lonely and harassed make fascinating viewing. People were absorbed and horrified and convinced. I was asked if I slept with a baseball-bat! Film is a mighty powerful medium. TV is a mighty efficient channel for propaganda. Put the two together and you can convince millions of people spaghetti grows on trees (as Fyfe Robertson did). Since their invention, both have been jealously guarded, controlled and exploited by everybody but US. They have developed a sophisticated language of sounds and images that reconstitute the real world into something riddled with additives and colouring. Then they spoon-feed it into our living rooms.



'HOW ABOUT THAT....THE HOME OFFICE HAVE REJECTED YOUR APPLICATION TO HOLD A DEMO!'

"Fly-on-the-wall", video effects, high-speed B&W film, staged continuity and a sound-track that merited a CD spin-off... the production was brill. It employed every device in the book to present itself as authoritative. *Fort Apache, the Bronx* isn't a patch on us, it appears. I'm just sad they missed the skaters cruising down Radford Road. Imagine it in full telephoto. Dusk. Maybe a bit of dry ice in the gutter to simulate steam. Cue: sultry sax. The illusion complete.

This posse had us up against a wall before they'd loaded their cameras. The much hyped researchers ("actually rubbing shoulders with the community") were talent scouts looking for subjects. They weren't here to discover but confirm. They knew what they were looking for. How many would volunteer again to be subjected?

The form of the series was chapter and verse Murdoch journalism. First the sensational banner headlines; inside front, "Fings Aint What They Yusta Be!"; centre spread, the human story; finally, letters at the back, the right to reply. Punchy, glossy, compelling and desperately damaging because there is no right of reply, short of taking over the airwaves.

It must be to everybody's amazement that the youths lasted as long as they did in the debate. Neither it nor the films had anything to offer them. Debate!? After seeing what the urban wasteland's really like, how could I refuse Kenny

anything? Poor lad, single-handedly taking on all those degenerates. Why, next time I nip out for a packet of Bourbons I must take my bazooka with me...

Resourcefulness

Ironically, the power of the medium and our inaccessibility to it was the basis of sleepy-time Channel 4's *Magic Hour*, a film by local independent producer, Frank Abbott. Shot locally using a combination of amateur and professional techniques and participants, it too was panned, but not for what it said about the Green. Mr Abbott captured the quirky energy, rich hues and strident resourcefulness of the area, but nobody realised until they saw Mr Dimbleby's efforts.

He was slated for what he said about television and for the way he said it. Having seen how Thames packaged us up and shipped us out, is it any wonder Mr Abbott is currently an unemployed local independent film producer? (*Magic Hour* is available for hire from Arrowdam Ltd, 45A Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG1 3FH. Tel. 410053.)

In the next five years the Great British Public will become judge and jury in the case of Regina v. Inner Cities. The witness for the prosecution has revealed damning evidence. Nothing has been presented to contradict it. The streets aren't safe. Whatever the sentence handed

down, it won't be tough enough for their liking.

As the law enforcer observed, there is a climate of fear, largely through ignorance, and it is so overpowering our own community is in the

grip of it. Programmes like *On the Margin* fuel those fears at the very time when we need to dampen them.

It's called "Divide and Rule".

CROWN COURT

Court in the act

KEITH LORD

THE BROADMARSH BUS STATION must be Nottingham's most sordid public space, so perhaps the new Crown Court building on the opposite side of Canal Street impresses partly by contrast. The building is only about half-complete, which makes it difficult to judge the exterior. The interior of the completed half is worth a visit.

English courts have always sat in public. You can go along without formality and have a look, and a listen.

You enter through a revolving door into the ground-floor lobby, a largish area where nothing much seems to happen. The effect is rather like a posh hotel, though without the indoor plants. There's even an officer at a reception desk who could easily be a hall porter. An impressive stone staircase sweeps up to the right at an odd angle: it reminded me of the Playhouse set for *The Little Foxes* a year or two ago. Courts and theatres have much in common, and I suppose this staircase must be intended for ceremonial entries and exits. (Processional dignity is not compatible with revolving doors, but a wide ordinary door is provided as well).

Court office

The officer will tell you what's going on in the various courts if you ask him. They are all on the first floor, where you can also find the court office. You can get food on the floor above.

Thick carpets, bare stonework and too-good-to-be-true wood panelling are the keynotes. Traditionally courts tend to have clearly designated separate areas (the dock, the jury box . . .). In the first floor lobby there are little stone pens of seats maintaining the tradition. You see people involved in cases having hurried last minute words with solicitors and barristers.

Going into the public gallery of one of the courts is not the same as at older buildings like the Shire Hall: the new building doesn't really have public galleries at all. You go into the courtroom through the same door as the solicitors, barristers, policemen and witnesses and sit down in one of the three or four rows of seats inside to the right or left of the door. You'll be facing the jury with the judge on your right and the dock on your left (or vice versa, depending on which courtroom you're in). The seats are a nice surprise - not hard creaky wooden benches but upholstered tip-ups, more comfortable than those at the Concert Hall for instance.

If you're not used to courts, you're likely to feel a sense of unreality. We all know in theory how lawyers dress and talk - we've seen it on

the box in countless films, plays and series; but it still comes as a surprise to find it all happening in real life, with a real prison sentence for a real person at the end. In these courtrooms, the sense of isolation from the everyday world is heightened by the total absence of windows: the courts are closed in on themselves. (At the moment there is some relief, because now and then the shouts of the building workers at the other end of the site intrude, though only the predictable swearwords are understandable.)

If you want a flavour of what goes on, I can tell you about four cases I attended earlier this year.

I slip into Court 3, chosen at random. Just before the judge arrives. I seem to be the only member of the public here, though there are several journalists (including a woman from one of the nationals). I soon realise why. You will have read about this case: man in his early twenties, parents nationally known figures, accused of stealing a large sum of money from a client of the firm he works for as an 'investment adviser'. The defendant was convicted earlier, and these are pre-sentence proceedings.

Counsel for the defence has an up-hill task: how do you switch from 'He's totally innocent' to 'He's sorry he did it' without losing credibility? A psychiatrist is here to give evidence. In theory I approve of this, and so I'm annoyed to discover that I don't find the man at all convincing. The defendant is 'undersized' (so?); in his early adult life he experienced feelings of sexual inadequacy and difficulties in relating to his family (don't we all?).

Gamblers' clinic

More interestingly, the defendant had become a compulsive gambler, encouraged by his father (who made a fortune out of bingo, not, of course, by playing it). It turns out that the witness runs a gamblers' clinic: he feels that he could cure the defendant, but not if the judge decides on a custodial sentence. No chance: the judge suspends some of the inevitable sentence of imprisonment, but the defendant will be inside for a few months. The actual terms of the sentence are quite complicated - a cynical person would wonder when the judge made his mind up.

When I get to the courtroom next door I find a man of much the same age also waiting for sentence. My eyes are drawn to a baseball bat, lying on the barristers' table. This defendant, after a classic argument in a pub, forced his way into the other fellow's house and laid about him

with the bat. He did quite a bit of damage, but mercifully not much to any people. The defendant originated in Glasgow and seems to have done that sort of thing before. I am convinced that he will be sent to prison, and so (I imagine) is the defendant. We're wrong: the judge (having humbly asked the clerk for advice about the extent of his powers) suspends the sentence. (The baseball bat he orders destroyed.) As he leaves, the defendant directs a smile of relief at everyone he sees. The young policeman sitting opposite me returns the smile.

This confirms one of my theories: judges, barristers, solicitors and even ushers belong to one group, journalists, policemen and defendants to another. The next case should confirm it even more. You will certainly have read (and may read more) about this one: Thames Valley career detective, arrested in Nottinghamshire accused of complicity in an armed post office raid, now facing charges relating to the planning of this and other serious crimes.

So, given that the defendant is a policeman... Well, he doesn't look the part. I have some of my students with me this time, and they fail to work out who the defendant is at all. 'Which is D?' whispers Jamie (D being a convenient classroom abbreviation we always use). We agree later that the shadiest-looking character in the room is in fact one of the solicitors. D himself looks like (say) a successful investment adviser. He writes lots of notes, which are handed to his barrister. I see this as a last effort to keep some control over his own life.

A Nottinghamshire detective is giving evidence about the various interviews with D after his arrest. At one stage D went by car with some of the Notts. force to a place where he had apparently met one of his criminal acquaintances. The jury all have maps, and the exact route the car followed is being described. As often happens when you drop in on proceedings, we can't really understand why this is so important, and when I look at the jury I begin to wonder whether they can either. The witness speaks in terms of left and right. The judge translates this into compass directions. Barristers helpfully point out possible landmarks. Someone tells the jury to look at the top of sheet 2, and it later turns out that he meant sheet 3. Some of the jurors are trying to follow on their maps. Some of them are trying to look as if they were trying to follow. Some of them have obviously simply given up. I keep looking at a young black juror, who has a trick of holding a hand to his mouth as if to hide a yawn. In fact it's obvious from his eyes that what he's hiding is a grin. This interpolice dispute must have a special savour for him.

We get back to the police station. D eventually rang his solicitor and said... Counsel for the defence rises to his feet: this part of the officer's evidence is, he submits, inadmissible. The jury are sent out while this submission is dealt with.

The change that comes over the barristers and judge is amazing. They become quite animated. Little jokes are made. An air of intellectual excitement replaces the earlier tedium. Lawyers have an undeserved reputation for liking facts. Nothing could be further from the truth. What sort of argument can you have about facts? He did it... Oh no he didn't... Oh yes he did... Pretty uninspiring. But a point of law is quite another matter.

What you say to your solicitor is generally privileged (can't be revealed to the jury). This, says counsel for the defence, applies to the phone call, and the officer mustn't be allowed to tell the jury about it. Counsel for the Crown has several counter-arguments: perhaps the privilege applies to consultations properly so called and not to casual remarks made on the phone; then again D knew the officers were listening and he needn't have said what he did, so by voluntarily doing so he waived his privilege. Notice, no facts needed - arguments can be drawn out of the air for ever and ever.

Play dirty

But counsel for the defence decides to play dirty: if the evidence is admitted, he will suggest that the officer's version of what D said is wrong; there is after all a difference between 'I've admitted it' and 'I've said I was involved'. So his client never said what the witness says he said. Oh yes he did... Oh no he didn't... A gloom descends.

The judge reaches a decision. He agrees that there was no privilege for the phone conversation; but he will nonetheless refuse to admit the evidence under his general discretion to exclude evidence whose possible prejudicial effect outweighs its probative value. Lawyers may not be much good with facts, but when it comes to comparing imponderables for weight you can't beat an English judge.

Having heard all this, we feel distinctly smug when the jury return with their ignorance carefully preserved. I wonder if they notice the gap in the story. It's probably not as bad as missing an episode of *Eastenders*.

We had to leave the court a few minutes later, so we didn't hear the cross-examination of the Nottinghamshire policeman. In case you didn't read about the case, D was convicted and sent to prison. The evidence of some of the police



witnesses (not the one I've been telling you about) was referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions as possibly revealing offences of perjury.

You aren't likely to hear about the fourth case, which arose in South Yorkshire: a pub disco organized by two smart lads hired for the night, an argument over a girl between one of the smart lads and some of the customers, a punch in the mouth for the smart lad and three customers charged with bodily harm offences. The only unusual circumstances are that the girl was the sister rather than the girlfriend of the main defendant and there was an unspectacular car-chase between the pub and the punch.

My students follow this case with particular interest. Mostly their sympathies are with the defendants. Malcolm later explains that the victim's friend was wearing a blue tie and a pink shirt (I may have the details wrong). The implication is either that evidence from such a source is unreliable, or that if you go around with someone who dresses like that a punch in the mouth is the best you can expect. I wonder if any of the jurors feel like this.

As this case progresses, it's increasingly hard to see any likelihood of truth emerging. Counsel for one of the defendants cross-examines the victim about his injuries (the theory being that they might have been caused by a car-crash rather than risticuffs). Why wasn't the back of his head bruised too? He looks annoyed and says he doesn't know. How do you interpret the young man's reaction? Anger at being caught in a lie? But how would you feel if, instead of getting sympathy for your broken cheek-bone and smashed

front teeth, you were criticised by some toffee-nosed stranger for not having a bruised skull as well?

A consultant dentist gives a competent account of the victim's condition when he saw him. He explains what a broken cheek-bone is and how easily it can happen. He courteously but firmly declines to involve himself in any further theorizing. It crosses my mind that lawyers could learn a lot from scientists.

We get bogged down in a great deal of inconclusive and muddled testimony from various people who saw (or rather almost saw) the fight. Two cars were involved. The one that arrived first ended up parked behind the one that arrived second. Thus the expression 'the first car' is understood in different ways by different people. I expect counsel for the prosecution to realise this and make all clear, but she never does. We leave before the defendants give their evidence.

At one point in the cross-examination of the victim's friend, counsel for one of the defendants asked him whether he had said: 'He'll be fucking your sister tonight.' Time was when barristers apologised to juries for necessary crudeness of this sort. Now they simply exaggerate their normal plummy donnishness and cultivate a disgusted look-what's-crawled-out-of-my salad tone. I walk back through the Broadmarsh Centre with Michael, one of my students. I am small, white and on the slobbish side of scruffy. He is tall, black and ultra-smart. As we walk, he repeats counsel's question (by which he was much struck) and soon manages an excellent imitation of his voice and manner. You should have seen the effect on the passers-by.●

PERSONAL COLUMN

Who do we turn to?

ROSS BRADSHAW

VISITING LONDON for a conference the other day, I was travelling by tube when three skinheads got on, sitting next to a young woman in front of me. I should say that I've got nothing against skinheads - indeed, with my baldness carrying on I'll soon be so describable myself. However, combined with the big boots and "England" t-shirts, the image is designed to alienate. One of the skins started sexually harassing the young woman. After a while of getting her breasts poked, she hit him in the face with a newspaper. After that he kept his hands to himself but carried on verbal harassment. Perhaps unwilling to give the skinhead the pleasure of making her leave, she stuck it out until her stop. There was probably no great threat. It was in the daytime, there were several others in the same carriage. But still this bloke starts poking a stranger's breast. I did nothing. I was scared. If I'd said anything - men's duty to stop other men sexually harassing women - would he have hit me? The woman didn't ask for help, but that's not the point. I feel that I failed her, but my own fear kept me rooted to my seat. At what stage would I - or the others in the carriage - have interven-

ed? For once, I wished I was big and tough. My fear, her discomfort. The skinhead had done his job well.

At the conference, I'd previously been talking to Janey Buchan, a Member of the European Parliament. Many years ago Janey was indecently assaulted (I should point out that Janey made this public at the conference: I'm not revealing a confidence) and now always travels home by taxi. She can afford it now but it was at some cost a few years ago. The man was an off-duty policeman. Janey made a point of telling us this. The problem is - who else do we turn to?0

All change in the book trade

IN THE LAST ISSUE of *Extra*, I contributed a long article on the decline of radical bookselling. Such is the speed of change in the booktrade that these last three months have seen the whole face of bookselling and ownership change, culminating in Reed International paying £540 million for the Octopus group. Meanwhile, on another planet the erstwhile best-known radical publisher, Pluto, changed hands again. Their previous saviour -

Allison and Busby - went into liquidation and has been bought by the general publisher W.H. Allen. Whether Allison and Busby's radical and black list will survive is unclear. Pluto are now owned by Zwan. Zwan are a new outfit publishing very expensive academic and hardback titles. Its founder previously owned Zed Press, the very academic Third World publisher. Zwan have bought all the Pluto books and the contracts for work in progress, but all of the Pluto workers have gone elsewhere. It seems likely that Pluto will become Zwan's paperback list and become more academic.

Also changing hands is Comedia. Comedia sold out to the Associated Book Publishers group - an enormous firm now itself in foreign ownership. Comedia made their name with books advocating alternative distribution and publishing systems for radical books. Their most famous title, *What a Way to Run a Railroad*, was a critique of libertarian structures. Comedia should fit in nicely with ABC's media studies list, but I don't think they'll publish much more on radical lines.

More worrying are the persistent rumours about GMP - the Gay Men's Press. GMP are the world's leading gay publisher, or rather they were. Few new titles have been appearing under their own imprint and more and more of their books are simply imports of USA gay presses with a GMP sticker on them. In *Gay Times*, GMP have denied imminent closure - which would be a tragedy for the gay movement and independent bookselling. GMP's authors have had trouble getting their royalties, so there is clearly something amiss. Fingers crossed that they'll pull through.

The future of Virago is still not clear, the company they are part of, CVBC, have been bought by the USA company Random House with the expectation that the Virago managers would "buy out" that part of the list and go independent. As we go to press, there is some dispute about how much Virago are worth - Random wants more than the Virago managers' valuation. The Virago bookshop by Covent Garden has closed, though. Opened just two or three years ago and announced as "very green and very beautiful", its closure may bring some relief to the less commercial women's bookshops in London.

Lastly, one of the more isolated radical bookshops in the north of England has closed. Single Step in Lancaster finally gave up the ghost blaming the constant decline of radical book sales and constant shoplifting. Very sad.0

For want of a little ground

Cotgrave: Aspects of Life in the 17th and 18th Centuries. Ed. by Joss Wood. WEA East Midland District. £2.95.

THIS IS A FASCINATING dip into the past. Cotgrave is not a name that stands out in history and that is what makes this book more interesting, in that it concentrates on the piecemeal written records of wills, house inventories and estate records to give an impression of how people lived. And how some people lived off other people. The estates fiddled the enclosure of the common land, collected the rents and spent a little, yes a little, on repairs. Thus Edward Wilde, aged 69, could write, "I lost my wife for

want of a little ground to milk 2 or 3 cows on. My children forced from me for want of employment ..." Centuries of grinding poverty form the backdrop to the nice beamed cottages of rural England, the taxes and sweat of the poor paid for those old churches we see. This pamphlet clearly points this out - not in the hackneyed way that I've just done but by calmly tracing the local history.

It is difficult to conceive of such times, and the chapter that draws me back is the chapter on the bubonic plague: "Between April 23rd and September 22nd (1637), 93 people died out of a probable population of 440-450." "Several families lost 5 members. Andrew Hornbuckle and his wife lost 5 children in 10 days ..." How could anyone keep their sanity when all around them a disease - origins unknown - wiped out friends, neighbours, and who will it be tomorrow? And when would it end? Shivers.

Don't, however, get the idea that here's another boring political tract. There's all the fascinating trivia of local history, how streets got their names, how the farms developed etc. The writing is a little dry in places, which is my only complaint. Available from Cotgrave Library or Mushroom Bookshop.0

Competition corner

THE COMPETITION IN the last issue was to supply a suitable motto for a local company. The winner is Patrick Smith, well describing the product of a local "food" manufacturer:



His suitable new motto for them appears above. I was tempted to disqualify him, since the logo formed the basis of a Vegetarian Society campaign at the Pork Farms/Harms marathon a few years ago, so Patrick's slogan is not original, but that would be mean. Besides, it's a useful quandary for the Advertising Standards Authority - which motto is legal, truthful, honest? Patrick wins the usual stunning prize of a year's sub to *Nottingham Extra*. (Ed. Less of the sarcasm, please - in our present phase of expansion, it gets more valuable with every issue.)

The competition this issue is in keeping with its overwhelmingly labour movement orientation (is that, incidentally, a good thing or a bad thing?). The competition is to invent a socialist joke. Before you write "*Militant*" on a bit of paper or even "Roy Hattersley", I should say that anything so predictable will not get you very far. No, we want genuine humour. Something to make us laugh. The prize is the usual year's sub. Entries, please, to the editorial address on page 3 by the end of August.0

EVENTS

POLITICS OF FOOD day conference, Newark Technical College, 28th November. Conference fee £5 max., including lunch. Crèche facilities. Speakers include Joan Maynard (Agricultural Workers Union), a Green MEP, Adrian Moyes (Oxfam). Full details from Newark Socialist Countryside Group, The Wharf, Trent Lane, Collingham, Newark.

LOOKING BACK

AT THE UNIVERSITY ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE, 14-22 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham (Tel. 473022)

BUILDING JERUSALEM? THE LEFT IN BRITISH POLITICS

What is the future of the Left in British politics? Can it survive the challenge of the New Right? Does the Left have an answer to the problems of economic decline and poverty? Has it come to terms with the issues of racism and feminism? As well as tackling these questions the course will also look at the history of the British Left; the roots of labourism and socialism, the struggles of the inter-war years

and the post-war social democratic heyday. Reference will also be made to the experience of the Left in other European countries. Tutor: Geoff Morris, M.A. 18 meetings, Tuesday 6 pm to 7.30 pm, starting 15th September. Fee: £21.85.

A series of writers looking at women's history. Mary Stott (former women's editor at the *Guardian*) opens the series on Wed, 30th Sept. Amrit Wilson (author of *Finding a Voice*) will speak on the history of Asian women in Britain on Thurs, 15th Oct. Lastly Jill Liddington, who has written about the suffragette period, will speak on Weds, 11th Nov. All the meetings are at the Department of Adult Education, Shakespeare Street, start at 7.30 pm and are open to women and men. Tickets are £1.50 (75p unwaged) for each event from Mushroom Bookshop in Heathcote Street. The series is organised by the Mushroom Book Events Group.

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Full range of offset printing services for A5, A4, A3 and Crown sizes. Leaflets, booklets, forms, stationery, posters.

Darkroom services

Copyproofing, reversals, negs, films, half-tones, plates. Very reasonable rates.

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