

BRENT UNION'S FIGHT FOR RIGHTS

UNISON members in the borough of Brent, north-west London, are stepping up the fight against the derecognition of their union by the Tory council.

The local government union lobbied members of the council's Policy and Resources committee last week (see page 3) where the council's Tory majority pressed ahead with their derecognition moves. The committee accepted the recommendation from the Personnel committee to go for derecognition.

The derecognition will be implemented after the council has taken legal advice and after consulting Unison national officials.

Brent is held by the Tories on the casting vote of the Mayor.

If the Tory council is successful, consultation between the council and the nearly 2,000 members of Unison would cease. The national agreements now in place would be threatened as well as many of the local conditions fought for by the union in the past.

Local agreements have been achieved in Brent which are often better than those negotiated nationally. These too would be immediately at risk.

Fear

Union members fear current sick pay arrangements, maternity leave provisions, and equal opportunity agreements could be swept away if the union was no longer recognised.

Local members of Unison are worried that national officials have started negotiations with the council without

the involvement of local officials.

They are especially concerned that the council may be trying to curb the powers of Unison regional officer Stuart Barber who has campaigned to expose maladministration and racism in the borough.

Support

Local union officials say their fight has won support throughout London with many applying to join the union in Brent itself.

It is clear that if the Tories get away with their derecognition plans this will give the green light to any other council to launch the same sort of attack against the country's largest union.

Union members in Brent ask all who support their fight to:

■ Send letters of protest to Brent council calling for the threat against Unison to be condemned unconditionally. To Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley, London HA9 9HU.

■ Write to Rodney Bickerstaffe urging the full weight of Unison be put behind the campaign against derecognition. To Unison, Mabledon Place, London WC1.

Labour supports new 'Sus' laws

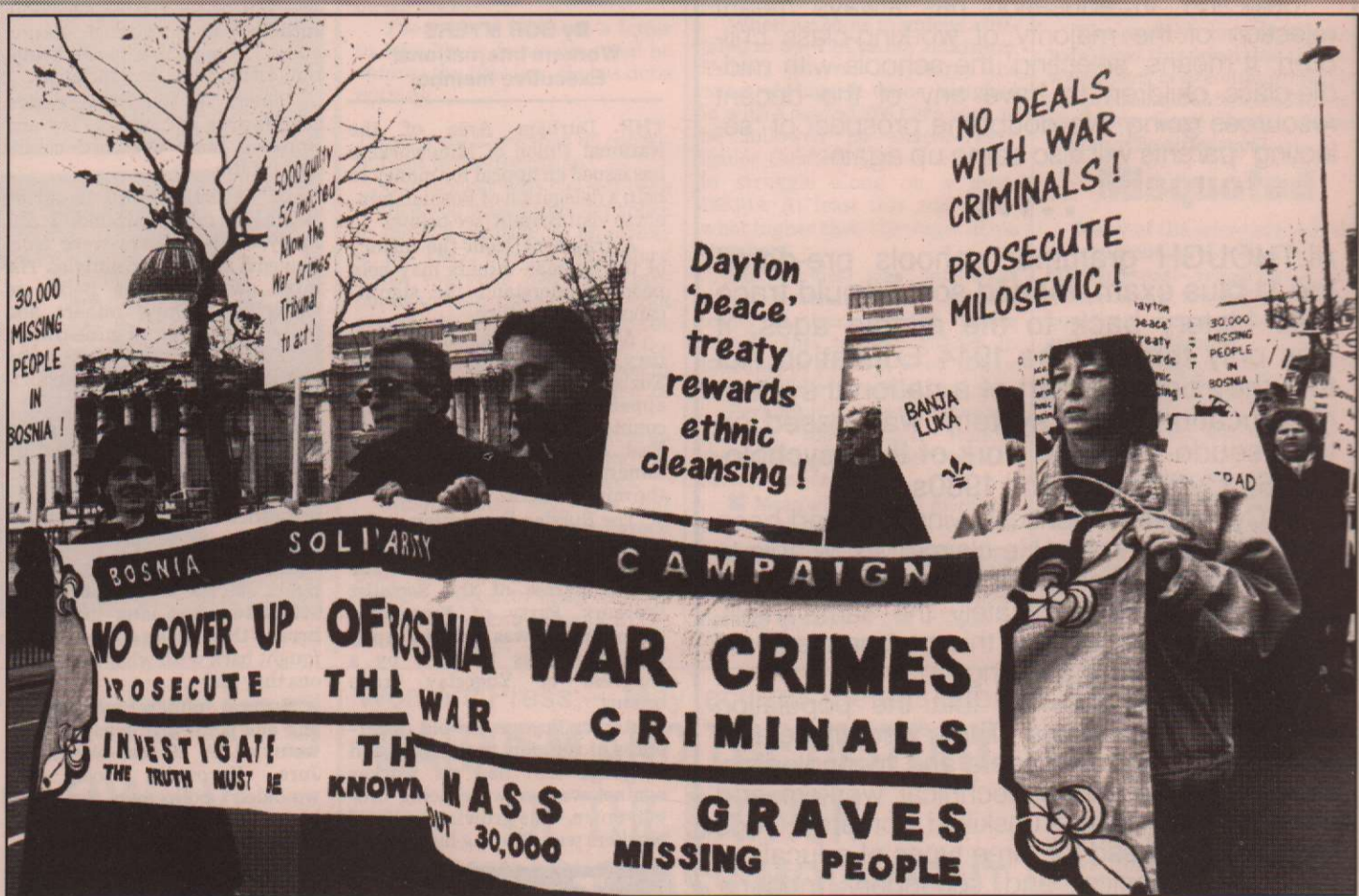
THE Labour Party leadership gave its support to measures being rushed through parliament on Wednesday that will give police sweeping new powers of body search and arrest on the streets.

After private talks with Tory ministers and senior Metropolitan Police officers, shadow home secretary Jack Straw said he accepted that such powers were needed to combat a supposed IRA cam-

campaign to mark the 80th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising.

Under these new measures, police can name a 'specified area' for 28 days where officers can stop and search pedestrians, even if they have no reasonable suspicion that they are involved in any terrorist activity.

Even the Liberal Democrats opposed the measures as a return to the 'Sus' laws abolished a decade ago which were often used to oppress ethnic minority communities.



Demonstration last Saturday against the cover-up of war crimes in Bosnia

Photo: Marg Nicol

BSE — health concerns ignored as beef industry collapses

BY DANIEL ROBERTSON

THE Tories are trying to sweep health concerns about BSE under the carpet as they blame everyone but themselves for the growing beef crisis.

Media hype is blamed — as if confirmed human deaths from BSE are of no consequence.

Still denying that there is any risk from eating British beef, they have twisted and turned to minimise the need to cull infected herds.

This is clearly now going to happen — although the logistics of slaughtering millions

of cattle defy the imagination.

The European Union have stepped in with offers to help with the massive cost of clearing British beef of BSE, reflecting common concerns over a growing boycott of beef and beef products across Europe. Cases of European deaths from the new strain of CJD have been reported.

British-produced animal feed has probably spread the infection into herds across Europe. A past cover-up of this situation seems likely to produce new panics across Europe.

The whole beef industry, which is a massive profit earner worldwide, is threatened with a loss of credibility

amongst consumers who are increasingly willing to question the healthiness of mass-produced food.

Thousands of jobs have already disappeared, tens of thousands will follow. Sacrificing Edwina Currie did not make Salmonella in eggs disappear — Douglas Hogg's departure will not perform a miracle for beef.

Yo-yo

Sales are going up and down like a yo-yo in response to price cuts and reassurances from supermarkets. But the steady effect of successive CJD deaths will inevitably eat away at consumer confidence

and propel the beef industry into terminal decline.

Details of how the deadly infection may have been transmitted to cattle are becoming clearer. A frequently posed defence of BSE beef has been that the origin of the infection — scrapie in sheep — has not previously infected humans.

It now seems possible that the defective beef rendering process used to prepare the animal feed that passed the infection from sheep to cattle selected out a particularly virulent strain.

Numerous different types of scrapie occur in sheep with

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Women of the Waterfront's WOMEN'S DAY

Wednesday 10 April

Assemble 11am, The Strand, Bootle
March to Seaforth Container Base

Book a coach! Come in force! Take the day off!
Bring your banners!

All national union offices have details

WOW c/o Transport House, Islington, Liverpool L3
8EQ Telephone 0151-207 3388 Fax 0151-207 0696
(Clearly marked WOW!)

London coach contact Liz Leicester 0171-911 1686

