



photo: Andrew Ward/Report

Glenys Kinnock (left) and Joan Ruddock launch One World.

# AID CRUSADE

## Interview with Glenys Kinnock and Joan Ruddock

Since 1984 public concern about poverty and famine in the Third World has increased dramatically in Britain. Organisations such as Band Aid have helped to push the politics of aid and development into the limelight. Last month, Glenys Kinnock, Joan Lester and Joan Ruddock publicly launched One World, a new campaign which aims to introduce a socialist perspective into the development arena. Here Glenys Kinnock and Joan Ruddock talk to Sally Davison.

*Why do you think there has been a ground swell of public opinion about aid issues in the last 18 months?*

**Glenys** Well obviously there was the reaction to Michael Buerk's film – it was the first time that we had sat and watched live satellite pictures, in our own homes, of people dying. And then we discovered in the subsequent days and weeks that we couldn't get food to those people. And then there was the Band Aid initiatives. Pictures of the starving and the sounds of the pop singers combined to spark off an amazing response.

**Joan** There was also a political opportunity there – people had been absolutely sickened by the whole direction of the Thatcher government in Britain. There is a great deal of misery and distress in our own communities, and perhaps people suddenly recognised that there were even worse things happening elsewhere. There is a political climate of protest in Britain, protest in Europe. And people feel the need to link with protest in the Third World.

*Live Aid and Band Aid were obviously very important in acting as a*

*focus for the emotions that had been aroused.*

**Joan** I think they allowed people to do something. It wasn't insignificant that people got up and wrote out their cheques, or collected money in their neighbourhoods and sent it in. That must have involved millions of people who had never answered a coupon in any newspaper or magazine. So people did positive things. They saw that there was a need for support and that it could be done by money. But what we, and others, are left to pick up is the feeling that people have done that – but what can they do now? Consciousness has been raised, the feeling has stuck, and there is a need for ongoing support. There is a real sense that there has to be change, because otherwise it will just go on like this, and probably next time famine will be less newsworthy. Famines will continue, but you can't just keep repeating Live Aid. You can't keep hitting those kind of heights.

**Glenys** There is a danger of what the agencies are already called aid fatigue. I already sense that there is some of that. If the rains fail this year, the people of sub-Saharan Africa will be in the same situation again. If that happens we cannot keep on saying that we have to find the resources for emergency food aid – there have to be commitments of another kind to long-term strategies to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

*You could say that Band Aid did more than just make money – it kept a momentum going. It didn't end with Live Aid last summer. They have managed to build on that by, for example, launching Sport Aid. That is bringing in a different constituency. So although it is not like a typical mass campaign, it has a sense of giving people different things to*

*do, even if the net result is always just to collect money. They have prolonged its life more than you might have expected.*

**Glenys** Yes, and don't knock it. I think that some people have implied that that is what we were doing. Certainly not – what we are doing is seeing the necessity to build on what they have done. We are full of admiration for what they have done. But we recognise that people have been asking where do we go from here. This is what has perplexed them. Band Aid raised public awareness and we are offering answers to some of the questions that people are asking.

*Are you saying that Band Aid had the fun, but now we have got to get the politics. Is there any way these areas could feed off each other more than that, rather than Band Aid just being like a conveyor belt which feeds people to you?*

**Joan** I doubt if the half the population which got involved in Band Aid are all going to come to us. And if they did we would be totally overwhelmed and would probably become ineffectual. But the importance is that a constituency of support for positive measures has been created and they were part of creating it. We are trying to pick up a proportion of that interest, as a political organisation – because that is what we are.

*Why do you think it is that up until now the labour movement and the Left have been so pathetic on these issues, and that it was left to organisations like Live Aid to start campaigning?*

**Joan** I think it is an extremely interesting question because at the very beginnings of the labour movement, internationalism was much more to the fore than it has been in more recent decades. In the very early stages people were so oppressed that there was a kind of identification with people who were without food. But as we moved away from that to a situation where it was all about collective bargaining and trying to get to the next rung in the ladder, and that kind of thing, the labour movement became very inward-looking. We are so concerned with trying to improve very narrow interests within Britain that we fail to see what's going on elsewhere. I also think, without being too harsh, that there has been an element of racism. The whole history of colonialism has produced its own kind of results in the labour movement, some of which have been very negative.

**Glenys** I agree. But it is encouraging that the response of the trade unions to One World has been very, very positive. There has been a recognition that we can make arguments about mutual benefit. That is one of the differences now. We are now one world and our survival depends on each other – we will all live or die together. It makes it possible to take the argument to people who might otherwise argue that charity begins at home. But we are not simply appealing to self-interest. We always say that we believe it is morally unacceptable in our world that there should be even one death, from hunger. This is especially clear in the weeks after Chernobyl.

**Joan** I believe the kind of support we are seeing from trade unions now would accept a greater sharing. That is the explanation of why we are a socialist organisation. We are working for basic principles: justice and fairness. And we are not finding ourselves alone.

*Could you say more about the special role of One World?*

**Glenys** We exist to educate, to provide a clear socialist view of development issues. We are not a charity and we are not an aid agency of any kind, although we have links with the agencies and have received tremendous support from them. Many of them have been involved in public education work about these issues.

*What is different about the way in which you are raising the issues? Did you sit down and think, 'we need a socialist campaign'?*

**Glenys** Yes, that is right. The agencies can't make political points as strongly as us. We are saying a lot of things that they would like to.

**Joan** All sorts of people in very 'respectable' organisations are coming up to us from all over the place and saying they are absolutely thrilled, because they can't do this themselves. If you are burdened by the constraints of the charity commissioners, you just cannot go into overt politics. We have started in overt politics. That creates a new dimension.

*Yes, but charities are restricted not just in that they can't be party political – they can't be political at all in their campaigns. There are two things you could have decided to do – one would be to launch a specifically socialist campaign as you have done. The other would be to decide, as socialists, that what is needed is a broader, mass campaign.*

**Joan** Certainly from working in CND I know the fantastic strength of being a mass movement – I think that has been our credibility, our claim to have a strong political voice in Britain. But I also know the difficulties of a mass movement because to make it democratic requires it to become, by definition, I'm afraid, bureaucratic. You get into a very complex organisation. That isn't the only model. The way we are hoping to work – and obviously none of us know because we have only just started out on this experiment – is by offering a perspective that focuses on what we as a group are able to work on – and that is defined as the labour movement.

At the same time we are trying to provide, to a certain degree, a resource which other people can use to extend their operations in this field. We won't have to gather everybody into any kind of central organisation. Our aim is to help people to equip themselves to argue the case more, to make links, to take One World as a base for discussion within existing organisations. To keep setting up new organisations that mean that people have to acquire all kinds of commitments to monthly meetings, to being secretaries, or whatever, is not necessarily the right thing. There is already a mass of organisations; and the political parties are all gearing up for another general election. I think any attempt to establish a mass organisation along traditional lines would not only be totally impossible; it might be the wrong thing to do.

*To be a mass campaign doesn't necessarily imply all that paraphernalia; it means a commitment to the idea that somehow one involves the mass of the people. There is a need to involve people not just through going to meetings, and finding out about issues, but also through feeling that they are part of a national movement for change.*

**Glenys** We are fast becoming a mass movement with the amount of interest that has been generated.

*You have taken on the responsibility of taking the kind of feeling there is one step further. What if the mood is that people want to take it further than that – that they actually want a mass campaign?*

**Glenys** Well, so be it.

**Joan** If they do I will be very happy. But we don't want to get into a situation where we are arguing about what our spokespeople should be saying, who has the authority, to whom are we accountable. My hope – and it's the hope of all of us in One World – is that we are just not going to get into that business at all. We have come together because we are of like mind, we have got a perspective which has been declared. We have managed to persuade some trade unions that they agree with it and support it and they are prepared to put some money into it. We are taking it from there.

*So we are talking about a pressure group, and an educational campaign?*

**Joan** We are trying to make a contribution to a change in the culture. Because if the culture were changed – and Band Aid began that shift – then it would become possible to have these issues at the front of political debate. It will become a major issue at election times, which has never happened before. And then the mass of the people will acquire a political opportunity because they are actually then asked to make political choices.

*To what extent are you trying to change the Labour party? Or is it a case of helping to win support for the Labour party?*

**Glenys** Anybody watching us and reading about us understands that we are Labour party people. And the Labour party is the only major political party that has policies which are in line with One World. We support the party's development cooperation policies and we will work for the implementation of our socialist perspective on the issues.

*You don't see it as something that is actually trying to change the Labour party as well?*

**Joan** It is not aimed at changing party policy. But as in so many areas, the policy may be excellent but people may not know what it is. People may not have been interested, or may have other much greater priorities. So it is really lifting the profile of these issues within the labour movement.

*The style of One World shares some features with other recent developments in the Labour party. Is your campaign part of a new direction for the Labour party, a new way of putting your ideas across?*

**Glenys** It is a new direction insofar as it is the first time that this kind of movement has existed. But it is also special because we are bringing together a lot of people in the movement. We are not about just one thing. For instance Joan is closely identified with disarmament. This in itself conveys a message.

**Joan** Also, I think, we do represent our times. You know we are not cynically setting out to say this is a kind of PR package – what we are doing is right because it has some political gain; we are people whose whole philosophy has been formed in a certain way. And there are millions of people like us, who have the same kind of life experiences as us, going through the 60s when we had so much, and there was so much freedom and hope in our world. And then coming down to the agony of the 80s when everything had changed – and we are seeing change on so many fronts. I think we are bringing all that together. So we are just part of what is

happening in the broad left movement in Britain.

**Glenys** It's about striking a chord.

*You have produced quite a lot of material about women in the Third World. And it was three women that publicly launched the campaign. Is this an important part of One World?*

**Joan** Well, we are not all women. It just happened that several of us were involved in the campaign because of our specific roles and commitments. But I am sure we all shared the pleasure of knowing that it was women on the platform, and reversing the still traditional position that the spokespeople of an organisation have to be men.

*Do you think that reflects that women are more involved in this area?*

**Glenys** Well, they are more involved as carers, anywhere, we all know that! But most of the charities are headed up by men. You can't say that this is an area that has been the preserve of women, because it hasn't been partly because it has been, an area for 'experts'.

**Joan** It may be useful to women in the sense that it is women who traditionally are the grassroots, the organised collectors for these organisations. That is where the women are playing their part.

**Glenys** And in charity shops. . . Who has ever seen a man serving in an charity shop?

**Joan** That's right. Certainly the people who have come to my door have always been women. I think that one aim in all our lives is to help women to have the confidence to participate more fully, when they thought they were only there to make the tea.

**Glenys** And you can make connections with women in the Third World. Of course the differences between us are enormous. But these points can be made if you do it sensitively. If there is one thing that men can shake hands on anywhere in the world, it is that the situation for women is that they come last and get least.

**Joan** It is fair to say that in the very poorest areas of Britain today women are again in the position of trying to be the person that takes the least out of the household because they are managing on so little money. The sense of being the one who must ultimately make the sacrifices for the rest of the family is understood in Britain.

**Glenys** Women want to see the results of their work in their cooking pots and their children's skin and their children's education; it is the same all the world over – if they are asked 'do you want food for that cooking pot or bullets and bombs' then women the world over give the same answer. Investing in women is investing in the whole future of the developing world. At the Decade For Women conference they said that women's lives had in fact deteriorated over the last 10 years. I was struck too by a recent observation in a UNICEF report that 'farmer' is in fact not a masculine noun. And then you realise that it is the women who have been working in the fields, have been growing food, doing all of this. And it has been unrecognised, it has been invisible. So women will be part of our grassroots development, there is nothing more grassroots than women in development work. □

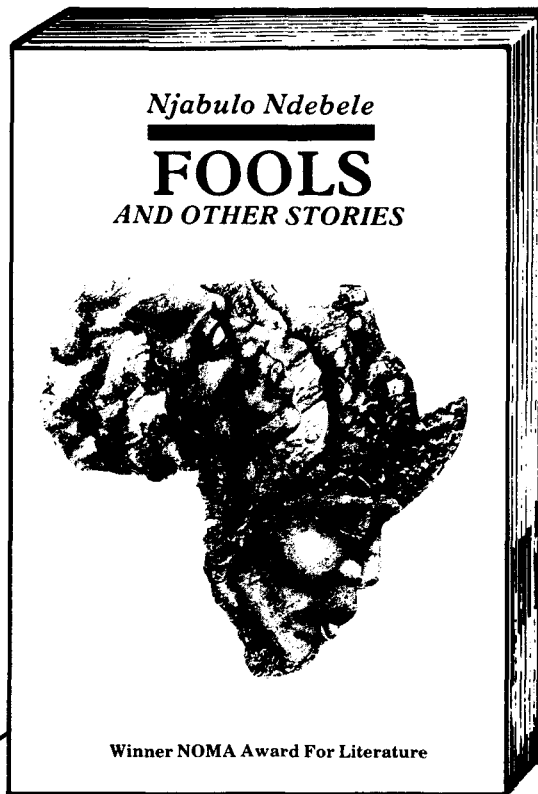
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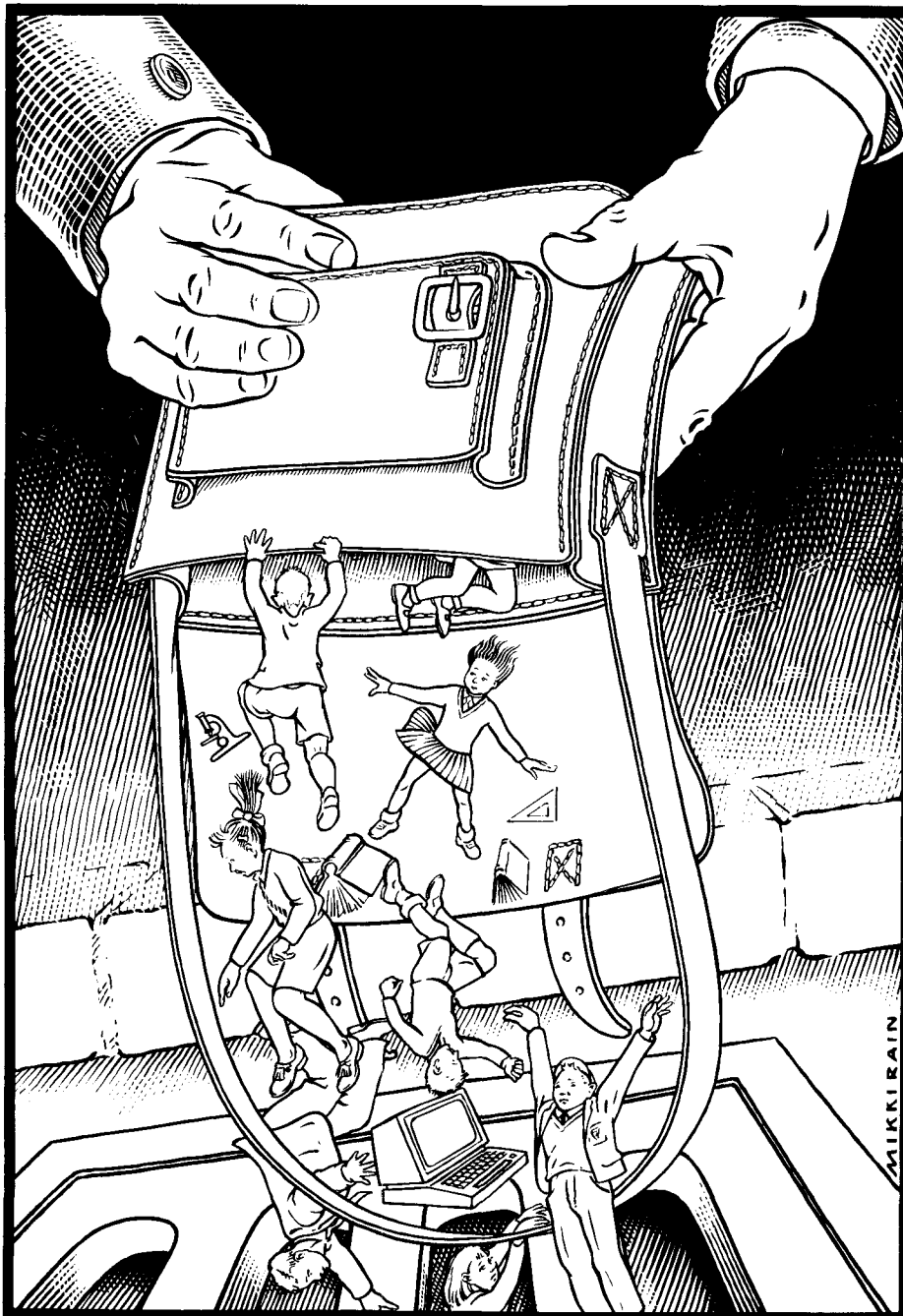
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M8

# The Battle of the Blackboard

Brian Simon

Education has become a high-profile issue. Thatcher thinks it might be an election-winner. But 1986 is not 1979. This time the Tories can't blame everyone else but themselves.



EDUCATION SUDDENLY catapulted to become a major issue in early March. The immediate cause triggering public concern was a clearly inspired leak from the prime minister's office – that to demonstrate her inflexibility in pursuing undeflected a Thatcherite radical programme, the prime minister was proposing to include, as key features of the Conservative party's election manifesto, first, a voucher or 'credit' system 'which would enable parents to choose between the state and private systems', and second, 'direct grant primary schools (ie, centrally funded) in inner cities' (*The Times*, March 10). The striking feature of this particular leak is that no other major issue was singled out for treatment. The focus was on education.

This briefing, variously reported, together with Keith Joseph's announcement of his impending retirement, made in early February, sparked an immediate power struggle for the succession, and a free market for a proliferation of 'radical' proposals – mostly emanating from the right wing of the Tory party.

If the leaks were the immediate cause of the succeeding flurry of activity, these themselves can be explained in terms of the growing crisis within the Tory party following the Westland affair, culminating in the resignations of Heseltine and Brittan with the consequent slump in Tory party support as reflected in the opinion polls. In this situation, the Tory leadership was, from early March, clearly casting around for a set of populist issues which, they believed, could be used to win back support.

Education was then conceived to be just such an issue, an attitude explicable in view of the undeniable popular success of the anti-public education campaign led by Rhodes Boyson which played an important part in the first (1979) return of the Thatcher government. Partly as a result of the teachers' action, education has been a simmering issue throughout the whole of the past year. Could not the Tories now seize the initiative by again singling out education as a major plank in the fight for a third term for Thatcher, needed, she claims, to enable her to complete her work and put Britain back firmly on the capitalist road for the foreseeable future?

### **Alienation of teachers**

But the situation in education today differs rather fundamentally from that in 1979. Public education has been through its worst year in its entire history, and many