BRENT LABOUR BRIEFING SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

THE FIGHTBACK IN BRENT

THE VICIOUS TORY attack on local government has meant that Heseltine expects Brent to cut its budget by £30 million. Faced with this impending financial disaster, a number of options are open to Brent Council:

1. Make cuts in services of 25%, . . so decimating public services and throwing thousands of Brent workers on the dole. . . and have no increase in rates.

2. *The "Pay More, Get Less" Option:* a package of cuts and rate increases ranging from suggestions of 40% increase in rates with 10% cuts or 45% increase in rates with 6-7% cuts and no sackings.

3. *The Fightback Option:* of maintaining jobs and services and raising the rates by an amount necessary to achieve this (perhaps 57% or so).

The problems in Brent must be seen in their historical perspective. Against the wishes of the Labour Group leadership, the decision was made to have no cuts and a 40% rate increase for 1980-81. This was a major victory for the left, and they have not been forgiven by Brent Labour Group Leader, John Lebor. Over the last two years John Lebor has launched his own personal crusade to demoralise working people in Brnet by talking at every opportunity about the need for cuts to be accepted in 1981 and continually criticising the working class for their so-called failure to build a mass movement against the Tory government at the drop of a hat.

VICIOUS ATTACK

Side by side with this has been a vicious attack on the left of the Party (called "Loonie Lefties" by John Lebor himself) perpetrated by Bill Montgomery of the *Willesden and Brent Chronicle.* Feb by information and leaks from members of the Labour Group, Montgomery has thrashed out like a wounded animal at any member of the Labour Party to the left of John Lebor.

The climax of the Lebor campaign against the left came at the Towns meeting in mid-January when he was faced with a hypocritical statement from the Tories arguing for minimal rate increases but refusing to explain or specify the level of cuts necessary to bring it about. His response to this situation was to turn on the left again in his summing up, launching yet another attack on his comrzdes in the Party, and totally missing a heaven-sent opportunity to bash the Tories into oblivion.

Furthermore, over recent months attempts have been made by the leadership of Brent Council to introduce cuts, even before the budget is fixed. The attempt to close Leopold School, the closure of Morgan Lodge and the slashing of the important part of the nursery programme by not building Uxendon Manor Nursery Unit are all signs of itchy fingers on the cuts trigger.

In these circumstances of double attack, the left in Brent has argued strongly for a position that will ensure:

(a) the maximum chshioning of the effects of the Tory attacks for Labour supporters and local government workers;

(b) the maximum unity within the Brent labour movement for the measures to be taken;

(c) the maximum support for a massive anti-Tory campaign pinning the responsibility for the situation on the Tory government.

NO CUTS

The first element of the left's approach to the budget has been that **there should be no cuts in services whatsoever.** Only by a no cuts position can the vital services to the needy, handicapped, ill, elderly and young be protected. These are all groups who, unlike ratepayers, find it very difficult to speak up for themselves. A no cuts budget is also necessary to fully protect jobs and job opportunities. **All cuts involve some job losses,** whether by natural wastage, early retirement, redeployment or more extremely by redundancy and sackings.

A consequence of this policy is, regretably, a large rate rise. This should not be welcomed but is the lesser of two evils. The worst possible policy to go forward with, is both a large rate rise and massive cuts. The Lebor package is not really a moderate middle way, but hits Labour supporters twice and politically gives the worst of all worlds.

Whatever the rise in rates, it will be too large for the Tory Wembley residents, while as usual, the cuts in services will hit Labour voters and supporters hardest.

The other element fought for by the left of the Party is **the lowest possible rent increase.** Council tenants are amongst the poorest section of the community and will be hard hit by rate increases. A further steep rent rise will only alienate staunch Labour supporters even more. A mass movement among tenants cannot be built by attacking them in the form of steep rent rises.

LEADERSHIP

In the long term, the main aim of the left must be to build a movement, welding together the Labour council, the Labour Party, the trade unions and the community organisations. But leadership must come from elected Labour councillors. If present councillors are not prepared to lead the fight against Thatcher, then the opportunity exists during the selection process to choose candidates for 1982 local elections to ensure that candidates are selected who will lead that fight. The leader of the council has a key role in creating the right sort of atmosphere for this fightback by virtue of his position. Now is the time for a new leadership in Brent, a leadership that is going to take the fight for the welfare of our people to the Tories, not shrink away from it.

RON ANDERSON
Chairperson
Brent Local Govt Committee
(in personal capacity)

Brent's Labour Leakers

F. HANSEN
Brent East CLP

LACKING ANY REAL BASE in the working class and isolated within the Labour Party nationally, the 'Gang of Three' have increasingly relied on the Tory mass media to prop up their waning credibility. As Tony Benn has pointed out, these "members from Fleet Street Central" represent nothing substantial within the Labour movement. They are simply political windbags, inflated out of all proportion by the collective huffing and puffing of the radio, TV and press.

The right wing's alliance with the capitalist press is not merely confined to national politics. On a local level, they are employing similar tactics. Labour Groups have long been a bastion of the right wing, despite the leftward shift in the Party. Now that they are coming under increasing pressure from local party organisations to make a stand against Heseltine's cuts, they too are allying themselves with forces outside the Party in a desperate bid to whip up "public opinion" in favour of the "moderate option" (large rent increases and cuts).

In Brent this media-strategy has begun to assume a particularly nasty form. At first it was confined to an open media campaign by the Labour leadership in favour of cuts, in defiance of local party policy. As the debate hotted up those who opposed this capitulation to Heseltine were branded as "loonies" and "wet behind the ears". The most sinister development, however, has been the anonymous leaking of information and misinformation about internal party decisions and debates. Rather than speak for themselves, the 'Deep Throats' of the right, are using the local press to launch a vicious and highly personalised smear campaign, against Labour activists.

GUTTER PRESS

The journal in question is the *Kilburn Times*, a newspaper that is a fully paid-up member of the 'gutter press'. It has never concealed its contempt and hatred of the Labour Party; and seems to specialise in publishing any letters the National Front sends in. Indeed, it has even printed Nazi hoax letters attacking Jewish people; one was signed by Julius Streicher! While 'opposing' the BM march in Paddington, it advised local people to ignore it.

The journalist in question is Bill Montgomery. He is detested by local NUJ members for having scabbed on a recent strike against sackings. Montgomery writes a regular little 'Notebook' about town hall affairs. Once upon a time he was castigating Brent's Labour leadership for its neo-Marxist leanings. now it appears they are only 'moderates', fighting the good fight against the 'bullying left extremists'.

Montgomery's journalistic style is a sort of. poor man's 'Private Eye'. Anyone he politically dislikes is given silly, schoolboy nicknames like 'Red' Ron Anderson, or 'Ferocious' Alf Filer. His political analysis is essentially psychiatric. Like the Stalinists of the Politburo, he believes that anyone who disagrees with the conventional wisdom of the establishment should be classified as a "loony". Character assassination is the name of the game.

Montgomery's latest piece is titled "How Brent's Left War-Machine Goes Into Action". His 'sources' inside the Labour Party inform him that the "dedicated men of the left" (clearly women aren't interested in politics) "led by party secretary 'Red' Ron Anderson," are engaged in a campaign to remove right wing Labour councillors who implement cuts. (Readers of **BRIEFING** will no doubt be shocked by this amazing revelation!)

DISTURBING

But what is really disturbing to Montgomery is that members of the Asian community are joining the party, under the auspices of the Asian Labour Party Association, and actually supporting the left. He clearly believes the Asians aren't capable of making political decisions: "It seems the brains are being provided by Brent East radicals, while the *bodies* come from sections of the Asian community." Presumably, Manibhai Patel, recently elected in Stonebridge, is just a body smuggled onto Brent council by the "loonies"!

This patronising, racist attitude is particularly directed against Asian women who, according to Montgomery, "were unable to follow the proceedings of the meeting (Stonebridge selection) and merely voted as they had been instructed." Clearly Montgomery and those in the Labour Party who feed him information, regard Asians as political cannon-fodder, who aren't even capable of understanding meetings, let alone participating in them.

Eventually the whole point of Montgomery's article finally emerges. He won't actually go so far as to encourage decent citizens to join the party he hates and defeat the loonies, but he provides four column inches for a "senior figure" to do so: "Despite their lack of popular support there is constant and growing pressure from the left for more extreme and expensive policies. Having failed to get their way by democratic debate the left is now using its grip on party organisation. . . . We (sic) would urge ordinary people to rejoin the party and attend meetings. . . ."

TOTALLY CONTEMPTUOUS

There you have it in a nutshell. The senior figure(s) of Brent Council are totally contemptuous of the party which put them in office. The democratic decisions of the party organisation reached after extensive debates at branches, GMCs and the LGC are irrelevant and to be ignored. Existing party members aren't "ordinary people" (they're all left, perhaps along with Reg Prentice), but "loonies" and "bodies". No, for our "senior figure", democracy has nothing to do with the Labour Party, it is all about slanders and witchhunts, and inciting right wing hacks to attack the Labour movement.

The tragedy of the whole thing is that the more the Labour leakers rant and rave, the more they reveal their own impotence and political bankruptcy.



Brent's Night of

TO ITS ETERNAL SHAME on Wednesday 28th Ja continue banking with Barclays. Councillor Phil Sea account was defeated by 25 Tory votes to 19 Labou including the Leader, Deputy Leader and Whip.

The call for withdrawal had not only received the overwhelming support of all three Brent CLPs and the Brent Local Government Committee, but had also been argeed by the Labour Group and should have been the subject of a three-line whip. The abstainers, led by Council Leader John Lebor, claimed they were abstaining on grounds of conscience!

A last minute appeal to John Lebor urging Brent Council to withdraw its account from Barclays was made by Bob Hughes MP, Chairperson of Anti-Apartheid. He explained that the case against Barclays was overwhelming, they had a controlling interest in Barclays National, which was the largest bank in South Africa with over a thousand branches in South Africa and illegally occupied Namibia. Barclays had identified themselves closely with the apartheid regime by purchasing Defence Bonds, raising huge loans and investing 30% of their assets in government bonds and securities. Bob Hughes also explained the scale and character of Barclays' involvement was quite different to that of other banks, and that the campaign for withdrawal from Barclays was part of an international campaign backed by the United Nations.

Meanwhile, because of rumblings from the District Auditor that it might be illegal for the council to accept other than the lowest tender (Barclays was £40,000 lower than the second tenderer) an opinion had been sought from Leading Counsel. This was unequivocal in supporting the legality of the proposed course of action. Counsel advised that: "if having considered the matter the Council concludes that to transfer the account from Barclays

Asians rally to forge alliance with Labour left

Wembley Midweek 3.2.81

Left take-over in Brent?

A determined campaign has been mounted by the extreme left wing of the Labour Party to take over Brent Council at the next borough election.

This campaign has already had considerable success and there is a real chance of Brent becoming another "People's Republic of Lambeth."

Bill Montgomery will be supplying facts and opinions in a special article in next week's issue.

Willesden and Brent Chronicle 29.1.81

...OW BRENT'S LEFT ...AR-MACHINE GOES INTO ACTION

Willesden and Brent Chronicle 5.2.81

...Shame

...uary, Brent's Labour Council voted to ...y's motion to withdraw the Council's ...r votes, with 13 Labour abstentions

to another tendering bank would serve to put pressure on South Africa to alter its policies to promote equal opportunity *or* is necessary for the promotion of good relations between ethnic groups in the borough *and* it concludes that the cost of such a transfer is not out of proportion to its possible effect on the promotion of such good relations *then* the council is under a *duty* to arrange its affairs without using Barclays Bank."

Despite Bob Hughes' appeal and the legal opinion, John Lebor kept up his opposition to the bitter end. He encouraged members of the Labour Group to oppose Party and Group policy and alone of the "conscience" abstainers he bitterly attacked the Group and Party's policy publicly at the Council meeting.

Two nights later Brent Local Government Committee overwhelmingly passed a motion of no confidence in John Lebor which will be discussed at the next meeting of the Labour Group.

The implications of this sorry tale are wider than the immediate issue. It cannot be acceptable for the leader of a Labour Group, having been overwhelmingly defeated in the Party, to use his leadership position to deride the Party and undermine its policies. The Wembley Conference decision must be extended to local government as soon as possible. The leadership of Labour Groups must be elected and held directly accountable to local parties. Brent Labour Parties need no further convincing—only in this way can such shameful episodes as the Barclays debacle be prevented.

CLLR MIKE GRABINER
Chair, Brent East CLP

The Struggle for Accountability

SO FAR THE debate on accountability at national level has centred around three main demands. The automatic reselection of MPs, party control of the manifesto and the election of the leader by a wider franchise.

In Brent, we have already won the first two demands, and at the GLC AGM last year a resolution was passed which called for the setting up of an electoral college to choose the leader of the Labour Group. This was turned down by the Labour Group at its AGM but certainly it will be debated again at this year's GLC AGM as also will a resolution which calls for the election of chairpersons and deputy chairpersons fo the council committees by the Group rather than the present system which is that they are "appointed" by the Group officers.

The other important resolution passed was one which put two observers on the committee mini-groups. This will be able to give advance warning of important issues which will be debated in Group and on the Council. In the past the excuse for lack of consultation has often been that there was no time.

IGNORED

Yet, whilst recognising that advances have been made we must also realise that on most important issues the Group has ignored the views of the Party. So—on council house sales, falling rolls, Barclays Bank and it looks as though on the cuts—the Group has taken decisions opposite to those taken by the three GMCs and the GLC.

Accountability is vital because it challenges elected representatives not only on the immediate level through reselection but also because it challenges the ideology which requires councillors and MPs to recognise an interest which is supposedly above that of class interest. Accountability is also a check on the tendency of councillors and MPs to become immersed in the administrative detail at the expense of wider political agitation.

ACCOUNTABLE

If we want a class movement which will challenge the Tories and importantly provide the power and support for the next Labour government to carry out the policies and intent of its manifesto, then it must be accountable, open and democratic. Over the next few years local government is going to be a major platform in the fight against the Tories. To make that fight effective then it is up to us to make sure that we have real accountability in local government and that means not only candidates for the 1982 elections who support accountability but also strong wards to monitor and support their councillors.

MARK FEENY
Chairperson, Brent North CLP

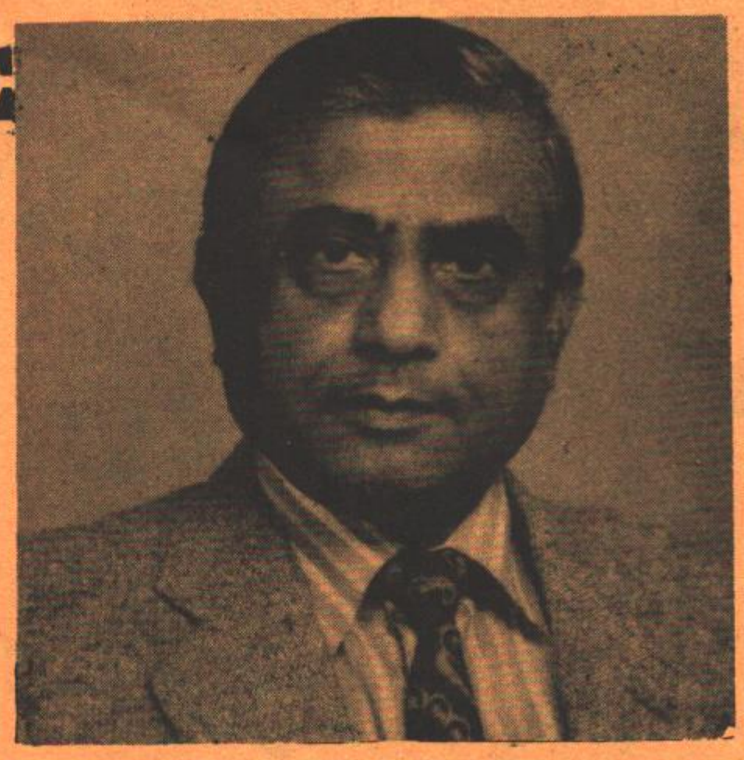
All-out support to Brent Labour Candidates in the GLC Elections

Forward To A Socialist GLC!

Brent East	**Nornam Howard**
Brent South	**Illtyd Harrington**
Brent North	**Lawrie Nerva**

LEFT COUNCILLORS ELECTED AT STONEBRIDGE





AS REPORTED in February's **BRIEFING**, January 29 saw a vital by-election in Stonebridge (Brent South). The two Labour candidates, both **BRIEFING** supporters, Merle Amory and Manibhai Patel, were elected with majorities of around 600 votes.

The election of Merle Amory was a small piece of history—she is the first black woman ever elected as a councillor in the UK.

Despite a small fall in Labour's share of the vote, mainly due to the intervention of Liberal and NF candidates, we actually improved our position relative to the Tories. To acheive this on an almost obsolete register with 1,000 removals from a 4,500 electorate, was an excellent result which completely vindicated the positive discrimination policy of Brent LGC, and showed that black candidates can succeed without a white 'crutch'.

The derisory NF vote gives lie to those who feared that putting up two black candidates would play into their hands. Rather the result demonstrates that white and black voters will unite to support those candidates whose policies they see as being in their interests.

LABOUR LEFT

In this respect the Stonebridge by-election is even more important for the Labour left; the elected comrades campaigned on a policy of 'no cuts' and will be a welcome addition to those on Brent's Labour Group who are determined to preserve local services. Both are also committed to using their position as councillors to help build the Party, and turn it outwards into the community. The establishment of the Asian Labour Party Alliance is an important step in this direction. Hopefully this will be followed by similar moves amongst the politically aware members of other ethnic minorities.

However, these two new left councillors may be only the beginning. March will see another by-election in Harlesden Ward, with perhaps another left candidate, and selection meetings in March and April will determine how many others will be contesting seats in Brent in 1982.

STUART MARSHALL-CLARKE
Brent South CLP

BRENT EAST Women's Section has just produced a paper on the provision of creche facilities and child care for Brent councillors, which they hope will persuade the Local Government Committee and Labour Group to take seriously their policy of positive discrimination in favour of women. If the proposals in this paper are taken up, Brent will have taken one step nearer to creating a situation in which women will be able to compete on equal terms, shoud they dedice to stand for election to the council.

The paper sets out in detail the cost of providing and running a creche in the town hall for evening meetings and administering a baby sitting service for child care in councillors' homes.

It is indicative of the state of the Labour Party that such an important and vital aspect of Party policy has to be argued, not in terms of need and the ultimate gain which such a service would provide, but in terms of the cost to the tax payer.

The discussion document however, spells out the minimal cost of breaking down one more barrier preventing women from taking part in the decision making process. Any decision to refuse the demands of the women's section on this issue will be seen quite clearly as a blatant disregard of the needs and rights of women and future bleatings on the need to involve women in politics will be treated with the scorn it deserves.

CLLR MERLE AMORY

Irish for Power

MUCH ATTENTION has been devoted recently to the rights and needs of ethnic minorities in Brent. The HSS issue educated a lot of people on the left, and helped to highlight the paternalistic attitude adopted by many on the right. Black people in Brent are now joining the Labour Party in their hundreds, intent on asserting their right to adequate representation.

Despite these advances, one ethnic minority, Brent's most long-standing one, the Irish, have tended to be overlooked. They regularly suffer harrassment, through the Prevention of Terrorism Act, they suffer from racism, reflected in the daily barrage of anti-Irish jokes in the media. Ignorance of Irish politics is rife, reflected in the Labour Party and its Tory bi-partisan policy.

'TROOPS OUT'

A start has been made in Brent. A debate on Ireland began in Brent East CLP about seven years ago and the Party adopted a basic 'troops out' policy. At the Conference of 1979, Brent East's delegate, Frank Hansen, was a prime influence in taking a debate on Northern Ireland on to the agenda. For the last conference, both Brent East and Brent North submitted resolutions similar to the model put forward by the Labour Committee on Ireland.

It is vital to keep the momentum going and, in particular, for Brent South to take up the issue. A resolution on Ireland from all three constituencies to this year's conference would be a significant advance.

COLIN ADAMS
Brent East CLP
Ireland Sub-Committee

ASIANS FOR POWER

Regular subscribers to LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING will recall a series of articles last year dealing with the subject of 'Brent's Indian Fascists' The right wing leadership of Brent's Labour Council, it was said, had been giving preferential treatment to a shadowy offshoot of the RSS—India's main fascist party. At that time the whole affair may have appeared somewhat obscure and to many comrades Paul Franklin's assertion that the controversy marked a "watershed in the relation between Labour and the Asian community" seemed an exaggeration, to say the least.

Events since then however, have completely borne out his assessment. The past three months alone have seen the recruitment of over 500 Asians into the Labour Party in Brent and it is the right wing who have the greatest cause to worry! This influx has coincided with the formation of a new national organisation, the Asian Labour Party Alliance, which is now applying to the NEC for affiliated status, as well as with, of course, Labour's historic Wembley conference.

The aims of ALPA are clear: to unite with all those who are prepared to challenge *now* the oppression of Britain's ethnic minorities. We put in *first place* the fight against the racists in our own movement. Just as there is no struggle to bring down this Tory government without the struggle to remove the misleaders of the past—Callaghan, Healey, Rees and CO, so we cannot even hope to unite the working people of this country behind a socialist Labour Party if we allow racists to continue in positions of responsibility.

For this reason, ours is a struggle for *power*. We seek proportionate representation of ethnic minorities at all levels in the Party and in public office. This can never be achieved in Brent under the present right wing leadership of the Labour Group. So, in addition to politically suitable ethnic candidates, we will be supporting all those who are genuinely prepared to fight our fight with us—and that means supporting the left. We are hoping that Brent will be the breakthrough.

SUBHASH PATEL
Asian Labour Party Alliance

LIST OF SELECTION DATES: LABOUR-HELD WARDS

Roundwood	Monday 2nd March
Stonebridge	Tuesday 3rd March
Carlton	Wednesday 4th March
Kensal Rise	Monday 9th March
Wembley Central	Wednesday 11th March
St Raphaels	Tuesday 17th March
Willesden Green	Friday 20th March
Kilburn	Tuesday 24th March
Church End	Wednesday 25th March
Manor	Monday 30th March
Alperton	Tuesday 31st March
Queens Park	Wednesday 1st April
Harlesden	Thursday 2nd April
St Andrews	Friday 3rd April
Brentwater	Tuesday 7th April
Cricklewood	Wednesday 8th April
Tokyngton	Thursday 9th April
Mapesbury	Monday 13th April
Roe Green	Tuesday 14th April