HARINGEY LABOUR BRIEFING SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

As a Borough, Haringey suffers from many of the problems that other parts of London do: tremendous housing shortage, industrial decline, rapidly rising unemployment, cuts being imposed by Heseltine.

Of course, in times of hardship, as in times of relative prosperity, the burdens and the benefits are not evenly spread.

In Haringey the people who suffer most in terms of opportunities, housing and jobs are the young, and more especially black youth.

Haringey has a strong and vibrant Labour movement – the fascists were dismissed in one of the earliest of the mass demonstrations against them in 1977; the 1979 local authority workers' strikes were strong and now, for the first time in history, Hornsey, Tottenham and Wood Green have returned Labour members to County Hall in the GLC elections.

The Borough has been Labour controlled since 1971 and, as we face the run up to the 1982 Borough elections, comrades are discussing how the Council should act and in whose interests.

Is the job of a Labour Council to pass on the Heseltine cuts and become an administrator of central government policies?

or

Is the job of a Labour Council to defend the living standards of the worst off people by fighting for resources for the Borough?

Since the Thatcher Government came to power, their main policy planks have been to divide the labour movement by creating high levels of unemployment, spending more on defence and slashing public spending on the welfare and social services. Because of the very high profile that local government takes and the relationship of central to local government spending the task of a united response has been the most serious weakness of the labour movement.

Party activists in Haringey have continually called for united work with other Labour Councils and with the trade union movement to defeat the Government; quite clearly, isolated no Labour Council will defeat or reverse Tory policy.

The demands on the Labour Party national executive and the TUC to mobilise to oppose the latest £400,000,000 cut from public spending must be stepped up; and commitments extracted from the National Executive and the Parliamentary Labour Party on how they will operate after we have won the next election.

Haringey Briefing has been put together by comrades active in the Labour Party, the Campaign Against the Cuts and the Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Campaign; it is designed to unite activists in the Borough to strengthen the fight against the Tories.

HARINGEY'S 1982 MANIFESTO

The time to begin working on Labour's manifesto for the 1982 Borough elections is now.

The Party has been in control of the Council since 1971 – the time has come to evaluate the successes and failures of Council policy and to set a direction for the Council to go in.

The aims and manifesto of the Party should not be constrained by the narrow parameters of the existing local government establishment, but an expression of the day to day situation in the Borough, and how a Council works as both an administrator, a pressuring agency and a campaigning body.

1. **Council activities and thrust of policy:** Partly due to the onslaught of Tory Government the whole purpose and nature of Council activity has changed and its relationship with the community has also altered to a very considerable degree. It is therefore suggested that one of the key parts to the manifesto making process must be how a future Labour Council would operate in terms of the Borough's economy, employment and unemployment, the Council's role as an employer, the development of cooperatives. In this whole field the ability of the Council to campaign and confront the Government, and to cooperate with the GLC and other Labour Boroughs, is vital.

2. **Youth, community, ethnic policies:** The continuing decline of employment in the Borough and elsewhere has a disproportionate effect on the people of the area, and quite clearly youth, and more especially Black youth, are the worst hurt. The Council must therefore adjust its whole approach to this area and treat youth, community affairs and recreational policy as one major entity in the future.

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Haringey

COME TO THE BRIEFING MEETING

Sunday 28th. June

7 p.m.

28, Middle Lane, N.8.

Muddling Along with Cuts

Haringey Council's budget for 1981/2 involves expenditure on Haringey services of £180 million. Of this, around 43% goes on salaries and wages for those providing the Council's services and another 23% on loan repayment and interest, with the remainder being accounted for by premises costs, supplies, equipment etc.

The biggest spending committee is Education with 37% of the total, followed by Housing with 28%. Social Services and Civil Amenities lag behind with 12% and 8% respectively.

Haringey's vulnerability to pressure from Heseltine arises from the fact that over 45% of its revenue (£80 million) comes from Government sources, as grants and subsidies. (The ratepayers provide another 36% of revenue with a further 9% coming from council house and other rents.) This large pool of Government grants means that Heseltine can easily penalise Haringey and indeed he already has done so. Two years ago 54% of Haringey's revenue came from grants and only 25% from rates. Since then Haringey has been forced to put up its rates by 96% to compensate for the reduction in Government support.

Now Heseltine threatens that another £4 million will be docked from Haringey in the current year, unless an equivalent sum of money is found by cutting services. This is the equivalent of a supplementary rate of 11½p in the £ or around £1.10 per week for the average ratepayer if levied from 1 October – on top of the likely increase in the GLC's precept of around the same again.

The Labour Group has not discussed its response to Heseltine's action and indeed is not due to meet until July 16th. However, already Robin Young, the Leader of the Council, has said that the Labour Group's policy of no cuts (a bit of a misnomer in any case) and no redundancies will have to be 'reviewed'

To make the cuts demanded will in practice be impossible, since so much of the Council's budget is already committed for the year. However, if the leadership attempts only a fraction of the cuts, the results will be dire with severe damage done to services and redundancies amongst the Council's workforce almost inevitable.

For too long most of the Labour Group in Haringey has tried to muddle along in the hope that Heseltine and the Tories will go away. Time has been wasted in not taking the case for public services to local people years ago and not pinning the blame for increasing rates on the Government who have caused them earlier. Too often 'administrative' decision have been taken rather than 'political' ones. This must not happen on this occasion and this time there should be full consultation with the Labour Party and trade union movement in Haringey, together with an effort to coordinate effective action with other Labour local authorities.

Toby Harris

Manifesto

(Continued from previous page)

3. **Council services:** The basic service committee structure of Housing, Social Services, Civic Amenities, Public Works, Planning, Personnel, Finance and Education has remained without major change over the past few years. In the manifesto making process we believe that there should be a thorough discussion of the methods of centralisation of services, the need for de-centralisation, increasing community input from the working class areas and above all some method of 'community modelling' of our delivery of services. It is quite clear that the record of Haringey has brought disproportionate benefits to the different areas of the Borough. This whole area must be examined and areas of deprivation identified and demands put on all services to act for those areas.

If any policy in this area is to be successful then there must be harmonisation of geographical areas and much better communication by Councillors and officers with their areas.

In making the manifesto it is hoped that the Local Government Committee of the Party will establish a series of working groups, drawn from nominees put forward by branches and affiliates who can then develop policy statements around the main issues for discussion by branches in the autumn.

The final decisions will be taken by policy conferences in the winter, but if the Party is to be able to sustain a radical and aggressive Council administration in office then the support of union branches and campaigns who can contribute to the manifesto will be much needed.

It is up to us as a party to represent all those who suffer disproportionately in Haringey – unemployed, Blacks, Cypriots, Asian people, women, and to offer to the worst hit areas some form of hope for better environmental standards.

Jeremy Corbyn

School closures con:

PICKING UP THE PIECES

The cracking of Heseltine's whip has been having its effect on Haringey's education system. Some of us have been fighting a joyless battle to prevent secondary school closures and the disruption of the service.

The hope of many enlightened parents and teachers was that our Labour councillors would have seen falling rolls as an opportunity for smaller schools and smaller classes.

Our education hierarchy, encouraged by a CEO inspired by Briault, produced so-called educational arguments for closing schools which included trying to convince people that smaller schools and classes would actually be bad for good education. It is to the credit of the majority of the parents and teachers who contributed to the so-called 'consultative procedure' that they dismissed such arguments as phoney. My analysis of the representations made during the 'consultations' showed overwhelming opposition to school closures, but in spite of this the Education Committee decided to embark on a severe programme of closures.

As a result of some very clever spade work within the Haringey parties, who allowed themselves to be ensnared in a numbers game, our Local Government Committee finally backed closures. This agreement was obtained without the Parties ever knowing the financial implications, and were assured throughout that all the recommendations were on purely educational grounds. It was only after the fatal decision to close was taken by the Schools Sub-committee that a Treasurer's report was issued showing that the closures would create massive savings of £1.6 millions per annum and an eventual saving of £3.25 millions per annum as a result of the loss of 345 teachers. 'Corn in Egypt' when we are starving for money.

But at what price? It will mean the disruption of eight schools out of only fourteen and the closure of four with the intention to amalgamate two more after 1983. Because admissions to the four schools will stop, these schools will slowly die, with dire effects on the morale of staff and pupils. The amalgamated schools will initially have as many as 1900 pupils on split sites which in one case will be as many as six sites. The four host schools will therefore have enormous problems of organisation; all this must surely threaten the effective education of the unfortunate pupils. Incidentally it will also mean that two terms after building works costing over £1¼ million have been completed at Alexandra Park School this highly successful school will close.

It is sad to see Haringey destroying what has been a good reputation in the educational world. It has flown in the face of all the trade unions involved in the education service.

The Tories are determined to deprive our services, thus forcing more and more people into the private sector and therefore consolidating elitism.

We shall be electing new Councils next year, our new councillors must be brave socialists who will not flinch at the mention of that Tory ogre, the District Auditor. In Haringey they will certainly have to pick up the pieces of the Haringey education service.

Don Billingsley

SOCIAL SERVICES

With unemployment rising in Haringey, as elsewhere, and with other social pressures growing, the importance of social services is clear. The leadership of Haringey Council pays lip-service to giving them priority, but the tragedy is that this is not being translated into action and into resources.

At present, the social services budget in Haringey is around £21 million, which goes to look after the 600 children who are in care, and some 700 elderly people in residential establishments (with a further 600 in warden-assisted sheltered accommodation). It is also spent in providing services for the physically and mentally handicapped and for the mentally ill, to provide day care facilities for 'at risk' children under five, and to provide community services and field social work for other vulnerable groups.

In some respects these services provide quite a good coverage when compared with other Boroughs: more than 4,400 people have home helps and over 600,000 meals were provided for the elderly last year in luncheon clubs or via meals-on-wheels. Other aspects are acknowledged as being of good quality, but not meeting the need. For example, intermediate treatment provides remedial education, industrial training and counselling to 300 young people, as an alternative to institutionalised care in perhaps a borstal or detention centre. It is recognised that another 500 would benefit from intermediate treatment if it were available.

There are serious gaps in other areas. For example, more than 500 'priority' children are on the waiting list for the Borough's six day nurseries. There is a major failure to cope with the needs of elderly people from the various ethnic minority communities in Haringey. Similarly, far more should be done in working in the community with elderly people, by promoting local activities so as to reduce loneliness and to help them stay in the community rather than move in to residential care. Other areas of concern are the lack of social work support for mentally handicapped adults and the large holes in the services available to the mentally ill and their families. Similarly, even where there is provision – for example, children's homes – standards could be improved.

Labour members of the Social Services Committee have always fought hard within the Labour Group to try and protect (and indeed improve) social services. On one occasion, they refused to implement cuts approved by the Group and forced the policy to be reconsidered, and on another occasion, the then Chairman (Angela Greatley) resigned rather than preside over a package of cuts imposed by the Group leadership. The effect of that package is still working its way through. Amongst other things it required that an unrealistic level of vacancies be maintained amongst social workers and not surprisingly this led to serious industrial action. As a result morale is rock-bottom in the Department.

If Social Services in Haringey are to meet the increasing demands placed on them, not only must the short-term resource crisis be resolved, but in the longer run significant sums will have to be made available to deal with the gaps in service and the areas where improvement is long overdue. This will require a major change in direction for the leadership which keeps *saying* social services are important but never *does* anything to support them.

Toby Harris

THE NEGLECTED ISSUES

Comrades,
For our contribution to 'Briefing' we would draw your attention to the environmental issues which are at least as important as the current 'Hot Potatoes' and if not given some urgent study could result in the negation of all issues.

Nuclear Waste/Spent Fuel is currently passing through the borough on the Gospel Oak – Barking line (every fifth load is being directed by this route).

One container (flask) can have the capacity in radioactivity of 100 Hiroshimas. The original idea of placing reactors as far away from habitation as possible has been undermined. Tests in this country have only been made on ¼-scale models of flasks at collision speeds of 30mph, (trains carrying nuclear material are supposed to be limited to 25mph). A collision of two locos can result in a 100mph smash. No material/element yet known is totally radioactivity proof (railway workers are warned and given time limits and distance from flask limits). Fire tests have been carried out only on models to 800°C. Chemical fires alone have been recorded at 1,000°C+. Six minor derailments are known of to date. How long before a major accident?

When asked to explain what a limited area/time period of evacuation would be, a council official had to agree "that an area of 5 square miles for 6 years would be contaminated 'if a major leak of "Short-life" activity occurred.

British Rail guards are supposed to be able to know if an accident warrants an emergency call to the nearest NAIR establishment (National Arrangements for Incidents involving Radioactivity establishments), as per the current 'working manual for Rail Staff'.

Transport & Handling of Toxic Chemicals.
Each day, lorries of various sizes and condition trundle loads of various capacity through this borough. Unless the dimensions of the container are oversize, or of unusual shape, there is no control on the carrying of dangerous chemicals other than to place a coded sign on the vehicle rear and/or sides. As this is invariably painted on – once action of fire or contents have removed said sign there is less chance of speedy accident control. Surely some embossed signs plus a sealed log book and some notification to the local authority is called for here?

Heavy Lorries & E.E.C. Proposals. There has been for some months a Royal Commission sitting to consider the effect of the various E.E.C. edicts on the weight/size limitations on the 'Juggernaut' heavy lorries that are becoming more and more a part of our everyday life.

Lucy Arnold & Ron Blanchard

FORGOTTEN TOTTENHAM

Tottenham has its occasional moments of glory when Spurs come up trumps – usually these are the only occasions when most locals feel anything approaching 'civic pride' – but as the football fans pour out of Seven Sisters tube, not many people stop and consider what the quality of life is really like in N17 and N15, or how much a Labour local authority has done to improve the generally downbeat surroundings. The fact is that despite many years of Labour rule, and major council interventions (mostly in housing where financial and bureaucratic constraints plus lack of imagination have resulted in the slums of the future) Tottenham is still a twilight area. South Tottenham, that I live in and represent, is referred to as 'marginal' by the planners – which doesn't mean that it could go Tory at the next election – quite the opposite. To planners it means that business doesn't want to go there. The sociologists call it 'urban deprivation', but whatever the label for the malaise, one can't help but notice that all the grandiose civic projects are in Wood Green – the Shopping City, new showpiece library, big new council offices, et al. Local shopping is in decline, traffic is heavy and lead levels high because of the presence of trunk routes, racism is overt, housing often in decline, and the industry that remains is small, struggling and usually considered to be an environmental hazard to those who live next to it. Given the mistakes of the past and the restrictions of the present, no Labour council will ever make Tottenham a beautiful place, but they could make it more bearable – safer, cleaner, more comfortable and convenient, happier and prouder. So where do we start?

First by listening to what the people in the area have to say – simple, but it's not often done.

Secondly, by giving residents an opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect their area in a more positive way than at present.

Thirdly, by questioning the wisdom of a policy of centralisation of services which adversely affects peripheral parts of Haringey like South Tottenham. We should be moving away from showpiece amenities to efficient and reliable local services.

Fourthly, by ensuring that the existing services are run more efficiently and effectively in areas that need them more. If football crowds cause more litter and vandalism in N17, then that area should have more resources to cope with it. Selective positive discrimination is needed. Lastly, more sensitive planning is needed, which means better co-ordination between GLC and borough, and a positive desire to foster a sense of community.

Already South Tottenham has a Housing Action Area, but its impact has been shattered by the Tory cuts. Soon we will have an Area Management Project which will give local people greater access to decision making, and will take up local issues and campaigns as they arise. But there are some problems which require more than a few leaflets and a team of community workers to tackle them. My ward seems to be a haven for scrap metal dealers, car breakers and demolition yards. They flock here, to every available piece of land. The council tolerate them, the locals hate them, they don't provide many jobs, but they do create a health nuisance for people living next to them, and an eyesore. It raises the issue of how you keep jobs in London without destroying the environment for those who have to live next to small businesses: what sort of industry should we have, and how should it be controlled? Everybody agrees that we need more jobs, but nobody wants that new factory next to *their* house. The council should stamp on the cowboys, give preference to more labour intensive, but environmentally safer forms of industry, only allowing developments that local people support, which means thinking a lot harder about the sort of planning procedures we adopt and their effect on whole areas. People before profit should be the answer. It sounds an easy old cliche, but there are very few council officers who sincerely believe it, and all too few Labour councillors when their backs are against the wall.

Jane Chapman

Must we sell to survive?

The Tories are determined to cut public expenditure by £3 billion over the next three years and 60% of that cut is to be on housing expenditure. The picture nationally is bleak but in Haringey it is particularly grim. Housing in the borough is reckoned to be amongst the worst in London and according to the Greater London House Conditions Survey 1979, Haringey has the highest proportion of bad housing in London. Over 40% of homes in the borough are unsatisfactory, with the worst conditions occurring in the private rented and owner-occupied sectors.

In 1977 the Labour council approved a strategy which would deal with all the bad housing in the borough. The main aim was to improve and preserve the condition of public and private rented accommodation and to maintain the overall supply of rented homes. The major plank in this strategy was to be widespread municipalisation followed by repair and improvement. Largely because of the cuts, that strategy now lies in tatters. The conditions in the private sector continue to decline, council houses are being modernised to lower standards and there is still a crude housing shortage in the borough.

This year the council bid for the Housing Programme was in itself a reduction on the amount needed to carry through the strategy, but the allocation of £27.5m was half of that amount. Most of that was already committed to contracts signed before the end of last financial year and by the end of June it is likely that the whole programme will be committed.

Further cuts in the rehabilitation programme are likely and many empty houses will get minimum repairs and have to wait for improved facilities until some unspecified future date. The modernisation programme for council estates to deal with years of underspending on repairs, condensation and lack of modern equipment is now a shadow of its former self. As the council has now run out of easily developed large sites, the new building programme has dried to a trickle. There is every likelihood that Labour members of the housing committee will be asked to consider selling off land or empty houses in order to finance other housing projects.

One of the major achievements of the last three years was the introduction of Haringey's own Tenant's Charter which was drawn up in consultation with the tenants' associations in the borough. The biggest advance in that was the introduction of a priority system for repairs, an area in which Haringey had amongst the worst records in London. Now, because of cuts in the amount of revenue money made available by the Council, it seems that the brief spell of a good repair service is at an end and tenants are being made to wait longer for repairs to be done. This was to be seen in the context of two rent increases last year and massive increases in estate heating charges which have almost doubled rents since 1979, and the prospect of the imposition of even higher rents threatened by Heseltine with no signs of resistance by the Labour leadership on the council.

On the issue of sales of council houses the Labour Group took a position of reluctant cooperation and devised a lengthy bureaucratic procedure to frustrate would-be buyers. So far none of the 1,000 applicants have bought their homes but with a waiting list of over 10,000 people who will continue to wait for co-operation with the Act, there is no justification.

The transfer of families from tower blocks is already behind programme and every house sold will further delay progress. It is hard to see how the Labour group can justify avoiding the issue of sales.

In the face of the onslaught by the Tories on public housing there is some support for the view that the private rented sector can still be dealt with even without money for municipalisation. The council, however is not up to the task of dealing with bad landlords effectively. There is no real coordination between departments to actively seek out bad landlords and deal with them using the strongest powers available. By reacting only to complaints from tenants and dealing with those complaints in a limited way the council puts the burden on those who are in the weakest position and least likely to complain or be aware of their rights.

In all a very depressing picture of avoiding problems and retreating from previous commitments. Like so many London Boroughs, Haringey needs more cash even to contain its housing problems, never mind to move towards any improvement in conditions. Faced with a determined attack by the Tory government, Haringey council has abandoned its own Housing Strategy and is showing no political will to defend its own tenants or those others in housing need in Haringey.

Colin Sherriff

ACTION NOT PROMISES

At least 50% of the people living in Haringey (often grouped with the minorities!) are partially ignored by the Labour Party; thrown a few sops by the Labour council; are being affected most by the Tories' strategy of cutting public expenditure and creating unemployment. Who are these people? Why are they being ignored? What is being done about their situation?

The answer is they're women and their situation is not unique to Haringey.

The Labour Party is at last nationally taking up women's issues in a public way (though the recent Women's Week of Action passed with little beyond a gathering of worthy women at the House for a ten minute of so debate). Local parties such as those in Haringey must follow through and exceed this commitment, not just by passing pious motions acknowledging the difficulties/prejudices women face in a party and a council dominated by men. (10 out of 41 Labour councillors are women, most ward secretaries are women, most chairpeople are men, only one Head of Service is a woman – and she's Head of Personnel). Although women don't just make the tea anymore, they still do the servicing jobs within the party, the jobs that entail the 'slog' without the glory.

The Labour Council – publicly thought radical but just reeling from a right-wing coup which has 'tidied-up' the front bench for the forthcoming elections next May – has been supposedly committed to pursuing equal opportunities as part of its 1978 election manifesto. The negotiations with the unions are still continuing. They founder on the provision of a creche – initially promises in the rate making exercise of two years ago but one of the first promises to disappear when the budgets were trimmed when the Tories came in. Women as employees are still concentrated in the 'service' departments – social services, housing, etc. and in the lower grades. It is likely to be their jobs that suffer first, as vacancies are not filled and 'rationalisations' take place. And as consumers of the services that are pared they will be taking on the burden of bad housing, reduced provision for the elderly, the handicapped and children with little or no say in how these decisions on priorities take place.

If the Labour Parties and the Labour Council are to accord women the rights they deserve, then a programme for action must be drawn up. In the party, more consideration must be given to the timing and format of meetings; creche or child minding facilities must be considered; women's sections (which exist in two out of the three borough parties) must be a forum for discussion and involving those women who feel discouraged by the male domination of other party meetings; we must have more women chairing meetings and more men doing the secretarial work and organising bazaars: in the current selection of potential Borough election candidates women must be encouraged to stand; when it comes to selection, wards must include at least one woman on their shortlists.

On the council, there must be a clear committment to equality, not just the tokenism of a woman or two in a more senior job; the manifesto for next year's election must acknowledge this need for positive action and recognise that half of the electorate is female; the possible new structure outlined by Jeremy Corbyn in his article should include an input from women who must be involved in formulating the services provided by the council.

Just a few suggestions for change not exclusive and not likely to improve everything overnight but with years of neglect to wipe out who can expect miracles?

Diana Minns