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NEW BUDGET CRISIS

HARINGEY ON THE RACK

The emergence of a £46 million budget deficit for the coming financial year (1989/90) has plunged the workforce, the community, and the Labour Group into turmoil.

The current Council leadership is proposing to deal with the crisis by a combination of savage cuts in jobs and services and punitive rate and rent rises.

Fundamentally, the £46 million deficit originates in the steady reduction by the Tory government of the Council's Rate Support Grant and the many financial restrictions (including rate-capping) which have accompanied it.

By Haringey Councillors Against the Cuts

Last year's cuts in finance and other services have made it impossible to monitor the Council's spending and income.

Cuts planned for the last two years have proved impossible to implement, leading to "overspending" of some £20 million. The cost of dealing with rising homelessness — created by Tory policies — has gone up and up.

In order to preserve services and fund essential housing and other capital developments, the Council borrowed large sums and built up massive debts. The rise in interest rates has made those debts more expensive to repay.

All along, we on the left have said clearly that borrowing was a short-term measure and that sooner or later the Council would find itself in conflict with the government.



Left to right: left Councillors Vince Gillespie, Martha Osamor (PHOTO: Leesa Herbert), Craig Brewin.

The cuts package proposed by Council officers to the Labour Group amounts to a reduction of £20 million if implemented in 1989/90, with a full year effect of £29 million.

It entails major cuts of one-third in all services, with the complete closure or collapse of several of them (including school meals, adult education, youth service).

The Council will be in real danger of not meeting its statutory obligations in several areas (social services, libraries, environmental health).

Without doubt, the cuts package will wreak havoc and devastation in the lives of tens of thousands of Haringey residents, particularly the most vulnerable and worst-off of our people: the young, the elderly, people with disabilities, black and ethnic minority people, single parents, Council tenants, the homeless, low-paid women workers.

This package cannot be implemented without major compulsory redundancies — on top of the 600 plus redundancies now being pushed through Public Works.

The current proposals imply at least 1,300 job losses from Council staff and up to 600 in the voluntary sector. Part-time, women, and black and ethnic minority employees will be hit particularly hard.

Continued on back page

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Local Government Round-up

Camden's Budget

Yet more cuts

After abandoning equal opportunities many months ago, Camden's Labour Group leadership are now set to dismantle what's left.

With a one-day strike by NALGO Social Services workers forcing the Council to retreat on cuts to the most vulnerable, the bearers of the "dented shield" have hit on the idea of closing Wesley House, the London Women's Centre.

Padrig Jones Holborn & St Pancras CLP, Camden NALGO

At first glance, the Borough'ss 89/90 budget is an anodyne affair, despite featuring the Poll Tax implementation (never fully discussed in either Labour Group or Parties).

It also includes a vacancy rate of 10% (i.e. job cuts) that will leave some services staggering from one disaster to another. Libraries and Social Work will be the hardest hit.

Further down the list is the creation of a Direct Services Department — on the model of Tory Wandsworth.

Managers recruited by South African linked headhunters with commercial attitudes will effectively undermine direct labour, leading to over 100 manual and admin job losses.

The irony of this is that no piece of Tory legislation forces Camden to go down this road, nor has any other Labour Borough attempted to destroy public services wholly on its own initiative.

News of the Stock Market crash and the rebuttal this gave to Bryan Gould's idea of leapfrogging the Conservatives' legislative straitjacket has not, it seems, filtered down to the majority of Camden Councillors.

True to form, Leader Tony Dykes is adopting a market policy at a time when the market is coming under increased criticism.

In spite of a declining service, Council rents are going up by an average of £2.16 a week (higher than the rate of inflation).

Seven Labour Councillors voted against this, and may face disciplinary action. The LCC are clamouring for expulsion from the Group and the Party.

Several Councillors who last year consistently opposed cuts and were therefore suspended from the Labour Group voted for both a rent rise and the budget at the full Council meeting.

Although going down on record as opposing cuts, they perceive the lack of activity outside the Council Chamber as a reason for hanging on within it.

Their position in the Labour Group assumes a central significance: a case of the procedural tail wagging the political dog! The logic of this mistake can be followed through, but it is essentially false.

No debate on the size of the cuts can obscure the need for socialists in local government to oppose any capitulation or refusal to fight back against the government.

Save Wesley House!

On International Women's Day, Camden Council cut £100,000 from the budget of Wesley House.

This leaves the centre just £20,000 a year to run on — less than its annual rates bill of £26,000 - - and places at risk this unique resource for women.

Wesley House was acquired by the GLC and extensively modernised to make it a centre with full access for women with disabilities, nurseries, space for conferences and workshops, sports facilities, offices, a fully equipped theatre, media resource equipment, and a cafe.

It is now the only women-only conference space in London and houses 14 women's groups and two day nurseries. Twenty thousand women a year use the centre.

Camden Council cut the £100,000 from its budget in a classic case of "divide and rule" when faced with opposition to its proposal to close two other nurseries in Camden.

If women wanted these two nurseries to remain open, then women would have to give up two other nurseries and a women's centre!

The whole scheme has been forced through with no consultation with the Party and despite a report which the Council commissioned discussing ways more income can be generated by the centre.

By Jill Entwistle Chair, Holborn & St Pancras Women's Section

It also ignores staffing changes agreed by the unions to enable security services to be brought in-house and the centre to open for longer hours.

The women at the centre have been given only a few weeks to come up with alternative funding. As things stand, the centre could be closed by May.

The campaign to save Wesley House recognises that women from all over London use the centre but is calling on Camden to continue funding until other Boroughs can be approached.

Help save Wesley House:

- Pass a resolution of support for Wesley House through your trade union, Labour Party, and/or Women's Section, and send a copy to Cllr Richard Sumray, Secretary of the Labour Group, c/o Members Lobby, Camden Town hall, Euston Road, London NW1. Send a copy to the Campaign.
- Petitions and model resolutions are available from the Campaign.
- Send a donation to the campaign.
- Come to the next campaign meeting, on March 29th, 5.30pm, Committee Room 1, Camden Town Hall.
- Contact: Wesley House Defence Campaign, c/o NALGO office, Room 710, Town Hall Extension, Euston Road, London NW1 2RU.

Brent

Bully-boys

On Wednesday March 8th, Brent's Labour Council set it's rate and introduced it's latest instalment of anti-working class measures.

The budget was forced through by physical and verbal intimidation of certain Labour Councillors by supporters of the Labour leadership.

On top of last year's devastating cuts in jobs and services and massive rent increases, the 32% rate increase is a surcharge of £5-7 a week on every household in the Borough to make up for money withheld by the Tory government.

The £4 million cuts package includes further job losses in teaching and the Housing Department.

Discussion

After much discussion, particularly in Brent Fightback, left Councillors who have consistently opposed the cuts felt they had no alternative but to vote against the Labour budget in full Council.

If this led to some right-wing Labour Councillors voting for even harsher Tory measures, or to the Labour leadership horse-trading with the Liberals or Tories, the left would have to blame the right wing.

The left was not prepared to proclaim one form of attack on the working class as "better" than another.

The right's willingness to accept the constraints placed on it by the government are the root cause of all the cuts, not the fact that the left oppose them.

Over the last year these Councillors and Brent Fightback have shown willing to lead the fight against cuts where it matters — amongst tenants, Council workers and users of services.

With six Labour Councillors absent on budget night, the Labour leadership had problems. It took three rounds of voting before they got their budget through.

By Pete Firmin, Brent East CLP

In the first round, five left-wingers voted against the budget, and one Labour right-winger (who wanted a lower rate increase and more cuts) abstained. Having lost the vote 27-31, the supporters of the Labour Group leadership turned rabid.

The Chair of the Labour Party's Local Government Committee and the Chief Whip both attacked left Councillor Graham Durham. (As they have already expelled Graham from the Group, why they should expect him to obey the whip is an interesting question).

The Labour right-winger who abstained was involved in a punch-up with the Chief Whip; the Chair of Social Services was restrained from attacking the chair of Brent Fightback; and Party members were physically prevented from attending the meeting of the Labour Group held in the ad-

NALGO NEC ELECTIONS

VOTE SIKORSKI & BURNS!

Across London and across the services, NALGO members are facing cuts, privatisation, and redeployment.

By Fred Leplat Islington NALGO

They are seeing sickness provision undermined, union facilities removed, equal opportunities flouted, the introduction of agency workers and consultants on short term contracts, the tearing up of contracts, and the victimisation of stewards.

All this comes before the implementation of the Poll Tax, Housing and Education Act, the privatisation of water and electricity, and the reorganisation of the NHS.

The leadership of NALGO has failed to mount any campaign of resistance against these attacks. It has left branches to fight alone. Although there have been victories, there have also been many defeats.

Support

They justify the lack of support for industrial action and the absence of national campaigns on the basis that it is impossible to win in the present circumstances.

The union, they say, should not fight back but instead negotiate early retirement and voluntary redundancy deals and maintain NALGO recognition and negotiating rights.

Civilians

The NALGO leadership now seem to be more concerned in recruiting police civilians and retired members, and promoting NALGO travel and insurance services rather than defending members conditions from the sustained attack of both the Tory govemment and Labour Councils.

Context

It is in this context that Carolyn Sikorski (Chair of Newham NALGO and a *Labour Briefing* supporter and Dave Burns (Secretary of Islington NALGO) are standing for election to the NALGO National Executive from the Metropolitan District.

Record

They are challenging the record of the NEC and are presenting an alternative based on support from NALGO nationally to branches in dispute, for national campaigns of industrial action against the Tory attacks, and for positive action, democracy and accountability in the union.

They have a consistent record in their own branches of defending their members, and are known in the union for challenging the retreat of the leadership.

There are eight places on the NEC to be filled from the Met District. *Labour Briefing* supporters in NALGO are calling for a vote for Azim Hajee and Judy Bashir from the Black Workers Group and Amanda Baird from the Lesbian and Gay self-organised group on the basis of positive action.

We are also calling for a vote for Ivan Beavis, Jean Geldhart, and Chris Eades to stop the election of the right wing — standing in the past as Fightback (!) composed of Tories, Liberals and right wing Labourites.

Campaign

Help is needed in the election campaign. Get Carolyn or Dave invited to speak at your branch, executive or stewards committee, get your executive to recommend a vote for them and ensure that their election bulletin is distributed to members or at least to stewards.

Ballots are being distributed and must be returned to NALGO Head Office by May 2nd.

Finally, the election campaign is not just about being elected. It is about arguing for a fightback, supporting branches in dispute and making links.

Any interested NALGO members should attend the public meeting with Carolyn Sikorski and Dave Burns on Wednesday April 5th, Room 11, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1. For further information phone Newham NALGO, 01-519 7457, or Islington NALGO, 01-354 7470.

Ealing

Ealin

Poor old Ealing Council have got it in the neck from everyone.

They have recently voted through a budget which includes a 35% increase in rates and substantial cuts in jobs and services. This vote sets the official seal on their longstanding "follow your nose" policy.

By OLIVER NEW

Labour came to power in Ealing at a time when the influence of GLC-type politics was at its height.

The Council was elected with an apparently radical manifesto and soon appointed highly paid officers to staff its brand new race, police, and women's units.

A series of disasters soon hit the Council. First, they took a hammering from the Tory press for being "loony left" — but found themselves without any idea of how to respond or popularise their policies.

Next they put up the rates by 65%, at a stroke cutting local standards of living and Labour support among the

ENT

' budget

journment, even though other non-Councillors were already present.

By the time the budget was put for the third time, one of the left-wingers and the right-wing abstainer voted for.

Leadership

With four left Councillors continuing to vote against, the Labour leadership got their budget through on the casting vote of the Mayor. The scenes of jubilation on the Labour benches were sickening.

Brent East CLP's Executive Committee has already condemned the violence, and even Terry Ashton, Labour Party London Region Secretary, had to admit it was out of order to allow some Party members to attend a Group meeting and not others.

Priority

The Chief Whip has already declared that his priority now is to expel from the Labour Group those Councillors — Helga Gladbaum, Frank Hansen and Mick Woods — who consistently voted against the budget.

Brent Fightback has already committed itself to organising against any such action.

Organised opposition to this budget was muted, partly because it did not contain cuts of anything like the order of last summer's package, and partly because of the demoralisation and confusion that now exists after the Council's actions over the last year.

The picket of Tory MP Rhodes Boyson's office and march to the Town Hall prior to the budget meeting were poorly attended, even by the left groups.

However, the fight for anti-cuts activists in Brent is far from over. The budget is unstable and likely to produce further cuts in the course of the year.

It gambles on inflation and interest rates not rising, pay increases being held down, rent arrears not going up and the sale of £10 million worth of Council property being achieved.

Atmosphere

An atmosphere has been created in the Council for managers to have a free hand to discipline workers, in a way which has not been the case for several years, often with the connivance of those union officials who have gone along with the cuts.

Not only are union militants being victimised and moved jobs without justification, but even non-activists are being sacked for minor offences such as swearing at managers.

Over the next months activists will have to be prepared to defend sections of the workforce as well as the left Councillors, and be ready to mobilise against a new round of cuts.

Ealing

g comedy?

electorate.

This masterstroke was deftly followed by their all-out struggle — not with the Tories, but with NALGO, whom the Council provoked into a strike over London weighting that lasted for a bitter five weeks and ended in compromise.

Consistent

Reinforced by this record of consistent failure and additionally buoyed up by three disastrous by-election defeats, the Labour Council has now moved on to a new stage of imposing "kinder cuts".

The budget has polarised the local Labour Party for several months. We have a well organised local Fightback Campaign, which is based on trade union support and agitation around jobs and the Housing Act.

Choice

The choice facing the Council and the Labour Party is unpalatable, but has been clearly posed over recent months.

Either support the Council policy of becoming agents for Tory central government policies, or defy the government and its laws through adopting a deficit budget and mobilising local support.

Led by the left and Ealing Fightback, a large part of the local labour movement, although not the majority, have taken the left course. They realise it is self-defeating for Labour to become the agents for the Tory government.

Fightback has the support of Ealing-Southall CLP, Ealing Trades Council, Ealing NUT, and Ealing NALGO.

Whip

Four Councillors defied the Labour whip by voting against the budget — Valerie Vaz (Deputy Leader), Ruth Clarke and Ruth Blunt (Chair and Vice Chair of the Women's Committee) and Kevin Veness (Chair of the Housing Committee).

They have since been removed from their posts.

Over 100 people joined a militant lobby outside the budget-making Council meeting. As the local labour movement polarises into two opposite camps, the question is, which side will exert the most attraction?

GLLP Conference

London Labour lurching leaderless

Squeezed into a day and a half, the London Labour Party AGM rushed through business hardly getting time to get excited over any debate.

The conference seemed to be something to be endured rather than enjoyed.

With no way forward on offer from the London leadership it was not surprising that many found better things to do on the Friday night, and that even on the Saturday many seats were empty.

Worthy resolutions on transport, water and housing were passed, but the only debates on the Poll Tax and "Party Organisation" raised even a glimmer.

Poll Tax, once again, saw the right raising the spectre of surcharge and the need to protect "our supporters from getting into debt" through joining non-payment campaigns.

Our priority is meant to be "efficient" collection of the Tax. The fact that this will put people into debt as they won't be able to afford to pay London's high Poll Tax demands was irrelevant, we were told.

The fact that across London local campaigns are springing up with people queuing up to support non-payment and non-implementation strategies was ignored, as card votes overwhelmingly endorsed the official approved "do nothing" strategy, designed to let cowardly Councillors off the hook.

By Greg Tucker
Lambeth Councillor

All is not rosy though on the local government scene, with the GMB and T&G proposing critical resolutions on competitive tendering complaining of a lack of Council consultation with concerned trade unions.

Condemnation of Camden's closure of the Wesley House Womens Centre was easily carried, calling for it to be kept open, and a move to reject the ALA report, though defeated, gained more support than usual.

"Party Organisation" sounds harmless — this year it meant asking why the GLLP's Lesbian and Gay Working Party had been closed down, and calling for support for Black Sections.

The debate, with a number of excellent contributions, exploded at the end when the Executive response, aggressively given by Mike Parker, was that the Regional officers had better things to do than call meetings of the working party and that Black Sections should stop raising constitutional questions and let the meeting debate issues for Black people.

As Sarah Roelofs pointed out, the Lesbian and Gay Working Party had always done all its own paperwork and didn't require any regional officers to help.

As Andrew Yunge Gordon made clear Black Sections with their "Black Agenda" were precisely addressing the real issues, if the Regional Executive cared to listen.

In spite of Mike Parker's platform speech, or perhaps because of it, both resolutions were agreed — marking a major step forward on Black Sections and a consolidation of support for lesbian and gay political expression.

To round off the meeting confirmation of unilateralism was passed nem con.

Whilst it could be argued that some people are biding their time to National Conference, perhaps some people should take note that London has now passed this policy two years running without anyone voting against.

Regional Executive elections saw the left lose their fight for Chair and Vice-Chair, though Jeremy Corbyn increased his vote. Joan Twelves, standing for Vice-Chair, maintained her previous vote, despite a series of stitch-ups.

Even though there had been no valid nomination, Jeremy's name appeared on the ballot paper for Vice-Chair, causing confusion.

Despite being told that this was in error, at least one union (the NCU) voted for Jeremy, even though their delegation had voted to support Joan.

With Jeremy and Joan re-elected to their CLP places, the Regional EC saw a number of changes.

The LCC trade union slate was not strong enough to knock off left trade union members from the NCU and COHSE, but saw their trade union caucus convenor Lindsay Thomas once again kicked off the EC.

The overall political balance is not yet clear but if anything marks a slight shift to the left — as in previous years the key will be who bothers to turn up.

Policy Review

Beyond Pep Talks

"The worst thing about Labour's Policy Review," declared one speaker at the South East London Policy Review Conference, "is that it abandons the working class and panders to SDP voters, knowing that the working class has no other choice but to vote Labour, come what may."

By Mike Phipps
Woolwich CLP

Carol Hall, A SOGAT Mother of Chapel sacked by Murdoch, went on to describe the Policy Review as "dishonest, opportunist, and insulting."

About 80 activists attended the conference in Woolwich, which was addressed by Ken Livingstone, Bernie Grant, and Diane Abbott.

Livingstone attacked the secret state, NATO, and the Stock Exchange for their influence over not only government but also Labour Party policy.

Grant was coolly received, possibly because of his recent public remarks about Salman Rushdie.

Diane Abbott referred to this directly when she said, "Labour MPs who make concessions to Muslim fundamentalism are doing a great disservice to the labour movement and to Muslims."

Despite some useful contributions, there were problems with the conference. It was largely retreading the ground covered by last year's local Socialist Conference, which was much better attended.

There was little opportunity for discussion in the plenary sessions, and some of the workshops attracted only five people — or didn't take place at all.

Above all, there were too many familiar faces from the organised left and too few grass-roots activists, and too much focus on internal Labour Party problems, separated from the wider struggle.

Many of the platform speeches were clearly aimed at raising the morale of those present.

But in conditions of dwindling membership, declining attendances, and a slump in the polls, a deeper analysis of Labour's long-term problems is required.

PUBLIC MEETING
with
KHOLA MAYEKISO
Thursday March 30th, 7.30pm
Lambeth Town Hall
Khola Mayekiso, partner of South African trade union leader Moses Mayekiso, is visiting Britain as part of an international solidarity effort to raise support for Moses and his four comrades who are currently standing trial on charges of treason, sedition and subversion.
PLUS SPEAKERS FROM:
Lambeth Trade Union Council
Broadwater Farm
Friends of Moses Mayekiso
Hangers
****
Farewell Benefit
Saturday April 1st, 8pm
Thames Poly Student Union, Thames St, SE18
£3 (waged); £1 (unwaged)
Special Guest:
Kola Mayekiso
PLUS:
Taxi Pata Pata; Way Out West; ALan Sutcliffe, Kent NUM; Scabaret; and others

HARINGEY ON THE RACK

Continued from front page

The Council leadership has already pushed its rent rise package through an Emergency Committee (see Scott Reeve's article).

Council rents will go up by an average of £13.50 per week in three six-month stages of £4.50 each, beginning on April 1st, 1989. In the end, this will amount to an extra £600 per year on average.

In addition, the service offered in return for rent will become poorer and poorer because of the cuts — 200 redundancies are being considered in housing alone.

To make up part of the deficit that cannot be covered by cuts, a large rate rise will be needed — at least 35%.

This amounts to an average of an extra £200 per year for ratepayers in the Borough — or some £4/5 per week. Under Tory law, everyone must now pay at least 20% of their rates.

When we fought rate-capping we did not do so merely in order to have the right to raise the rates, but to demand the resources and powers required to meet the needs of the people of the Borough.

Removed

The Tories only removed rate-capping from Haringey *after* they had closed off all other possible sources of revenue and *after* the Council had done their bidding by making cuts in 1987 and 1988.

A massive rate rise now will simply be passing on to the people of Haringey the effects of the Tory interest rate rises and of Tory-created homelessness. It will be asking people to pay a great deal more for a great deal less.

It will undermine our struggle against the Poll Tax and increase hostility to Labour among working class people who simply cannot afford this extra tax.

When the current Council leadership took over from Steve King and Martha Osamor in 1987, they promised greater efficiency and improved service delivery. They promised to protect equal opportunities and front-line services.

They promised to prioritise advice work. They promised to secure a legal and "balanced" budget. They promised to pin the blame for the cuts on the Tories.

Each and every one of these promises has been broken.

As we predicted, it has proved impossible to pursue any of these goals while making massive cuts in jobs and services. Even a balanced and legal budget has not emerged.

We were told that the purpose of the cuts "strategy" was to keep Labour "in power" and to use that power to protect the most vulnerable of our people.

Now it is clear that instead of real power, the current leadership has been satisfied with the trappings of office. Instead of protecting the most vulnerable they have been forced by the Tories into attacking them again and again.

If this latest package is passed, the result will almost certainly be the loss of the Council to the Tories in 1990 — and with it any last vestige of Labour "power" in the Borough.

At the full Council meeting on March 30th we will vote against the Group leadership's proposals for cuts and rent rises.

The Group leadership will then enter into protracted negotiations with the Tories about the exact proportion of cuts to rate rises.

Right-wing Councillors have already announced their intention to misleading the public and deliberately seeking to pin the blame for the ensuing fiasco — and the cuts — on the *Labour left* — not the Tories.

The grotesque cynicism of this manoeuvre will be transparent to everyone. We call on the Labour leadership to transform Labour's financial crisis into a political crisis for the Tories.

This can only be done by drawing a clear line and saying thus far and no further — in other words, by refusing to play the Tory game, declining to set a "legal and balanced budget", and fighting will all our might to win support for that stance amongst the workforce and the community.

There are several alternatives to the proposals coming from the current leadership. Some Councillors Against the Cuts prefer one and some another.

But we are all agreed that if the Labour Group could be united around any one of these, it would be vastly preferable to the current suicidal course.

Mass resignation by the Labour Group, followed either by a concerted effort to win the ensuing by-elections on a "no cuts, no rate rise" platform or by the organised boycott of the elections is one possibility.

Resignation from Council leadership and Committee Chairs and subsequent "majority opposition" is another. Setting a deficit budget and directly defying the government is yet another.

Our stance offers at least the possibility of resistance, renewal, and advance for the Labour Party and for working people in Haringey. The strategy of the current leadership offers only an endless spiral of retreat and defeat.

Councillors Ron Blanchard, Craig Brewin, Pauline Crossan, Peter Doble, Vince Gillespie, Kevin Hargreaves, Roger Harris, Steve King, Dave McCulloch, John Moore, Narendra Makanji, Martha Osamor.

Haringey tenants fight back

Labour: attack the Tories, not the people!

The Labour leadership of Haringey Council will never even consider breaking laws that serve the interests of the Tories.

But these law-abiding comrades openly flout the law when it comes to attacking Council tenants.

By Scott Reeve South Hornsey Tenants Association

On Friday March 3rd, Council leader Toby Harris called a meeting of the Emergency Committee for the following Monday to increase Council rents by an average of £13.50 a week over the next year.

The members of this Committee, being chosen by the leader, were all Labour cutters plus two Tories. If the idea was to raise Council rents in secret they were gravely mistaken.

Tenants quite by chance found out about the meeting and insisted on their right to have their say. They pointed out that the Emergency Committee had no lawful authority to raise Council rents.

The decision to increase rents by £4.50 from April 3rd flouts the Council's own tenancy agreement, which states that Tenants' Associations shall be consulted on rent rises.

No Tenants' Association was even *informed* let alone consulted.

The period between the Committee meeting and the date of the rent increase was exactly four weeks.

How could it be possible for the Council to comply with the law which requires that all tenants receive at least four weeks notice of any rent increase?

As the Emergency Committee can only take urgent action, tenants rightly asked why the Committee was convened at all when there was a full Council meeting on the same evening?

The Committee also voted to raise the rents by £4.50 in October and by the same amount in April *next year*. Can this be described as urgent?

The Labour right argues that it is doing the tenants a favour by increasing the rents in three stages and not all in one go when the new Tory Housing Finance Bill becomes law in April 1990. This line is ridiculous.

Legislation

No one can have any definite idea what effect this legislation will have on Council tenants other than it is likely, if it is not fought, that they will double or even treble.

In reality Haringey Council tenants, along with other working people in the Borough, are being made to pay for the financing mess in which the Labour leadership finds itself.

These worthy citizens, who came to office on a balanced budget platform, preside over a Council which will be £51 million in the red unless they massively increase rents and rates and savagely cut services.

The rate increases mean that the Labour Council will be demanding that its tenants pay an extra £9 or £10 a week.

Most Council tenants simply can't afford to pay these bills and many of those who can will soon be putting in "right to buy" applications.



The Council will be demanding tenants pay £9-10 more per week — for less!

Council policies are rapidly making buying your Council home (despite the high interest rates) cheaper than renting it.

Haringey Council's services have been abysmal for years. The cuts of last year made them even worse and the scale of this years cuts will make many of these services non-existent, including the services they are legally required to provide.

The Haringey Labour leadership may believe that they have no choice but to faithfully carry out the Tory attacks on Council tenants.

Council tenants on the other hand have no choice but to fight the Tories and those who aid and abet them.

Haringey Council tenants are now organised and ready to fight back — in the courts, in the streets, or simply by not paying rent and rates.

Labour Councils must start to work with Council tenants in their battles with the Tory government and stop serving as the shock troops of the Tory onslaught against tenants and public housing.

STOP PRESS: The Steering Committee of Haringey Tenants' Associations are seeking an injunction declaring the rent rise illegal. Advice from several sources gives them an excellent chance of hoisting the Labour leadership on its own petard.

London's Travellers

Still at the sharp end

A gipsy family from Greenwich are going to the European Court of Human Rights to seek justice denied them by the British judicial system.

The family live on an official gipsy site where they have a small patch of ground for their caravan.

They object to the fact that they have no tenancy rights, even though they pay rent and rates to the Council and they can be ordered to leave without reason at the whim of a Council officer.

By JOE PREM

They are one of the more fortunate gipsy families in the area as they have somewhere to stop. There are many who are virtually "groundless" through evictions and daily harassment by the police and other officials.

Thousands of gipsies in Britain are in this position because Local Authorities have not complied with their legal duty to provide permanent and transit sites under the 1969 Caravan Site Act.

Greenwich Council argues that it has provided a permanent site. But the 1969 Act specifies that the Council should offer sites to gipsies who are forced to live on the roadside.

What Greenwich has done is compulsorily purchase land owned by gipsy families and then allowed the same gipsies to live on their own land as insecure licencees.

The Council is now reducing the population on the site by forcing the gipsies onto the roadside without offering alternatives sites or compensation.

Once the gipsies are on the roadside, Local Authorities can banish them from the Borough by using a power referred to as "designation".

This has parallels with Apartheid pass laws and allows Local Authorities to restrict the numbers of gipsies who can legally reside in the area — usually limited to 15 caravans.

Only last year were gipsies recognised as a distinct racial group and afforded protection under the Race Relations Act. Nonetheless, discrimination persists. There are "No Travellers" signs in pubs all over London.

Gipsies are often denied access to services, education, health care, and employment. Politicians and journalists still label gipsies as a problem to be got rid of.

Gipsies contribute to the community through their skills, labour, and wealth generation.

In particular, gipsy culture and philosophy stands in opposition to capitalism, reminding us that our laws are based upon traditional property rights and not human rights.

Gipsies' needs are minimal. They do not wish to be housed; they do not necessarily want permanent sites; they do want to follow their nomadic lifestyle and be allowed to pass through or stay a while at their traditional stopping places.

Gipsies wish to be respected and left in peace.