LONDON LABOUR
BRIEFING
40p FORTNIGHTLY
NO.111 APRIL 12~25 1989

Tenants reject billeting scheme

OUTRAGE IN ISLINGTON

Islington's Labour Council looks set to implement a controversial "shared singles scheme" in the face of widespread opposition from tenants, local Labour Party wards, and housing campaigns including SHELTER and CHAR.

The Borough's Housing Committee plans to billet complete strangers from the Council's waiting list in the homes of Council tenants. Under the scheme, tenants who refuse to have strangers billeted in this way face eviction.

The new "tenancy" on offer under the billeting scheme is not even secure. It is an attempt to create the type of sham tenancy agreement for houses and flats which currently exists in the private sector.

Paul Lincoln, a worker at CHAR, was recently quoted on BBC Radio, saying:

"The Council's approach to this case is extremely bad. Most people would be very unhappy to have a complete stranger foisted on them... and it will be extremely embarrassing for the individual who is referred to them by the Council."

The Director of SHELTER, in a recent letter to Cllr Maurice Barnes (Chair of Housing), commented that the Council "should not take steps which increase the insecurity of tenants."

Even Barnes's own ward Labour Party passed a resolution over his objections calling for the scheme to be dropped.

The new scheme is supposed to be Borough-wide, but the Council has no properties lined up for it. Indeed, the Council doesn't have any "people lined up!

That's because it hasn't even got a "shared singles" waiting list, nor any officers appointed to run the potentially explosive project. All of which may make it look like a bad joke.

But it is no joke for the residents of Charles Rowan House, a run-down mansion block in the south of the Borough.

Charles Rowan is not a short-life property. Its residents have been living there for some year as licensees, paying rent directly to the Council.

Charles Rowan residents are now being told that homeless people will be billeted in their homes.

By STEPHEN GOOD
Charles Rowan House Tenants & Residents Associations

To issue licenses rather than secure tenancies to some of the Borough's residents is bad enough. That Islington Council, in the climate of the 1988 Housing Act, deliberately intends to perpetuate insecurity for certain groups of people is an outrage.

The Charles Rowan Tenants and Residents Association believes that the Council, despite strenuous denials, wants to sell the estate. By not making residents secure the Council would encounter no obstacle in selling to a private developer.

The Council would also have no statutory obligation to rehouse since the new scheme provides only for similar accommodation on the same terms as the proposed billeting scheme.

In other words, *if* there is suitable alternative property (and so far there isn't), Charles Rowan residents can look forward to being billeted with someone else!

Islington walks away with a fat cheque for selling the blocks and no additional demand on housing stock.

If the Council plans succeed then a dangerous precedent will be set.

Are Islington's Labour Councillors prepared to provide Tory Councils and other financially troubled Labour Boroughs with a degrading answer to the homelessness crisis?

Will Islington's future Council tenants be put into run-down estates on sham tenancies while the Council waits to sell off their homes to the highest bidder?

Ward Labour Parties and GCs should make sure that Councillors are mandated to vote against such policies. The best way to prevent any extension of this inhuman scheme to other Boroughs is to isolate and expose Islington.

Tory policy on housing is clear enough without vicious refinements supplied by Labour Councillors.

All messages of support and resolutions to be sent to Steve Good, 63 Charles Rowan House, Margery Street, London WC1 0EJ.



Camden to follow?

Council lock out housing staff

Padrig Jones
Camden NALGO Housing Department

As *Briefing* goes to press, over 80 NALGO workers in Camden's Housing Department face lock out and the sack.
Staff at one office have already been locked out.
Workers are boycotting right to buys, in an effort to gain more staff and shore up a rapidly declining service to tenants.
NALGO is arguing that repairs, harassment, safety, and rehousing must be priorities.
The Council wants workers to sell off housing and screw every penny out of tenants. This approach to being a landlord won't encourage much opposition to the Housing Act.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Local Government Round-up

Camden's Budget

Left Councillors answer back

We would like to clarify the sitaution in Camden following the adoption of the 89/90 budget by the ruling Labour Group.

Padrig Jones's article in *Briefing* no. 110 must have left *Briefing* supporters confused as to the nature of this budget and its political ramifications.

Councillors Caroline Holding, Graham Shurety, Sandra Plummer

From November 1988 until March 1989 the size of the budget gap and scale of projected cuts were gradually reduced.

By the time of the budget-making meeting in March the original gap of £27 million had been bridged by a combination of creative acountancy measures, a £2.16 rent increase, a global vacancy rate of 10%, and a cut in expenditure of £2.5 million across all departments. Overall expenditure is £132 million.

Let there be no misconceptions, we see this as a thoroughly reactionary budget, as well as a further erosion in living standards.

It consolidates the devastation of last year's cuts in jobs and services, stores up financial problems for a future crisis, and continues to demobilise and undermine any fight against Thatcher. It has to be opposed.

However, we must not delude ourselves that the scale of the attack is the same as that of last year or of that in Haringey and Brent this year.

In his attempt to conjure up such an illusion Padrig Jones misses the whole thrust of the Labour Group leadership's policy and totally overestimates the potential for waging the sort of campaign, with strikes, demonstrations, mass lobbies, etc., that was fought last year.

For the leadership of the Labour Group this is a "holding budget" calculated to keep the left and the right on the Labour Group at bay whilst avoiding conflict with Camden's community. They want an unproblematic run up to the 1990 elections.

This right wing have consistently attacked the budget. With some justification they suspect that by grossly underestimating the cost of Poll Tax implementation and exaggerating the attainable vacancy rate, the leadership are dabbling in a covert deficit budget.

Whether this is entirely accurate or not, it certainly complicates the picture and makes a knee jerk "up and at them" response inappropriate.

There is little prospect of an immediate broad community/class struggle against the Labour Group but with the collapse of the *Briefing* Group in Camden and the increasing isolation of the left in Holborn & St Pancras CLP, there is little likelihood of a successful defence campaign against a witch-hunt.

Moreover, every sectionof the labour movement that had fought alongside the Manifesto Group against the cuts last year urged us not to risk expulsion this year.

Our tasks are clear.

•We must unite the Manifesto Group of anti-cuts Councillors around a programmatic alternative to the leadership.

•We must call on the left to regroup around this alternative platform and take the necessary organisational measures to ensure that left candidates get selected for the 1990 elections.

•We must consolidate the anti-cuts alliance that has been built with unions and community groups over the past two years, getting an endorsement for our platform, and throwing the weight of this alliance behind those groups which come into conflict with the Council's policies now.

•Finally we must join with comrades like Padrig as an effective and authoratative organiser of the left in Camden.

Deptford & E. Lewisham Labour Parties

MAY DAY

99 years of International Workers Day celebrations in London

MONDAY MAY 1ST

3.30pm: March. Please dress in red. From SELTEC, Lewisham Way, including stunts & events at Conservative Party HQ and Lewisham Hospital. Bring banners & placards & balloons.

5.00: Rally. Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove. Speakers include Richard Balfe MEP, Joan Ruddock MP, local campaigns & international solidarity groups, and special guest European speaker to be announced.

5.30-8.00: Campaign Stalls at the Labour Club

6.00 onwards: Bar-b-que and Bar.

8.00: Music with Star Disco, Surprise guests and prize raffle (£1 waged, 50p unwaged, kids free)

Kids Videos will play at the Labour Club from 5pm

National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign
South East Region
May Day and Fifth Anniversary of the Miners Strike
Benefit night
Monday May 1st, 7.30pm-midnight
Hackney Empire, 291 Mare Street, E8
Artistes include:
Ian Saville (Socialist Conjuror)
Skint Video
Jacket Potato (Rock Band)
Simon Korner Experience (Hackney based band)
Billy Stevens (guitarist)
King Biscuit (band)
North Staffs Miners Wives Support Group
John Moore (comedian)
All proceeds in aid of the 198 victimised miners remaining from the 1984/5 strike.
Tickets (£5 waged, £2.50 unwaged) available from: Hackney Empire Box Office; Mick Poole, 555 7123; Terry French, 0304-364560; Ed Fredenburgh, 359 0258

The Socialist Conference Campaign for Socialism

One of a series of national meetings to discuss the Socialist Policy Review initial documents, and the kinds of policies and strategies needed to combat the growing power of global capital in the last decade of this century.

We are firmly convinced that we must go beyond the slogans to create the kind of radical socialist programme that will command the support of millions of people and which is essential to the emancipation of working people and their allies.

We believe we must break the Thatcher consensus, and not adapt our programmes and policies to the worst features of reorganised capitalism.

If you support these aims, we hope you will come to the meeting and participate in the creation of a new and vigorous socialist movement.

Saturday April 22nd, 6-10pm
Council Chamber, Lambeth Town Hall
Speakers:
Tony Benn MP
Hilary Wainwright
(Socialist Conference)
Hanif Kureishi
(Director, *My Beautiful Laundrette*)
and
Not the Red Rose Cabaret

BRENT

Witch-hunt starts

At Brent Council's budget-making meeting on March 8th, the Labour right voted through a rate rise of 30% together with a small cuts package.

Within days the Labour Group Whip was openly saying that "the priority is to get rid of Gladbaum, Hansen and Woods," the three Labour Councillors who had refused to vote for the anti-working class budget, along with Graham Durham, who has already been expelled from the Group.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

After the first round of voting on March 8th, during which four Labour Councillors voted against the budget and one abstained, thus ensuring it fell, several supporters of the Group leadership physically attacked those members of the Labour Party who did not follow their chosen path.

Party members were also ejected from the Labour Group meeting held during the Council adjournment, even though other non-Councillors were present.

Helga Gladbaum wrote a letter of complaint to Terry Ashton, Secretary of the Greater London Labour Party, with copies to all Councillors and Party officers.

This provoked a flurry of responses from people clearly not used to having to explain their actions.

Councillor Peter Pendsay wrote a four page diatribe in which he brought up every incident he could recall from the past 11 years. Others simply denied the charges, claiming that the violence came from those they had attacked.

After Terry Ashton let slip that it was wrong for the Labour Group to admit some Party members but not others, the Chair of the Labour Group began denying that it had even been a Labour Group meeting, and claimed it had been a private meeting by invitation only (but he himself had announced in full Council which room the "Labour Group" would be meeting in).

The issue even reached the Labour Party National Executive. When yet another witch-hunt of *Militant* in Scotland was being motivated on the grounds of "intimidation", Ken Livingstone asked how come it was only ever the left that got investigated, and what about the events at Brent Council's meeting.

Kinnock went apoplectic and claimed that action would also be taken against the right for any such events, adding that he "condemned violence wherever it came from."

Now Terry Ashton has written back to Helga Gladbaum and (surprise, surprise) after spending a couple of sentences saying how he deplores any such violence, he then goes on to spend most of his letter pointing out that it is really her fault anyway for voting against the budget!

The Labour Group meeting on Sunday, April 2nd witnessed the first procedural steps in the witch-hunt.

The Labour Whip, John Ryan, said he would be drawing up a report to go to the Executive of the Local Government Committee on the events of the Council meeting.

When the objectivity of such a report was questioned on the grounds that Ryan himself was involved in some of the violent incidents that took place (as was the Chair of the LGC), Ryan replied that his report would be totally objective and would leave "nothing unmentioned" and that, anyway, under the rules he was the only person that could write such a report.

Dorman Long, Labour Group Leader, commented that the violence was "peripheral" to the main issue — the breach of group discipline. The Labour Group then voted to endorse this procedure.

Although Ryan said he is "not recommending specific action at this stage", it is clear that the majority of Labour Councillors want to see the left expelled from the Group, if not the Party.

Attempts at the last Brent East General Committee to put an emergency resolution calling for no action before full discussion had taken place throughout the Party were defeated, and the newly-elected LGC is packed with right-wing witch-hunters.

However, the witch-hunters are not having it all their own way. About 30 Labour Party and *Brent Fightback* activists turned up on the 2nd to give support to the left Councillors, easily outnumbering the Councillors present.

Both Brent East and Brent South Parties have current policy against any witch-hunt.

We need to exert maximum pressure within the Party to ensure that those Councillors who have refused to sell out remain free to argue their position in Labour Group.

Lambeth

Lambeth sets a rate

After three meetings of 16 hours, 15 budget proposals, and nearly 40 divisions, Lambeth finally set a rate at 3.45am on April 1st.

It means a 12% rate rise, £1.00 per week on all rents and institutionalising cuts in services made by staff shortages.

By Councillor GREG TUCKER

The LCC leadership were only able to succeed when the Tory opposition decided to abstain. Fourteen left Councillors continued throughout to vote down all budget proposals.

In line with our Party policy, we did so on two main counts.

First, the LCC budget included a rent rise of £1.95. Even when they dropped this to a £1.00 rise, the local Party found it unacceptable. The left Councillors consistently argued in the council chamber for a zero increase in line with our manifesto.

Second, the LCC refused to take up any fight on the Poll Tax. Instead they allocated £3 million for Poll Tax implementation.

In opposition to this, the left argued that the Council should spend no more than the £800,000 given to us by the government for the Poll Tax; the remaining £2.3 million to go on delivering decent services.

We saw no reason why Poll Tax costs should be paid for by tenants and ratepayers who don't want the Poll Tax in the first place.

Despite this being a "legal" option, the LCC refused to do anything not sanctioned by Council finance officers.

Having made a rate the debate has now switched to the Labour Group AGM to be held in May.

The left is standing a slate headed by Joan Twelves. The Party is being consulted and it is already clear that a majority of wards support the left.

Given that the current Council leadership has already said that it will ignore any Party decision, what happens at the AGM is, however, still in doubt.

Against the Poll Tax!

Anti-Tax groups unite

Forging links in Lewisham

About 40 activists attended an anti-Poll Tax Conference in Lewisham last month.

By Patrick Scott Deptford CLP, Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax

The Conference was organised by Lewisham Against the Poll Tax (LAPT) and also involved Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax, plus representatives from Tenants' Associations and pensioners' groups.

The aim of the Conference was to develop co-ordination between the various groups and to discuss strategic and tactical questions in regard to fighting the Poll Tax.

In both respects the Conference was a success. It was agreed to establish an anti-Poll Tax federation in the Borough, Lewisham Anti-Poll Tax Union (LAPTU).

The purpose of LAPTU will be to co-ordinate work between the anti-Poll Tax groups and to build support and affiliations from Tenants' Associations, trade union branches, Labour Parties, etc.

The Conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of an illegal campaign against the Poll Tax and recognised the need to link the building of a campaign based on non-registration and non-payment with the need to build a campaign amongst Town Hall workers in favour of industrial action against implementation of the Tax.

The majority of Lewisham Labour Group have made it clear that they will implement the Poll Tax whatever opposition is mounted. Only one local Councillor, *Briefing* supporter Pat Waylett, has pledged not to pay.

Nevertheless a substantial minority exists within the local Labour Parties in favour of fighting the Poll Tax. At the Borough Local Government Committee Conference held last autumn, about 30% of the delegates supported a resolution calling on the Labour Group to refuse to implement the Tax.

Hither Green Ward of East Lewisham CLP organised a meeting against the Poll Tax in conjunction with Community Resistance which 50 local residents attended and which has been used as the basis for building a local anti-Poll Tax group.

Briefing supporters have played a central role in building resistance to the Poll Tax in Lewisham and were important in the establishment of Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax.

We see our role as linking the struggle against the Poll Tax with wider struggles in local government, notably against cuts in Council services and rent increases.

Only on this basis will it be possible to reinvigorate and give new direction to the Labour left.

London activists meeting

In March, a meeting called by Tottenham Against the Poll Tax for London anti-Poll Tax activists attracted 40 people from 15 different local groups.

The meeting discussed the state of local campaigns and the tactics being used to build them.

Concern over the bureacratisation and lack of activity of London Against the Poll Tax emerged, as some of the groups attending the TAPT meeting had been refused affiliation to LAPT.

The meeting agreed to build a "non-compliance" contingent on the June march being called by LAPT and to continue to meet on a monthly basis to build cross-London co-ordination.

The next meeting will be on Monday April 17th, 7.00pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W1. All anti-Poll Tax activists and groups are welcome.

For more details of the meeting and to get on the mailing list contact TAPT, c/o The Unwaged Centre, 72a West Green Road, Tottenham N17.

Repression in Iran and Iraq

Meeting
Saturday April 22nd, 7.30pm
Conway Hall
(nearest tube, Holborn)
Speakers:
Jeremy Corbyn MP
S. Toreb (Iranian writer)
Al-Hashimi (Iraqi journalist)
Mary Dynes (Rights and Justice)

Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom

Conference
Media in the 90s
April 29th, University of London Student Union, Malet St, London WC1
Topics include: Secrecy, Censorship, Media Ownership & control, Northern Ireland, Media Education.
Several banned films will be shown.
Day concludes with benefit starring *Eyes on Brazil*, a leading African-style band.
All day ticket: £10 (£4 unwaged)
Conference only: £6 (unwaged £2.50)
Benefit only: £6 (unwaged £2.50)
For further information contact Madeleine Barnett or Tom O'Malley, 01-437 2795

Community Resistance Against the Poll Tax

Hither Green shows the way

"Public meetings are finished as a political activity" is current "wisdom" coming out of Labour Party Head Office.

But the Channel Tunnel and the Poll Tax campaigns are knocking that bit of New Realism on the head!

Working with the Community Resistance campaign, very active in Lewisham, Hither Green Branch Labour Party felt it was time to challenge the "shut up and pay up" strategy of the Party leadership.

By DAN CARTER

Through street stalls, newsletters, leaflets and posters; mailings to community groups, trade unions, Tenants Associations and student nurses; contacts made through local Poll Tax campaigns and leafletting public meetings and train stations, the branch filled Lewisham Labour Club.

The meeting was used to launch a local group to become part of the Community Resistance/Lewisham Against the Poll Tax Federation.

Lesley Lee (from Hither Green Labour Party) opened the meeting by pointing out that eight out of ten local residents would lose out under the Tax.

Councillor Ashtaq Arain (former Chair of the Race Relations Committee, who resigned in protest at the cutting of the Race Unit), explained how the Tax worked.

He pointed out that Poll Tax collectors would decide who was divorced or separated, who lived with whom, who was responsible for a household.

Maureen Boyle (a NALGO social services shop steward) outlined the dilemmas facing trade unionists who should have confidential relationships with people and who would be asked to provide names and addresses for the register.

She linked the devastation the Tax would cause individuals with its equally destructive effect on local services.

Brian Harrisson (a Community Resistance organiser) rallied the meeting with news of the response they had received in months of regular street stalls, now being followed up by establishing local groups across the Borough based on a clear "non-registration, non-payment, non-collection" position.

THe "Can't pay, Won't pay" slogan linked those unable to pay the Tax with those refusing to pay.

Comments from people at the meeting showed the mixture of anger at the government over the Poll Tax and frustration at not knowing how to stop it.

One of the local Tenants' Association representatives spoke of the need to publicise the issues more on local estates, and of the unions' need to take action.

Unions

An AEU member pointed out the need for Town Hall unions to link up with other unions.

Councillor Pat Waylett repeated his promise not to pay the Poll Tax. "If a tenant in a one-bedroom flat has to pay the same as a millionaire in a mansion, it's the most unfair Tax and I for one won't pay it."

An SWP member who said we should concentrate on getting Neil Kinnock and the Council leadership to resist implementing the Tax was strongly countered by Lesley Lee.

Lesley stressed the need for rank and file action and promised that in Hither Green we weren't going to sit back and wait for a lead from those who had never before defended workers' rights.

The style of the meeting, and the establishment of an ongoing campaign to produce local publicity and canvass the local area, was part of Hither Green Labour Party's commitment to working with local people in taking control over their own lives, in contrast to the patronising attitude of both the national Labour leadership and local Council.

It is hoped other Labour Party branches will help launch similar "Community Resistance" Poll Tax groups.

Hither Green Labour Party and its Councillors have faced constant attacks for maintaining their commitment to the manifesto they were elected on. Yet it remains one of the few branches in the Borough which puts out regular newsletters, fundraises, holds street stalls, involves members fully in meetings by breaking into small discussion and activity groups, and, against the trend in London, even retained a Council seat in a by-election.

DAYSCHOOL

What future for Local Government?
The 1990 Local Elections: Strategies for the Left

April 29th, 10am-5pm

Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Road

All *Briefing* supporters invited

£5 (waged); £2.50 (unwaged)

(This is to cover the costs of the Dayschool: hire of venue, and creche. Any surplus money will be used for a pooled fare.)

Creche places must be booked by April 22nd: phone 01-801 6041/809 3927 to do so.

Morning Session

The experience of Labour Councils '79-'89. Contributions from Labour Councillors, local government trade unionists, Labour Party and community activists.

Afternoon Session

1990: Strategies for the left. Do we stand, and on what basis?

Since the early 80s local government has been a vital area of struggle for the left and a vital part of the Tory plan to reshape society. With each new piece of legislation the space for socialist Councillors to make real improvements in people's lives has lessened. Yet they have continued to play an important role in defending gains already made and speaking out on important political issues. As the crisis facing local government deepens, the discussions about the role of left Councillors have intensified. Some argue that there is no place for the left in local government; others say that it is vital we continue to fight to the end and make whatever limited gains we can. The Dayschool on April 29th is an opportunity to discuss the experience of soft left Labour Councils in the period '79-'89 and look forward to the 1990 local elections.

For more details contact: Mandy Mudd, 01-801 6041

Tube workers vote for strike action

It's the difference at McDonald's you'll enjoy

In the *Financial Times* last December, Dennis Tunnicliffe, new Managing Director of London Underground Limited (LUL), chose an apt illustration for his vision of the future of the capital's tube network:

"McDonalds has shown the way in this. You don't have to have very highly paid and educated people to treat the public properly."

He might well have added that in this vision members of staff don't figure very largely at all.

By K.C.Jones

What there will be is plenty of new managers — called "Centurions" — each with his or her own team of between 60 and 100 happy and hard at it railworkers.

The intermediate layer of managers — all appointed on the "suitability" or the "it's who not what you know" principle — is already in place.

They have been organised on a line by line basis across the whole of LUL, headed up by ten General Line Managers. Now management intend to impose a completely new method of staffing and payment throughout all grades on the Underground.

This will be done on the "suitability" principle in the case of those already doing the jobs, but in ever increasing numbers it will be done by direct, outside recruitment.

Each line is now a "profit centre" ready and ripe for privatisation. The only obstacles now remaining are the fundamental agreements with the unions on working practices and promotion, redundancy and transfers.

Bright, new, thrusting, yuppie managers have been overheard talking about "smashing the unions on LUL this year."

The National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA) are balloting around 10,000 of their members for all-out strike action to halt management's plans.

ASLEF, the train driver's union, following its craft traditions has taken an Executive decision not to ballot.

Within days of this decision, management informed drivers' local representatives of its intention of getting rid of the agreement which allows drivers to transfer from one line to another in order of seniority.

So much for ASLEF's initial protestations that the issue "didn't affect their members"!

The seniority issue is in many ways central to this growing dispute. Apparently an "anachronism" and "a restrictive practice preventing the efficient running of the railway in the modern age", seniority is at the heart of workers' limited control of the day-to-day organisation and regulation of their working lives.

In the past this system has largely neutralised favouritism, racism, and sexism in the grades covered by it.

For example, in the station supervisory grades Asians make up 37% of the total on LUL, while on London Buses, where seniority criteria don't apply, they make up only 2% of comparable grades.

In an obscene display of cynicism, LUL management have attempted to use the King's Cross tragedy and the resulting Fennel Report as justification for their union-busting productivity drive.



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Wise after the event? Since the King's Cross fire, escalator cleaning has begun

They claim that the fire and the fatalities could have been avoided by proper management structures and techniques; i.e. the ones they want to implement now through the "Action Stations" project.

The fact is that it wouldn't have made a scrap of difference at King's Cross if the "A" Team of "suitable" management clones had been on duty that day.

This is because it was management's decision to cut back on regular cleaning and maintainance of escalators on the whole of the Underground which led to the accumulation of over half a ton of grease and fluff under the Northern Line escalators.

The Lifts and Escalators manager, who took the last in a long series of such decisions leading up to the disaster, had been appointed on the basis of "suitability".

The union agreements apply across the whole LUL and allow strong London-wide workers' organisation.

If management smash them then workers will be beholden only to their line manager, who will also be able to pay bonuses as appropriate. This would remove the need for central pay bargaining; the union would be stuck.

As we go to press all indications are that workers are voting overwhelmingly for strike action. In 1987 a ballot of five to one in favour of defence of the agreements and the bargaining structures was frittered away in working parties which resulted in several damaging local deals.

The District Council leadership of the NUR is determined that this time management will back down without qualification — or face all-out strike action from May 8th, the proposed implementation date for the Action Stations.



PHOTO: Martine Stead

A transport service isn't a hamburger chain. Can LUL management look beyond the superficial resemblance of a conveyor belt?

East London Rally



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Dodie McGuiness, pictured above on International Women's Day in Northern Ireland, gave a speech at the East London rally.

Britain out of Ireland!

Over 600 people packed the Queen's Hall, Queen Mary College, Mile End for the East London Irish Year of Action rally on March 13th.

This was an excellent response to an event based on the demands for Irish self-determination and Troops Out Now, defying Tories like Olga Maitland who vilified it in the local press.

Jim Thain
East London Irish Year of Action Committee

It was all good publicity: and Olga did look a bit silly when the "Top IRA Man" she warned the Great British Public against listening to turned out to be Sinn Fein Councillor Dodie McGuiness.

The main themes were repression — as excercised by the security forces in Ireland and Britain; by the judicial system; and through media censorship — and resistance; in the streets and Council chambers of Derry, Belfast and London; within British and Irish prisons; and even in the House of Commons, as personified by another speaker, Ken Livingstone MP.

Dodie McGuiness gave a graphic account of the early Civil Rights movement and the watershed which was Bloody Sunday.

No one who witnessed that massacre or the imperialist violence that ensued, when Catholics were burnt out of their homes and beaten relentlessly by the RUC, could doubt there had been a qualitative change in the nature of the struggle.

There could be no civil rights for the oppressed Catholic minority in the Six Counties until Ireland as a whole was reclaimed.

She emphasised the need for unity in the solidarity movement in Britain, especially in building events in this Year of Action to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the troops going in. It was vital that the demonstration this August be successful.

Ken Livingstone denounced the corruption which helps bolster the Loyalist statelet, with particular reference to MI5, leading Unionist politicians, paedophilia, blackmail, and the Kincora Children's home.

He described how difficult it is to raise this matter in Parliament; how, naturally, the bourgeois media wouldn't touch with a bargepole; and how, under Hurd's new restrictions, he was now effectively banned from airing his views on Ireland on the BBC.

Local Councillor Therese Shanahan made a withering attack on the historic bipartisanship and betrayal of the British Labour Party and Trade Union bureaucracies; and praised those MPs who had defied the Front Bench to vote against the Prevention of Terrorism Bill (now a permanent Act).

Erroll Smalley also spoke on the PTA; and the effects it has on the families and communities it is directed against.

He should know: he is the uncle of Paul Hill, one of that group of political hostages known as the Guildford Four, framed for a bombing campaign they could not possibly have perpetrated.

It is common knowledge that the Guildford pub bombings were carried out by the Balcombe Street siege Active Service Unit, yet these four (then) young people have suffered 14 years of physical torture, personal humiliation, loss of liberty, and the sexual violence of systematic strip-searching.

It remains to be seen what justice the Appeal Court will accord them; but the Birmingham Six case set a grim precedent.

Mick Gosling spoke of the weakness of the British labour movement generally on the question of Ireland.

He had been victimised at Ford Dagenham for his trade union activities and the main pretext for his dismissal had been his chairing a meeting featuring Bernadette McAliskey during a lunch break.

The rally was chaired by local black activist Unmesh Desai.

April 5th stoppage

Unofficial action on the Underground

London was in chaos as Underground drivers went on unofficial strike on Wednesday April, 5th.

Frustration has been building up since 1984, when the gradual introduction of one-person-operation (OPO) began.

There was to be a pay review in 1985 but we're still waiting for it. The purpose of the strike was to show management that we are not prepared to put up with any further delay.

Drivers are now beginning to feel the stress and strain of working alone. Previously we could have a slight break as the guard handled door defects, passenger queries and problems, lost property, and helped out with mechanical failures. Now there is never even a moment to relax.

Drivers feel that there has been no recognition of their additional responsibilities. In fact, management conducted a "stress survey" early on during OPO, and concluded that there was no appreciable increase in stress levels!

By a Neasden Driver

The strike was organised at the grassroots. It was approved almost unanimously (only one opposed!) at two genuinely mass meetings.

Local contacts at each depot took care of organisation. I'm proud to say that at Neasden Depot the contact people had almost nothing to do, such was the level of self-organisation.

On April 5th, the lines which are now OPO were virtually solid. On the Central and Northern lines, however, where there are still guards, few drivers took strike action.

This was because the initial mass meetings were mistakenly limited to drivers at OPO depots only, and had concentrated mainly on getting a differential in rate of pay between OPO and non-OPO lines.

The head offices of both NUR and ASLEF issued circulars distancing themselves from the action. This had to be done to comply with Tory legislation.

The LUL Executive members of both unions have assured us that they intend to organise an official ballot as soon as legally possible.

Rally with

Sam Njuoma
SWAPO President

Wednesday April 19th, 7.30pm
Friends Meeting House
Euston Road, London NW1

•FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN NAMBIA!
•VICTORY TO SWAPO!

Organised by SWAPO and the Namibia Emergency Campaign
Namibia Emergency Campaign, c/o 13 Mandela Street, London NW1, 01-387 7966