LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
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No confidence left in "incompetent" LCC

LEFT TAKES LAMBETH BACK!

In a hectic Labour Group AGM on Monday May 8th, the left took control of Lambeth Council. Joan Twelves becomes Leader, with Julian Lewis as Deputy and Steve French as Chief Whip. Voting was 21-19 throughout.

By Greg Tucker Lambeth Councillor

Disgruntled with the LCC's leadership for the last year, the local Parties had twice passed votes of "no confidence" in them.

So bad had it all become, that Council officers had contacted Walworth Road asking the Labour leadership to make the LCC "go quietly".

Their incompetence and refusal to lead any campaign against the Poll Tax or Housing Action Trusts (HATs) provided the chance for a realignment in the Labour Group.

No longer rate-capped, and with over 1,000 vacancies, finance is no longer the issue as it is elsewhere in London.

With the anti-cuts Councillors firmly in control, the new leadership is pledged to rapid recruitment to rebuild Council services, action to improve morale amongst the workforce, and an immediate improvement in the service to the community.

It is an indictment of the LCC that in the last six months they have been unable to recruit one home help.

At the same time the left aims to rebuild the Lambeth tradition of fighting to defend local people from government attack.

Key issues will be housing, where the LCC would not take up tenants' demands for real campaigning against HATs. We will be ensuring that the HATs-estates' Tenants' Associations are properly supported and that the Council weighs in with its own campaign to alert all the Borough to the dangers of the Housing legislation.

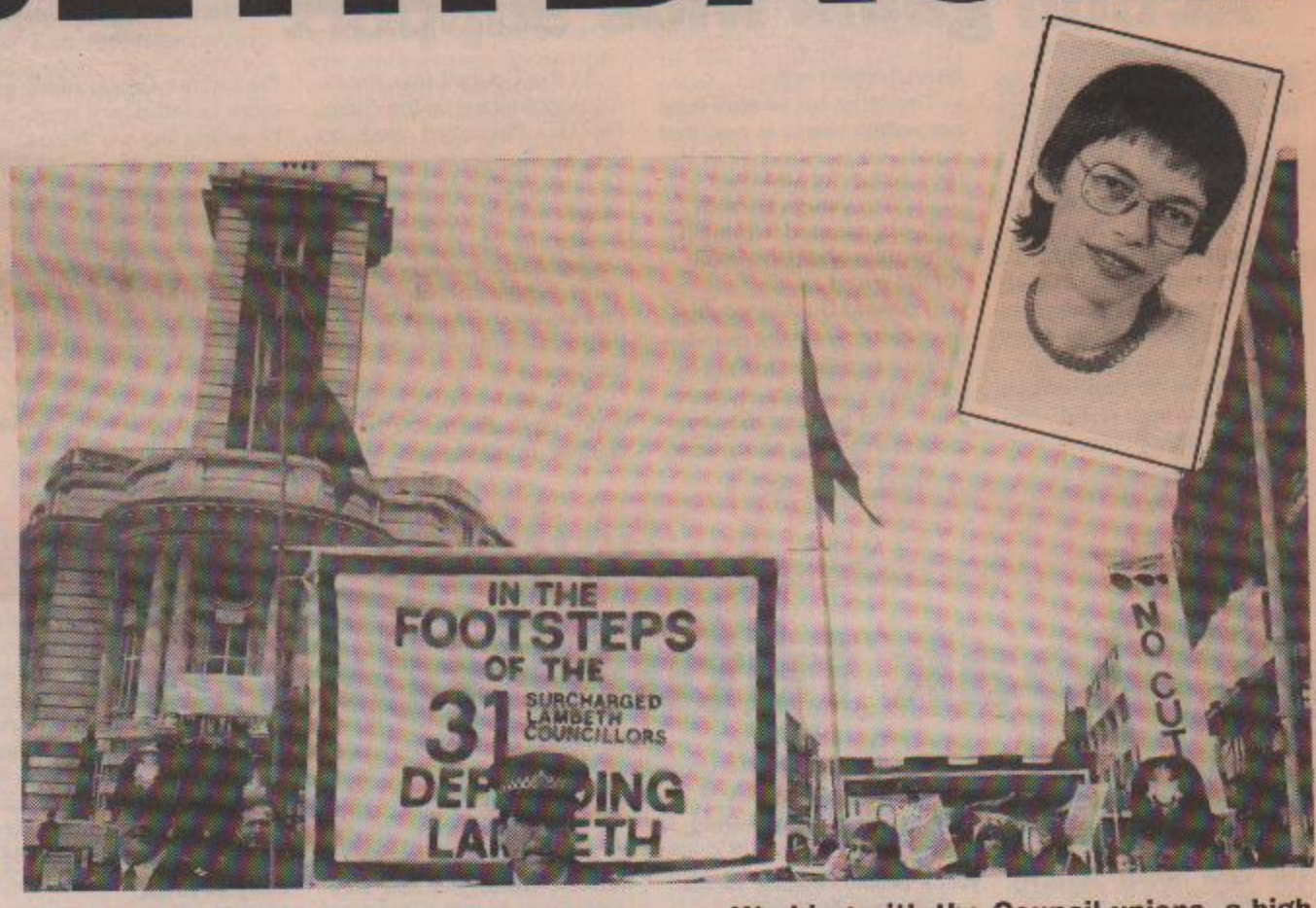


PHOTO: Nick Hazlewood

On Poll Tax, the LCC have been busy pushing through implementation as fast as possible.

We aim to work with Lambeth Against the Poll Tax to build resistance to the Poll Tax. We shall start out by finding out exactly what the LCC has already committed the Council to.

On privatisation, although Compulsory Competitive Tendering is almost upon us, the LCC had done little to build defences against it.

Working with the Council unions, a high priority for the new administration will be to plan a fighting strategy which can ensure Council services stay in-house without loss of pay or conditions.

On transport, despite the Channel Tunnel link and major roads planned to go through the Borough, the LCC failed to get campaigns off the ground. What should have been a safe, uncontroversial issue still could not arouse them to a fight against the government.

We will be fighting to defend local people from the blight and misery of the Tories' unintegrated market forces-led non-strategy for transport.

It's early days to give a full, detailed programme of our plans; but Lambeth's back on the right (left!) lines!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Local Governn

Camden

Councillor suspended for rent rise protest

Anti-cuts Councillor Adrian States was suspended for three months from the Labour Group at a joint meeting of the Group and LGC Executive on April 24th for opposing February's rent rise.

Six other Councillors also refused to support the rent rise. In March, six anti-cuts Councillors continued their protest by refusing to endorse the budget — which contained the rent rise and £10 million cuts — by abstaining on it.

The seven Councillors who opposed the rent rise were put

By Fred Leplat
Holborn & St Pancras CLP

on trial for defending tenants in Camden.

Last year's massive cuts brought a drastic deterioration of living standards on Camden's Council estates. Another rent rise nearly twice the rate of inflation was unacceptable.

This victimisation is happening at a time when 100 NALGO estate managers are on all-out strike for extra staff, and when NUPE members have held a one-day strike against the threat of 80 job losses.

The trial was a joke. The Labour Group right wing majority requested that the anti-cuts Councillors abide by Standing Orders. Yet they happily flout standing orders to avoid consultation with the Party.

Conference

No joint meeting between the Labour Group and LGC to discuss policy and manifesto implementation has been called since January 1987's Borough Conference!

On a very close or tied vote, six of the seven Councillors were allowed to remain in the Group. But Adrian States was singled out.

Provocative

He is now appealing to the Regional Party against this vindictive personal attack. Even the Chief Whip had to admit that he did not answer questions in a provocative manner.

Adrian States is well known for helping Tenants' Associations to fight the Housing Bill, supporting local Council workers striking for decent conditions, opposing the Council's Police "Consultative" Committee and opposing the introduction of the Poll Tax.

Adrian States must be reinstated.

NALGO Housing Office strike!

Action gains wide support

NALGO members in the Housing Department have been on strike since April 10th following the suspension of five workers.

NALGO had submitted a claim for the reinstatement of 14 posts deleted last year to cope with the extra workload.

The strike is now official and support from NUPE and Tenants Associations has been magnificent.

The claim for 14 staff (one per estate team) is one that must be supported. Over the last year, nearly half the posts in the Housing Department have gone, while the workload went up by 30%.

Tenants are suffering, as the Council has asked that the staff's priorities be rent arrears and Right to Buy applications. Repairs, harassment, and general management are seen as secondary.

As the Council was avoiding negotiations on the claim, NALGO boycotted work on Right to Buy applications and Councillors' enquiries. The result was still not negotiations — but a lock-out!

The LCC's Ken Hulme, Vice Chair of Housing, denounced the strike as political and led by left wingers.

This red-baiting "Murdoch"-style approach to industrial relations will leave the Labour Group more and more isolated as it is seen to be acting like the Tories.

Socialists in the Labour Party should pass resolutions calling on the Labour Group to enter into immediate negotiations and meet the claim. Invite speakers to your ward, union or TA by phoning NALGO on 860 5634.

*Reprinted from Camden Labour Briefing

Social Security Bill

A bleak future for the under-25s

The 1989 Social Security Bill discriminates against young people.

Calling for the support of the House of Commons for a new clause that would support independent living for under 25 year olds, Jeremy Corbyn MP described the horrors of living rough.

The following is an abstract from Hansard (24.4.89).

Mr Corbyn: Tonight in London it is an ordinary wet miserable night.

Earlier this evening I went to a meeting at the London School of Economics. On my way back, I counted the number of people getting ready to spend the night on the pavement in Arundel place, just in sight of the Savoy hotel, where a room costs £400 a night.

Just before 9 o'clock there were already 12 people getting ready to spend the night in sight of the Savoy and just near the law courts.

When I go home there will be more than a dozen people begging for money outside Finsbury Park station near to where I live. There will be young people begging so that they can exist in this city.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr Wilson) spoke about the plight of young people being forced into crime and all sorts of indignities to make ends meet. That is happening all the time in London.

If they are out on the streets, sleeping rough and looking dishevelled, it is difficult for them to get a job. It is difficult to get a job if they have no address and they cannot say where they live in the first place.

They get into a cycle of despair. The ways out of that cycle of despair are often crime, drugs, prostitution, and so on.

What is the government's response? They say that under 25 year olds should be partly dependent on their parents and that, if they are trying to live independently, they should get less than those over the age of 25.

The same government are making large cuts by closing long stay institutions of various sorts.

In some ways, some of us welcome closures of long-stay institutions, provided that they are compensated for by real spending on real community care that gives real support, and provided that we do not ignore people and leave them to try to fend for themselves, often in a vulnerable situation.

Many young people are unable to get jobs in the north or other parts of the country — not through any fault or lack of effort on their part. So, not unreasonably, they come to London.

Even if they can find jobs, which is difficult, they cannot find anywhere to live.

They then go to Centre Point where they are told that there are thousands like them and they cannot be helped. They traipse around Advice Bureaux, crisis centres, and Members' surgeries.

At every turn, they are told "No."

Interruption

Not everyone seems to have followed the line of Jeremy's speech. He was subject to an interruption, which produced the following exchange:

Dame Elaine Kellet-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Savoy hotel. Some years ago, I was the chairman of a welfare committee in Camden.

As such, I was in charge of a common lodging house in Parker Street. The deputy head chef of the Savoy was one who went there from choice. He could certainly have chosen to go elsewhere.

Mr Corbyn: I am not quite sure what that intervention adds to the sum total of human knowledge. The hon. Lady was not in her place earlier in the discussion.

I was not talking about the chef at the Savoy. I was making a comparison between the poor people who sleep in the streets and the people who walk past them to spend £400 for one night in the Savoy hotel.

If the hon. Lady does not understand the difference between what I was saying and what she is thinking, heaven help us all.

Hari

£100 a week provokes wa

The morning of May 3rd saw a walkout by Haringey's finance department.

It was swiftly followed by mass meetings and sympathy action by NALGO members in Education, Social Services, Chief Executives, Personnel, Libraries, Housing and Economic Development and Environmental Health.

By 4.30pm, NALGO members were crowded into the Personnel & Management Panel demanding that Labour Councillors reject controversial proposals to pay £5,000 salary "top-ups" to 22 hand picked senior staff in the Finance Service.

Borough Treasurer John Pirrie has set out to convince Councillors that this is only way to solve the difficulty faced by Haringey Council in recruiting senior finance staff.

Pirrie has further threatened to issue another "Section 114(3)" Notice and plunge Haringey into a new financial crisis, unless Councillors agree to his demands.

Yet again the question is posed: who runs Haringey — elected Members or Chief Officers armed with Tory laws?

Last November, the Labour Group in Haringey agreed a "recruitment & retention" package despite bitter opposition from NALGO.

Based on the premise that salaries must respond to market forces, such packages are designed to provide "perks for the boys" — cars, cheap mortgages, and pay rises outside the grading structure, while low graded staff suffer the sharp end of the crisis in local government.

A succession of low pay settlements for local government workers, combined with Haringey's failure to keep up with local pay agreements in neighbouring Boroughs, has meant that Haringey faces a high turnover of staff.

Coming on top of the uncertainty and deteriorating conditions now experienced by Haringey's workforce, it means that the Borough is unable to recruit to many posts.

Hence Pirrie's proposal to award a £100 a week perk to 22 senior officers including himself!

Not suprisingly this suggestion met with an outraged response from NALGO Finance members, and a walkout in mid-April finally wrested a commitment from the Personnel & Management Panel to convene talks on the issue.

These proved to be a matter of management informing staff side that NALGO would have to

Direct Labour

Compulsory redu

On April 17th the leadership of Haringey Council finally took the decision to make 130 craft workers compulsorily redundant in the Public Works Service.

The decision marks a new stage in the attack on Council jobs and services and a new all time low for the Haringey Labour Parties.

Barely two weeks later the draft report of consultants who have been investigating the Public Works Service since Christmas was published.

It proposes two options: cutting the service in half again, with a further 450 redundancies, or complete closure. The first option would mean that over 1,000 redundancies would have taken place since Christmas.

Thatcher can be well pleased with the actions of Toby Harris (Haringey Council Leader) and his supporters, whereas for Council tenants, the unemployed and the homeless it has meant only further hardship and despair.

The Council has excelled itself by its sheer incompetance and discrimination over the sackings. With a total disregard for trade unionism, the redundancies were issued without notifying trade union representatives.

On the day after the decision to make the sackings had been taken, senior management denied to a meeting of shop stewards that any decision had yet been taken.

Workers were notified that they were to be sacked in the most haphazard and random fashion.

Some were notified verbally by their managers, others received photocopies of the handwritten forms on which their points had been added up according to the criteria used to decide who was to be sacked.

On the form was a Yes/No Box marked accordingly as to whether the individual concerned had received enough points to avoid the sack or not.

Points were allocated according to individuals' attendance and disciplinary record — taking account of the number of days lost through sickness and the number of periods of sickness. Two points were also awarded for each year of service.

The procedure adopted makes a mockery of the Council's claim to be making redundancies in accordance

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"perk" kout

lump it as the proposals would be going through.

In the event NALGO achieved a successfull show of strength on May 3rd, when, after much delay, the panel meeting — crammed with angry strikers — decided to defer the decision to Friday.

Three of the staff members who are due to receive the £5,000 a year perk joined the strike outraged by the proposal.

A further lobby on Friday resulted in a second deferment — this time until May 11th, to allow time for further negotiation.

At the time of going to press NALGO is discussing further action to put pressure on Councillors and a programme of action should the £100 a week perks be put through.

Vital issues are raised by the dispute, including the right of NALGO to negotiate on pay and conditions, and the importance of stopping any attempt to undermine this right and the National grading structure.

These very rights are also under threat in the employers' offer in the current national pay negotiations.

NALGO members in Haringey are justly angry after two succesive years of cuts, vacancy freezes, and numerous petty attacks on our conditions of service.

For example, the £110,000 earmarked for the perks in Finance would pay for ten or more vacancies to be filled. For some NALGO members £5,000 represents a year's income!

The £40 long service Christmas bonus abandoned in 1987, would cost just £160,000 to re-instate, yet the Council prefers to reward the Borough Treasurer for his failure to maintain a viable financial service.

This dispute has finally broken through the fragmentation and demoralisation of a Union branch squeezed between a vicious Labour Council and a NALGO leadership that has been happy to derail and block many previous attempts to organise resistance.

This strategy has only been dropped when NALGO's very right to negotiate has begun to be threatened.

Activists now have the task of building on the mood for action and focusing the struggle onto positive demands like the longstanding "Haringey Factor" claim for Inner London Weighting and a pay supplement to recognise the special skills demanded from staff working in the Borough.

What we must avoid is a "business as usual" approach, which sends members back to work with no victory greater than saving Haringey Council £110,000.

Organisation

ndancies

with equal opportunities principles.

Some appalling cases amongst those sacked have come to light: a woman on maternity leave, a woman recovering from a miscarriage, a number of workers on certified sick leave recovering from injuries sustained at work including a broken leg.

With characteristic cowardice the Councillors responsible for the decisions have refused to sit on panels to hear appeals against these decisions.

The consultants' report now under consideration by the Council proposes not just hundreds more redundancies, but the tearing up of the conditions of service of both craft and white collar workers.

For NALGO members this will mean a 39 hour week, an end to flexi-time, no adherence to job descriptions, performance related pay and an end to the right to trade union meetings in worktime.

Similar attacks on the rights of craft union members are proposed, including a reduction of the working week to 39 hours from 42 and a half hours. A shorter working week can be a gain for workers — but they aren't when then come with a corresponding loss of pay, like this one.

The response from the two Constituency Labour Parties has been shameful. A motion calling for the re-instatement of the 130 sacked workers and condemning the way the sackings were carried out was passed by only two votes on the Tottenham General Committee.

Delegates in Hornsey & Wood Green didn't consider it a sufficient emergency and voted not to *hear* the motion.

A joint meeting of the Labour Group and the Local Government Committee Executive decided it was inappropriate to discuss the issue.

It had more urgent business to deal with — whether or not to discipline the 11 Labour Councillors who refused to vote for cuts or rate rises.

However Councillors and delegetes stood in shamefaced silence when some of the sacked workers forced themselves into the room at the end of the meeting and explained the grounds on which they had been sacked.

Tony Vargas, one of the craft union representatives, bitterly denounced the "yuppies" who had taken over Haringey Labour Party.

Letters



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Open Letter from Haringey Labour Briefing

Following discussion at the last regular meeting of Haringey Labour Briefing, we decided to make a collective response to John Calderon's letter in the last *London Labour Briefing*.

First, we wish to make it clear that far from having "collapsed", as John alleges, Haringey Labour Briefing continues to thrive:

—bringing together left activists from both CLPs in the Borough;

—co-ordinating the left intervention in local Labour Party politics;

—participating in a wide variety of campaigns;

—and organising a local public meeting in defence of Salman Rushdie.

Second, while there are a number of tactical differences amongst us, and amongst the anti-cuts Councillors, we do not for a moment believe that these differences amount to the kind of profound or long-lasting split which John tries to manufacture in his letter.

Yes, there are a number of difficult and serious tactical questions which face us in the struggle against cuts and rent and rate rises. And yes, these must be thoroughly and honestly debated.

But we are all agreed that this must be a debate among comrades, with mutual acknowledgment of the socialist commitments which unite us. We feel that because of its tone, its inaccuracies, and distortions, John Calderon's letter makes no useful contribution to this debate.

Along with the 11 Councillors Against the Cuts, we remain united in opposition to all cuts and to rent and rate rises.

For the last 20 months, Haringey Labour Briefing has played a leading role in organising opposition to the current right wing Council leadership, both inside and outside the Labour Party, and will continue to do so.

We will also continue to fight all attempts to witch-hunt or discipline Party members because of their opposition to cuts.

Recently, we enjoyed a major success in this regard when we defeated an attempt to throw *all eleven* anti-cuts Councillors out of the Labour Group.

Yours for socialism,
Haringey Labour Briefing

Sowing divisions where none exist

Dear *London Labour Briefing*,

I write in response to John Calderon's letter to *London Labour Briefing* no. 112 on this year's budget making in Haringey.

As one of the seven anti-cuts Councillors who abstained in the final vote I would like to make a few points to Cde Calderon.

He implies that fear of being expelled from the Labour Group/Party led seven Councillors to abstain, thus preventing the development of a "real crisis" which "would have forced the unions to fight."

However, he offers no evidence for our motivation, nor for his own prediction of what might have been.

In my view the result of us continuing to vote against the budget would have led very rapidly (within a few minutes) to the right of the Labour Group agreeing a substantial cuts budget with the Tories — either the budget already produced behind the scenes by the officers or a version of the Tories' own proposals.

This would undoubtedly have led to compulsory redundancies; but I do not share John Calderon's mechanistic analysis that this crisis would have forced the unions to fight any more than they fought against previous cuts and redundancies in Haringey and other Local Authorities.

Instead it seems more likely that there would be further demobilisation amongst the workforce, further divisions as each section looked to protect itself, and the left would have been the scapegoat.

There is no doubt that a number of the labour right, especially those connected with the LCC, actually wanted the left to vote the budget down to use this as an excuse to witch-hunt us out of the Party — that after all is the main driving force of the LCC in local government.

Cde Calderon's letter fails to appreciate that effectively the budget vote was an impossible choice — oppose it and cuts would result, not oppose it and rates go up astronomically.

But his letter has a hidden agenda — a thinly disguised sectarian attack on *Briefing*.

I can assure him that neither Haringey Briefing nor Haringey Councillors Against Cuts have "collapsed" and it is difficult to take seriously the views of someone who thinks they have.

He is attempting to sow divisions within the left where there are none.

Councillors Against Cuts have stuck together and have, subsequent to the rate-making Council meeting, successfully and collectively defeated an attempt to expel all 11 Councillors (not just four, John) from the Group.

We are determined to continue to oppose the cuts and rate increases, and to defeat the Tory project for local government.

I hope that John Calderon with join us to work constructively to that end.

Yours for socialism,
Peter Doble,
Haringey Councillor

For an independent party: join the SWP

Dear *London Labour Briefing*

The article by Scott Reeve on recent events in Haringey makes some worrying points for socialists.

First, Haringey Council is not a hung Council, nor are the Tories in effective control. Labour retains control.

Further, the Labour majority is following the logic of a reformist party in power, managing the bosses' crisis for them.

They should and could have fought against this. They didn't, but this should not obscure the fact that the Tories and not Toby Harris are to blame for the current situation.

We are completely opposed to both cuts and rate rises. One is not a lesser evil. But there is no point in entertaining grandiose notions about the influence of Councillors against the Cuts or Fightback!, useful though both organisations are.

Nor is it useful to pursue the Council through the capitalist courts. Rent rises, for example, need to be fought from the grassroots and involve Council workers as well as tenants wherever possible.

Comrades in *Briefing* and the local SWP branches are clearly serious about building opposition to the Tories and to the implementation of their policies by a right wing Labour Council.

But we have to grasp that, at the moment, opposition does not exist in a coherent and organised way.

Anger and bitterness have to be turned into action. In practice that will mean the hard slog of arguments with individual activists. It will mean supporting resistance where small fights do occur and trying to generalise them.

That will mean, also, raising the fightbacks in the docks, at the BBC, and on the tubes. And arguing that we can both fight and win.

Finally the experience of Labour in Haringey, with the best of intentions on the left at least, has not been a happy one. The balance sheet shows a few gains and many losses. The energy and time of good socialists has been wasted.

A more effective strategy, we would suggest, is to help in building an independent socialist party based not on electoral politics but on the potential of the working class.

That is what we are trying to do in the SWP.

Yours fraternally,
Keith Flett
Hornsey SWP
Duncan Gaffney
Haringey SWP

Students

NUS London Broad Left

A breakthrough in student politics

Baker's White Paper on student loans sent shock waves through colleges up and down the country at the beginning of this academic year.

A few left London colleges were able to turn an NUS "lobby of parliament" into a national demonstration with over 20,000 on it in less than a week.

It became known as the "Battle of Westminster Bridge" after the police charged us.

This process continued with the London anti-loans campaign demonstration on February 1st.

We built a successful demonstration despite opposition, sabotage and threats of court action from our "leaders" — the University of London Union, NUS London and national NUS.

This new combative left represents the class struggle, united, democratic left in the London student movement.

It unites many independents, *Socialist Outlook*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Action*, the Greens, and *Militant*. The Broad Left set up London Students Against the Poll Tax.

It is very different from the national "Left Unity" initiative, which attempted to model itself on the London Broad Left, but which revealed itself to be little more than a sectarian talking shop at its Conference (though it may yet be possible to improve it).

The Broad Left succeeds because it is based on a clear division in student politics: do you support class struggle or class collaborationist methods of defending education; mass action or professional lobbyists?

By Alistair Chisholm Secretary, SOAS Labour Club

While Socialist "Worker" Students and the RCP have chosen to stay outside this, with the SWP wrecking an early meeting, most of those forces prone to sectarian posturing have been kept in check by the independents who want a fighting, united, democratic left.

The "Democratic Left", split into three and left high and dry in this year's radicalisation, is a broken force; Labour Students does not exist on a London level.

The Broad Left seems poised to take over NUS London — the third largest student organisation in Western Europe!

It is dramatically underfunded — a budget of only £25,000 a year. But it is a very important area for the left to build on.

Next year, with Poll Tax, loans, increased tuition fees, further privatisation, and massive cuts on the agenda, NUS London could become key to beating back Baker if we consolidate in the colleges.

London is geographically and politically central to the fightback: we will be fighting for mass action, for an alliance with workers in education, and for the oppressed to be centrally involved in the fightback.

The selection meeting the Broad Left held was very interesting, with independents doing well in all the contested posts.

Also, a *Socialist Outlook* supporter beat the Socialist Student/Socialist Organiser candidate for General Secretary by 37 to 11.

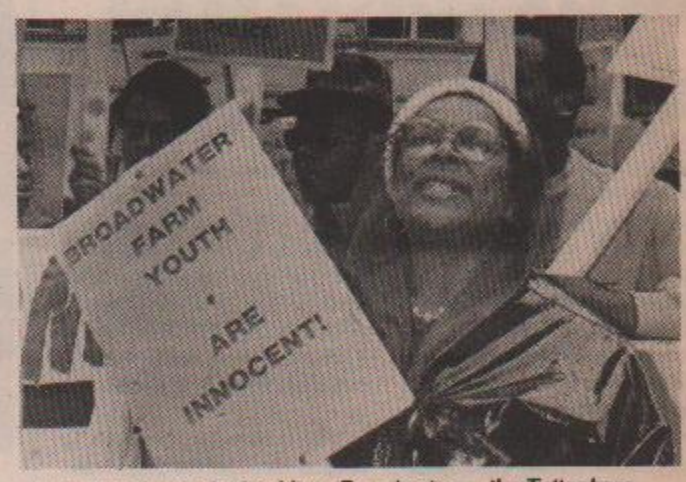
There is an experienced, committed slate. We have a group of serious activists who will be a thorn in Baker's side next year, when the new White Paper is announced and when the Poll Tax collectors start their rounds.

Justice for the Tottenham Three!

LSE students stand by Silcott

The decision of LSE Students Union to elect Winston Silcott Honorary Life President has provoked a storm of protest from the right wing — from Ministers of the Realm to college administrators, the press and Tory students.

By Alistair Chisholm Secretary, SOAS Labour Club



At last the demand raised from Broadwater — the Tottenham Three are innocent — is being more widely heard.

It seems the simple demands for justice and a fair trial are too close to the mark when racist policing and scape-goating by the courts is concerned.

Silcott — along with Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite — were convicted on the basis of no photographic or forensic evidence.

One of the witnesses who was forced to implicate 27 people in the killing of PC Blakelock was later *proved* to have been in a pub in Windsor at the time of the uprising.

The press have been full of crocodile tears for Blakelock. What about Cynthia Jarrett whose killing provoked the uprising — the police offers who killed her are still in the force.

Where is the outrage for the families of the framed Three? Where is the media anger at the death threats sent to the president of LSE Students Union?

At an emergency Union General Meeting on May 2nd the right failed to get the two thirds majority they needed to overturn the decision.

Lord Gifford, who spoke to the meeting, called the verdict on the Tottenham Three "the worst miscarriage of justice for ten years."

At a meeting held at about the same time, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Student Union decided to award Winston Associate Life Membership; NUS London has also issued a message of support.

The right wing at LSE and the college administration are hoping to turn the press hysteria into a backlash and to attack the union's autonomy. The whole anti-racist and student movement must defend the LSE.

The Tories are poised to move. Student backing for a high-profile campaign like that of the Tottenham Three could be the excuse they have been looking for to mount a major attack on students' rights.

Irish Year of Action

Guildford Four

Fighting for justice

"We will never give up the fight for justice."

So said Lily Hill, who has battled for 15 years to free her son Paul and the other prisoners wrongfully convicted of the Guildford pub bombings.

She was speaking at a lunchtime meeting organised by the Hackney Irish Year of Action Committee as part of an extensive speaking tour.

Speakers

The other speakers were Kevin Harvey from the Wolfe Tone Society and Graham Smith of Hackney Community Defence Association, which campaigns against police malpractice and racist attacks.

Lily gave a moving account of the difficulties families of political prisoners face in maintaining their relationships and their determination to resist British state repression:

"I will not sit back and do nothing. It is the courage of my son which has kept me going. They have taken the best years of these young people's lives and they can't be allowed to get away with it."

By Jim Thain Hackney Irish Year of Action Committee

She expressed her support for the protesters at Risley Remand Centre, condemning British prison conditions as inhuman and disgraceful: no prisoner, whether guilty or not, should suffer this treatment."

Corrupt

She branded the judiciary and police force as corrupt, pointing to the promotions of key figures in the Guildford Four case, such as Michael Havers, who became Attourney General, and Peter Imbert, now Chief of the Metropolitan Police.

She attacked the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the presence of British troops in the north of Ireland, which had such a negative effect on children.

Kevin Harvey read out a letter from jailed Irish Republic Harry Duggan to all engaged in Irish solidarity work and anti-imperialist struggle.

Volunteers

Duggan was one of the volunteers arrested after the Balcombe St siege who claimed responsibility for the Guildford bombings and produced detailed confessions — evidence which the Appeal Court wouldn't look at.

Graham Smith stressed the vital and courageous role families play in supporting victimised relatives.

Communities had to organise themselves against police brutality. The solidarity action of LSE students in electing Winston Silcott Honorary President was a gain for the Tottenham Three campaign.

Censorship on Ireland

Newham Council bans Sinn Fein

In March this year East London Irish Year of Action Committee held a "Britain Out of Ireland" rally in Tower Hamlets.

Over 500 people heard speeches from Sinn Fein Councillor Dodie McGuinness, Ken Livingstone MP, and Cllr Therese Shanahan from the Isle of Dogs.

It was decided to follow up this success with an event in the summer to launch ELIYAC's mobilisation for the Time To Go/Britain Out of Ireland demonstration and festival.

ELIYAC approached Newham Council to book West Ham Town Hall. A week later we were informed that Newham Labour Group had adopted a "No Platform" policy towards Sinn Fein and that ELIYAC was banned from booking Council premises.

What does Newham Labour Group hope to achieve by this act of censorship?

Sinn Fein represents over 100,000 voters and denying them a platform — whether on TV, radio, or at public meetings — does nothing to find a political solution in the six counties.

The government's recent TV and radio ban has been widely interpreted as an act of desperation in the face of Sinn Fein's political and electoral advances. Why does Newham Labour Group want to join with Thatcher's government as censors on Ireland?

By Julian Scola Chair, East London Irish Year of Action Committee

Councillor Conor McAuley, Deputy Leader of Newham Council, argues that Sinn Fein should not be allowed a platform because they are associated with "terrorism".

This emotive argument is used by reactionaries against the PLO and the ANC, but this did not prevent Newham Council from proudly flying the ANC flag above Newham Town Hall.

Will Newham Labour Group ban all Tory Cabinet Ministers from Council premises in the light of the politically motivated violence used by government forces against the miners, against the printers, in Gibraltar, and with their shoot-to-kill policies?

Sinn Fein is a legal political party which represents a significant part of the nationalist community and have every right to be heard. Encouraging political dialogue could even be seen as contributing to a political solution in the six counties.

Newham Labour Group are not being asked to support or endorse a meeting addressed by Sinn Fein: ELIYAC simply wants to make a commercial booking. We cannot allow Newham Council to join the Tory government in its attempts to silence Sinn Fein.

Those in the labour movement who are committed to the cause of Ireland should join ELIYAC in condemning Newham Council for its act of censorship.

Send letters of protest to: Councillor Fred Jones (Leader of Newham Council), Newham Town Hall, Barking Road, London E6.