LONDON LABOUR
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DISASTER LOOMS FOR LONDON'S SCHOOLS

Annual income £1 billion, annual expenditure £1 billion, result happiness.

Annual income £873,000,000 annual expenditure £1 billion, result misery.

London's school community is about to be taught a Dickensian lesson. ILEA-watchers will know what is about to happen is desperate. The only question left to answer is whose fingers are on the trigger?

by Keith Lichman

(London Labour Party Regional Executive delegate to ILEA Labour Group)

ILEA's 9th February Labour Group meeting was lobbied by what I guessed to be 300 to 400 of their employees, mainly NUPE, but with some other trade unions represented, including teachers.

The NUPE leaflets demanded no cuts in jobs or services. They also stated that the Tory government was deliberately starving the ILEA of funds. (ILEA has received no rate support grant since the Tories came into office and has been increasingly heavily rate-capped).

It then went on to say "**Nevertheless** — ILEA Councillors must fight to keep Jobs and Services."

Naturally, with so many irate employees speaking their mind, the ILEA members were only too ready to assure them of their best intentions. The message from the top was in effect "Trust us and we will do our best to save you."

Only one of the club let the pretence fall with "It's my fucking house and it's my car that I worked for..." basically enunciating the point that he had no desire to be surcharged.

An understandable position but one that found no sympathy among the highly vocal deputation. As one NUPE member pointed out, "Everybody in this room will lose their jobs by the thousands — it's not just you..."

Good intentions, however, are easy to come by and cost very little. The members may succeed in riding the Authority through 1987 without making redundancies or they may not. My view is that they won't manage.

But either way, with or without heroics, the service,

Continued on back page



PHOTO: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

ILEA at the crossroads

Inner London's education service is in crisis.

For two years, ILEA's Labour leadership have set the maximum rate allowed by Tory legislation and got by on reserves.

The coffers are now bare and the government is calling the tune.

In response, ILEA is considering a package of cuts including:

- only filling one vacancy in three
- raising school meals prices
- compulsory redeployment of teachers.

The budget will be set on March 3rd. At the moment, it is still not clear what decisions

By Mike Loosley
Secretary, ILTA

ILEA will take. But so far, ILEA has refused to take the trade unions into confidence and run a joint campaign to show the people of London that education cuts are not the answer.

Have the ILEA leaders forgotten that it was action by ILEA unions which helped save ILEA from the bludgeon which smashed the GLC?

The fighting capacity of London's teachers was undermined by the NUT national leaders' suspension of ILTA council for organising a strike against the Baker Bill on January 13th.

Eight thousand inner London teachers went on strike and 3,000 of them marched through blizzard conditions, defying not only the weather but the threats of ILEA and the national NUT. They realised that Baker's attempt to strip teachers' unions of their negotiating rights is a threat to the whole trade union movement.

The national union is beginning to get the message and is now calling for nationwide industrial action.

If the Bill becomes law, teachers will have to take action to stop Baker imposing conditions of service by diktat. The no-cover action and withdrawal from voluntary duties outside the normal school day must continue.

ILEA's response to its budget crisis will only make the government's task easier. The redeployment proposals are the most draconian measures yet seen by London teachers.

ILEA leaders have dressed up this £19 million cut as "creating career opportunities for teachers." If ILEA gets away with this attack on teachers, other groups of ILEA workers will be next.

This is all part of a process delicately called "harmonisation".

We should reject Frances Morrell's recent advice to a trade union delegation: "Leave it to us and trust us."

What they said at ILEA Labour Group

"We have to swallow a lot of our socialist principles and take management decisions — after all, we are managers."
Anstey Rice

"There are 8,000 teachers paid by the authority not doing what they are employed for... are we brave enough to do the job for which we were elected? Only the most irresponsible and lazy people refuse to work."
Jim Mthethwa

"You can use your brain, Norman."
John Carr to Norman Lucas, Chair of ILEA Labour Group

"It's my fucking car and it's my house that I worked for."
Charlie Rossi

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Cultural boycott in Hammersmith

Victory with wider implications

The picket of the South African production of *The Bijers Sunbird* at the Lyric Theatre (*LLB* 67) continued until the planned close of the play's run without any response from the theatre's management.

Nevertheless, this was a victory for the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

By Steve Parry
Hammersmith & Fulham Anti-Apartheid

Had the production had a successful run it would presumably have transferred to another venue, in the West End or elsewhere, and the floodgates would then have been opened to South African penetration of British theatre, by way of attractive commercial offers that cash-strapped British managements would have found it difficult to refuse.

Now South African money can see that any such venture will be wrecked on the opposition of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and its supporters, and while apartheid South Africa will continue its efforts to promote cultural contacts as a means of legitimising itself in the eyes of the world, time is against it.

It is a pity that this victory should be greeted by an attack in *LLB*, of all places.

Let it clearly be said: a policy of openness should *not* be used to allow the publication in *LLB* of right wing or opportunist attacks on socialist actions or causes.

The editors of *LLB* would never have printed such an attack if it had been directed at, say, striking miners or the printers; why is an action in support of the people of South Africa treated differently?

As for the "arguments" in Charlie van Gelderen's article: Boycott is a *tactic*, not a principle. The AAM has stated that it has no wish to make the boycott ridiculous by rigid application. Highly selective quotations from the ANC's 75th anniversary message, plus one blatant misrepresentation, do not, of course, argue against a policy which the ANC itself inspired and still supports.

If van Gelderen honestly opposes the cultural boycott, he should argue with the ANC (and the other South African organisations who echo their call) for a change of policy, not urge Britons to break solidarity with the South African struggle.

As time runs out for apartheid, its supporters and fellow-travellers become more desperate — and more subtle. Away from the front line, the only correct course for socialists is solidarity with the organised support for the liberation struggle.

In Britain, Black Sections have a right to their own position, but other Labour Party members must regard themselves as committed to the Anti-Apartheid Movement, and should always look to it for guidance on South African issues.

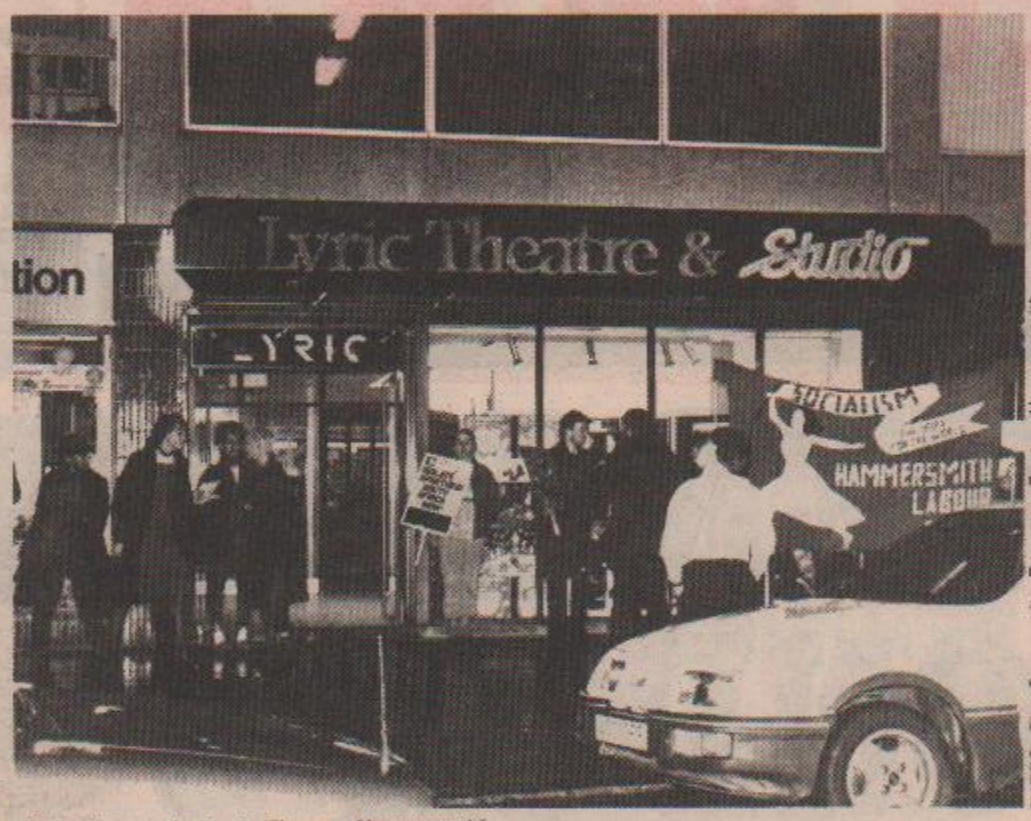


PHOTO: The Community Resource Centre, Hammersmith

Picket line at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

Haringey Council budget

Where next?

An aggregate meeting of Haringey's Local Government Committee and the Haringey Labour Group decided on February 14th to proceed with the full implementation of our Election Manifesto, backed by a political campaign in the Party, the workforce, and the community.

Attempts by LCC members to deride the present Council leadership and push through a thinly-disguised "cuts" policy were resisted.

However, numerous problems remain. A large 3-year capital programme is now on stream but government restrictions mean that this cannot be further expanded to meet our Manifesto commitments.

Crucial ommissions in the current programme include desperately-needed funding for the under-sevens' committee to develop childcare provision and to the Economic Development Unit for job creation and grants.

We are told there can be some expansion of revenue spending — but we still have not received sufficient information to know how much growth can be sustained.

Some members of the Council leadership appear to be suggesting that important Manifesto commitments will have to wait until the election of a Labour government. This is definitely not a strategy acceptable to *Briefing* supporters.

So far the Party and Group members have received much useful information regarding plans to implement the Manifesto and the funds required to do that. What we are missing is information on financial resources. Just how much can we realistically expect to raise by borrowing or "creative accounting"?

Like most other Labour Councils, Haringey will manage this year to "close the gap" between income and expenditure. But, of course, at this level of funding, we can only begin to implement our Manifesto, not to mention meeting the rapidly increasing needs of the people of the Borough.

By Craig Brewin
Haringey Councillor

LEWISHAM

Left forum challenges for Leadership

Lewisham Left Forum, a rapidly expanding broad left group, has decided to mount a political campaign to challenge the increasingly rightward-moving leadership of Lewisham Council.

The twin prongs of the campaign will be a need to fight back against central government and accountability to the Party. The need for the Left to take the offensive following the overwhelming support given by the Party to the recent NALGO safety strike was a major theme.

By Dan Carter

Having discussed recent anti-gay activities by certain local churches; fascist activity; policing and the Irish community and other developments in the local community, the Group decided on a plan of action around Council work.

There will be a fringe meeting at the recall Borough Local Government Conference (lunchtime, Sunday March 1st)- a meeting to finalise the platform for the Council leadership elections and decide on candidates on Wednesday March 4th at Deptford Town Hall at 8pm; and the next full meeting of the Forum will be on Tuesday March 31st at 8pm at Deptford Town Hall, where amongst other items the Council's budget will be discussed.

Copies of the "Lewisham Left Forum" newsletter can be obtained from Pat Waylett, 3a George Lane, London SE13, price 10p each plus large stamped addressed envelope.

LETTER

Dear Comrade,

I wish to clarify a corection sent in regarding Brent LCC and McGoldrick (see last *LLB*).

While they asked for *Briefing* to point out their position, they really also need to answer two questions. Why did their comrades vote against or abstain on the vote at Brent East GC supporting the inquiry and why have they failed to condemn the disgraceful role of the Labour leadership?

Clearly the LCC want the best of both worlds, which quite often means the worst for the working class.

Perhaps "LCC dissidents" in Brent may want to leave and join *Briefing* if, as they claim, they have really understood the lessons of McGoldrick. I doubt that they have.

Yours comradely,
Alf Filer
Brent East CLP
Briefing supporter

Continuing the debate among new Councillors

Fight their rotten system!

In reply to comrade Peter Chowney, I would say that it is very important for Left Wing socialists in the Labour Party to take the struggle into the Council chambers.

It would be a disaster just to hand over the Councils that the Left controls back to the Right Wing.

Surely we can not allow the Tories and the right wing Labour Councils to get away with privatising local services, slashing expenditure and sacking workers.

Comrades must work closely with the trade unions. The unions must be involved in every level of Council decision making and given the right over hiring and firing workers.

The Council must take its arguments in defence of Labour policy to the workplace.

There is absolutely no point in just getting elected and sitting in the Council chamber, making decisions that affect working people you are supposed to represent, whilst not consulting and getting support from working people to defend Labour's manifesto commitments.

Of course, local authorities are a piece of the state machinery.

When the Left are elected onto the Council it does not follow that socialism has arrived — it just means you have arrived!

By Cllr Ian Hughes
Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan

Hackney Council's decision not to negotiate with the catering workers and subsequently calling the police while the occupation was taking place was a disgrace. It shows how shallow these people's commitment to socialism really is!

If Councillors have not got the bottle to defend Labour policy, they should resign and make way for workers who will fight.

This is not a game we are playing, where we can draft nice sounding manifestoes, then renege on the working people who elected us, when the going gets a bit tough.

Hackney shows what is wrong with all these so-called "left wing" Councils. In 1984 over twenty Labour-controlled "left" Councils drafted a policy committing themselves to defend Labour party policy in opposing the Tories' planned rate-capping. United, with the support of the local trade unions, the Tories would have been forced to back down. All but two of these Councils capitulated.

Liverpool and Lambeth, left isolated, were betrayed by the right wing Labour and Trade union leaders who were more terrified of mass working class support for socialist policies than the Tories.

It is nothing short of scandalous that the former "lefts" like Blunkett, Margaret Hodge and the like who, to cover up their own inadequacies and failures with their drift to the right, have joined in the chorus of slander, vilification and slurs on these two councils' policies and their leadership.

Workers will not forget these former "lefts" who will eventually be discarded and a new generation of genuine socialists will emerge to form the left within the Labour Party.

I am sorry to have to be so harsh on these comrades, but with the carnage that the Tories and their system are inflicting on the lives of working class people in this country, we need socialism in this country now — more than ever.

If you are not prepared to fight and take on this rotten system, make way for socialists who are.

Working class people have had enough betrayals and sell-outs in the past. We do not want any more in the future, especially by middle-class people who call themselves left wingers.

We've no illusions in local government

Like Peter Chowney in Hackney, I was first elected a councillor (in Lewisham) last May.

I haven't been "forced to recognise the unresolvable conflict between socialism and British local government." I was aware of that before. Nor was I under any illusions about socialism in one borough.

Support

The most that can be achieved by socialists in local government is to give support and expression for working class demands and educate people that it is the capitalist system that is preventing them achieving those demands.

It can also, by implementing what socialist policies they have the power to achieve (the GLC being one of the best examples), show people that socialism can work and can deliver.

Industrial action

Peter seems to have been faced by industrial action as we were in Lewisham. In Lewisham left councillors didn't just "shift uncomfortably in their seats": we fully supported the workers' demands from the start.

By Pat Waylett
Hither Green Councillor
East Lewisham CLP

We worked hard to build support for the strike in the Party, spoke at NALGO meetings, marched with the strikers and went on picket duty.

Isolated

The result was that the Leadership of the group became totally isolated from the Party — to the extent that the Leader refused to come to the East Lewisham/Deptford Xmas party because he was afraid of the reception he would get!

Since the strike some members of the Group have told us that they realise they were used during it, and deeply regret their part in supporting the attack on NALGO.

Decision

Nor would we have tamely accepted a decision to postpone indefinitely non-housing manifesto commitments — but such a proposal is unlikely to be made by the current Leadership and certainly would not get through the Group. Nonetheless, we still have one of the largest budgets for new housing and improvements in the country.

SDP threats

As for allowing policy to be determined by SDP threats of court action, I think the Party would have erected gallows outside the Town Hall if anyone had dared to suggest that in Lewisham.

It seems to me that Peter is getting swept away by "pragmatics", voting for things he knows to be wrong against all his instincts.

Principle

There is only one way to be in local government and remain sane: always act and vote on socialist principle and stuff the "pragmatics"; if the Group takes an action that goes against all your basic beliefs you fight them. Most of all you relate to your ward and the Party.

I sometimes think that if I went into a Group meeting soaking wet and put a resolution that it was raining it would be beaten, but as long as I have the support of the Ward and the majority of activists in the Party, I will stay there and fight.

Labour must fight LDDC

DISASTER IN DOCKLANDS

"There is now a commercial appreciation of the development potential of the Isle of Dogs as a financial, banking and office location, easily accessible to the City."

London Docklands Development Corporation Corporate Plan, April 1986

London's Docklands are now the scene of the most spectacular experiment ever in subsidising the UK property market.

In the absence of any declaration to the contrary, one can only wonder whether the Labour leadership endorses the LDDC's market-led approach, which could have come straight from a Milton Friedman textbook.

Labour's failure to take a position on the South East's booming property market will sooner or later cost the dearly at the polls.

By John Turkie
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

Because of the proximity of Docklands to the City of London, it has become prime land, and thus also attracted buckets of private investment.

The Tories hail the LDDC as the saviour of the inner city, and Tebbit makes Tory political broadcasts from the Isle of Dogs' Enterprise Zone.

An Unelected Quango

Following the closure in 1981 of the last of London's docks — the Royal Docks in Newham — Michael Heseltine, then Secretary of State for the Environment, set up the London Docklands Development Corporation — the LDDC.

Its brief was to "regenerate" 8.5 sq. miles of London's Docklands, stretching from Bermondsey through Wapping, Limehouse and the Isle of Dogs, to Newham's Royal Docks in North Woolwich and Silvertown. All executive powers for this are were taken away from the three democratically elected local authorities and handed over to an unelected and unaccountable government quango.

The LDDC were also granted enormous powers of "vesting" public land and purchasing private land through Compulsory Purchase Orders under the 1980 Local Government Planning and Land Act.

An "Enterprise Zone" was created on the Isle of Dogs where the LDDC were to own the land outright and not to be hampered by the existing planning process.

On this site is planned the gigantic Canary Wharf development — 12 million sq. ft. of office and commercial space — which has more private money tied up in it than the whole of the Channel Tunnel. **If Canary Wharf goes ahead, the world's largest private investment project will have needed no planning permission whatsoever.**

The LDDC's pockets are lined by public money from the Department of Environment.

Regeneration?

The net effect of the "regeneration" of this once heavily industrialised area is to squeeze out local people and local industry. The "up-market" approach of the LDDC combines private luxury housing with offices servicing the financial and high-tech worlds. As big money has rolled in, local people have been pushed out.

The closure of the East India Dock in 1968 and particularly the West India Docks in 1980 had severe consequences for the overwhelmingly working class population of the Isle of Dogs.

Unemployment in the area now stands at nearly 30%. Property developers have forced out traditional riverside industries which employ predominantly local labour. If Canary Wharf goes ahead, it will not be long before whole housing estates on the Island are bought up for what will become "prime development land". Already, residential land is changing hands at nearly £2 million per acre.

In South Newham, three consortia are currently negotiating with the LDDC to redevelop the Royal Albert and Victoria Docks. Promoted by a highly profitable US/Swiss banking consortium, this private development is to be subsidised by up to £2 billion of public money, made up of enterprise zone rate and tax allowances and supporting transport infrastructure.

Environmental Disaster

The Docklands Light Railway and the proposed Docklands Highway (which wil involve the demolition of a few thousand homes in an area of chronic housing shortage) will run along parallel routes, from the City to Canary Wharf and onto the (newly developed?) Royal Docks, where there is already a Short Take Off and Landing (STOL)port, with a runway bordering on back gardens, a school playground, and overlooked by housing estates.

The Docklands Highway will meet the proposed East London River Crossing from Newham to Greenwich, which in turn will tear through Greenwich and eventually link up with the M25. £0.75 billion will thus be spent servicing City workers from Kent and Essex — money that could be spent on improving East and South East London's appalling public transport system.

Canary Wharf, however, remains an extremely speculative development. In some corners of the City, even post "Big Bang", doubts exist concerning the demand for such a massive scheme which would comprise one fifth of the office space currently existing in the City of London.

Given the level of public subsidies enjoyed by the developers, it is a cheap gamble for them, but a very costly one to local communities. Canary Wharf — which is opposed by Labour local authorities and the London Labour Party — will change the face of London and have a devastating impact on the predominantly working class communities of East and South East London. Yet the Minister is refusing a Public Inquiry.



PHOTO: Chris Davies (Report)

Surrey Docks — as it used to be

The Choice for Labour

And what is the Labour leadership's response to this Tory offensive? To date, a Docklands' representation to Cunningham and his colleagues has failed to move them to demand a Public Inquiry into Canary Wharf, never mind commit a future Labour government to abolish the LDDC.

Indeed, the LDDC and the developers behind Canary Wharf have far greater access to the Labour leadership than do the representatives of the Docklands communities. **At the time the Labour leadership were avoiding a meeting with the Docklands' representatives, they were being wined and dined by the developers and taken on helicopter tours of Docklands by the LDDC.**

After meeting the developers, Cunningham claimed he "remained of open mind". Nonetheless, many people feel that the Dockalnds delegation failed to gain any commitments from the Parliamentary Labour Party Environment Committeee because assurance of future support had already been given to the developers and the LDDC.

What is desperately needed at this eleventh hour is for the Front bench to **publicly** demand a Public Inquiry into Canary Wharf and to mount an offensive against the Tories plans for London's Docklands and other deindustrialised areas of Britain.

Unfortunately, Labour leaders seem taken in by the myth of the urban development corporation, and believe that the new ones proposed for areas of the north and Midlands will provide some kind of solution to the deep recession afflicting those areas.

The Docklands communities, for their part, are not opposed to regeneration, which surely means regenerating what is already there — i.e. the local economy. What must be opposed, however, is the expulsion of the existing working class communities and their replacement with new and totally different ones.

The demographic reshaping of East and South East London that is beginning to take place should be ringing alarm bells even in the Shadow Cabinet, if only because these inner city seats should all be "safe" for Labour. At present, of course, Bermondsey is Liberal-held — remember Tatchell, Foot and Mellish? — though surely a Labour target. It is worth noting that its MP, Simon Hughes, is well known for his public opposition to the LDDC.

An issue for the left

The Labour leadership have been substantially let off the hook by the ineffectiveness of the local Labour Parties, and indeed the Greater London Labour Party. The four most affected CLPs — Bermondsey, Bethnal Green & Stepney, Bow & Poplar and Newham South — are moribund politically, particularly Bow & Poplar CLP which takes in the Isle of Dogs.

They are, of course, opposed in principle to the LDDC, but have no coherent, campaigning line in opposition to it, and therefore, in practice, do not oppose them politically. Too little, too late, has been done.

The ignorance that exists concerning these issues, even among the left in London, is a potential political disaster for Labour. The areas picked out for new urban development corporations (UDCs) have no idea what is about to hit them. Nonetheless, it is still not too late for the whole question of UDCs to become a major political issue inside the Labour Party nationally.

There is little doubt that this will involve taking on the right wing leadership (and some on the "left"). This battle should be eagerly anticipated, not just because we have been on the defensive for the last two years, but because the right — particularly in this case — are on very dodgy ground, even on their own terms.

UDCs are vote losers for the Labour Party, in all senses. In the case of a UDC such as the LDDC, the objective is for the area to become a paradise for the rich, resulting, over a number of years, in the erosion of the traditional Labour vote.

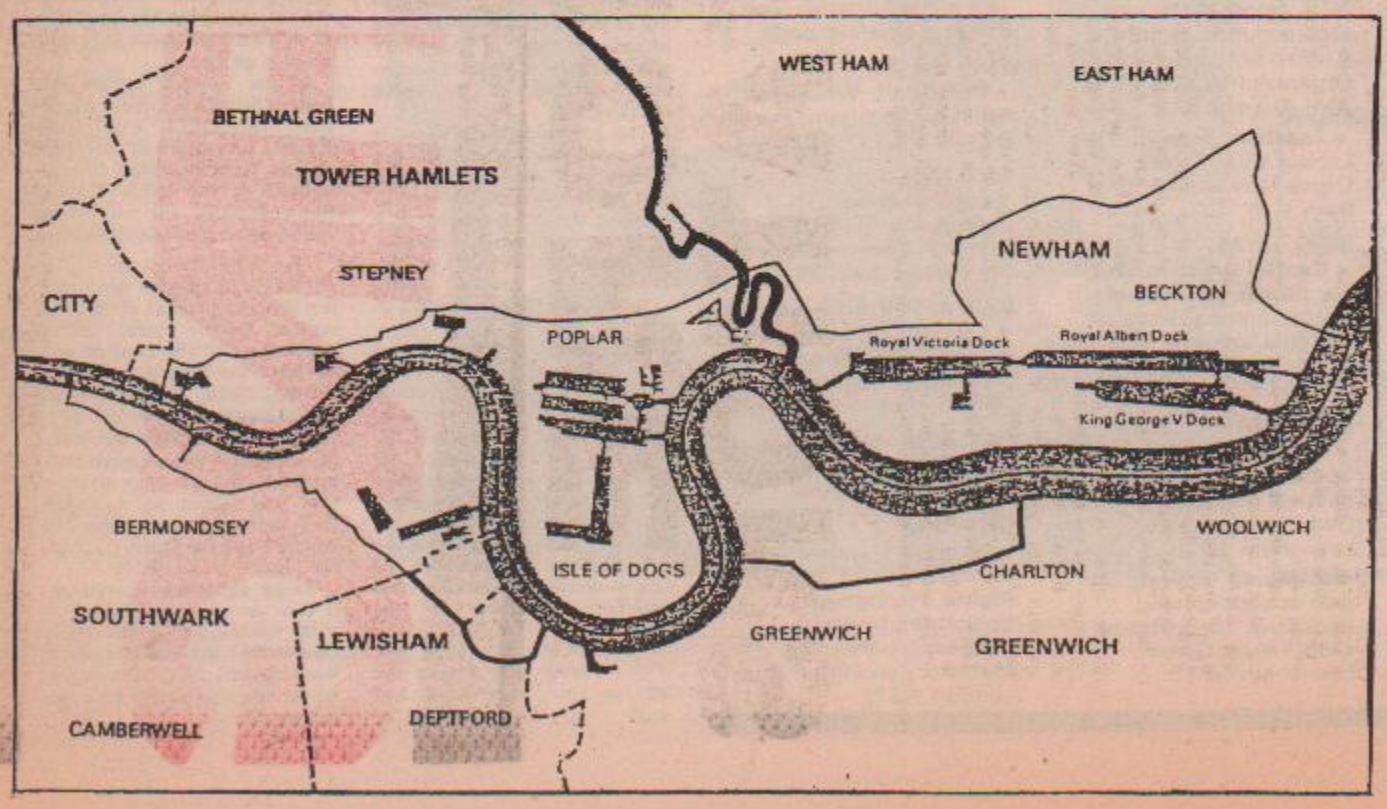
True, in 1981 local people welcomed the creation of the LDDC, due to the failures of the old right wing Labour Councils. But after six years of Tory "regeneration", the people of Docklands know only too well that the LDDC are only interested in allowing speculators to make vast amounts of profit, principally at their expense.

They want the abolition of the LDDC and the return (no matter how inadequate) of *democratic control* to Docklands.

Cunningham and others seem quite enamoured of the LDDC. It may be an unelected, undemocratic, and unaccountable quango, but it possesses quite extraordinary powers — far greater than any local authority. A Labour Secertary of State for the Environment could do quite remarkable things with such a tool with the right people on the Board. Or so the argument goes.

If a future Labour government were not to abolish the LDDC, but were to tinker around with the Board personnel, this could be the death knell for Labour in East and South East London. The left must make sure the lessons from Docklands are learnt.

DOCKLANDS



Conference Adverts

Briefing **is asking all readers to ensure that their organisations place an advert in *Briefing* for London Region Labour Party Conference.**

Let us have the name of the organisation, the message to Conference and the remittance by March 31st.

Cost £5 per col. inch (minimum 2 col inches).

Send to Briefing, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5

ILEA gets it wrong again

On February 9th, the ILEA Labour Group ended months of rumour by voting to reinstate compulsory redeployment of teaching staff by 26 to 11.

The decision was taken without any consultation with the elected representatives of the Inner London Teacher's Association, ILEA's biggest teaching union.

The decision was taken with the conscious knowledge that compulsory redeployment of ILEA staff was expressly condemned by the London Labour Party at successive Annual Meetings — the occasion for the previous ILEA's abandoning its policy of intimidation of its employees.

The decision was taken without any consultation with the Regional Executive of the London Labour Party.

And I'm willing to bet that not one of the 26 union bashers consulted their General Committees or their Party officers. Certainly the Hackney North members, Stephen Benn and Bernard Wiltshire, told their Party nothing, even though it was their Party that campaigned for 5 years to end compulsory redeployment.

By Keith Lichman

The tone of the debate (as usual) was virulently anti-teacher. Exhortations to the Group to swallow their socialist principles and *manage* were treated absolutely seriously and echoed. Indeed so many principles were swallowed with so much haste that it was truly miraculous that the Group was not overcome with flatulence.

Those who attended last year's Annual Meeting of the London Labour Party will remember Frances Morrell's praise for voluntary redeployment and her statement that it had worked better than the compulsory schemes.

Now apparently other criteria count for more. ILEA is hoping that the government will make some kind of financial concession to alleviate ILEA's disastrous financial position. Why the government should bother when its policy has always been to destabilise financially ILEA and its policy has been successful, is anyone's guess.

Nevertheless, the government is apparently likely to be impressed by the fact that a Voluntary Redeployment scheme would cost £19 million and a macho compulsory one would be much cheaper.

So the victimisations are to begin again with all the knock-on effects on labour relations. Frances Morrell agreed that the reversal of policy would have to be presented to the Greater London Labour Party "and the unions can vote for it." I hope our comrades will do no such thing.



PHOTO: Hackney Gazette

Maurice Hope, Jim Holland (Mayor of Hackney) and Denis Andries (current light-heavy weight champion at Hackney Town hall reception.

HACKNEY BOXING BAN

In December, Hackney Labour Group decided not to allow promoters to use Council buildings for staging professional boxing. We took the decision in the light of evidence that professional boxing carries serious medical risks.

We were conscious that we would be criticised for making the decision, particularly because we have several world class boxers living in and closely associated with Hackney.

The decision was received quietly at first, but eventually the anger of these local boxers brought down on us the massed spleen of the boxing correspondents. It was clear, they wrote, that we were banning professional boxing in order to make room for single parent mud-wrestling.

The scale of the response was way in excess of thescale of the decision — was a matter of not taking bookings in two buildings really going to bring the sport to its knees? The boxing lobby seemed to think so, even threatening legal action to compel us to rescind the decision.

By Felicity Harvest Chair, Leisure Services Committee, Hackney (personal capacity)

We have yet to see if that materialises, but I suppose in a climate where judges think they have the right to tell us what newspapers to put on library shelves, they might well think they have the right to tell us what to put on in our municipal buildings.

Besides, if Hackney could do such a thing, would not other "loony left" Councils follow? Might Brent ban boxing at Wembly? In the face of such considerations, the earth apparently shook.

I believe we took the right decision. There are many activities which have been seen as a sport or acceptable public spectacle in the past which we would now condemn. Would we countenance bear baiting on Hackney Marshes, or public floggings in front of the Town Hall?

There is nothing "loony" in banning an activity which is well-documented as causing brain damage.

I hope other left authorities will look at what their own buildings are used for and at what powers they gave as licensing authorities. We are now being told that our decision was wrong because amateur boxing is just as dangerous.

If that evidence is presented to us, I will soon be moving that we ban that too.

EVENTS

***London Labour Briefing* is now running a free listings column for events in London. Send details to *Labour Briefing* at 26 Crofton Road, London SE5, or phone them in on 733 7016. Please include access details.**

FRI FEB 27
Deadline for articles for *LB* no. 71.

SAT FEB 28
★ All down to Brighton to support the **Wheelers Strikers** — assemble 12 noon, Queen's Square for the march. Details 379 5098.

★ **Policing the Irish Community Conference**. 10-4, The Albany, Douglas Way, Deptford. Speakers, videos, workshops, stalls, creche. Details 854 8888 ext. 2056.

★ **Positive Images**. Fundraising social at 247a, West Green Road, Tottenham.

★ **Labour Women for Ireland** AGM, London Lesbian & Gay Centre, 67-69 Cowcross St, EC1. 608 1471. Accessible, creche, cafe, disco, etc.

★ **El Salvador Solidarity Campaign**, Conference on Central America, TUC, Gt. Russell St.

SUN MAR 1
★ National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, **Miners' Benefit**. With Hangers, Silentnight, and Print Strikers. Wembley Conference Centre, 7.30pm.

THURS MAR 5
★ Leafletting of **Wheelers** restaurants in support of Brighton strike and sacked London workers. Details 379 5098.

TUE MAR 7
★ *LLB* no. 71 published.

FRI MAR 13
★ *LLB* no. 72: deadline for articles.

SAT MAR 14
★ **March for Mandela**. 1pm, Whittington Park, N19. Support the non-stop picket of South African Embassy. Organised by City Group Anti-Apartheid.

★ **Teachers Benefit**. Labour Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham SE13. 8pm.

MAR 16-24
★ **Central America Week**. For details of London events and publicity material, contact 82 Margaret St, W1N 8LH, 631 5173.

SAT MAR 21
★ **Deptford Labour Party Social**. Disco, food, political pub quiz. Labour Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham SE13.

★ **Booksale**. *Briefing* on sale at secondhand booksale, 12-3, Labour Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham SE13.

SAT/SUN MAR 28/29
★ ***Labour Briefing* Conference** at Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton. See *Building Briefing* page.

TUE Mar 31
★ Benefit for **Wheelers Strikers**, Peckham. Details 379 5098.

SAT APR 4
★ **London Health Emergency** AGM. 1-4pm, Camden Town Hall, Judd St. Details 833 3020.

SAT APR 4/SUN APR 5
★ **Labour Committee on Ireland** AGM. You have to go to Manchester Town Hall for this one!

SAT APR 11/SUN APR 12
★ **GLLP Conference, Poplar Civic Centre.**

SAT MAY 2
★ National **Demonstration for Lesbian and Gay Rights**, Haringey. Sponsored by Positive Images, c/o Reading Matters, Lymington Ave, London N22.

Management admits nursing crisis

A shortage of over 300 nursing staff — leaving the district 20% short of its 1,600-plus target staffing level — is causing closures and other problems in Paddington/N. Kensington, according to health authority sources.

A District Health Authority document, quoting figures for the end of December 1986, shows a gathering crisis in key departments and wards at St Mary's and St Charles Hospitals.

By John Lister

Management blame various factors for the failure to attract or retain the nursing staff needed to maintain services:

- low salaries;
- poor NHS accommodation;
- private sector "poaching" of trained NHS staff;
- low morale caused by repeated cuts (coyly termed "inevitable changes");
- increased pressure of work from faster throughput of patients;
- dependence upon nurses with no local roots in the area.

At St Mary's Hospital, Fleming Ward, two Intensive Therapy Unit beds, and a Special Care Baby Unit cot have already been closed due to nurse shortages, while six Elderly Mental Health beds have been forced to close at St Charles, where there is a 25% shortfall of nursing staff.

The acute unit at St Mary's alone is short by 103 staff nurses — a vacancy rate of 34%, piling added pressure on those who remain. A specific breakdown of wards and departments shows some catastrophic under-staffing, with the Renal unit short by 66%, ITU 48% short, Coronary Care 43% and Paediatrics 38%.

The acute unit at St Charles Hospital is 50 staff nurses short — a 27% vacancy rate — with problems worst in Theatre (78% short), and orthopaedics (60%). The picture for care of the elderly is little better, with a vacancy rate of 45% and above, while the Mental Health Unit is short of 20 staff nurses out of a complement of 63.

Similarly disastrous nursing staff shortages are reported by management in Riverside DHA, which has 657 vacancies from a total staff of 2,900. Of these vacancies, 279 are for staff nurses, whose numbers are 39% below target, with particular departments understaffed by over 75%, and none by less than 20%.

At Charing Cross Hospital, NUPE has publicised complaints by senior medical staff that the lack of nursing cover is endangering patient safety, together with a signed statement from nurses in the Recovery Unit.

In Wandsworth's St George's Hospital, NUPE nursing members on four wards and the casualty unit have written to management complaining that patients are being put at risk by short-staffing.

But for all management's bleating, there are signs that — with its eyes on cash limits — it is far from keen to fill the growing numbers of vacant nursing posts.

Instead, at Charing Cross, at Hampstead's Royal Free Hospital, in Brent's Central Middlesex, and elsewhere, a shortage of nurses provides an easy excuse for ward closures and spending cuts which would otherwise be more hotly contested.

With staff nurse pay as low as £6,475 and even nursing sisters on as little as £8,070 with a maximum of £10,800, it is hardly surprising fewer and fewer trained staff feel willing to subsidise London's under-funded hospital service.

Only a massive increase in NHS funding can reverse the drain of skilled staff from the health service. Will Michael Meacher deliver?

Schools disaster

Continued from front page

with the £127 million shortfall, will be literally decimated. And when we look over the mortal remains of what was once perhaps the most radical, most original Education Service in the country, apportioning the blame, in the time honoured Labour Party tradition, they may at least contain some lessons for the future.

Budgetary Starvation

Clearly the prime guilty party in the disaster is HM government. During its unpleasantly long life, it has twice attempted to destroy the ILEA by direct legislation and twice failed owing to popular opposition. The indirect method of budgetary starvation by Central Government has proved far more effective.

The government's purpose is not mindlessly vindictive but rather, well thought out and part of the overall strategy to preserve the old hierarchy of a declining capitalist economy. Unemployment is a fact of life. Without a radical social upheaval, it will remain a fact of life.

Under these circumstances, a large, educated pool of unemployed is not only a costly luxury. It is a positively revolutionary danger. Hence the attacks on education; hence the decline in teachers' pay and working conditions leading to a loss of skilled exponents from teaching; hence the attacks on the ILEA which caters for the largest density of working class anti-Tory families in the country.

So much is unsurprising. But if the Tories have played the leading part, they have had some pretty pink-faced accomplices.

For a start, Mr. Kinnock, our noble Leader, has been stunningly silent on the issue. Obsessed by the belief that ILEA is full of crackpot lefties, not to mention gays, lesbians and blacks, none of whom play rugger, nice Neil, intent on building his page three appeal, has put his mouth where his money is and has said nothing.

Mealy-mouthed Labour Party

The Labour Party is little better. Nationally, its promises on education are mealy-mouthed without even a hint of restoring the cuts let alone any intention of shifting the balance in favour of state education.

In the London parties too there is little to say about education. The GLLP Conference Agenda is evidence of that. Few Parties have bothered to participate in the ILEA Liaison Sub-committee or to send observers to the Labour Group.

The result is that the worst crisis ever in London education is reaching its climax almost unnoticed by the great labour movement. In the blue corner, we have the Tory government, bristling with judicial power; and in the pink corner, there is the ILEA Labour Group, most of whom were apparently unaware of the epic struggle they had signed on for when they were elected in May. The children and the ILEA staff are the piggies in the middle.

As for the labour movement, it can scarcely be bothered to even watch. But if the Party cannot take the interests of the working class children seriously, whose interests can it seriously represent?