LONDON LABOUR
40p
BRIEFING
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WE WILL NOT BE MOVED!

PHOTO: Mercury Group

Once again, Inner London teachers find themselves in dispute with the ILEA over the issue of the compulsory transfer of teachers.

The dispute is not new but this year's proposed procedures show real hostility and animosity towards London's teachers.

The procedures were heralded with a blaze of teacher-bashing in the press. The *Standard* was particularly vitriolic, suggesting that hundreds of teachers lounge around staffrooms, drinking coffee all day.

ILEA introduced their new procedures without negotiations with the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA). Indeed, ILTA officers had had their credentials withdrawn by ILEA during the crucial period of drawing up the procedures. Headteachers have been threatened with disciplinary action if they refuse to take part in the procedures.

Subject inspectors have been warned that they cannot interfere, even if the subject is to disappear from the school curriculum. Individual teachers have been informed that they will be suspended without pay if they refuse to move schools on ILEA's instructions.

In attempting to move more than 1,300 teachers, ILEA claim to have two objectives: first, to make savings of more than £19m as part of the package of cuts for 1986/7; secondly, to distribute teachers more equitably throughout London's schools.

Of course, Frances Morrell and her supporters claim that the £19m "savings" are not a budget cut. This claim is hard to swallow in schools which may have to lose more than 50% of their teachers and face the prospect of larger classes, fewer subjects on the curriculum and reduced learning support for students with special needs.

Equally cynical is the plea for more equitable distribution of teachers. ILEA have up to 500 vacancies in secondary schools: in order to fill these, they consider it necessary to inform 1,300 teachers that they are *compelled* to move schools.

But it's not as simple as the sums — or the *Standard* — suggest.

Secondary teachers are trained to teach a narrow range of subjects; and there is such a mismatch between the skills required to fill vacancies and those offered by the teachers that ILEA wishes to move, that there is little prospect of filling vacancies through these procedures.

By PAUL FOLEY
Islington NUT & Hackney South CLP

Hackney and Tower Hamlets are often cited as areas of acute teacher shortage. Indeed, in one Tower Hamlets school, there are 6 unfilled vacancies — but ILEA has informed 5 teachers in the same school that they may be compelled to move.

There are several unfilled vacancies in primary schools, particularly in Hackney, but these cannot be filled by secondary teachers who have neither the training nor experience to teach in primary schools.

Unless those responsible are particularly stupid, ILEA must realise that its movement procedures will not solve the teacher shortage and will lead to a reduction in educational opportunity for the majority of London's secondary school students.

Behind the renewed turn to compulsory redeployment lurks a sinister intent. In the week before setting the budget leading members of ILEA met Kenneth Baker. There is little doubt that they hoped their firm procedures for moving teachers would convince him towards a more lenient view of the rest of the budget.

Presumably, that is why Frances Morrell told a lobby of ILEA workers that the budget would be all right if teachers did as they were told.

ILEA are determined to exert greater managerial control over its teachers. The ability to move teachers at will; the proposed introduction of fines for teachers who refuse to cover for absent colleagues; the willingness to introduce Baker's draconian working conditions are all indicators of ILEA's determination to attack the working conditions of its teachers and defeat its major obstacle — the Inner London Teachers' Association.

The imbalance in ILEA's "free market" system may well lead to the possibility of compulsory redundancy. Many teachers are asking themselves if teachers identified for movement today wil not in fact receive redundancy notices tomorrow.

This is one reason why teachers in several London schools have already staged spontaneous walk-outs demanding that letters identifying individual teachers for transfer are withdrawn. There is a determination that job security, conditions of service and educational provision must be defended against ILEA attacks.

It is particularly important that Labour Party school governors actively support teachers and express their opposition to compulsory transfer. Labour Party wards and GCs must mandate ILEA members actively to campaign against compulsory transfer; and use Greater London Labour Party structures to insist that ILEA members carry out GLLP policy of opposition to compulsory transfer.

These procedures are an insult to teachers, students and their parents. They are real cuts in London's education provision and should be opposed by all who wish to defend the quality of London's education service.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Lambeth budget

Labour makes cuts!

The so-called hard left Lambeth Labour Group voted for cuts to balance its budget at its meeting on March 16th.

£1.8m (on top of other "savings") will be cut from the housing repairs budget and recruitment will be dragged to save £6.1m.

Cllr Bellos went even further than the director of Finance who wanted to save £4.4m from unfilled posts.

Ten councillors opposed the cuts, but 28 — including Linda Bellos — supported them; this after the Norwood CLP and the LGC had rejected the Leadership's cuts proposals.

The cuts in the building DLO are made in the hope that an independent inquiry into "management procedures" will save £4m this year.

That inquiry, originally won trade union support, on the basis that all savings would be spent on creating DLO jobs to clear the £7m backlog of 27,000 repairs.

The inquiry hasn't even started yet and any savings it finds will not come on tap until the very end of the financial year. So a DLO that faces shut-down from the DoE has to turn itself round to make a profit with a cuts budget.

The Labour Group has completely turned its back on its manifesto commitments to "invest more resources to its repairs service" and the promise not to make cuts.

Surcharged councillors and Council trade unionists (present as speaking observers) forcefully rejected the proposals. Former revolutionary Councillor Dunipace stated that we should make cuts because if Labour councillors did not we would be disqualified and the imposed Tory administration would.

One GLC councillor stated that to reinstate the cuts would lead to privatisation! Another said that we should proudly tell the community that the cuts budget was defending their services.

By Cllr Steve French Lambeth

The 10 oppositionists must now lead a battle against the cuts, together with:

- Lambeth tenants, who must demand that the Labour Group do their duty and fight the government, not them;
- Lambeth trade unions, who must take action to ensure that these cuts are not implemented so that their jobs are secured.

This is a real kick in the teeth for the Lambeth "31" and the community who supported their fight and returned an increased Labour majority.

The 28 will have a hard task defending their actions to the trade unions and the community. They must learn that the working class will not support a labour movement which is not prepared to fight.

Postscript

Already the campaign to reinstate the cuts has bourne fruit.

At the Council's Policy & Resources Committee on March 19th, an alternative was presented by the leader Linda Bellos, that only £350,000 should be out from the housing repairs budget and an amendment from the left was accepted that the measures in the budget were unpalatable and that other means must be found by the Rate-making meeting on March 27th to bridge the gap.

No surrender no apologies!

"You don't mean that Tower Hamlets Liberals are going to cancel the Greater London Labour Party Conference!" gasped a tight-lipped ashen-faced Terry Ashton when I gave him the news over the phone. "They can't do that!"

Well, they can, and they have. And we all have a lesson to learn from their determination to carry out their policy — even if that policy is political score-setting, petty spite, and daylight robbery.

Since May, it has gradually dawned on the electorate in Tower Hamlets that, although the Focus leaflets over the past ten years have repeatedly called for improved services and fulminated against rent and rates rises, now Focus has more or less vanished form the doormats and the Liberals have decided that when you're in power you just have to cut services and put the rents and rates up.

Understandably, the voters are rather cross about this con-trick, and there has been a storm of protest.

But do the Liberals mind about the letters to the local paper, the petitions, the deputations, the lobbies? Not a bit of it. The Liberal leadership seem to feel that the more hatred they attract, the more it proves their political virility.

is this: why are we so easily put on the defensive, when our opponents — whatever shade of Tory — will ignore all protest, and carry on doing what they want, no matter how outrageous?

Can't Kinnock see that, when opposing the Iron Lady, famous for sticking to her guns (far from the truth though that may be) he has nothing to gain from fudging, shifting his ground, apologising and generally trying to keep politics out of it?

Our opponents, both Thatcher nationally and the Liberals in Tower Hamlets, having duped the voters and grabbed power, aren't afraid to use it. They go all out for what they want, with no apologising. So should we.

By Christine Shawcroft Leader, Tower Hamlets Labour Group

Hackney Police Committee

Hackney people reject consultation sham

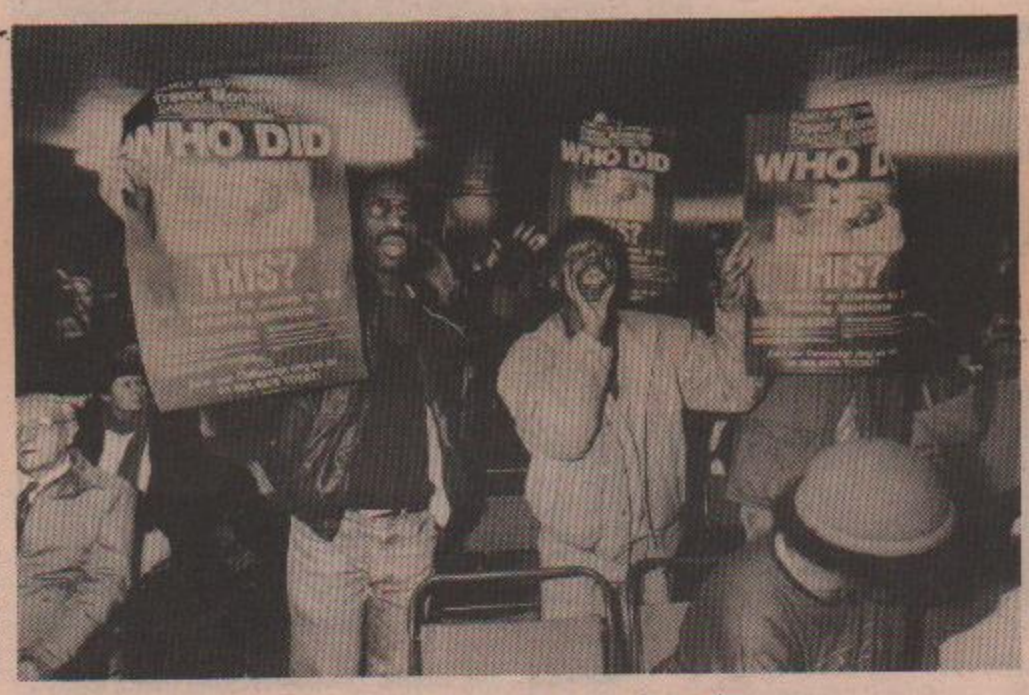


PHOTO: David Hoffman

Protestors from the Trevor Monerville campaign during the meeting

An attempt by the police to set up a consultative committee in Hackney went badly wrong on March 11th.

Two thirds of the local people who turned up objected to the police trying to set up a committee by themselves — without involving the Borough council or the main community organisations.

The police alone had decided who to invite to the meeting. The police alone decided who they would give a voting card to. The police alone decided who they appointed as chair of the meeting.

By any stretch of the imagination it was hardly an exercise in public consultation.

That the meeting eventually had to be abandoned was entirely predictable. Almost everyone in the Borough — including both local MPs, the Council, ILEA members and the CRE — had called on the police not to go ahead with the meeting, which had been set up behind the backs of the elected council at a time when councillors were in discussion with Scotland Yard on a possible joint approach to improve police-community relations.

Already the lies and distortions of what really happened on March 11th are being spread by the police and sections of the national media.

District Assistant Commissionar Wyn Jones, who called the meeting, has accused councillors and others of organising disruption.

By Tommy Shepherd Chair, Hackney Police Committee

This is an entirely ludicrous proposition. Why would anyone in their right mind try to disrupt a meeting at which two thirds of the people present agreed with them? The truth is that the police-appointed chair of the meeting refused to recognise the one vote that was taken at the meeting.

Now the police will have to assess whether to continue with their go-it-alone approach, or to sit down and talk with those who have been elected to speak for their community.

Hackney council does not refuse to speak to the police — in fact talks have been going on about consultative arrangements since January 1985.

The council has been determined that any consultation must give local people a real say over policing in the borough — and that any committees must be representative and democratic. This is why the council has insisted that there must be a link between the consultative arrangements and the electoral process.

For over a year the police have rejected the council's proposals on consultation saying that they did not accord with the law. In fact, the council has obtained a legal opinion on its proposals from a leading QC saying that not only are they lawful, but that they are within the spirit of the guidance issued by the Home Office on the matter.

Perhaps the police move to set up their own consultative committee was an attempt to get round the discussions with the elected council and create something which they alone controlled before public pressure obliged them to enter into arrangements which gave the council the leading role. If so, they reckoned without the people of Hackney, who showed on March 11th that they were not prepared to be duped into the setting up of a bogus talking shop.

GLLP: we want our conference!

As *Briefing* goes to press, it is unclear when — if at all — the Regional Party Conference will be held. The most likely date at the moment is April 25/6th. Deadline for Conference greetings ads is now extended to April 14th.

In the wake of Patricia Hewitt's diatribe against the London Labour Party, our Conference on April 11th and 12th would have attracted far more media attention than it has in the past.

Last year, the NEC didn't send a representative to the London Annual Meeting, although it was invited to do so and does to every other regional confernece.

This year, according to press reports, we were to be honoured by the presence of Roy Hattersley.

The conference would have been a major event, at which the London Labour Party could have launched a fightback against the Party's, as well as the media's, distortions of its policies.

One fact we particularly need to spell out over and over again: the London Labour Party had no say over the campaign or the policies put forward in the Greenwich by-election. In contrast, it did have control over last year's May elections — and won magnificent victories, especially in those areas, such as Lambeth, where a fighting strategy had been pursued.

The major debates at the conference, especially those on the discussion document from the Executive Committee on "A Council for Greater London", on local authorities, on the accountability of the ILEA, on unemployment, housing, health, and police make it clear that the London Party has positive and popular policies, on which it will be fighting the general election and which it will fight to get implemented by a Labour government.

The Regional executive will have an important role to play in leading London's general election campaign. Over the past year, whilst the left has had a nominal majority and chairs of committees, the right — in particular the trade union representatives — and the officers of the region (accountable to the NEC, not the Regional EC) have worked together to tie the hands of the REC and its committees.

By Joan Twelves Vauxhall CLP

One change was due this year, which would have made it highly likely that the left would lose its majority on the REC — not because of a change in the politics of the London CLPs, but because of a change in the system.

Instead of the old system whereby each quarter (quartile) of London elected four representatives, boroughs have been twinned to elect one representative per two boroughs.

The change was opposed by the Regional Executive Committee at last year's conference because, while it was agreed that the quartile method had problems in respect of accountability, it was felt that the new system would be no better, and would lead to new problems. Against the recommendation of the REC, the rule change was passed by the conference mainly on the block votes of the trade unions — who are unaffected by the change.

The problems anticipated by the REC have materialised, not least in confusion. In some borough groups, every CLP has nominated someone. In others, there is just one nomination. A second round of voting on the Sunday morning of the conference is being proposed for those areas where there isn't a majority from the first round. In fact, in some areas, where each borough has an equality of votes, there could be a permanent tie.

Perhaps the most anomalous thing about the new system is the unevenness of it. Differences in constituency size (and therefore voting strength) were balanced out under a system when about 20 constituencies were put together into a quartile.

But with the new system, the person elected by Kensington & Chelsea and the Cities of London & Westminster boroughs will need no more than 3 votes (the equivalent of 1,001 members as voting is on the basis of 1 vote per 500 members or part thereof, and there's only 4 CLPs involved) to go onto the Regional Executive, whereas to be elected by, for example, Lambeth and Southwark, where there's more and larger CLPs involved, you need to win at least 8 votes (the equivalent of 3,501 members).

Only CLPs in the boroughs concerned can vote to elect their borough group's representative. In some groups, there is only one nomination. In some others, *Briefing* is unable to give positive support to any of the nominees. *Briefing* does however recommend support for the following (borough group in brackets):

Martin Hughes, *Enfield N. (Barnet & Enfield)*
John Hillier, *Beckenham (Bromley & Bexley)*
Jeremy Corbyn, *Islington North (Camden & Islington)*
Madhav Patil, *Ealing Southall (Ealing & Brent)*
Chris Rogers, *Hayes & Harlington (Hillingdon & Harrow)*
Kingsley Abrams, *Wimbledon (Kingston & Merton)*
Beth Wagstaff, *Deptford (Lewisham & Greenwich)*
Joan Twelves, *Vauxhall (Southwark & Lambeth)*
Peter Spalding, *Croydon Central (Sutton & Croydon)*
Diana Minns, *Hornsey & Wood Green (Waltham Forest & Haringey)*
Danny Harris, *Hammersmith (Wandsworth & Hammersmith)*

In the trade union section, *Briefing* can only give positive support to two of the comrades standing — Bernard Laker (ASTMS) and Paul Moore (NCU).

London Health Emergency AGM

Time for Labour Parties to fight for NHS

Who could guess from listening to Neil Kinnock or from most Labour Party publicity material that the state of the health service is one of the issues that most concerns voters — especially in London and the South East?

Opposition to NHS cuts, and firm pledges to spend more to improve services and cut the waiting lists, could be Labour vote winners in many a marginal ward in this key region of the country. But when did Kinnock last have anything of substance to say about health?

Anyone can score points against the Tories' latest rise in prescription charges, and every labour movement activist can talk vaguely about "NHS cuts".

But precious few local Labour Parties make use of the actual facts of London's NHS to hammer the Tory record and win popular support. A few hard facts of the beds, wards and services closed or under threat in your *own* consituency carries much more weight than any amount of waffle about cuts and closures in general.

This is the political territory where Labour should feel most at home and the Tories at a disadvantage: but time and again we see opportunities being missed by the Party nationally and by local CLPs.

One recent example underlines this: virtually no Labour Parties responded to Norman Fowler's recent announcement of extra cash allocations designed to reduce waiting lists before the next election.

But two out of every three London health authorities got *nothing* from Fowler's extra £25m; many of those that did got tiny amounts far short of the sums that have been cut from their spending up to now.

London as a whole faces a *£22m cut in real terms* in its cash limits for next year, while many districts are still finalising new, damaging packages of cuts.

Only £2.1m of the total waiting list money has gone to London, shared between ten health districts — although at the last count London waiting lists had risen 7% in six months to a total of 126,000.

No help

Twenty London health authorities, including some facing the steepest increases in waiting lists and the heaviest spending cuts, received no extra help at all.

It was like stealing wallets from 30 people and then giving ten of them back a fiver. Tory policies created these huge queues for treatment: now Fowler is claiming credit in election year for a cosmetic attempt to whittle them down slightly.

The best advice to London waiting list patients is not to hold their breath expecting their lucky number to come up for admission: for most Londoners health services will just continue to get worse and worse.

Labour response

But where did Labour Parties contact their local press with a quick, informed response to debunk this election gimmick?

The London schemes approved by Norman Fowler seek to take 8,500 off the capital's health queue: almost exactly the number by which it had *increased* in the six months prior to the latest waiting list figures. At the last count, over 12,500 patients were awaiting urgent treatment, while nearly a quarter of the total — 29,608 — had been waiting over a year.

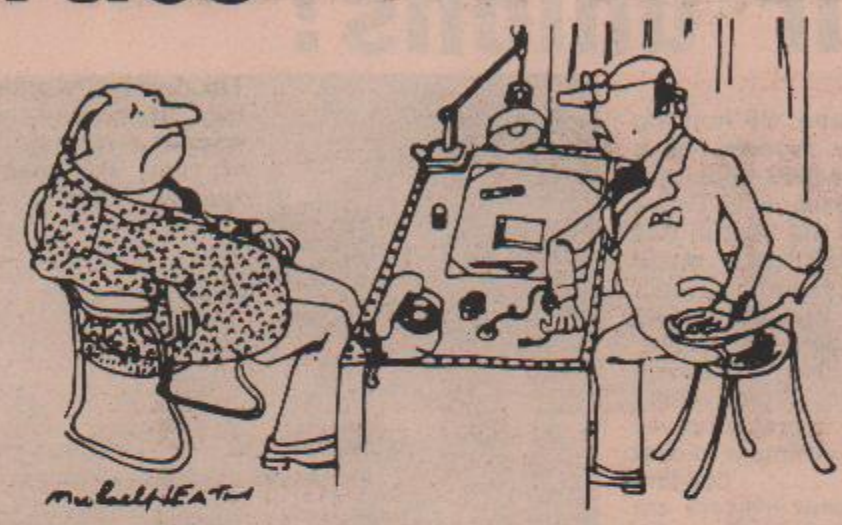
Detailed local figures are available of waiting lists, cuts and closures: but precious few London Labour parties take the trouble to find out or use this information.

● In **North West Thames region**, Fowler's allocations mean that just three London districts, Hillingdon, Brent, and Hounslow & Spelthorne share £514,000 extra cash to combat their soaring waiting lists, while desperate health authorities in **Paddington, Riverside, Ealing** and Thatcher's own patch, **Barnet**, get nothing, despite lengthening queues. Hounslow have admitted that some of their new money is to be spent buying treatment for NHS patients they cannot treat.

● In **North East Thames**, almost half of £929,000 extra goes to Barking, Havering & Brentwood DHA; Redbridge gets £86,000 after a 20% leap in waiting lists; and Bloomsbury, with the nation's longest waiting list (up 13.4% in six months to 14,000) and some of the biggest budget cuts in the country, gets £200,000 for 170 joint replacements. But eight other London districts, including **Islington** (lists up 31.6%), **Tower Hamlets** (up 7.6%) and **Haringey** (up 16%) as well as cash-strapped **Hackney** (£3m overspent) and **Hampstead**, get nothing.

● In **South-East Thames**, only Greenwich (lists up 33%) and Lewisham/N. Southwark (up 15%) get extra cash, while desperate **Bexley**, bed-cutting **Bromley** and cash-starved **West Lambeth** (lists up 17%, with 43% of non-urgent cases waiting over 1 year) get nothing.

Extra cash for **South West Thames** is focussed on two London districts — Richmond and Kingston — with waiting lists already falling. Merton & Sutton, where numbers waiting rocketed 19% in six months to 3,098 at the last count, gets not a penny.



Well, Mr Thompson , you can either die, or have private treatment

By John Lister
London Health Emergency
(personal capacity)

Simply following through on this one story should have given most Labour Parties in London an angle to expose the Tory record and spell out a commitment to the NHS: there are literally dozens of other opportunities to build support by combatting NHS cuts across the capital — opportunities that almost always go begging due to CLP apathy or ignorance.

Among the more obvious issues:

● Major cuts and cash crises are hitting most of London's 30 health districts: the features of each are different, but each offers a platform for campaigning.

● Nursing shortages are beginning to hit services in many districts — Paddington, Riverside, Bloomsbury, Hampstead, West Lambeth, Wandsworth and elsewhere: this ties in with the fight against low pay.

● Thousands of low paid ancillary jobs have been axed by competitive tendering in the NHS, hitting black women workers hardest of all — but also hitting standards of patient care.

Despite Labour's general apathy, where health campaigns have been built — such as the lively campaign against the closure of West London Hospital, backed by local health unions, community groups and funded by Hammersmith and Fulham Council — it has been possible to hold back cuts and closures and to build genuine local support. This could be done much more widely.

There is still time to remedy the labour movement's weakness on health issues, and make the NHS a major pole of attraction for working class voters in the next election.

A ready source of information, advice and expertise is available from London Health Emergency, which has established a wide base of over 150 affiliations from trade unions and community organisations as well as a relatively small number of Labour Parties.

LHE produces a quarterly tabloid newspaper (circulation 12,000) which is used by union branches and local campaigners, as well as more detailed reports, and has become a central source of up-to-date information for the media on health services in London and elsewhere. Why not get your organisation affiliated.

The LHE Annual General Meeting on April 4th will offer delegates and observers a chance to catch up on developments in London's NHS and local campaigns. Any CLP, ward, community organisation or trade union branch is entitled to affiliate to LHE (£15 basic, £25 if over 500 members) and send a delegation to the AGM, which will be from 1pm to 4.30 at Camden Town hall (Judd St, WC1, nearest tube King's Cross).

Why let Fowler set the health agenda? Fight back with the facts from LHE!

Further details from LHE, 335, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1. 01-833 3020.

LHE AGM
April 4th
Camden Town Hall
1-4.30pm
Ring 833 3020

Send details of events in London to *Labour Briefing*, 26 Crofton Road, London SE5, or phone them in on 733 7016. Please include access details.

THU MAR 26
★**Islington Labour Briefing**. Meeting for all readers/supporters to discuss General Election campaign. Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, N4, 8pm.

FRI MAR 27
★***Briefing* Editorial Board. Deadline for notifying articles for issue no. 73**

★**Conference on criminal justice**. Islington Town Hall, 9.30-5.30, organised by Labour Campaign for Criminal Justice. £10 waged, £2 unwaged (includes info pack and coffee). Further details: LCCJ, 12 Cromwell Road, Alperton, Middlesex, HA0 1JS.

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.

WED APR 1
★Deadline for articles, issue no. 73. This is not a joke!

THU APR 2
★*Briefing* Editorial Board

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!

MON APR 6
★**Maternity Emergency**, National Rally, Central Hall, Westminster. Campaign against cuts in maternity grants & benefits.

TUE APR 7
★**Hammersmith & Fulham Labour Briefing**. Public meeting: ILEA budget. Speakers: Hilda Keane, President Westminster NUT; Keith Lichman, GLLP delegate to ILEA Labour Group. Hammersmith Town Hall, Room 5, 7.30pm.

SAT APR 11
★**Women's Health**. Tower Hamlets Women's Council, GLLP fringe/public meeting, lunchtime. Mildred Gordon, Paula Uddin, TH Health Campaign, Chair Andrea Campbell, DHA.

London letters

Dear *Briefing*,

I was staggered to read in the *London Labour Briefing* February 25th- March 10th a short article by Felicity Harvest concerning the boxing ban in Hackney.

This ban and Ms Harvest's defence of it demonstrates all that is wrong in the thinking of many Labour Party members about sport.

Ms Harvest argues that the ban is necessary to prevent possibilities of brain damage occurring to boxers in Hackney. She also compares boxing apparently to bear baiting and public flogging.

I would like to point out to Ms Harvest that boxing is a sport entered into voluntarily by those who take part in it. Obviously boxing carries risk — nobody who is sensible would wish to deny this — but so are many other aspects of life.

Does Ms Harvest want to ban crossing the roads in Hackney because people are at risk of being run down? Does Ms Harvest want to ban people walking the streets of Hackney because of the possiblity of being assaulted or mugged? I certainly hope not.

Most boxers are working class men and often their sport has been the only way out of the life of poverty and unemployment. How can any socialist attempt to prevent somebody taking part voluntarily in a sport which is liable to give them the only opportunity they will ever have for a decent standard of living?

The ban represents a do gooding attitude that seems to prevail amongst many middle class socialists. The argument that anything is bad for you should automatically be banned is a total breach of individuals' freedom.

What socialists should be trying to do is to prevent exploitation. Often boxers like many other sports persons are exploited by promoters, by managers and by the media. We should be arguing for legislation that ensures that anybody taking part in a boxing fight gets the best medical treatment and gets the rewards in terms of pay that they deserve. We should not be arguing that we should ban the sport.

What is the next thing that we are going to see from middle class socialists in London? Are we going to have bans on football because of the possibilities of people breaking their legs, bans on cricket because of the possibilities of being hit by the ball and severely injured! I repeat all aspects of life have risk and sport is often very risky but it is enjoyed by millions of working class people.

It is about time that socialists inside the Labour Party started to realise that sport plays a very large part in working class people's lives. If you take away sports from many people you leave little else for their entertainment.

Most people cannot afford and are not interested in going to the theatres or art gallaries. They would much rather go to a football match or watch a boxing fight on the television. Who is Felicity Harvest and who are Councillors in Hackney to decide what working class people should do for their own entertainment?

Yours sincerely,
Pete Marshall
Regional Officer, COHSE

Dear Editors,

Charlie van Gelderen (letter, *LB* No. 71) accused my article (*LB*, no. 70) of confusion.

He confuses my call to Labour Party members to look to the AAM for guidance on South African issues with a demand (which exists only in his own head) for slavish obedience to the *leadership* of the AAM; he affects to find a mystery in the simple statement that Labour Party Black Sections have a right to an independent view on a black issue; he attempts to equate the theatre created by the South African people in the townships with the American capitalist music industry and a commerical theatre production company based in the apartheid state.

Further, he confuses the constructive criticism of *policies* which, as he implies, any movement must welcome,with an opportunist attack on an *action* (and with smear and personal abuse). Hammersmith & Fulham Anti-Apartheid undertook its picket of the Lyric Theatre & MJR productions of Capetown — after careful discussion and consultation; we had the right to public solidarity from comrades. That solidarity was given, as I have previously stated, by every relevant body. The consequences justified HFAA's stand and will continue to do so.

Steve Parry
Hammersmith & Fulham Anti-Apartheid

Hammersmith & Fulham **Briefing group is totally united in supporting the picket of the Lyric Theatre, and **Briefing** supporters were on the picket line every evening.*

***Ian Harrison, Alan Lenton**, Convenors of H&F **Briefing** Group.*

Dear *Briefing*

Writing in support of Linda Clarke's article in *Briefing* no. 71 I would like to add two points.

First, the issue of race: I have argued previously in *briefing* that sport is an important means by which members of the black community can more easily realise their potential.

This is because they are not hindered to the same extent by the institutional racism which holds back black people in other walks of life. Boxing is such a sport and it is unfortunate that Hackney's ban came shortly after two black Londoners had won world titles.

The second point is the morality of boxing. Boxing is the only sport in which the main aim of the participants is to damage each other. This is the key to any argument against boxing, but one which those supporting the ban have not put forward. I personally think this argument is not strong enough given the dangers that people risk in other sports.

The medical evidence is inconclusive — although this is partly because it was drawn up without the help of the boxing authorities.

What local authorities should be doing is ensuring that rigorous safety standards are adhered to at bouts in their borough.

I certainly would not support any ban at Alexandra pavillion.

Craig Brewin
Haringey Councillor

Why are these councils attacking our unions?

In Islington, 28 housing advisory workers have been locked out for working to rule; in Ealing the NALGO branch has voted for strike action over a claim for Inner London Weighting; and in Camden the Labour Group has narrowly avoided disciplining NALGO representatives for organising a picket (and building department officers are threatened with suspension).

So what's going on in London's Labour authorities; is it coincidence or design? Certainly the disputes are unrelated and are not part of any union campaign: Islington workers are claiming parity with other housing advisers in other authorities; Ealing's cost of living puts it in the Inner London Weighting band; and Camden's dispute was over the right of trade unionists to organise in opposition to the Council's policy on policing.

What these events do seem to have in common is that each has been created or exacerbated by a growing mood among Labour Councillors that the time has come to take on their local unions, particularly NALGO.

There are a number of factors contributing to this mood: some Councillors feel they can refute the charges of "loony left" by attacking their workers; others are playing personal politics and jockeying for position in internal elections; some hate NALGO because it isn't affiliated to the Labour Party; others hate NALGO because they hate all unions and particularly one which includes politically aware officers who may argue against the woolly half-baked policies of the Council.

Others are embarrassed because we remember some of the things they said in their fight against ratecapping about not cutting jobs or services to cover for the government's attacks and how the real damage would be in Years 3 and 4 of the Rates Act's operation.



PHOTO: Brian James (Public Eye)

And here we are and everyone's falling over themselves to balance the books by selling if not the family silver at least the family stainless steel.

During the recent attacks on trade union rights launched at two Executive Committee members of Camden NALGO,

By Jo Fawkes
Camden NALGO

useful links were made between the unions, Black Workers Group, the local Labour Parties and the many black and women's organisations who had joined in campaigning against the Police Consultative Group. On the other side were Labour Councillors, the Chief Executive and the Council disciplinary machinery.

The fact that it took several weeks to dissuade the Council from pursuing the action against individuals for supporting their union's policies and the closeness of the vote (21 to 17) at Labour Group are significant omens for the coming months as the financial crisis bites into local authority spending and senior management and Chief Officers come into their own.

If Labour Councils are to make cuts they have to undermine the unions and already one can feel the desire to smash the workforce into passivity at any given opportunity.

So far these impulses have been thwarted, but they do undermine the confidence of many members at a time when they feel vulnerable to cuts. The danger is that Labour Councillors will destroy existing union organisations only to find there is no one to defend them or work with them when they want allies.

In the labour movement, my sense is that our best defence lies in the loose coalitions and alliances like those made in Camden; those unions which have made space for self-organised groups of black workers, women, lesbians and gay, and members with disabilities may find themselves moving in new directions politically, but will also find their defences strengthened. The same cannot be said of current Labour Groups on the above evidence.

Islington NALGO

NALGO strike continues

As from Monday March 9th NALGO Housing Advisory Officers in Islington have been suspended without pay by the Council.

For several months the Housing Advisory Officers had been working to rule in support of a regrading claim which would have brought their pay into line with that offered by all other inner London Boroughs (including Tory Westminster).

On March 5th-6th the officers were called to see their managers (who support their claim) and told that the should give an undertaking (British Telecom style) to "work normally" or they would be suspended without pay.

As they had been working

By Doug Thorpe
Islington NALGO and Islington South CLP

to job description, having ceased to carry out only those jobs previously done on a "goodwill" basis, they replied that in their view they *were* working normally and were duly suspended.

On Friday March 13th NALGO members in all the decentralised Neighbourhood Offices and Housing Department came out on a one day strike in support of the victimised workers. A mass rally on the Town Hall steps was addressed by Ealing strikers and striking London teachers.

This is just the latest in a series of events following the Council's failure to fight ratecapping which make the "Islington Cares" logo look like a sick joke. We have recently witnessed the spectacle of Islington Councillor Chris Adamson, a NALGO member, crossing NALGO picket lines in the Lewisham safety screen strike. A manifesto commitment to reduce Social Services day and residential workers' hours to 37 per week has been withdrawn.

To cap it all they follow their act of suspending a racist on full pay for 18 months and offering her a big pay off to keep her mouth shut by sending home without pay workers struggling to provide a service to the homeless with inadequate resources and facing an increasing level of violent attack!

What price a commitment to fighting racism and homelessness? Presumably we can expect future manifestoes to be printed on loo rolls to facilitate disposal after the election.

Support the locked out Housing Advisory workers! Get speakers to your union and Labour Party Branches. Messages of support and collections are urgently needed.

Ring (01) 354 7470 for speakers, etc.

"GLC-in-exile" workers in exile!

Workers at the London Strategic Policy Unit have taken three days' strike action in defence of a fellow worker.

She had been used by a system best described as an "internal temping agency", which allowed low grade staff to be moved around the organisation at management's discretion.

This system is at last being abolished. After 11 months working in Personnel the union insisted that this individual be allowed, like all other staff involved in this temping system, to stay in Personnel if she wished.

Management would only permit a 6 month extension; so after 18 months she would have been returned to an area of the organisation that she had no interest in, and away from an area that she was needed in and wanted to develop a career in.

The dispute is now far more than just a dispute about individual treatment of a worker although settlement of this is *our* main concern. We have made representations to members of the London Strategic Policy Committee, established agreements which have been broken, and been accused of seeking to breach equal opportunities practices. We have felt that management have been using this dispute to try and assert their managerial authority over the unit.

Members of the LSP Committee have hidden behind equal opportunities procedures, falsely asserting that the union

By Phil Walker
NALGO Convenor, LSPU

is attempting to breach them. Even a brief examination of the facts would show clearly that this was not the case.

At present the union is drawing up a catalogue of breaches of equal opportunities practices, bad practices and mismanagement to present to members who have clearly forgotten that not 6 months ago 3 of them decided, undemocratically, to order the suspension of the unit's recruitment process — only to change their minds two weeks later.

It is within this context, and in the context of our accumulated experiences of inequality, discrimination and indifference that workers have witnessed over the last 12 months, that we judge the management and members' position in relation to this dispute.

Workers are asking the LSPU management and LSPC members to consider the needs of the individual in relation to the needs of the organisation. We believe that both the individual's needs and those of the organisation can be quite adequately met without breaching any equal opportunity procedures and have repeatedly put forward the solution which has been repeatedly rejected.

It is clear that management is labouring under the false belief that they are doing London a service by allowing the organisation to grind to a halt, by allowing bad practices to continue and by developing equal opportunities policies which bear no relation to the practices that workers in LSPU experience, and which underline the continued discrimination against low paid, black and women workers.

Ealing strike

Council locks out housing workers

The dispute between NALGO and Ealing Council over London weighting has been both interesting and educational.

A "loony left" authority, lampooned in the pages of most of the tabloids and even *The Guardian* for its outrageous policy, has been prepared to withstand a strike which has disrupted every service in the Borough for several weeks.

More than 2,500 NALGO members have been on strike in support of about 30 staff who were locked out for taking limited industrial action in support of the claim for inner London weighting.

The case for inner London weighting is a good one. Teachers in Ealing already get inner London weighting, and the manual workers' weighting gives them about £300 a year more than staff workers.

Neighbouring Brent Council have already recognised the anomaly and now pay staff the inner London rate; Hillingdon council, even further from central London than Ealing, have agreed to increase the weighting paid to their staff to the manual level.

While conceding the justice of the claim, as indeed did the previous Tory adminstration, the Labour Group say they cannot afford to pay, particularly with the prospect of ratecapping next year. Payment of inner London weighting to their staff has not been one of their priorities, although they say they are concerned about the problem of low pay.

This approach shows an unwillingness to grasp the nettle of opposition to ratecapping in deed as well as word. Rather than mount a vigorous campaign against ratecapping

By an Ealing NALGO member

together with the unions, the leadership fo the Council has turned and attacked their own workforce, using the Tory argument of limited resources.

They are attacking their natural allies in any campaign against ratecapping next year, with the spectre of privatisation also looming on the horizon. Has the Labour Group decided to stay within the limits set by the Tory government and wait passively for the election of a Labour government?

Not one of the "left" councillors, including some *Briefing* supporters, has felt able to support NALGO publicly, although a great deal of sympathy has been expressed in the safety of privacy.

The Labour Group's commitment to low pay seems a little insincere: since May, expansion has been primarily in the principal officer grades rather than directed towards relieving the pressure on the lower-paid staff. No wonder many of the existing staff feel aggrieved.

It is difficult to reconcile the election of the Council last May on a thoroughly progressive Manifesto (ironically produced with a substantial input from many local NALGO members) with their subsequent behaviour over the London weighting claim.

Councillors who have been implementing a wide-ranging and radical programme of equal opportunities, women, policing, lesbian and gay rights, homelessness and many other issues are now reacting in an authoritarian manner to the legitimate demands of their staff.

Ealing's radical programme is obviously one that socialists support, but it does not have any *necessary* connection with the organised labour movement.

Victorian liberals could often be remarkably charitable to the deserving poor and oppressed minorities, provided appropriate gratitude was expressed and due deference shown, at the same time as viciously attacking any sign of self-organisation by the workers in their own enterprises.

There is certainly a lack of trade union knowledge and experience in the Labour Group. Leading councillors who pay much more attention to the manual than the white-collar unions appear unaware of the sexism inherent in their attitudes. Many of the manual workers are highly-paid craft workers, while many of the white-collar workers are low-paid women.

One of the most heartening aspects of the dispute has been the campaign waged by NALGO members in the local party. Although support for NALGO has by no means been universal, several wards have carried resolutions in favour of NALGO and this has undoubtedly increased the pressure on the Councillors to reach a settlement.

Unusually these days it has not been a defensive dispute. After eight years of Tory rule, council workers felt entitled to a better deal under a Labour administration. They have had a rude awakening, and perhaps, also, a foretaste of things to come under Kinnock.