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The brutal face of the Alliance in Tower Hamlets:

RACISTS!



Fifty years ago East Enders united to drive fascists from our streets. Tower Hamlets has a strong tradition of fighting racism and fascism. Today, we need to draw on that strength.

During the past few weeks some 90 Bengali families in bed and breakfast accommodation have received standard letters from the Housing Department, in effect defining them as intentionally homeless and announcing an intent to cease paying their bed and breakfast accommodation bills.

● The Liberal Council claims to have a policy of "consulting" and communicating with its consituents in more than one language.

—*All the letters were sent out in English only.* Many of the families only realised they were being evicted when the council stopped paying for their accommodation once their landlord received notice that payment would be stopped and told the families they would have to get out.

● Liberal Councillor Jeremy Shaw, Chair of the Housing Sub-Committee, has claimed on television that none of the families have lived in this country for very long.

—*This is simply not true.* All the families have legal residency in this country; all have a history of residence in this country before being placed in temporary accommodation by the Borough of Tower Hamlets — many have lived over twenty years in the UK!

Shaw's television lie was designed to reinforce the racist myth that families are "flooding" in from Bangladesh and immediately claiming Council accommodation.

● The Liberal Council argues that the families have accommodaton in Bangladesh. They claim that families were interviewed by Bengali-speaking officers to establish this.

—Evidence suggests that children in the families were questioned to "establish" that they could return to accommodation in Bangladesh.

The families' files confirm the vast majority of the interviews were conducted by non-Bengali speaking officers. Over 1,000 homeless families in B&B speak Bengali (Shylet dialect) — at most two officers attached to the Homeless Persons Unit have this skill!

● The Liberal Council claim passports were not asked for at interviews.

—One of the files of the families facing eviction contains a complete photocopy record of a Bengali and British passport. Another contains references to information gleaned from a passport. *Other personal effects in individual files show that the Liberal Council has been building up unauthorised dossiers of information on homeless families.*

The proposed eviction of 41 families, some of which have already happened, eclipses the previous idea of "housing" families in a boat on the Thames (since taken up by the Tory government). David Steel has said that the Council's policy is in danger of being misunderstood: in other words he wants Tower Hamlets Liberals to disguise their racism so as not to rock the boat before a general election.

All the notices have been sent to black families: the Council is not attempting to harass white people who have lived out of Tower Hamlets for a period of time. A letter has been sent to the Commission for Racial Equality, asking them to take up this second major discriminatory attack on Black families.

It is up to all socialists to expose the racism of the Liberal Council, and to fight it in solidarity with the homeless families.

By Phil Maxwell
Chief Whip, Tower Hamlets Labour Group

Tower Hamlets cuts embarrass Liberal leadership

By Jane Kehoe
Bow & Poplar CLP

The Liberal Council has just made swingeing cuts in Tower Hamlets.

● Particularly hard hit have been the Arts. The Half Moon Theatre's £70,000 grant has been completely axed; the Whitechapel Art Gallery's grant has been cut by 80% from £40,000 to £5,000. Of 20 groups applying for funding, 16 were rejected; and these cuts may have broken post-GLC abolition deals.

● Of 40 community groups hit by cuts in funding, 16 were Black or Black-orientated, including the Homeless Families Campaign and the Maternity Services Liaison Scheme, which has 10 bi-lingual health workers and saw its £72,000 application rejected.

The Liberals' justification is that only £2m was available for voluntary organisation funding. With £500,000 still to be allocated, some organisations — such as the Docklands Forum and Camerawork — have been told not to even bother applying.

The Council's attitude has caused embarrassment to the Alliance nationally — on April 9th the local Community Organisations Forum mounted a 24-hour "wake for community services" outside David Owen's house in the comfortable and luxury Narrow Street area.

Parts of a letter from the Liberal Council of Tower Hamlets:

I am (...) satisfied that you have a priority need for accommodation (...) you have dependent children.
However (...) you and members of your family resided in Bangladesh from 30 Sept. 1983 until 30 Sept 1986 and (...) the accommodation you occupied in that country (...) would have continued to be available for (...) your family had you not left it.
(...) I cannot accept that (...) your family have a settled place of residence in the UK (...)
In my view therefore it would have been reasonable for you to continue to occupy the accommodation in Bangladesh (...)
(...) I am of the opinion that by voluntarily leaving your accommodation in Bangladesh (...) you have thereby rendered yourself intentionally homeless.
and your family ...
(...) My Council will not accept any further responsibility for you and your family ...

Labour Group resolution

● The Labour Group should act as a resource for the families threatened with eviction. The Group should support their campaign and *not* seek to "direct" or instruct them.
● The Labour Group should campaign against the racist practices uncovered in the Homeless Persons Unit which have been encouraged by Council policy. Initially this should mean informing as many people as possible of the practices.
● The NCCL and CRE should be contacted in connection with the above.
● The seven neighbourhoods should be asked to take the threatened families as an interim measure until the Council is forced to accept their responsibility for them.
● The Group should liaise with the families through the homeless families campaign.

The Liberals showed their true colours at the London Boroughs Grants Committee on April 8th.

This year they voted down:
● Third World Library;
● Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom;
● Hall/Carpenter archives;
● Jewish Council for Community Relations;
● Africa Centre
● two Latin American magazines;
and many other requests.

They voted *for* all these last year. As the election approaches, the true party colours shine through...

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Election strategy



Poll shows Labour retaining more support in London than outside

The Guardian

Forward with the left!

The Hewitt letter, the Washington fiasco, the NEC onslaught on Black Sections: it's not surprising that recent opinion polls show Labour losing support across the country.

But of all the areas polled, Labour has lost least support in London.

By Narendra Makanji
Vice Chair, Labour Party Black Sections

What price "the London effect" now, Patricia?

In London Labour has lost nearly 7% of the electorate in the last few months, since November; compared with a loss of 13% in Wales (the home territory of the last three Party leaders) and 11% in Hattersley's West Midlands.

It is now up to Labour Party members in CLPs to mount a rescue operation to improve Labour 's chances by projecting positive policies to the electorate.

In vast areas of London, the Tory party has been wiped out: mainly because of the attacks on local government — attacks beyond just GLC abolition and rate-capping.

The Tory party is promising its supporters large scale privatisation, abolition of rates and introduction of a poll tax, the establishment of non elected development corporations and the breaking up of ILEA and the Boroughs. If these policies are carried out, jobs and services would be devastated and Tory supporters would be laughing all the way to the banks.

CLPs will need to analyse the impact of these polices on each area and ensure that such information is used to good effect.

The Alliance, with three MPs and controlling four Boroughs, are a serious political challenge which Labour needs to confront.

In Tower Hamlets, the alliance won control from a right wing Labour Council and has proceeded to carry out even more right wing policies. The recent eviction of nearly 100 Bangladeshi families on the grounds that they are "intentionally homeless" is identical to Hillingdon Council sending a Black family to the Home Office in a taxi nearly ten years ago.

Tower Hamlets has also cut grants to the Labour History Museum, Half Moon Theatre and forty other voluntary organisations. The Alliance has closed facilities for pensioners, swimming and leisure facilities, advice for pregnant women and even laundrettes. This is the reality of the Alliance in power.

However, Labour cannot win just by criticising the policies and the record of the opposition parties. Labour has to defend its record and put forward its policies. Labour must proclaim its objective of equality and spell out what this means in practice. Throughout London, Labour has led the way in:

- increasing the number of Black people taking part in government;
- establishing women's committes;
- supporting the demands of lesbian and gay communities;
- combatting low pay;
- campaigning with trades unionists in struggle.

Labour has also extended democracy by a series of measures which have explained the human and legal rights of individuals and how these rights can be exercised. Just a few examples:

- "take-up" and "sign on" campaigns;
- electoral registration campaigns;
- decentralisation and localisation of decision-making servicing;
- police accountability;
- opening of files and freedom of information.

The general election campaign should be based on Conference policies and not on speeches and statements of MPs. This means that the Labour Party campaign should include the establishment of a Ministry of Women, positive action for race equality, lesbian and gay rights, unilateral nuclear disarmament and the introduction of the statutory minimum wage.

Labour cannot afford to ignore the electoral power of women, black people, lesbians and gays and the youth. These constituencies can only be won by projecting clear socialist policies with the aim of achieving equality and extending democracy.

Labour must oppose all our opponents — including the ones in our midst.

Camden Police Committee

This system will not work

Tommy Shepherd wrote in the last issue of *Briefing* of the fiasco of March 11th, when Hackney police tried to set up a consultative committee without first consulting the Council.

By Adrian States
Vice Chair, Camden Police Sub-committee

He stated that Hackney Council still wishes to pursue the link between consultative arrangements and the "electoral process".

Well, if Camden's experience is anything to go by, it's difficult to see how such a system can ever work, given a police force that has no restraints on it to be accountable to anyone.

The so-called "favourable terms" that were negotiated with the police in establishing Camden's consultative group, and which were apparently the envy of other boroughs, simply mean that a more than average number of 11 councillors were invited to take part in group meetings. Big deal.

This has led to right wing councillors, representatives of white dominated tenants associations, the ratepayers association, and neighbourhood watch groups consenting to collaborate with the police in the absence of black, women's, gay and lesbian groups who have felt the full brunt of police brutality against them and who refuse to take part.

With an increasingly paramilitary style police force out of control and killing at will, it is clearly naive to think that cosy chats with them are going to change their attitudes.

Furthermore, even if the police were accountable to the community, that in itself would not bring with it any transformation of the existing structure that is blatantly anti-working class.

How can it be possible to continue having meetings when 100 or so self-organised groups in Camden reject participation? It's an insult for the right to say that given time and a little persuasion they will see the error of their ways and will then take part, as if they're not capable of making up their own minds.

Meetings

In the meantime, meetings will continue to take place in isolation that will attempt to discuss and solve the very issues that affect the oppressed in the borough without them being present.

But the police must be really laughing at what is happening as they are getting away with setting the terms of policing in Camden. These collaboration exercises are casting over the police a false veneer of local accountability that is designed to shift attention away from rising crime rates of racial assaults, rapes, muggings, domestic violence and burglaries — crimes that are especially hitting the working class.

The Labour controlled council is blindly following a piece of Tory legislation by complying with the hated Police and Criminal Evidence Act, all at the cost of Camden's own Police sub-committee, that has been weakened by community groups quite rightly boycotting it as a result of the Council's decision to participate.

Discussion

In addition, the sub-committee's Civil Rights Unit is doing work that is not being placed on sub-committee agendas but is being given to the consultative group for discussion.

The police attend sub-committee meetings and take notes of what is said but refuse to answer questions, following a dictat from the Home Office that forbids them to do so — all in an attempt to avoid being pinned down by elected councillors.

So a council committee is systematically being destroyed by a free-standing body that is answerable to no one — a consultative group that condones its own racist, sexist and anti-working class stance — with the connivance of the police and the right wing on Camden's Labour Group.

It's vital that *Briefing* supporters show solidarity on the picket line and that we let the collaborators know that playing into the hands of the police is not the way to stop their butchery.

Forward with socialism!

HILLINGDON

The politics of the *Standard* smears

Labour Party activists in Hillingdon have recently had a taste of gutter journalism from *The Standard*.

The target for the usual mix of abuse, distortion, and pure factual inaccuracy is the group fighting for socialist policies in what *The Standard* calls the "leafy lanes" of Hillingdon in West London.

By Steve Clare
Hayes & Harlington CLP

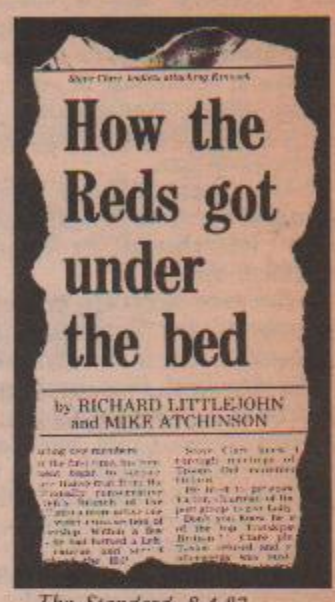
This media witch-hunt stems from an article in the local press last November.

Reg Taylor, for many years Chair of Standing Orders at London Labour Party Conference, was quoted as saying that the formation of a *Briefing* group, open to all Party members, "is an attempt to take over the Labour Party in Hillingdon." Taylor, a former left-winger turned witch-hunter, was for many years National Chair of the TGWU Broad Left.

Two members of Hayes and Harlington CLP also spoke to the local press and were both subsequently censured by the General Committee. One has since resigned — ostensibly because he feeels unable to support Labour Party policy on lesbian and gay rights.

Former treasurer of Uxbridge CLP, Ms Irene Saunders, attended the inaugural *Briefing* meeting and compiled a list of all those present (except for her daughter). She then wrote to the Leader of the Labour Group and prospective parliamentary candidate for Hayes, Peter Fagan, stating "we have been taken over by an extreme leftist group that is worse than *Militant*." Comrade Saunder's daughter is a *Militant* supporter.

As the focus of the latest attack in *The Standard*, I have been condemned for wearing a Kent NUM T shirt. It is said that my record reads like a classic anthology of the "loony left". My sins include recruiting new members to the Labour Party, campaigning against health cuts and apartheid, being involved in a major campaign in defence of school meals workers in Hillingdon, supporting a unified Ireland, and generally backing the struggle of women, blacks, lesbians, gays and the unemployed.



How the Reds got under the bed

by RICHARD LITTLEJOHN and MIKE ATCHINSON

The Standard, 8.4.87

Most sections of the labour movement in Hillingdon recognise *The Standard* article for the trash it is. The three or four ex-socialists who are promulgating the smear campaign have no real support in the Party. What really worries them, however, is that the ideas of democratic socialism have arrived in Hillingdon and have found an echo amongst younger elements in the Party.

Unable to argue their case politically, the right wing rump have instead resorted to smearing individuals through the Tory media: a final convulsion before being consigned to the dustbin of history!

WALTHAM FOREST

Welfare not warfare!

The debates which have taken place within *Briefing* on the issue of local government finance over the last few editions have, to master the art of understatement, lacked the (literal) fire of the open warfare that has erupted in Waltham Forest over the same period of time.

By John Wray
Leyton CLP

Even before last year's elections it was well understood that a large increase in the rate was inevitable.

In March the Council set a 62% rate increase after two LGC conferences, one to determine priorities of services, the other to decide on which to implement.

Over the months preceding this the press had been full of guesses at what the increase would be. 70% was the estimated norm.

The Chamber of Commerce began a campaign against the council but things became ludicrous when a move to "repatriate" Chingford into Essex was started and received phenomenal support, especially in Leyton and Walthamstow.

It was slightly ironic, as Chingford Tories had run the council between 1982 and 1986. It was reminiscent of the so-called "Retreat from Moscow" that began after the 1945 general election when the new Labour government established principles of welfare that were taken for granted by most working class people until 1979.

Like its predecessor of 40 years ago the self-exile movement was one based purely on the rich refusing to pay for the welfare of the less well off.

Until early April the campaign maintained such eccentricity. Then suddenly it was transformed by the apparently anonymous Friends of Waltham Forest who issued a leaflet calling people to the full council meeting on April 9th to demonstrate in support of a Tory motion to reduce the rate, even though the new demands had already been sent out.

Far worse, though, was the leaflet's other content. It listed Council Leader Neil Garrard's home address and phone number, blamed him personally for the rate increase and urged people to call or visit him to let him know what they thought of the new level of rates.

Abuse

What followed was an innumerable stream of death threats and other abuse, a firebombing on Neil Gerrard's home the day after the Council meeting and an extremely nasty and vicious atmosphere in the borough.

The most pertinent points to arise from the issue are as follows:

- It is clear that the new campaign is not to reduce the rates, otherwise it would have been timed several months earlier, before the decisions were made. It must therefore be seen purely as an attempt to undermine the Labour Party's support in the borough, particularly in Walthamstow, before a general election.
- It is essential to find out exactly who "Friends of Waltham Forest" are. They seem to be anonymous, but local sources are looking not much further than the membership of Chingford Conservative Association to find them.
- If a 62% rates increase is sufficient to stir up such a backlash of hysteria and open violence against a Labour council, what could a Labour government expect if it sought radically to redistribute economic power on a massive scale on a national and international level?

Brent Education policy

The truth behind the media lies

The last week in March saw Brent in the national limelight once again with the screening of a Panorama programme called "Brent Education — Hard Left Rules".

This followed the close attention paid to Brent during the McGoldrick affair, particularly from the *Daily Mail* and the *Standard*.

By Colin Adams
Brent East CLP

The case against Brent council and its education policies was put by past and present officers of the local NUT, such as John Poole and Max Morris, plus a couple of headteachers and a retired adviser.

All these people are at the top of the educational establishment in Brent and have most to lose by challenging the status quo. They are all people who have failed to see the need for change — they have failed to meet the demands of local people, in particular the Black community.

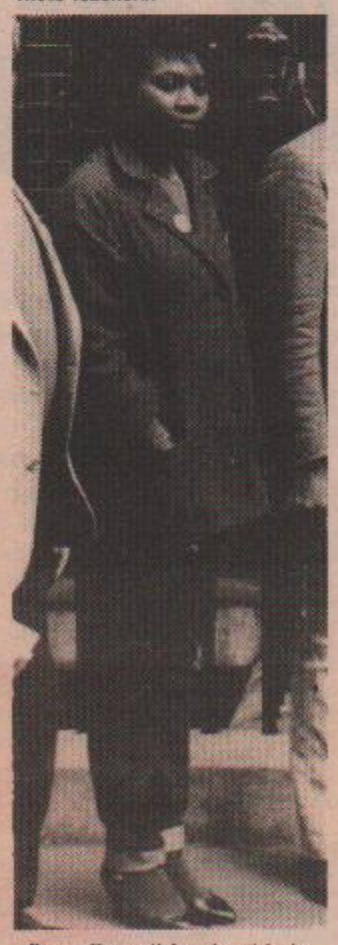
They covered not only the familiar ground of the McGoldrick affair, but also Brent's code of practice covering appointments, and the new Development Programme for Race Equality.

Viewers saw unstubstantiated accounts of irregularites at interviews which had begun after introduction of a procedure designed to reduce the powers of patronage held by Heads and advisors. The local NUT leadership had opposed it, just like the appointment of advisers to look at race and gender issues across the curriculum in schools. As we keep hearing, they supported the policies, but...

The Development Programme for Race Equality (DPRE) was set up in January, following pressure by the Home Office four years ago. Brent has many employees whose salaries are subsidised (75%) by the Home Office through Section 11 funding. The Council could not identify what 180 of these staff were doing specifically for black children and were told to sort the matter out or lose the money.

The DPRE is divided into two groups. Some will work in schools looking at the issue of race and gender and focussing on under-achievement. Others will concentrate on specific areas of the curriculum across the borough.

Again, the local Union hierarchy have opposed the scheme, because headteachers will not have complete control over these teachers.



Brent Council Leader, Merle Amory

To tie all these developments together, the programme needed a conspiracy: and created the sub-plot of four Trotskyists who had moved into a bedsit 10 yeas ago and had managed all this on their own! This was the hard left at its most devious (and pretty efficient!) best!

The case in defence of the Council and its policies hardly got a look-in. Both councillors and employees were shown in a distorted way. The aim was to present shadowy, threatening figures — to confirm the "thought police" concept put forward by Fleet Street.

Snippets of interviews were shown out of context and people's faces were distorted out of all recognition. Nearly all the reasonable "professional" people were white; black people were shown as violent, unstable or unqualified.

Reactions to the programme were swift and angry. The BBC switchboard has apparently received one of the highest level of complaints in recent years. Most complaints have focussed on the total bias shown — the lack of an alternative viewpoint.

For example, the film crew spent a whole day in a Brent School, and two hours with the headteacher who really supports Brent's policies. Not one second of that footage was shown.

Other complaints referred to the blatant racism shown throughout the programme. The BBC are contemplating an answerback session, so fierce has the criticism been.

The Council responded by issuing a press release contradicting the Panorama story, and then proceded to shoot itself in the foot.

In May the Labour Group, at its AGM, will elect Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees. In order to democratise the process as much as possible the local Government Committee devised a procedure to start with hustings at which all interested people were to declare themselves.

This took place on March 25th, two days before the Panorama programme. Branches were informed by letter that Ron Anderson and Niton Parskotam were standing for Chair and Vice Chair of the Education Committee, their present positions.

However within a few days and at selected branch meetings, Niton was nominated for Chair. To make matters worse, Merle Amory, Council Leader, appeared on TV to dissociate herself from Ron Anderson. This behaviour has shocked many members and is reminiscent of previous Group leaders.

As well as interfering in the procedure, this would have sent a clear message to onlookers, in particular the local NUT leadership — there must have been some truth in the Panorame programme, and the pressure had paid off. Ron was to take the full blame.

Such behaviour by the leadership serves to reinforce previous criticism in these pages — that the Council is too much based on the council chamber and is run in a bureaucratic manner. The Labour Party, never mind the community at large, has little say in what takes place.

During the McGoldrick affair no attempt was made to mobilise its supporters amongst parents, and teachers and wider. It does not need a firm of PR consultants to tell councillors that their policies are not getting through the distortion of the media — it needs to be done at a local level, in schools, on estates, etc.

Many supporters of the Council — including employees in key posts — are worried that the dumping of Ron Anderson will involve not just a change in personnel but a change of policy. This is not to question Niton's commitment to the policies but the motives of those behind the manoeuvre.

The opportunity exists with a local by-election and a likely General Election to show that the Council stands by its policies and wants to mobilise people around them. Failure to do so will lead to retreat and eventually defeat.



Left to right: Russell Profitt (PPC, Lewisham East), Martyn Day and Mee Ling Ng for the picket against Shell

Shell and disinvestment

As the campaign against apartheid intensifies, local authorities are discovering the power they have to put pressure on companies to withdraw from South Africa.

By Mee Ling Ng
Chair, Anti-apartheid Working Party
and Martyn Day
Chair, Finance Sub-Committee
Lewisham Council

Last September, Joint Action Against Apartheid was formed and backed by the Anti-Apartheid Movement at a conference in Lewisham with representatives from 14 local authorities.

Joint Action includes authorities from up and down the country, primarily concerned to ensure that their pension funds are not directly or indirectly supporting apartheid.

The organisation is increasing in numbers, and inroads are being made into the trade union movement. Of the 28 Labour controlled pension fund authorities in Britain, 20 are now members, with combined funds at our disposal of £7-8 billion.

Twenty British companies have been spotlighted and work has gone on to co-ordinate shareholder action and disinvest from those companies — to try and continue the recent spate of company withdrawals from South Africa.

Lewisham Council has viewed disinvestment as one part of an overall campaign against apartheid. Major elements in our campaign have been the Council's withdrawal from Barclays, and a decision to boycott all Shell products subject to other products being available on reasonable terms.

Local authorities could be a substantial lever in persuading Shell to disinvest: e.g. ILEA has fuel contracts with Shell worth over £30m!

Many may be concerned about the legalities of boycotting. However, a legal opinion, obtained by Lewisham from Lord Gifford QC, argues that the Council has to deliver services within the "real" world and has to be accountable for its actions within this context. Given an international campaign against Shell, the Councils' obligation is to take part on the basis of promoting good race relations — if alternative products are available on reasonable terms.

Several authorities have already started to broaden the boycott through contracts compliance; and action taken so far has the potential to snowball into wider action.

Action will be stronger if it is co-ordinated. Joint Action Against Apartheid and Local Authorities Action Against Apartheid will be playing a major role in this campaign — and we would encourage all local authorities and trade unions to join us!

Chasidic Schools debate

Multi-culturalism or socialism?

The debate over the Chasidic community's demand for state aid for its independently-run schools has been dogged by confusion and smears.

By Mike Marqusee
Haringey Labour Briefing

Without exception, Chasidic Jews send their children to their own religious schools, where a strict religious orthodoxy is taught, the sexes are separated from an early age, exposure to sex education is denied and subjects like lesbian and gay rights, anti-racism, and anti-sexism are taboo.

In response to the obvious objections to granting local authority funding to institutions which flagrantly contradict local authority equal opportunities policies, Chasidic spokespersons insist that equal opportunities should mean the right for minority groups to educate their children according to their own beliefs, that Chasidic women and not outsiders will define women's role within the Chasidic community, that their community as a whole is oppressed by racism, and that local authorities already fund Church of England and Roman Catholic Schools.

Here the tie between multi-culturalism and socialism has been stretched to breaking point.

The debate has not been helped by the racist intervention of the National Secular Society, a relic of paternalist and ethnocentric nineteenth century liberalism.

The Society's circular opposing the Chasids' application for funding was redolent of the worst anti-semitic tracts, with complaints about the "strange garb" of the Chasids, their speaking in a foreign tongue (Yiddish), and their attitude toward birth control.

According to the NSS, the Chasids had better get cracking and assimilate to their "host society" or else.

Socialists will of course reject this notion of an unchallengeable, monolithic (and imperial) "host society" to which all minority groups must conform. But equally, we should reject the new "multi-culturalism" which preaches that the only alternative to this "host society" and its values is the institutionalisation of religious sectarianism and the abandonment of the long struggle for a secular, democratic and socialist state education system.

It should go without saying that socialists oppose all private education. We should also oppose all steps to increase the fragmentation of the existing state system in a welter of church or synagogue or mosque or temple dominated "voluntary" schools.

Multi-culturalism, in this form, is a trojan horse within the state system. Its arguments need to be answered carefully and cogently — but rejected unequivocally.

If the Chasids' current application to Haringey Council is granted, the Council will then be forced to meet similar demands from numerous other groups. Already a Seventh Day Adventist School is asking for financial support. Empty school buildings scattered across London will be fair game to religious groups who will all stake a claim to equal treatment.

The comprehensive basis of the state system will be whittled away. Elected authorities will be stripped of essential elements of democratic control. Huge numbers of children will be denied the type of education, including sex education, which socialists should recognise as a fundamental civil right.



What kind of education do our children want?

State funding will end up as a giant subsidy to a *de facto* private system — not so different from Keith Joseph's long-cherished voucher system.

We will not be able to answer the Chasids' understandable cry of foul play until we begin building a genuinely secular and egalitarian education service. This means not only the elimination of acts of religious worship from schools, but phasing out of all voluntary-aided church-affiliated schools — including those of the "established" and Catholic Churches.

Our aim should be to encompass the various cultural traditions present in our society within the state system. We should foster mother-tongue instruction, bilingualism, multi-cultural history, literature, diet, etc.

All pupils should learn about *all* the various religious and ethnic identities within their community. All this must be backed by rigorous anti-racist, anti-sexist, and egalitarian educational practice and ideas.

The demand for separate schools for minority religious groups is pressed so hard precisely because we have so far failed to achieve this. Our anti-racist policies have too often been watered down to occasional gestures — a few community language signs and somosas for tea.

Sweeping anti-racist action, incorporation of cultural diversity as a virtue, not a burden, and the full disestablishment of the Christian sect are the only real answers to the claims of Chasids and others to state funding for their private schools.

Socialists must differentiate themselves in this debate from the two kinds of liberalism which oppose us: the old-fashioned racist variety of the National Secular Society and the trendy communalism of the new multi-culturalists. The spearation of church and state — a corner-stone of the bourgeois American Revolution over two hundred years ago — has still not been achieved in Britain.

Let's press toward that essential socialist goal, not backward to an increasingly sectarian society in which racism will flourish and education will serve only the established powers-that-be in each separate community.

NUT London leadership suspended and expelled

Another episode in the long-running contest between the NUT's national leadership and the London leadership was enacted at NUT headquarters on Thursday April 9th.

The Executive (minus the National Offices) acting as an appeal body, decided with only 3 votes against to expel two of its London officers and suspend five others.

The suspensions will last for one year with a further year's ban from union office.

The story starts on December 10th 1986, when the ruling Council of the London NUT voted to call upon the National Executive to support a one day national strike against the Baker Bill on January 13th 1987.

The Bill, which sets out to completely destroy teachers' pay, conditions, and negotiating rights, was then before Parliament. The National Union didn't want to strike. It preferred lobbies and letter-writing.

One one of the worst days of winter weather, in a driving blizzard, 6,000 teachers went on strike and 3,000 marched

By Mike Loosely
ILTA General Secretary (suspended again!)

through central London in defiance of both ILEA and their national union.

They realised that the fight against the Baker Bill was crucial.

The national union officers had already suspended the whole of the ruling council of ILTA and its officers (over 50 union members). Their crime was passing a motion and, apparently, displaying an intention of acting unofficially. No request to call off the strike was ever made.

Under the rules, a national disciplinary panel met and heard the two whole days of evidence. It found the "defendants" guilty, but reinstated them immediately. For these teachers anxious to fight Baker, this was a great victory.

Appeal

However, the National Officers did not view it that way! They decided to appeal against the "punishments".

It appears to be the first time the "prosecution" has gone to appeal. Perhaps they were influenced by the fact that the appeal would be heard by the rest of the Executive, would be final, and allow no further appeal to Annual Conference. The result was the decision of April 9th, a blatantly political one.

It is all part of what many on the Executive have seen as a battle between a dangerously militant London leadership and a "moderate" national leadership. London is the largest division in the country with 13,500 members. It is well organised, with good communications amongst its members, who have shown themselves well satisfied with a leadership that fights for their interests.

Vigorous

London has not seen eye-to-eye with the national view for some time. It campaigned vigorously against the recent ACAS deals at Coventry and Nottingham. These deals, in linking pay and conditions (to the detriment of the latter), had flown in the face of Conference policy.

The national leadership had only narrowly won majorities at a special Conference and in a national ballot of the membership. ILTA had organised effective publicity against these deals and had carried on the popular no-cover action at a time when the national union had already capitulated.

The national union leaders preferred to secure deals with Labour local authorities as a bulwark against the intervention of Baker. They relied on a Kinnock victory at the next election. ILTA Took a proper trade union view: there might not be a Labour government, and in any case you don't *sell* your conditions of service to your employer, whether Labour or Tory. This view has gained considerable support in the Union.

The national union saw its chance to remove an increasingly painful thorn in its side. Unfortunately, their plan went wrong. To begin with the Disciplinary Panel came up with the "wrong" decision, forcing the officers to resort to the appeal. Also, they had made a grave political error. They tried to discipline members for waging a campaign against the Baker legislation — at the very moment when the national union has at last been forced to take industrial action against it.

Inother words, the ILTA officers have been suspended for prematurely implementing union policy! Meanwhile, the national union's campaign is, as usual, too little, too late.

These issues are not dead. The fight against Baker will go on, and the question of the unjust suspensions will not go away.

ILEA: how we can fight compulsory redeployment

ILEA's decision to compulsorily redeploy teachers is a major attack on trade unionism.

The following are some practical and immediate things which can be done by teachers, other trade unionists, governors, students and socialist members of ILEA.

- All teachers who have been victimised by ILEA and designated for redeployment should demand to see their elected ILEA member. They should go accompanied with a friend and take detailed notes of what is said.
- The Labour Party, at ward and constituency level, must be the focus for discussion of the issues. Motions condemning the policy should be passed and sent as emergency resolutions to London Regional Labour Party Conference. ILEA members can be mandated by their local Labour Parties to vote against the policy. If such members refuse they are moving down the same road of unaccountability that the SDP founders travelled.
- Every possible effort should be made at school level to discuss the issue with support staff unions. NUPE and TGWU are particularly important because they are affiliated to the Labour Party. Their members, particularly active shop stewards, must ensure that union delegates vote *for* trade union rights and *against* the right wing of ILEA at the coming regional conference.
- Governing bodies should be convened to discuss this matter and should send motions condemning ILEA. The educational damage inflicted upon schools should form the centrepiece of motions from governing bodies. Labour governors are key people in this aspect of the campaign.
- Teacher members of the ILEA Education committee should table a motion to reverse the policy. This can be supported by a mass lobby of the Education Committee designed to persuade some members to switch their vote. It must be remembered that up to ten Labour members are now prepared to reconsider their vote.
- A mass meeting of all designated teachers, all those on temporary terminal contracts, and all union representatives should be arranged *quickly* at County Hall. This meeting should discuss the nature of the campaign required to deafet the policy.

By Steve Cowan
ILEA member, Westminster North

Anger

It would also be the first platform for a collective expression of the anger of designated teachers. It is right and proper that this should take place within County Hall — where teacher victimisation takes place.

- The Unions must work to secure television and radio time and should take action to counter the extreme right wing views presently coming from the newspapers, the government, and some ILEA members. The intention of this witch hunt is to deflate teacher militancy in preparation for the imposition of the Baker terms and conditions.
- Involve Outer London Labour Parties in passing motions to the Regional Conference. Many ILEA workers live in outer London so this concerns them. Also what happens in the ILEA often becomes practice elsewhere.
- No designated teachers hould co-operate with the bribe or with any of the so-called voluntary deals. No scheme is voluntary when the outcome is fixed in advance.
- Withdraw goodwill from the authority until the policy is changed. The imposition of this policy and the consequent breach in industrial relations reflects a major shift in ILEA's attitude towards the unions.
- Join the Socialist Teachers Alliance to ensure an efective campaigning voice for teachers on all issues.

EVENTS

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.

See *Building Briefing* (National page 8) for details of further events.

THU APR 23
★**Islington Labour Briefing** meeting, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N4, 8pm. Speakers from NALGO & ILTA discuss Labour Authority attacks on trade unions. All supporters/readers welcome.

SAT APR 25
★**Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group & Lesgislation for Lesbians and Gay Rights Campaign** joint meeting on law & immigration. 2-5pm, Hampden Community Centre, 150 Ossulton St, London NW1. Nearest tube/BR Euston or King's ×/St Pancras. Disabled access. Contact LGIG, BM Welcome, London WC1N 3XX or LLGRC, Rm 221, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AP.

★**CND march**. March through Southwark to join National CND demo: meet Camberwell Green, 9.30am.

MON APR 27
★**Westminster *Briefing* group**: inaugural meeting. 8pm, 2, Denbeigh Place, Pimlico, SW11. Contact Paula Watson, 638 5308, for further information.

★**Peckham CND**. "Radiation for beginners", at SCVS, above Times Furnishings, 135 Rye Lane.

TUE APR 28
★**Black people & policing workshop**, organised by London Strategic Policy Unit. Details: 633 5944.

APR 29-30
★**Policing & Civil Defence workshop**, organised by LSPU. Details as above.

TUE APR 28
★**NALGO Met District Broad Left** meeting to discuss National Conference & pay claim. 6.30pm, County Hall.

WED APR 29
★**Camden Labour Briefing** meeting. 8pm. Venue: contact Fred (387 1361) or Fran (431 0357).

MON MAY 11
★**Lambeth Labour Briefing** How do we fight the cuts? Meeting to discuss Lambeth budget; ILEA elections; building a local *Briefing* group. 7pm. Lambeth Town Hall.

★**Peckham CND**, with Harriet Harman MP, at SCVS, above Times Furnishings, 135 Rye Lane.

SAT MAY 16
★**Booksale**. 12-3, Labour Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham. Buy your *Briefing* here. Deptford & Lewisham Labour Parties.

THU MAY 28
★**Islington Labour Briefing** meeting, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N4. 8pm.

WED JUN 3
★**London Childcare Network**. Childcare & you, with Harriet Harman MP, 7.30pm, Conference Hall, St Matthew's Meeting Place, Brixton Hill. Come along and say what sort of childcare you want.

Evening Class
Social Anthropology
An introductory course for socialists and feminists
Lecturer: Chris Knight
(Department of Anthropology, University College, London)
7.30pm
Wednesdays
from April 29th
Regents Park Children's Library
Robert St, NW1
Wheelchair access
Details: 852 3790

ILEA BY-ELECTION



John McDonnell

Key campaign for the left

On May 7th the media, Thatcher and the Labour leadership will be pouring over the local government election results to guage the standing of the parties with the general election in sight.

Although there are Council elections across the country there is only one local goverment election in London — the ILEA by-election in Streatham.

The by-election has been caused by the death of a Tory ILEA councillor, who had a majority in May last year of only 1,500.

The seat is highly marginal and is on the hit list of target seats for Labour in the general election.

The Tories have neglected the constituency for years and a real backlash has grown up against them. The Liberals have no real presence in the area. As a result the ILEA seat is there for the taking.

I am fighting the campaign on the desperate need to improve local education services and to ensure ILEA stands firm against cuts. If Thatcher is re-elected, rate-capping will continue and ILEA will be faced next year with a massive budget crisis. We need more firm socialists on the ILEA to stand firm against any threatened cuts in jobs and services.

By John McDonnell
Candidate, Streatham ILEA seat

I am also standing on a platform opposed to ILEA's treatment of teachers on the issue of forced redeployment.

There is a real prospect of winning the seat if socialists across London come to Streatham to assist in the campaign over the next three weeks. The left in London need a victory. In Streatham we can demonstrate that campaigning as left socialists, firm on principle, we can win.

I appeal to all comrades to come to our aid in Streatham.

For information on how you can assist contact the agent, Phil Mason, 20 Crossman House, New Park Road, London SW2. 01-674 5369. Canvassing takes place every evening and Sundays — and don't forget to be there on May 7th!

More racial attacks in Newham

Newham Monitoring Project has had a caseload for the first 3 months of this year of 120 compared with 87 last year.

More than 80 of these cases are of racial harassment. The rest are of police harassment of Black people.

Even police figures show a 100% increase in racial attacks in Newham over the last year. They say this is due to the success of their Public Awareness Campaign.

The main reason is not this, but the grave increase in the number of racial attacks.

We have noticed this especially in schools. The Harris Survey — commissioned by Newham Council and published on March 11th showed a number of alarming developments:

- only 1 in 20 of racial attacks is reported to the police;
- of those, the police only take action in 1 in 10, which means police action in 1 in every 200 racial attacks;
- Asian women are the section of the population who feel the most vulnerable;
- more than two thirds of those attacked had been so more than once.

By Nishit Kanwar
Newham Monitoring Project

Our Project has documented 14 incidents of police harassment of the Tamil community since November — involving 58 individuals. Each incident concerned passport checks. There are more than 4,000 Tamils in Newham — the highest number in the country — but under this pressure, numbers are now beginning to leave.

Finally, we have monitored an increasing fascist presence in Newham, especially in Canning Town, and even now in East Ham, where the National Front now sell papers on Saturdays outside the tube station.