LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
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'NO GO' FOR THATCHER IN OUR INNER CITIES!

By KEITH VENESS
(NUPE Branch Secretary, Hackney Officers)

Immediately after her re-election, Thatcher went on telly to announce that her government "intended to sort out the inner cities".

It didn't require much imagination for those of us in NUPE and other council unions to realise just *who* exactly in the inner cities she intended to sort out!

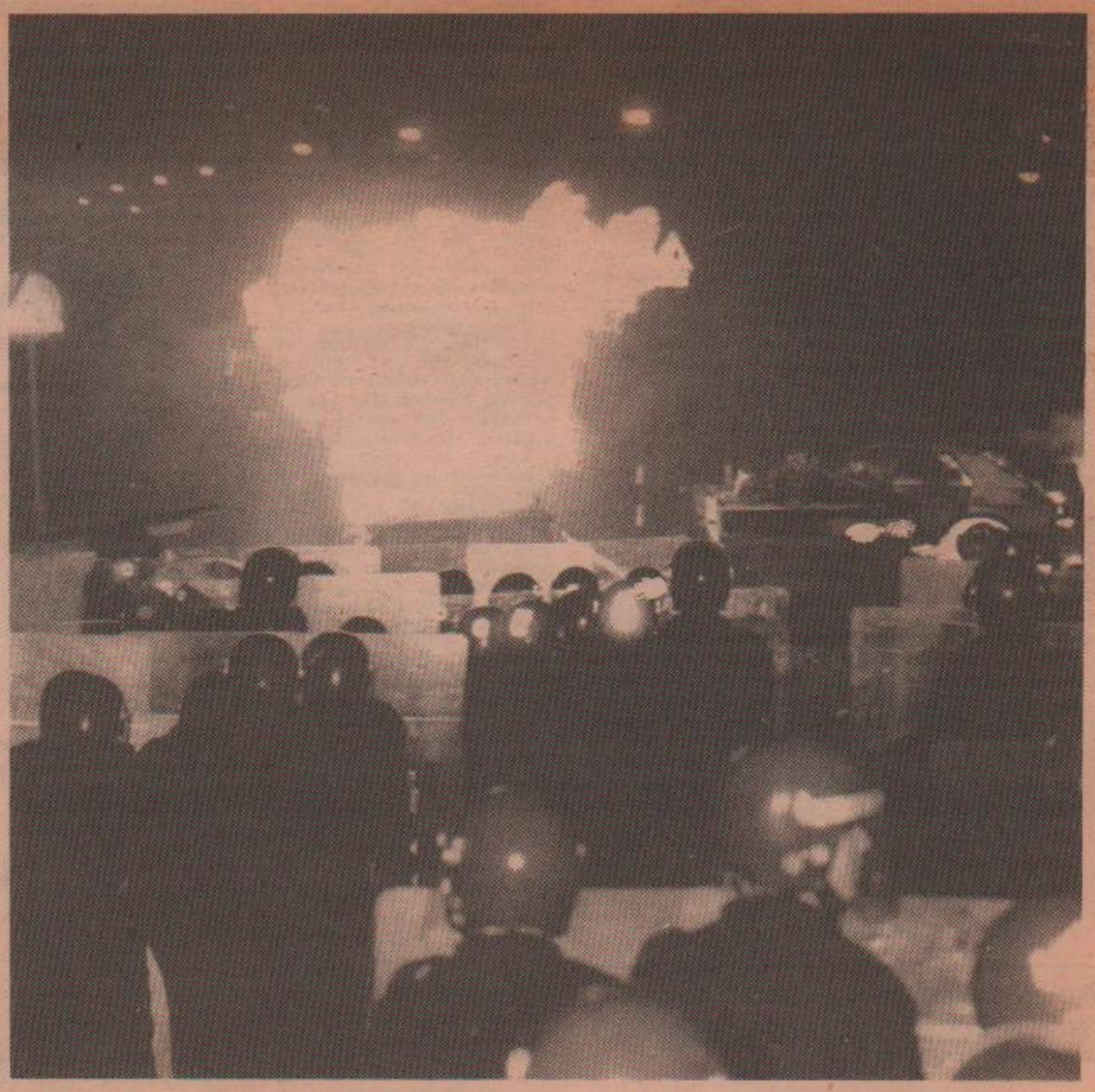
Her next act was to appoint Nicholas Ridley (the man who thinks Adam Smith was a Keynesian) to spearhead the assault. The Tory programme is certainly "radical" by any test. It will ultimately involve the dismantling of most council housing, the ending of many local services, and the handing over to big business of virtually any local provision that can be turned to profit.

The "Queen's Speech" on June 25th (which even caused a few raised eyebrows from its reader) went on to detail how London and other big cities were going to follow the lead of Hong Kong and Seoul. It contained four major proposals:

- Local authority housing will be undermined by extending "Right to Buy", by PAL (pick a landlord scheme — housing association or property speculator), by handing over housing powers to Docklands-style quangos, and by forcing rents up again and again to make council housing totally unattractive. The remaining 10-20% of council stock will then be run as "welfare housing" on the American model.
- The bill to privatise services vital to everyone (such as cleansing and road repairs, etc.) through compulsory tendering will be revived.
- Charges will be imposed on things like nursery places, meals-on-wheels, home helps, etc.
- Local authority control over education will be dismantled. City colleges will be government-run and schools in wealthy areas will be allowed to opt out of council control, following again the US model of rich private and poor public sectors of education.

The Tory assault has now moved to the heartlands of both trades unionism and the Labour vote. In Boroughs like Hackney, where my own union is based, the only large groups of organised workers are in the public

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Sorting out the inner cities Thatcher-style: if we can't say "no go" now, will this be the Tories' response?

PHOTO: J.P. Pictures Ltd

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

London Region Conference

Tell the right wing:

You lost us the election!

The London Labour Party Conference, postponed from March, will finally be held over the weekend of July 11th and 12th.

The Conference should be well timed to hold a reasoned discussion on the result of the general election and to start preparing to defend Londoners against another five years of Tory attacks.

Time for this discussion is being scheduled for the Saturday afternoon. The debate wil presumably be opened by the Chair or the General Secretary putting their views — or rather, those of Walworth Road and Kinnock's office, as the Regional EC hasn't met.

It will inevitably be polarised between those who believe that Labour's defeat, nationally and regionally, was caused by the so-called "London effect" — left councillors pursuing policies of equal opportunities and refusing to cut services — and those who reject this view and want the Conference to start organising a fightback.

The view that the London Left lost the election for Labour has to be firmly rejected before any fightback can be organised.

Regional officers have been careful in their public statements and have pointed out that bad results went side by side with good ones. But defeated candidates such as Alf Dubs have not been so reticent, repeating the post-Greenwich Hewitt theme that "grannies scared of lesbians" lost us the election. And Margaret Hodge, in a paper to the ALA, accepted that the so-called "London effect" lost us votes, ignoring the contradictory evidence in her own borough, Islington, where both our candidates increased their votes.

Yes, we did badly in London — and much worse than we should have done considering the good results in the Borough and ILEA elections only 12 months ago. But where campaigns have been run over a number of years by high-profile councils and constituency parties to expose government policies and explain Labour's to gain the support of and mobilise the black community, to involve and be part of all sections of the community, then people voted Labour.

By Joan Twelves
Vauxhall CLP

This was seen in Lambeth, but also in Islington, Southwark and Camden, where all the Labour candidates increased their share of the vote.

These areas have not been immune from London's demographic changes.They have been the focus of media attacks for years. Supporters of the "London effect" theory have to explain why in boroughs most identified with the left (in the media's broad sense of the word) the results were the best in London.

This is the most identifiable pattern in the London results — the one never mentioned by the Walworth Road psephologists. Of course, there were others specific to London.

● The loss of manufacturing industry, the resultant decline in trade union membership, and the parallel rise of the service and finance (non-unionised) sectors; the decline in private rented accommodation, increased owner-occupation and soaring property prices. The danger now, of course, is that this will be used by the right wing as the excuse for modifying policies to pander to the yuppy middle classes.

● That massive rate rises hit the working class as much as the middle class — something some of us have been saying for years. The election came too soon after April's rate bills for Ealing, Waltham Forest and Hammersmith & Fulham ratepayers to see any evidence of their rates paying for better services.

● Gerrymandering and slur campaigns. Wandsworth's ruthless eviction of the working class was matched by the disappearance of nearly 10,000 voters from Westminster North's register since 1983. And slurs against candidates (especially black comrades) worked when the leadership of the Party was seen by its silence and past actions to be endorsing the lies of the press.

As Jeremy Corbyn pointed out in the last issue of *Briefing*, where the left campaigned voters returned to Labour. We cannot allow the right to take the offensive, using "London" as a way of hiding *their* failure to win the election and setting the agenda for the coming years.

It is clear what line we can expect to come from the Chair of the London Party — with the backing of the LCC, the trade union bureaucrats and all those who have refused to fight for the last eight years and don't intend to change their habits now.

While the ballot boxes were still warm, the Chair of the London Party was backing the "staying in power at any price" line of Margaret Hodge and other council leaders at the ALA Labour Group.

Voting will be taking place at the Conference for the new Regional Executive Committee. Since the abolition of the GLC, the REC has had no clear role and has been increasingly ignored, not just by constituency and trade union activists who see it as irrelevant, but also by its own Chair and the national Party.

In fact, for the past six months, the REC and its committees have been being totally bypassed. The London Party is now run by Head Office, with Glenys Thornton acting as their willing messenger. No decisions of the Regional Campaigns Committee are ever implemented and the views of EC members are ignored — for example, election leaflets prepared by Nadine Finch (Chair of the Policy Committee) and Jeremy Corbyn (Vice Chair of the Regional Party) on women, pensioners and transport never got printed.

Electing left wingers to the REC won't change this situation, whatever mandate comes from the Conference, as long as the London Party is run by a "shadow" committee, handpicked by Walworth Road, of Glenys Thornton, Brian Nicholson, Margaret Hodge, Neil Fletcher and Chris Humphreys.

According to the *London Daily News*, NUPE is planning to propose changes to the REC to get rid of the women and YS representatives, and the "self-appointed prophets who appear as the voice of London." This is rich coming from a paid trade union official like Chris Humphreys who has consistently ignored the decision of his Regional Conference that their delegation to the London AGM — and consequently representatives on the REC — should only comprise lay members and who has been party to an appointed clique usurping the role of the Executive.

We have a major fight on our hands in London to defend our industries, transport system, housing stock, health service, education system and municipal services. The resolutions and amendments on the agenda of the Conference were submitted in January, with a recurring theme of "the next Labour government".

Emergency resolutions are needed to make the Conference topical. We need to develop our positive policies *and* work out clear strategies and tactics for campaigning to defend collective provision of jobs and services.

Each debate should focus on this — even if the precise wording of the resolution doesn't. The tone of the conference needs to be one of militancy, not demoralisation. The conference needs to be the starting point of our campaigning, sending a message to the Tories and Londoners that Labour is not defeated and is not going to let London be destroyed.

But when we debate the election and talk about the "London effect", and when we plan campaigns against the poll tax and to defend the ILEA, questions need to be asked from the floor about who *was* actually running London's election campaign, who the Chair thinks she is accountable to and what is the role of the Regional EC if all decisions relating to London are being taken elsewhere. Otherwise the whole weekend will be a waste of time.

BRIEFING FRINGE MEETING

Sunday July 12th, 12.30pm

Walworth Town Hall
Walworth Road (opposite Labour Party HQ)

Speakers:
Mildred Gordon, *MP*
Sharon Atkin
Jo Fawkes, *Chair, Camden NALGO*
Mandy Mudd, *Positive Images*

Chair:
Jeremy Corbyn, *MP*

Campaign Forum/Labour Briefing FRINGE MEETING

Saturday June 11th, 12.45pm

London College of Printing
Elephant & Castle

Speakers:
Eric Heffer, *MP*
Ann Pettifor, *LWAC*
Peter Willsman, *CLPD*
Linda Bellos, *LP Black Sections*
Graham Bash, *Labour Briefing*
LCLGR

Briefing's slate for the REC elections

The Chair & Treasurer (Glenys Thornton & Brian Nicholson) will be elected unopposed.

The 8 women representatives have already been elected by Regional Women's Conference.

Constituency Section

Only the CLPs in the boroughs concerned can vote to elect their borough'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* recommends support for the following (borough group in brackets):

Martin Hughes, *Enfield North*, (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)

Trade Union Section

Briefing feels it can only give positive support to two of the comrades standing — Bernard Laker (ASTMS) and Paul Moore (NCU).

Support Lesbian & Gay Rights!
Support Labour's policy!
Lobby of London Labour delegates on 12 noon, July 11th, Leisure Centre, Elephant & Castle
Bring your banners!
Support resolution 93!
Organised by LCLGR

No to compulsory redundancies!
No to the imposition of Baker's conditions!
Lobby of London Region Conference, Saturday July 11th, 9am onwards, Leisure Centre, Elephant and Castle
Organised by Inner London Teachers' Association

POLITICAL COMMITTEE

LONDON REGION CRS Co-operative Retail Services Ltd. SAYS SUPPORT

SOCIALISM AT WORK
DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

It was at the Swansea Co-operative Congress in 1917 that the Co-op took the historic decision to enter politics. The Movement wanted direct representation by Co-operators in the House of Commons. It saw this as the most effective means of "voicing the demands of the Co-operative Movement and safeguarding its interests".

Political involvement had been suggested before, most seriously in 1895 and again a few years later as the Trade Unions brought the Labour Party into existence. But it was the punitive actions of the war-time coalition government that spurred action. Co-op vehicles had been unfairly requisitioned; far more Co-op employees had been conscripted than other retail employees; and the allocation of foodstuffs had shortchanged the Co-op. The last straw was the imposition of the "windfall profits tax" on Co-op Societies in 1917. This meant taxing co-operators' savings. For us it was not an income tax as it was for other retailers.

An Emergency Co-operative Congress was convened at Central Hall, Westminster, on 17th and 18th October 1917, which agreed to set up the Co-operative Party. W.T. Allen, Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, proposed the historic motion declaring:-

"Co-operation is a theory of society and, therefore, a legitimate basis for a political party".

Today's Co-operative Party takes its ideological root from this source, the inspiration of Robert Owen and the Rochdale Pioneers. Its ultimate objective is the creation of the Co-operative Commonwealth, a vision of a Socialist Utopia based upon bottom-upwards not top-downwards control of society.

JOIN THE COOPERATIVE PARTY
SHOP AT THE COOP

For further information contact:- Andy Love, Political Secretary, CRS Limited, 78-102 The Broadway, Stratford, London E15 1NL.

Interview with Steve King

No cuts — still the bottom line

STEVE KING was recently elected leader of Haringey Council in succession to Bernie Grant. Haringey has repeatedly hit the headlines in recent years — over Broadwater Farm, "positive images", and recent challenges to its budget by the District Auditor. *Briefing* spoke to Steve at the Civic Centre in Wood Green.

***Briefing:* Thatcher's "inner cities" drive is clearly aimed at places like Haringey. How do you think the Councils should respond to the package announced in the Queen's Speech, in particular the poll tax proposal?**

Steve King: We have to publicise as widely as possible that the poll tax is an attack on the right to vote. We have to link it with the social engineering proposals on Council housing and education and see these all as attempts to eliminate key pockets of Labour strength.

***Briefing:* Haringey has its share of relatively prosperous, white working class people, including many Council tenants, who seem to have abandoned Labour. How do we regain their support?**

Steve King: On certain estates we have demonstrated we can maintain a Labour presence and win Labour support, through Council, Labour Party, and local community group activities.

These estates are, however, predominantly Black. Where estates are mainly white, two tasks are posed. First, we have to ensure that we put a stop to Council policies that create or preserve all-white estates, and promote a full mixture of all our citizenry on all our estates.

Secondly, we have to persuade the white Council tenants and others whose support we have lost that we are not appealing solely to their better instincts, their love of their neighbours, but also to their common class interests with Black people, with women, with the dispossessed in general, and that it is in their own interests to stay with or come back to Labour.

***Briefing:* The Council's budget is under increasing pressure. This raises the old question of legality versus illegality, defiance versus compliance.**

Steve King: Experience has shown we need an issue, a deadline, a clear bottom line, around which we can mobilise people. Mobilising around something as wide as the future of local government — which is in effect what we are talking about — is difficult if not impossible. The problem at the moment is that no one is clear as to whether what we are doing will be considered legal or illegal. What we need therefore is a constant reiteration of the line with which we won the last local elections — no cuts in jobs or services.

We need a clear indication from the local Party that they will support the Labour Group if we are forced to adopt an illegal road.

***Briefing:* The bottom line then is no cuts. When we reach it, what alternatives present themselves?**

Steve King: There will be a debate over what is and isn't a cut — some of which we've already had. There will be pressure on us to freeze vacancies. We need a ringing endorsement from our workforce and trades unions that not only do they want us to fight to maintain their jobs, but to maintain the services as well, and therefore to continue filling vacancies.

No one knows for certain how the next year or so will shape up. It is incumbent on us — the people who came up through the Party, through the labour movement — to stick to our commitment to maintain services and jobs at all costs.

***Briefing:* Haringey has received more than its fair share of media abuse. How do we combat the bad press?**

Steve King: I don't think we can. The media will say whatever it is they wish to say, whatever it is they are told to say, regardless of our efforts.

A victory in a major court case would help us. We're suing the *Mail* at the moment over the "Ba ba Black Sheep" story. If we were to win that, and receive substantial costs, it would give us a bit of clout in the future.

We also need more support from those who are supposedly our allies. We need our national leadership to come to our aid unhesitatingly when we are attacked.

Coffee

Also, we can present some of our policy decisions more clearly than we have done in the past. For example, the Nicaraguan coffee story, of which great play was made, largely because we didn't promote the story in the first place. We didn't make it clear why we had taken this decision — that we were buying this coffee for political reasons, to support the people in Nicaragua.

***Briefing:* The uprising at Broadwater Farm was a watershed in the history of the Borough. What is the Council's role in relation to the planned Civil Rights march?**

Steve King: Thanks to the efforts of Bernie Grant, we are working with the people on the Farm, rather than against them. I'll seek to maintain that.

We will give as much support as we can to the Civil Rights initiative on request from and in concert with the people on the Farm. I would hope that all members of the Labour Group will take part in the March itself.

We must make clear that we do find common cause with the people on Broadwater Farm, as well as with all the other campaigns around the deaths of Black people in the hands of the police, and the miners and other trade unionists under attack.

***Briefing:* What is your approach as a white person replacing someone who was Britain's first Black Council leader?**

Steve King: I intend to maintain and develop all the links with Black groups which have been established so painstakingly in the past few years. Of course, it's a great advantage to have Martha Osamor as Deputy Leader because of her own strong links to the Black community in Haringey.

***Briefing:* The "positive images" initiative has been unique to Haringey. How strong is the Council's commitment to the lesbian and gay rights policy? What lessons can we learn from our struggle with the backlash over the last year?**

Steve King: My own priority is to get the policy implemented and running within a year. We then have two more years for the policy to be in place before the election, which will demonstrate our commitment to lesbian and gay rights and will also demonstrate quite clearly — to everyone except the bigots — that there is nothing to fear here and that this is an integral part of our equal opportunities policy, from which they and their children will benefit.

***Briefing:* What plans have you got to follow up last year's Sinn Fein visit?**

Steve King: We hope to reciprocate the visit. Irish groups in the Borough are now meeting and planning a visit to the Six Counties so that Labour Councillors, Party members, and other people from the community can speak again with the comrades who came to Haringey last year.

Again, we need to follow the example of our comrade from North Islington, Jeremy Corbyn, who has never bowed down to pressure on this issue or gone back on his commitment to the Irish both here and in Ireland.

***Briefing:* What's your response to the recent ALA meeting?**

Steve King: It's clear from the meeting that if the Leaders take their various Groups with them there is little basis for a united campaign of total resistance to the government.

Comrades are prepared to campaign and to argue but the overwhelming tenor of the debate was one of retrenchment and trimming as necessary. Personally, I reject this line completely and would hope that the Party and the Group in Haringey feels the same way. We should resolve to stand firm on no cuts in jobs or services.



Haringey Council leader Steve King: dresses up for a photo call.

For details of the Civil Rights march planned in Haringey see National *Labour Briefing*, page 2

London RESISTANCE

Compiled by Dan Carter

The Tories are gearing up for a major offensive, — but London will resist! *London Labour Briefing* feels it is important we try to provide space so that we can all follow where the fight-back against the Tories is taking place, in the community and in the trade unions. As well as our usual coverage in longer articles, please will comrades send us short reports or updates on actions going on. Send your brief articles to PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ; or ring us on 01 733 7016 — keep us in touch with what's going on in your area.

NALGO

Taking action

NALGO members took one-day strike action in Waltham Forest over a shortage of social workers and the need for better pay. In New Cross, at Goldsmiths College, the NALGO branch joined a students union gala day to publicise threatened cuts of £3 million; the branch has a policy of strike action if the cuts lead to compulsory redundancies.

Postal workers

Solidarity in dispute

The postal dispute in West Central, followed by solidarity action in neighbouring areas by postalworkers in the UCW has led to around a third of a million items of mail being blocked.

Over 20,000 addresses in central London were without deliveries and post boxes in the area were sealed.

The dispute arose over the employment of temporary sorters and the solidarity action from Mount Pleasant took place when business tried to break the strike by despatching their mail elsewhere.

Lewisham

Labour backs CPSA strike

One of the first signs of a fightback against the newly-elected government is coming from CPSA members across London.

East Lewisham Labour Party voted to back the strikers at the Catford Unemployed Benefit Office before the general election and a CPSA member there spoke at the Party's first campaign meeting after the election.

At Catford UBO, there is a turnover of 25% and an inexperience level of 30% — many workers are low paid and have to claim extra benefits themselves.

Being in the front line of claimants' anger, they have to suffer considerable abuse when payments do not come or are stopped.

The CPSA strikers are working closely with the Town Hall NALGO staff and have support from Catford Unemployed Centre and left councillors. Having had their confidence boosted by the election of John McCreadie as Deputy General Secretary of the union, they are now campaigning for further strike action in the ballot.

Fighting Westminster privatisation

By Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

A crisis is brewing in Westminster over the response of both NUPE and NALGO to Westminster City Council's privatisation plans.

The Council intends to privatise all thirteen of its service departments and so far, the local union bureaucracy has failed to organise any effective opposition.

So frustrated have a section of the membership become that a group of activists have set up **Westminster Workers against the Cuts** (WWAC), a joint NUPE-NALGO rank and file organisation to organise the fightback themselves.

But they have an uphill struggle on their hands. The local union officials seem intent on preventing any genuine challenge to Lady Porter's Tories.

Action

True, NALGO did hold a Day of Action on April 29th (not joined by NUPE), in protest against cuts and the Council's decision to withdraw from the National Joint Council, but since then a branch motion calling for a strike ballot has been rejected by the District Organisation Officer and the National Emergency Committee.

Instead, a ballot on possible non-compliance is being held at workplace meetings where it seems union officers have been urging the acceptance of in-house tendering as the only way of coping with privatisation.

Yet they must know that in most sections in-house tenders have no chance of success and even where they might be accepted they will lead to job losses, pay cuts and worse conditions. In refuse collection, for example, the number of men on each wagon will be reduced from five to four.

NUPE is following the same path. A series of section meetings is being held, at which the officers are supporting in-house tendering with such fervour that members of WWAC, who have urged a Westminster-wide strike and a campaign to mobilise both the workers in all local government unions and the users of the council services, have been subjected to organised abuse, physical violence and intimidation.

One of the problems seems to be that the NUPE shop stewards, Len Showell and Larry Quilty, are both supervisors and their jobs are not in danger — hence what appears to be their willingness to co-operate with management.

Much of the workforce is frankly demoralised and terrified. The defeat of the miners and the printers has sapped their will to fight and many just seem to be shutting their eyes and praying "please God, not me".

Against this background the local Labour Parties and the Labour Group on Westminster City Council need to organise immediately a broad campaign to support WWAC. The community must be aroused and all users of council services alerted to the dangers ahead.

Only in this way can the union officers be persuaded into a principled stand and the workforce heartened to engage in a genuine struggle.

EVENTS

Send details of events in London to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ, or phone them in on 733 7016. Please include access details. Our usual Events compiler is on holiday — so please help us out by writing or phoning in.

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

SAT JUL 18
★**Nicaragua benefit** for women in Nicaragua, organised by Lewisham Nicaragua Support Group. 8pm, Labour Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham. (The last one sold out, so make sure you're there early!)

TUE JUL 14
★**Lewisham Labour Left** meeting: Where now after the election? 8pm, Deptford Town Hall, New Cross Road SE14. All welcome.

THU 23 JULY
★**Islington Briefing** meeting: Organise the Fightback! 8pm, Red Rose Centre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N4.

Come along and discuss and help to organise for a fightback. The Party should turn outwards not inwards! Support those fighting back — civil servants, teachers, etc! Stop the witch-hunt! Fight the Tories!

'NO GO' FOR THATCHER IN OUR CITIES

Continued from front page

sector (mainly the Council and ILEA) and these provide much of the driving force for both the union movement and the Labour Party locally.

Nothing less than the total destruction of municipal power will satisfy this government. Having lost virtually every seat in major cities like Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Stoke and Leicester — and having come a bad third in much of Inner London — Thatcher feels she has *nothing to lose* in taking apart local democracy and services.

WE HAVE TO PROVE HER WRONG!

What is the initial response from our leaders — benumbed at both the failure of the Kinnock road-show and the relative success of the hard left in the elections — to this onslaught?

As might be expected, the senile toothless bulldog of the TUC can barely bring itself to growl. The Labour Party leadership announces it will be busy in the lobbies of the Westminster "gas-house".

Various individual union leaders are noticeable only by their low profile. There has been an absence both of fighting talk, and — more important — actual planning for a real fightback.

More of a surprise has been the response of Labour Council leaders in London. Margaret Hodge, as Chair of the ALA, went straight into print to tell us that "defiance is not an option" and seemed to be suggesting that compliance and negotiation was the only way to save anything at all — though why Ridley should even bother to negotiate in the face of this sort of strategy was not made clear!

In fact, defiance and confrontation are fast becoming the *only* way of fighting. We will need to mobilise thousands of tenants to reject the "PAL" options, industrial action to beat off the privateers, and a united refusal to comply with the government's highflying quangos.

The first test for councillors will probably be the rent rises planned for April next year — as the government cuts the link between the rates and the Housing Revenue Account. This will require councillors to vote for rises of around £5 to £6 each week.

If Labour councillors meekly raise their hands for this, we will probably lose every bye-election for the next three years.

Of course, the District Auditor will be happily advising them of dire consequences if they do not. What is our response to this? **Resign, comply, or defy** — a brutally simple choice indeed.

The resigning option has started to surface amongst some of the more trendy "class of '82" councillors who apparently didn't think that fighting for working class people might involve a few cracked heads.

My members cannot resign and go off to jobs as stockbrokers a few miles down the road, nor can tenants decide to resign and buy a bijoux terrace in Docklands.

Any Labour or trades union representative who resigns and walks away from this fight will never be forgiven by those who have to stay and battle on.

The battle is far from one-sided. This time Thatcher will not be taking on the "official" leaders but those of us around *Briefing* and the local government left. They will not find us a push-over, just as they did not find Lambeth and Liverpool quite the easy job they believed. Whatever the sneers from the right or the ultra-left, ratecapping never succeeded in cutting one job or any services. The unity of the Boroughs and the mobilisation during the rate-capping campaign show what can be achieved.

On the trades union side, we intend to revive the "London Bridge" structure of rank-and-file shop stewards across the London Boroughs which was very powerful in 1985 but has since fallen away. A relaunch of the campaign took place at an all-Hackney stewards rally on July 1st and we intend to go onto a battle-footing from there on in.

We only have a few months to prepare. We must use these months to build up support on the estates, in the workforces, and throughout the community. This is not a fight of our making — but we had better be prepared to use every instrument in our arsenal to win it.

Labour Party Black Sections

sends socialist greetings to delegates of the London Labour Party Conference. We urge all delegates to support Black Sections and fight all witch-hunts in the party.

Forward to a Labour victory at the next general election!

CHAIR Marc Wandsworth

SECRETARY Kingsley Abrams

LSPU workers won't be sold out

Keeping a voice for London

The London left has been set up within the Labour Party as the scapegoat for the general election defeat.

According to the *Independent* (29.6.87) senior Labour MPs are calling for a "...clear cut of hard-line London left-wingers, supporters of Sinn Fein and Marxist socialists through a rewriting of the Party rule book."

Speaking on the Queen's speech, Thatcher said:

"Just as we took power from the trade unidn bosses and restored it to their members, so we must now extend to the people new freedoms and responsibilities in housing, education and local authority finance... Nowhere are the damaging effects of dependence on socialism seen more clearly than in some of our inner cities."

Against this background of internal and external attacks, the Borough leaders and their Groups have started a debate on the future of London-wide bodies such as the Association of London Authorities, the London Strategic Policy Unit, the Docklands Team, the London Ecology Unit, and the Disability Resource Unit.

By *Briefing* supporters working at LSPU

Margaret Hodge, Chair of the ALA, has set the political agenda with a discussion paper that the *Daily News* (24.6.87) described as a "Council climbdown". She dismisses any strategy of defiance such as that led by Lambeth and Liverpool, and instead talks about "unpleasant choices" — cuts, in plain language.

Organised

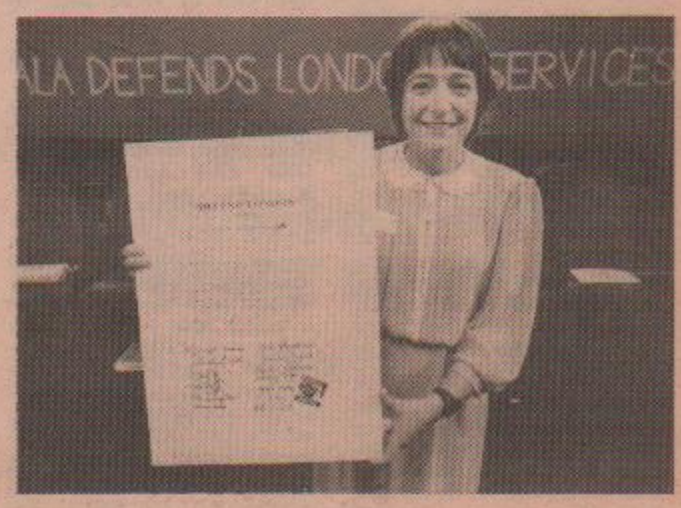
Linda Bellos, Chair of the London Strategic Policy Committee, is advocating a substantial restructuring of the London-wide bodies and a strengthening of the ALA. Unfortunately, some Labour Groups may see London-wide bodies as an optional extra of the kind that can easily be shed as they duck any fight to defend jobs and services. Such parochialism must be strongly resisted.

Labour Councils should be launching a massive campaign against the government's legislative propoals. To do that the London Left needs some kind of collective identity. If we are to have any kind of cross-London strategic approach it is essential that the London-wide bodies continue in some form.

The chaos of GLC abolition left London with a confusing myriad of joint boards and units. This combined with a third Thatcher term means that it is necessary to consider serious reorganisation.

If this debate is to take place in a constructive fashion it must take place in the context of a *redeployment agreement negotiated with the trades unions*. There must be an overall strategic approach to the reorganisation — not empire building and the pleading of special cases.

Above all those of us involved in local government as party activists and members must ensure that all decisions are made in the open and not cobbled together by Borough leaders around a private table.



Margaret Hodge: how times change...

Frontline local government

Briefing starts the fightback!

More than 50 local government activists attended a *Briefing* meeting on June 27th to discuss the new Tory plans for local government. The meeting, which included councillors, trade union branch secretaries, CLP officers, and other activists from more than a dozen London boroughs, heard Reg Race outline the gamut of Tory plans for local government. Jo Fawkes, from Camden NALGO, and Cllr Greg Tucker from Lambeth, both spoke of the need for a united campaign of defiance against the Tory plans from the workforce, the local community, local CLPs, unions and Councils, and opposed the limp surrender proposed by the Council leaders in the ALA. The following statement was agreed at the meeting and signatories are sought from trade union and CLP activists, Councillors and others.

The new Tory government plans a barrage of attacks on local authorities:

- a "community charge" (poll tax) to replace rates, which will drastically hit the less well off.
- Privatisation of six areas of local services, leading to job loss and service deterioration.
- Forcing local authorities to hand over estates to new landlords or trusts.
- Ending local authority subsidies to council rents, leading to huge rent rises.
- Allowing local authorities to opt out of the ILEA, undermining a democratically-elected London-wide authority.
- Allowing local schools to opt out of LEA control, thus introducing selection by the back door.
- Ending contract compliance conditions by local authorities, thus undermining equal opportunities and progressive service conditions policies.
- Curbing local authorities' power to publicise their policies and criticise the government.
- Establishing more Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) thereby taking away local authority democracy and accountability.
- Continuing the financial squeeze on local government through curbing so-called creative accountancy.

Taken as a whole they represent an ever more serious attack on local democracy, jobs, services, and living standards than the previous Thatcher years.

No strategy can successfully oppose these Tory plans unless it unites all those who will lose out under these plans — the workforce in local government, the local community, the voluntary sector, the unions, Labour Parties, tenants, teachers and parents — and mobilises them in a fight against the Tories.

Any strategy which attempts to put one sector under attack against another — defending services is more important than jobs, jobs are more important than tenants, etc. — will undermine the defence of local government against the Tory onslaught. Nor can the response be organised solely on a local basis, each at their own pace — it is vital that every borough prepares now a unified campaign with other boroughs. Such a campaign should:

- Fight Tory attacks on local government and mount a propaganda campaign to explain the achievements of Labour in local government.
- Demand more money for local jobs and services under democratic control.
- Oppose job losses, vacancy freezes, or slowdowns in recruitment.
- Oppose cuts or deterioration in services or service delivery.
- Oppose attacks on local living standards through rent rises.
- Mount an offensive campaign opposing privatisation, and calling for democratic control of all local services.
- Oppose the break up of the ILEA and call for the democratic control of all publicly-used services, whether currently controlled by local authorities, quangos, development corporations, or other bodies.

The left should argue within each borough and across London for a broad based campaign involving all those under threat — the community, workforce, the Party and unions, Council, voluntary sector, tenants — to establish the real social needs of the borough and the resources needed to meet them. Such a campaign should mobilise the maximum support for the defence of jobs, services, and local living standards and their expansion through additional government money, and against the range of other government attacks on local government. Propaganda must be prepared around the need for democratic control and accountability of local services, against the poll tax and the financial squeeze on local government, to prepare for whichever attack is phased in first by the Tories.

The left will start this campaign as a minority in each borough and in each union. But across London as a whole there will be considerable support for this fighting approach and against caving into the Tories. The left must seek every tactical opportunity locally and across London to express the full extent of its support. It should use all pan-London levers such as the ALA, London Bridge, LVSC, ILTA, London Region Labour Party as wel! as local Labour Groups, Labour Parties and unions to build support for a fighting strategy.

Please add my name to the *Briefing* statement on defending local government:

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Organisation .....

Capacity in which signing statement .....

.....

Signature .....

Please return this slip to *Labour Briefing*, PO Box 457, London SW2 5UZ.