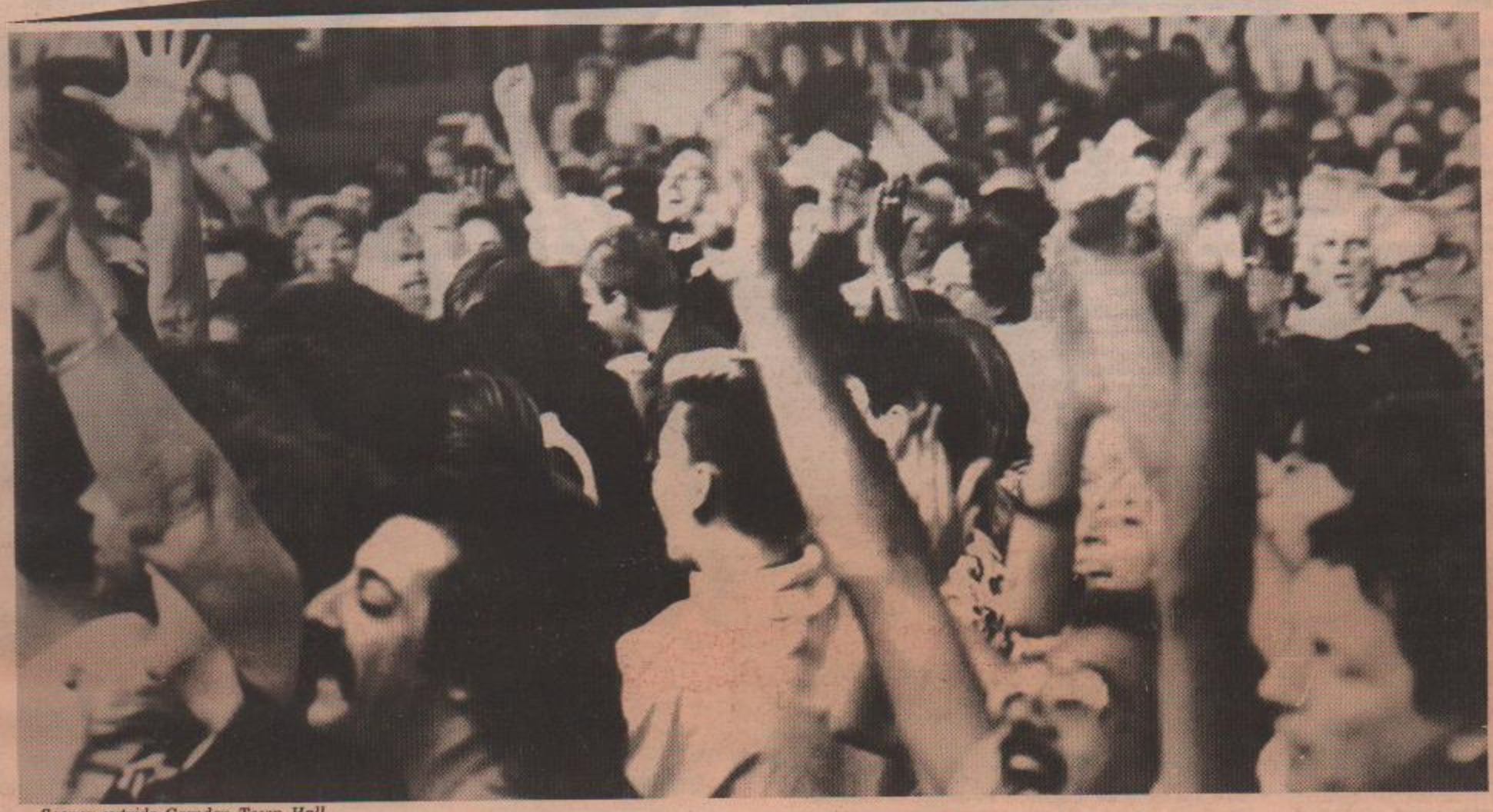
LONDON LABOUR
BRIEFING
40p
No78 SUMMER 1987



Scenes outside Camden Town Hall

Camden nine call to action:

FIGHTBACK NOT CUTBACK!

Within days of the General Election result, the Camden Council leadership were putting together a cuts package designed to clear the £12 million shortfall in this year's budget.

There was no discussion about this tactic.

There was no attempt to consult either the local parties, the trade unions, or the community organisations — just an overwhelming desire on the part of the leadership to "balance the books" and take whatever measures were necessary to comply with both the newly elected Tory government and the rejuvenated District Auditor.

The political and practical consequences of this strategy have been appalling.

In political terms the Leadership have simply ignored their responsibility to develop a strategy based on resistance. There has been no attempt to defend jobs and services, and there has certainly been no attempt to either consult or mobilise the trade unions and the community organisations — those who will be at the sharp end of the cuts package. In the words of one prominent right winger *"The Manifesto has been thrown out of the window".*

By:
Councillor Kate Allen, Chair, Staff & Management Committee
Councillor Steve Bevington, Chair, Housing Management Committee
Councillor Angela Birtill, Vice-Chair, Staff & Management Committee
Councillor Caroline Holding, Vice-Chair, Employment Committee
Councillor Karin Newbury
Councillor Gloria Lazenby, Vice-Chair, Leisure Committee
Councillor Sandra Plummer, Chair, Lesbian & Gay Committee
Councillor Graham Shurety, Chair, Grants Committee
Councillor Adrian States, Vice-Chair, Lesbian & Gay Committee

In practical terms, the Town Hall has been turned into "Fortress Camden", the building locked and barricaded against intrusion by the community, workers sent home at 5 o'clock in order to empty the building, and security guards employed to prevent access at every entrance — even deputations to the Labour Group are now accompanied by Security Guards.

The alienation of the Leadership from the workforce and the community has accelerated to the point that the Leadership are neither believed nor listened to.

They have refused to say when — if ever — they will begin the process of resistance.

However, resistance to the Leadership is increasing. Both within the Council and within the local Labour Parties there is genuine anger about the way in which the cuts have been implemented and the way in which the package has been railroaded through the Party. We voted against the cuts package in full Council and resolutions are already pouring in from furious branches to the General Committees.

Continued on back page

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

London Labour Party AGM

Scapegoating the left

"The London Party has to ask itself some hard questions, because the rest of the Party is asking them.

"Why in London alone was there an actual swing against Labour?" asked Larry Whitty on the second day of the London Labour Party AGM.

That question dominated both days of the Conference. But rather than try to analyse Labour's defeat rationally, Party members preferred to blame themselves, or at least the loony left sitting next to them.

On the first day, the LCC had laid out their own perspective. A series of failed parliamentary candidates came to the rostrum to whinge about how they had been let down by the left. Having extolled the personal performance of Neil Kinnock and found the excuse of "major demographic changes" to explain why they personally had not been able to galvanise the electorate they set about the hunt for scapegoats.

Without coming out in the open, and calling for equal opportunities policies to be ditched, they attacked "the image of Labour Councils ignoring the concerns of the majority," and "the lack of discipline from some prominent individuals."

You could be forgiven for agreeing with them until you realised they did not mean the inability of Councils to deliver decent services, but the fact that some have paper policies on gay rights; or that rather than Peter Shore's attack on Party policy, they meant Sharon Atkin's simple assertions that the Party has a long way yet to go before it can call itself non-racist.

It was left to a few individuals, such as Alf Filer from Brent, to point out that the national campaign had been awful, that you could not combat media attacks when national leaders chimed in with media denunciations of the left.

The AGM agreed that the answer to our problems — aside from launching a membership drive — was vigorously to distance the Party from any unrepresentative actions by the Left and condemn anyone who might defy the NEC.

At the same time Glenys Thornton, Chair of the London Party, blaming the Regional Executive for its lack of campaigning (nothing to do with her, of course) pushed through a special report which commits the Party to a recall AGM in the autumn.

By Greg Tucker
Lambeth councillor

Its main task will be to re-examine the structure of the Regional Executive. Having failed over the weekend in an attempt to destroy the right of the London Women's Conference to elect its representatives on the Regional Executive, their next target will be to weaken the role of the Constituency Labour Party section.

This year already saw a new structure for the Constituency section with members elected from *pairs of Boroughs*. This led to a number of changes on the executive, although key figures like Jeremy Corbyn and Joan Twelves were re-elected and the left right balance remained the same.

On the question of what to do next, the AGM decided to bury its head in the sand. In a report from the ALA, Margaret Hodge gave a lecture on "our socialist responsibility — to remain in power and use all the imagination at our disposal." We are asked to pretend that Councils will not be making cuts!

If this message was not clear then Neil Fletcher, in his ILEA report, swept away any last illusions. Defending the policy of compulsory redeployment and ILEA's attacks on teachers he blamed the NUT, and the ILTA leadership in particular, for ILEA's problems.

But then of course the NUT is not a real union — it is not affiliated to the Labour Party. Despite his disgraceful witch-hunting speech, the ILEA report was easily carried on a card vote.

Nevertheless, all was not going the way of the right. On a close card vote, the Conference agreed to reject "one member, one vote" and upheld the accountability of MPs to their General Committees. Although we had earlier been told to keep quiet about lesbian and gay policies and instead focus on "good" issues like housing and health, the AGM overwhelmingly welcomed the Positive Images campaign from Haringey and agreed to a sustained campaign against homophobia. Resolutions on real social ownership and nationalisation under workers' control were also passed.

A lively debate on Black Sections saw speaker after speaker calling for the right of Black people to play a full role in the Party, only to be massively defeated on a card vote.

Despite the vote it was clear the argument was being won, with the only speech against which included such gems as "I can't join a women's section because I am not a woman, but I don't discriminate against women — I'm married to one," causing uproar in the meeting.

In the wake of the General Election, and with a continuing failure of the centre-left to put forward a strategy for fighting the Tories, the London Labour Party continued this year to drift to the right. It was left to a successful fringe meeting organised by *Briefing* to raise any glimmer of a fightback.



Terry Ashton

Round-up of fightback in London

CAMDEN. In response to Council vacancy freeze, ending temporary contracts, and other threatened cuts, NALGO mass meeting voted to oppose cuts, refuse to co-operate with Council, and to endorse Camden-wide campaigning against proposed cuts in jobs and services. Meeting of voluntary organisations' representatives also voted against cuts. But NUPE mass meeting voted to "co-operate with Council". Meeting to launch borough-wide campaign, against cuts on July 29th called by 9 councillors with trade union support.

BRENT. Labour Group seeking £7m cuts this year has asked local Party for proposals. Joint shop stewards committee of all unions, except NUT, voted against cuts in jobs and services, and for a lobby of the Council meeting on July 29th. At least 7-9 councillors expected to oppose cuts. Left won good hearing at Party consultative meeting. *Briefing* helping to co-ordinate anti-cuts campaigning.

ISLINGTON. Special Labour Group on 19th discussed huge attacks for next financial year. Joint Trade Union Committee and NALGO Executive voted against cuts in jobs and services, and to set up a borough anti-Cuts Committee at meting on August 3rd. A handful of councillors expected to oppose cuts.

HARINGEY. Council meeting voted down all options for resolving financial crisis. Bernie Grant and Labour Right motion for 3% cuts across the board defeated 20-20 with Tories abstaining. Steve King & left motion for no cuts in jobs and servies also defeated. Further Council meeting expected July 27th. Plans to launch Haringey Fight Back community anti-cuts campaign in September.

LAMBETH. Labour Group referred to Party for proposals to meet financial crisis. Group voted to "defend" jobs and services and support London wide campaigns and events on that basis, but "no cuts" amendment from left minority councillors voted down by right-centre including Linda Bellos.

LSPU. Governing body of member boroughs agreed to shut down "GLC in exile", London Strategic Policy Unit, at end of March '88 with loss of 300 jobs. Some boroughs even hesitating on whether to redeploy staff.

London RESISTANCE

Compiled by Dan Carter

Chessington South BLP

Growing attacks from the right!

It is now clear that the right wing of Surbiton CLP have had it in mind for some months to neutralise the Left in its Chessington South Branch.

In Surbiton the Right comprises the supporters of Kinnock as well as the Old Guard Right of Wilson and Callaghan.

They include such figures as Andrew MacKinlay, Labour's PPC in Peterborough, and Allister McGowan, Surbiton's own PPC.

At the General Committee meeting less than a week after polling day, Chessington socialists were effectively made scapegoats for the poor Surbiton General Election result — the worst in North-east Surrey as opposed to the comparative best in 1983.

On an overwhelming vote "the state of Chessington South Branch" was referred to the Organisation & Propaganda sub-committee of the Party.

However at that sub-committee's meeting on July 7th, to follow through the attack by merging Chessington South into the two neighbouring wards of Chessington North and Hook, the Right wing was only able to demonstrate its own disarray and disorganisation.

The other wards had the previous week come out strong-

By John Hayball
Chair, Chessington South BLP

basis of their aversion to our politics and desire to keep them "in quarantine" in one Branch!

The prospect therefore reamins of further action against the Branch leadership.

Socialists in Chessington South have been infuriated by suggestions of inefficiency and inadequacy on *their* part over the Tolworth West ward (won from the Tories in the 1986 Council elections) having to be organised by the election agent himself in the General Election campaign.

Chessington South Branch has given no priority to the distribution of the opportunist "Clarion" broadsheet but has continued to sell *Labour Briefing* after the collapse of *Labour Herald*.

Briefing readers have provided the power base from which our campaign in the ward halted what would otherwise have been larger Alliance gains at Labour's expense.

Stop Press: *As if to underline the effectiveness of our campaign John Hayball, Chair of Chessington South Branch Labour Party, was attacked by a gang of stone-throwing youths whilst on his bike late at night on Friday July 10th near his home.*

The youths shouted "fucking wanker", and "vote Conservative", John Hayball escaped unharmed.

London-wide Conference Against Cuts in Jobs and Services

Camden NALGO have called for a London-wide conference against cuts in jobs and services to be held in late September. The conference will be open to trade unions, CLPs, voluntary and community groups, tenants and anyone committed to fighting cuts in jobs and services.

Delegates and observers are welcome.

Watch this space for more details, or ring Jo Fawkes, Camden NALGO, (01) 278 4444 x2014.

Labour Party

Forging an alliance for change

TESSA VAN GELDEREN, Chair of Brent South CLP, spoke to PAUL BOATENG, newly elected MP for Brent South.

Paul Boateng: The election result reflects the very real success of Mrs Thatcher's strategy of divide and rule. It is not simply an issue of north versus south. There is also a divide within the inner cities — between areas which have prospered under Thatcher and areas that have borne the brunt of her policies.

On top of that we were feeling the effects of a concerted campaign against the Labour Party, which targetted the left and left-wing councils, not just during the election but over the last few years.

It's not a "London effect" but a "Thatcher effect" that's really damaged Labour's electoral fortunes. She has flourished because we have not been able to establish a coalition of interests sufficient to make the electoral gains we ought to have made.

As to the campaign itself, its professionalism was in no doubt. The message was presented in very attractive packaging. But the reality is, however, that all the packaging in the world couldn't mask what was perceived by the electorate as being several years of disunity and lack of concerted purpose within the Party as a whole.

Tessa van Gelderen: **What do you mean by disunity?**

Paul Boateng: I mean the attack we have seen by certain sections of the right in the Party on the left. I mean the witch-hunts. I mean the recriminations that have occurred over the years — that hasn't helped. Nor can we avoid the conclusion that we have failed as a party to develop any coherent or convincing vision of what a socialist society is all about.

We need to spend a lot of time over the next period building up a core of conviction, a vision broadening the base of the party, and increasing its membership. We also have to avoid the constitutional wrangles and in-fighting that took place in the years running up to the election.

Tessa van Gelderen: **Larry Whitty said the Party is not going to have an autopsy but a biopsy. Unfortunately biopsies can result in bits being cut out. There has been talk, inevitably, of a further witch-hunt, starting with the London Labour Parties.**

Paul Boateng: I don't think that will happen. I think there's a recognition (one can't say on all sides of the Party) nationwide and in the Parliamentary Labour Party, that we cannot have a repeat of the aftermath of the 1983 election and keep the Party on course for an election win in 1991.

Tessa van Gelderen: **But won't there be pressure on Kinnock to blame Labour's poor result on the "loony left" and to show his "authority" again by getting rid of it?**

Paul Boateng: There is no way there can be any rational basis for any purge inside the Labour Party — there is no criterion for such a purge. It may well be that there are certain sections of the extreme right of the Party who would rather have a Party that didn't contain a number of us who are socialist activists in London.

But I don't believe they will prevail on the leadership. The leadership have given every indication, certainly within the PLP, so far, of recognising, with the exception of the issue of reselection and deselection of MPs, that there can be no further constitutional changes and that the emphasis and the priority is to be on unity.

If you begin expulsions again, any hope of unity goes by the board. There is no basis for that in the constitution or anywhere else.

Tessa van Gelderen: **You talk of no expulsions, yet Sharon Atkin is still to come before the National Constitutional Committee and there is the ongoing debate around Black Sections. What do you think will happen?**

Paul Boateng: The Black Sections issue *is* an ongoing debate and will remain so. It is a constitutional question which will not go away and which will and must be debated and ultimately resolved. No amount of wishful thinking is going to cause it to disappear.

But you know the issue of making sure that the constitution of the Labour Party reflects the particular contribution of Black people within our society and within our movement, the issue of making sure that the constitution of the Labour Party is a vehicle for the creation of a successful multiracial society, need not be an issue that splits the Party down the middle.

It is a complete misreading of the issue of Black Sections to believe it is about separatism or about sectarianism — any more than women's sections, youth sections and so on.

The responsibility of those of us who support the concept of Black Sections and the responsibility of those who oppose it but who maintain they want to see a successful multiracial society, a successful Labour Party reflecting it, is to ensure that the debate is conducted in a fraternal and comradely way, and isn't used as an excuse for creating divisions...

Tessa van Gelderen: **Is that an implicit attack on Sharon...?**

Paul Boateng: No...

Tessa van Gelderen: **Do you think she's under threat of disciplinary action...**

Paul Boateng: Well, obviously she's under threat...



Paul Boateng

Tessa van Gelderen: **Do you think it will happen...**

Paul Boateng: I hope it won't because no good will come of it. We don't want to see the Sharon Atkin affair become a running sore in the Labour Party and I think the efforts of all of us in the Party must be directed at making sure it doesn't.

I hope we are listened to. Who knows whether or not we will be, but we have to have a go.

Tessa van Gelderen: **How do you see the relationship between the Tribune and Campaign Groups and your role in that? (This interview took place before the breakdown in the joint slate negotiations)**

Paul Boateng: The background of the new influx of MPs is very often grass roots activism within the Party, within local government, and within the campaigning experience — that's what influenced most of our lives politically.

We need to see the left within the PLP come together, getting out and about within the community and campaigning on socialist issues, in much the same way as — in the '40s and '50s, and indeed the period immediately before the war — the Bevanite group did, who after all were the founders of Tribune.

We need to revive that old campaigning tradition within the Labour Party. Now to a certain extent that tradition has atrophied within Tribune. It's no use simply just writing Tribune off because, after all, the overwhelming majority of left MPs belong to it. So we need to work *with* it and, in my case and in the case of a number of other new Members of Parliament, *within it*, in order that with the Campaign Group it can once again become that motor for radical socialism within the Labour Party as a whole.

To begin with, we need to establish a common slate for the Shadow Cabinet elections, but it doesn't end there. It would be a tragedy if it did, because at the end of the day our future electoral success is not only determined by who's in the Shadow Cabinet.

It's determined by the extent to which we manage to forge a commitment to socialism and the way in which we manage to ground our action here in the Commons with the struggle and experience in local communities. That is going to be one of my own objectives, within the House, to participate in that sort of action.

Our purpose here is to forge alliances for change. We're in the business of achieving power in order to implement the aims and objectives to which our movement is committed. You don't do that by simply locking yourself up in the House of Commons and receiving delegations.

Tessa van Gelderen: **Do you think there is a particular role for the Black MPs?**

Paul Boateng: There is a particular role for Black Members of Parliament. After all, our experience in the community is very much grounded in the struggle for survival. We have valuable knowledge, because our roots are in autonomous self-organisation and with single issue campaigns.

We need to operate effectively within the PLP to share that experience and also that dimension of policy, not just around the issue of race but also around the question of organisation. We must make sure we have that input.

Brent news

By Mick Woods, Brent councillor

Like other London Labour Councils, Brent adopted a strategy of "creative accounting" together with lending arrangements earlier this year to avoid making cuts in jobs and services.

In choosing this road the councillors turned their faces against any concept of mobilising to challenge the Tories in favour of wheeling and dealing on the money markets and hoping for a Labour government.

Like other Councils Brent has now discovered it is unable to secure all its deals and is faced with a choice of making cuts in mid-year or overspending.

The Labour Group, meeting on Monday July 13th, heard that the Council has "saved" £7m already this financial year from unfilled vacancies and has also benefitted from a fall in the interest rate. After a small degree of creative accounting this will leave a shortfall of a further £7m in its budget. The leadership claim that vacancies have remained unfilled due to "incompetence", not design.

The Labour Group, while deferring all decisions until after discussion by the Party, did agree by 24 votes to 9 to ask Council officers to review services and identify where cuts could be made.

The Council meeting on July 29th will decide what to do and Party meetings in the meantime...

will decide on policy. It is already clear that it will not be an easy fight to commit the Party to opposing all cuts in jobs and services.

All the arguments about having lost the election, "only" £7m in cuts, etc., will be reeled out. The left must point out that in addition to the real cuts involved now, capitulation would be a signal that the Council will not resist privatisation, poll tax, sale of council estates, or rate-capping in future years.

The trade unions have already begun to organise. A Joint Shop Stewards Committee meeting on July 15th (involving all the Council unions except the NUT) opposed a freeze on all jobs and agreed to oppose cuts and job losses, despite the presence of a TGWU full-timer who opposed any fight and called for cutting NALGO jobs.

The JSSC are producing 10,000 leaflets calling a mass meeting at 10am on July 29th, and for a lobby of the Council meeting that evening.

Steps are already underway to draw together those in the Party and the unions opposed to cuts into a common campaign in an attempt to win on July 29th, and to mobilise in defence of jobs and services, regardless of whether the Council is prepared to do so.

London Labour Party AGM

ILEA report

Would your kids want a "second hand" teacher from this man?

In his first appearance before the London Labour Party Conference as ILEA leader, Neil Fletcher showed that he wasn't up to the task of leading a campaign against the Tories' attack on education.

There was venom in plenty — but this was reserved for the teaching force and those CLPs who had the temerity to suggest that a Labour employer should negotiate with its employees.

No proposals were made about how ILEA intended to defend education; no mention was made of the imminent withdrawal of Westminster from ILEA and the robust campaign that ILEA would need to mount against this.

Instead the Tory strategy was accepted — bring teachers into line. This is from the man who has just been elected to chair the employers' panel in national negotiations, having ousted John Pearman in what the press called a "left wing coup".

Speakers from the floor attempted to move a motion calling for ILEA to maintain existing Greater London Labour Party policy: opposition to *compulsory* transfer of staff (not just teachers) and to negotiate with the unions.

The intransigent line was supported by the trade union sections, including NUPE. These delegations did not draw the conclusion that if teachers are treated in such an arbitrary fashion — without support from the Labour Party — then it will be them who next bear the brunt of ILEA's attack. It was also forgotten that the effect of ILEA's compulsory transfers will mean a worse education for their *own* children!

By Hilda Kean
Hackney South & Shoreditch CLP

Speakers from the CLPs pointed out that working class children were losing out: ILEA's cuts in teaching jobs mean larger classes, less curriculum choice, and less help for children with learning difficulties.

Delegates rebuffed the myth that teachers were being moved into areas of need — it was areas like Hackney, Lambeth and Southwark which were *losing* teachers. Only 100 vacant jobs have been filled by ILEA's compulsory exercise yet over 700 more teachers have been told that they are "waste" and not welcome in their schools.

The massive card vote in favour of ILEA's stance indicates that there is little understanding about the change that has taken place in ILEA, from that of a progressive authority attempting to work with parents and teachers to one implementing Tory proposals by attacking the workforce and quality of service provision.

The fight to defend jobs and education in inner London will continue — whether ILEA members are included in that fight or not remains to be seen.

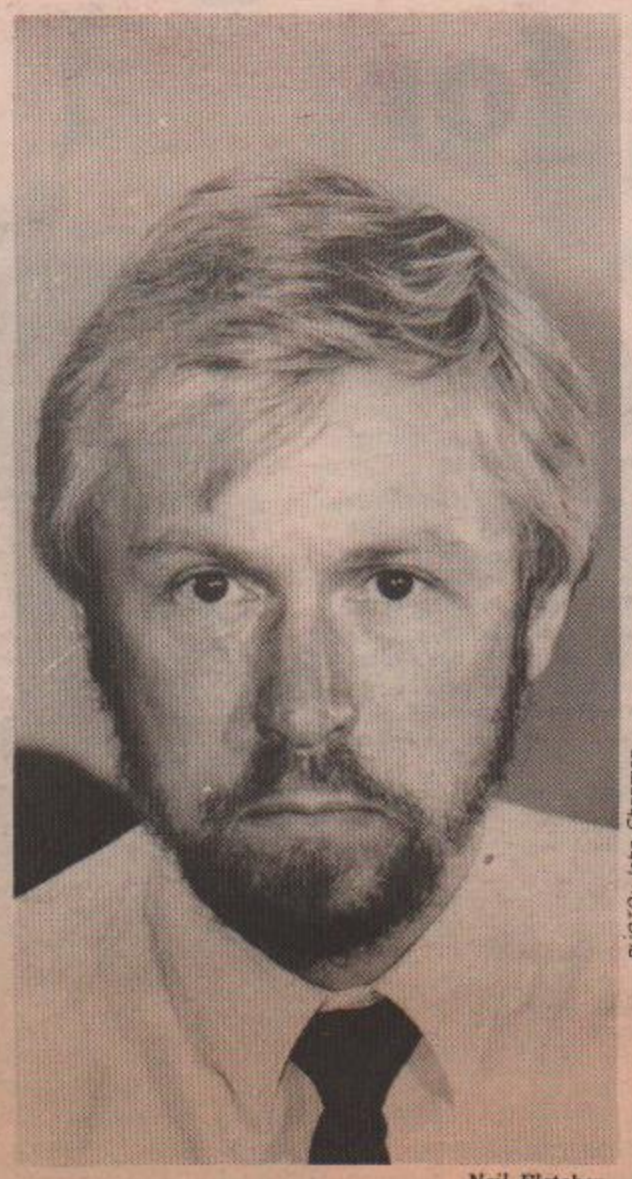


PHOTO: John Chapman

Neil Fletcher

FIGHTBACK NOT CUTBACK!

Continued from front page

A hastily convened meeting of Camden Black Workers' Group unanimously passed a resolution calling on the Council to unite with them in fighting the cuts and mobilising resistance.

An identical resolution was also passed unanimously at a meeting of Voluntary Sector workers, attended by over 350 people and convened at two days' notice.

A mass meeting of NALGO workers voted — despite immense pressure from management and the Leadership — to reject the cuts package and strategy by 1,200 votes to 800.

Our own position as Councillors is unequivocal. We reject both the cuts package and the cuts strategy. We align ourselves with those who are organising opposition and we call upon everyone in the labour movement to join with us in building resistance.

We can neither support nor condone a leadership that has, in its own words, "no alternative" to cuts and more cuts. Neither are we prepared to "throw the Manifesto out of the window".

Camden is probably the richest Labour-controlled authority in the country. After Westminster and Kensington, a 1p rate increase in Camden brings in more money than anywhere else in Great Britain. Put simply, the bricks and mortar in Camden, the empty land, the telephone poles and the parking meters, even the Council bathtaps and bidets, are worth a damn sight more in Camden than virtually anywhere else.

Because of its wealth and its proximity to the City, Camden is a natural for creative accountancy. With a bathtap in Camden worth more as collateral than a dozen bathtaps in neighbouring Hackney, it was hardly surprising that creative accountancy — selling and leasing back of assets — should become the financial bedrock of the Council's policy after the collapse of the campaign against rate-capping.

Indeed, for the Leadership of the Council, this financial strategy became, in essence, a political strategy.

Over the past fifteen months, politics has been reduced to a car boot sale, the raising of cash on the money markets has seemingly obliterated the need to develop a political strategy to deal with the moment when the bathtaps and the bidets run out.

This finally happened on June 11th. Politics arrived in Camden with a vengeance.

What is happening there now will soon happen right across London as the financial measures expire . We are simply the first Labour Council to reach the point where "creative finance" is no longer an option.

We would urge comrades across London to begin the process of mobilising resistance immediately, and to give your support to ourselves, our workforce and our community, as we begin the process of defending jobs and services, and move inexorably towards direct confrontation with either the Leadership of the Council or the Tory government.

Camden's cuts package which has been rushed through the Council — at an emergency meeting called by the Tories — includes:

- **★an immediate freeze on all vacancies — approximately 900 jobs;**
- **★no renewal of temporary contracts — approximately 300 jobs;**
- **★the ending of current Council/Trade Union agreements;**
- **★a freeze on the harmonisation of pay and conditions;**
- **★an immediate cut in overtime working.**

A further package of cuts is being prepared for the autumn. So far — and it is likely to be extended — this package includes:

- **★the application of similar cuts measures in the Voluntary Sector;**
- **★a 5% cut across the board in the Voluntary Sector;**
- **★the introduction of redundancies.**

Lesbian and Gay Rights

Left breaks through a sea of apathy

The GLLP Conference was the first opportunity for the Party to debate publicly the general election result and the so-called "London effect" in which lesbian and gay rights has a high profile.

Hornsey & Wood Green and Tottenham CLPs had put Composite W, welcoming the positive images and equally valid intitiatives taken by Haringey and Ealing councils and calling for other local authorities to follow suit.

This was supported by a lobby on the Saturday lunchtime organised by the LCLGR.

Both the Campaign Forum/Briefing fringe meeting on the Saturday and the *Briefing* fringe meeting on the Sunday had speakers on lesbian and gay rights on their platforms, and the issue was referred to constantly — if obliquely — throughout the weekend on the conference floor.

The right in the Party clearly want to play down our policy on lesbian and gay rights along with other socialist commitments but will not be explicit about this. An attempt by the EETPU to counterpose their motion on campaigning on popular policies — which clearly did not include lesbian and gay rights — was easily defeated amidst jeering and hissing; but this didn't mean that the sentiments of the composite were welcomed by many conference delegates.

It wasn't that people disagreed with the positive images or equally valid initiatives. The composite supporting them was carried, overwhelmingly with only one vote against, but there was a clear mesage that this was a policy that we shouldn't campaign on — and this was stated explicitly by one delegate.

By Mandy Mudd
Tottenham CLP

Throughout the Saturday there was constant reference to the importance of getting into the community and being involved in campaigning. Delegate after delegate endorsed this strategy and both Glenys Thornton and Brian Gould stressed its importance. But no mention was made of the campaigns that have taken place around lesbian and gay rights this year: the Smash the Blacklash demo in Haringey, the Womborne 12 campaign, the Legislation Campaign.

Nor was the idea that you campaigned on policies to explain them and popularise them ever expressed. Indeed the whole struggle around lesbian and gay rights wasn't really mentioned except in coded terms; though all delegates knew that it was part of the struggle between the rightward moving LCC and the left in the Party.

Saturday lunchtime saw the LCLGR lobby — delegates filed out of the conference to banners and activists calling for support for composite W. As well as the LCLGR banner the Positive Images banner was there.

The lobby met little hostility but neither did it receive much positive response and there certainly wasn't any queue of prominent figures waiting to address the delegates from the lobby.

Similarly, on the Sunday, the debate on composite W met with no hostility. There wasn't a single speaker against the motion. Alan Dobbie from Haringey & Wood Green moved, Mandy Mudd from Tottenham seconded. Graham Nicholas, Chair of the ALA Lesbian and Gay Committee, Peter Purton from the LGLGR, Vince Gillespie, Chair of Haringey's Lesbian and Gay Sub-comittee all spoke in favour and Sarah Roelofs replied from the London EC.

The reaction of conference to this debate was mainly one of apathy — in fact the whole debate lasted less than 15 minutes. Clearly conference wasn't going to abandon the policy as the vote showed, but the amount of time given and the lack of commitment to thoroughly debating the issue reinforced the message that this was a low priority issue.

In contrast was the importance given to lesbian and gay rights at the two left fringe meetings.

On Saturday Peter Purton from LCLGR spoke about the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation and explained how a "civil liberties"/tolerance approach was not enough since without work around positive images and equally valid lifestyles to create an atmosphre of respect and acceptance, tolerance was impossible.

On Sunday Mandy Mudd talked about what had been happening in Haringey and called on comrades to prioritise the issue and campaign openly to challenge the agenda set by the Tories and increasingly the right inside the Labour Party.

Both speakers shared platforms with Black Sections, speakers about the struggles in local government, Sharon Atkin, and opposition to one member one vote — all issues that the right in the Party want to sweep under the carpet.

This was a further example of how the struggle for prioritisation of lesbian and gay rights is an integral part of the left's political battle in the Party to keep socialism on the agenda.

At the end of the weekend the GLLP's policy on lesbian and gay rights was a positive and radical one. Comrades ought to be actively promoting and campaigning around this — calling for the implementation of positive images and equally valid policies in their boroughs.

This will have to come from rank and file left activists and must be taken up by heterosexuals as well as lesbians and gay men because there is evidence that the Party leadership want it to remain marginal, a minority issue, a paper policy. It is our responsibility as socialists to make sure this doesn't happen.

Setback in Haringey By-election

Briefing supporter Linda Clarke was defeated by the Tories in the Noel Park by-election in Haringey.

An excellent local campaign — based on honest socialist politics — was unable to combat long-term trends in a seat which Labour had only won by nine votes last year.

The Tory majority of 500 votes was a bitter blow to the left in Haringey, which had thrown itself into a campaign in which CLP officers and local right wingers had shown little interest.

The Labour vote actually held up well, but was swamped by the disintegrating SDP vote which turned *en masse* to the Tories.

Local housing problems — including a plague of empty and squatted properties — played a major role in the defeat. But the malaise is deeper. Older white residents are deeply hostile to the Council's equal opportunities policies.

The Tories, needless to say, were uninhibited in exploiting the full range of bigotry. Travellers, squatters, lesbians and gays, Black people all came under fire.

Linda was a magnificent candidate, who had pledged herself to oppose *all cuts, all* rent and rate rises, and she was warmly supported by numerous local groups.

She refused to give a traditional concession speech and explained that her campaign had been "only the start of the fightback against Tory policies" in Haringey.