LONDON LABOUR
BRIEFING
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London Fights Back!

An all-London Conference Against Cuts in Council Jobs and Services.

Sunday 20th September 10am-5pm, Conway Hall, WC1

Open to trade unionists, Labour Parties, community groups, tenants and organisations of the oppressed.

Creche, access, signers provided.
Details: Camden NALGO 01 278 4444 ext. 2431



LONDON FIGHTS BACK!

Labour Councils across London are facing unprecedented Tory attacks.

But instead of uniting with their workforces, tenants, and communities to defend jobs and services, almost all of them are getting ready to do the Tories' dirty work for them.

Meanwhile, in Tory Westminster, rank and file trade unionists are forced to fight their own union leaders as they resist the onslaughts of private contractors.

Margaret Hodge and the other Council leaders say "there is no alternative". Labour councils must make "humane" cuts. But in nearly every borough an alternative *is* emerging: campaigns are springing up to mobilise Council workers, tenants, community groups, and the local labour movement around the simple demand: *no cuts in jobs and services!*

Fighting back is possible. Even the wet Tories of the Bow Group recently recognised that "it is doubtful if the fabled commissioners could successfully run even one Council against the determined opposition of the workforce." *Exactly!*

There will be no future opposition to privatisation, the poll tax, the break up of the ILEA and Council housing estates, or any other items on Thatcher's inner city agenda, if the unions are crushed by job cuts now, and the services we are trying to defend continue to deterioriate.

Council workers must link up with their allies in the local labour movement, tenants and community groups, to resist cuts in jobs and services, and to lay the ground for future campaigning against the full range of Tory attacks.

An isolated fightback in a single borough will be easy prey to Tory venom. But collective resistance across London is potentially powerful — powerful enough to defeat even the re-elected Tories.

That's why the fightback in each borough must be co-ordinated and London-wide action must be planned.

London Bridge Shop Stewards Meeting
10 September, Camden Centre
10am — 2pm

The fightback starts now!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Local government round-up

Haringey

***Haringey Fights Back!*, a local campaign to defend jobs and services established by *Haringey Labour Briefing*, has had a busy summer.**

Five thousand 4-page leaflets explaining the Tory attack on local democracy and the need to fight all cuts in jobs and services were distributed throughout the borough, including morning leafletting of major Council workplaces.

A petition against cuts has been signed by thousands of council workers and residents. Stalls have been run at public festivals and events. Stories have appeared in the local press, and the LCC-spearheaded right wing, now in control of both CLPs in the borough, is fuming — and issuing predictable, laughable threats.

The 3% cuts proposed by the right would mean 500 jobs losses. *Haringey Fights Back!* is spreading this alarming news as widely as possible.

All this activity is in preparation for the launch meeting of *Haringey Fights Back!* on September 14th, at Brabant Road Trade Union Centre. Special leaflets and posters for the meeting are going out around the borough as we go to press.

Before then, a big anti-cuts lobby is planned for the Labour Group meeting of September 8th. Treasurer's ingenuity may well have saved the Council's bacon for the current financial year, but the campaign against the cuts remains as urgent as ever.

Moves are afoot to organise those councillors opposed to all cuts around a clear *political* strategy.

September 22nd's full Council meeting may yet witness further scenes of Labour discord, as the left fights efforts by the right, including new MP Bernie Grant, to force the Council into capitulation.

Islington

***Islington Fightback* was set up on August 3rd following an open meeting called by the Joint Trade Union Committee of all Council unions.**

Attendance from NALGO stewards has shown that there is commitment to building opposition to cuts amongst the workforce and users, and the involvement of Labour Party members demonstrates that there remains a layer prepared to fight the drift to the right.

Unfortunately attendance from other Council trade unions has been patchy. Only a handful of councillors are prepared to oppose the cuts. The most prominent members of this group are Black, and they therefore face institutional racism as well as political criticism.

Much work remains to be done. In Islington the ratecapping campaign was weak and never succeeded in drawing in the range of community support enjoyed elsewhere. It is vital to involve tenants groups, Black groups, other trade unionists (especially those in the teaching and voluntary sectors), and other service user groups. Without the support of such groups, the Council workforce will lack the confidence to take industrial action.

Islington Fightback is organising a conference on October 17th and a mass lobby of full Council on October 20th. We are now meeting fortnightly on Tuesdays at 7.30pm in the Town Hall. Come and join us!



Scenes inside Merle Amory office as services-users show their feelings about cuts.

Brent

Despite the disastrous lessons of neighbouring Camden, the Labour leadership of Brent Council seem intent on cuts in services and job freezes.

Faced with the collapse of the "dented shield" policy in the wake of election defeat, Brent's leadership have decided to begin putting to the sword those it previously claimed to be defending.

This sad process began during August with a decision to slash expenditure on probably the poorest section of the Brent community, those single parents dependent on Section 1 payments.

Having already cut its budget from 1986 levels of £220,000 to a mere £108,000 this year, the Council's new decision placed social workers in an impossible dilemma. They could either deny essential payments or ignore Council policy.

Unsurprisingly, overspending occurred. The only alternative would have been a rise in children accepted into care as fuel bills, childminding fees, etc., made life impossible for single parents.

In attempting to impose its reduced bdget, Brent triggered a massive protest as dozens of black women and their kids met at the Town Hall. Having failed to get a response from those responsible, they invaded Council leader Merle Amory's office.

Whilst this disgraceful attack on the working class of Brent was occurring, senior Council officers were busily preparing a list of 8% cuts across all Council services. These cuts are to be imposed on a budget which planned to spend only £3.8 million more than the Tories managed during the inter-regnum ended by Labour's crushing victory of May 1986.

In addition to wide-ranging cuts, a freeze on recruitment is to be proposed, an ironic echo of the old right wing Labour council of the mid-1970s. All the cuts in services being proposed, many of which have already been canvassed by the Tories, are certain to hit those groups least able to resist — the poorest sectors of Britain's eighth-poorest borough.

Saddest of all, it is Black people, especially Black women, who will bear the burden. This comes from a Labour council with the highest number of Black councillors and a proud record of anti-racist measures.

If Brent Council is seen to be a mere agent of Tory central government, Labour's appeal in the borough will be severely undermined. In this context, the idea of imposing cuts is as bankrupt as the Council's beleaguered finances. Even worse, this year's cut, to meet a budget gap of £13 million, will only be the beginning as larger gaps are already looming next

There is no alternative but to organise a mass resistance involving every corner of the borough. As the reaction to cuts in Section 1 have shown, and previous health campaigns have demonstrated, mass anger can be directed at central government.

Brent *Briefing* has already linked up with militant workers, community activists and councillors opposed to cuts and intends to mount a big campaign in the Party. One of the two Labour constituencies, Brent East, already opposes cuts.

Against the likely supporters of "socialist cuts" (full time officials of TGWU, NUPE, and possibly the teachers' leaders), it will be necessary to unify all those interested in fighting Thatcher's onslaught. Whilst this will clearly not include the right wing rump on the Labour group left over from previous years, as the full disaster facing Brent sinks in, many more councillors will return to the "no cuts" position spelt out in the 1986 manifesto.

Hackney

A paper circulated at Hackney Council's policy and resources committee says that, as a result of previous special financing deals, the Council now faces a *deficit* for the current year, and goes on to propose various measures to deal with it.

It suggests a strategic review of resources.

Directors would be instructed to report to a Management Team with a set of proposals to eliminate "waste", including checking whether posts which have been vacant for more than a year can be eliminated.

Flexibility in transfer and redeployment of staff can also be employed to close the gap. Staff will be moved around to fill vital vacant posts.

The report recommends the Council seek an agreement with the unions for limited recruitment to key posts, allowing staff to leave under voluntary severance.

It further proposes that all uncommitted growth items be frozen and that rents be increased.

This report will be discussed at the Annual Borough Congress — a consultative body made up of General Committee and Local Government Committee delegates on Saturday September 26th.

Although these recommendations have not yet been discussed by the Party, Council officers are set to implement them. Many are already in operation — which would not happen without the nod from the Labour Council leadership.

Two children's homes have been merged, and staff will be redeployed. Housing Area Action Staff have no work to do because funds for the capital programme have been frozen. Posts were frozen during the month of August under the pretext that no one applies for jobs in August.

Many trade unionists already feel betrayed by the local Labour leadership. If the Labour Council does pass a formal cuts budget it will make it even more difficult to prepare a united fightback against privatisation, involving the Labour Party and the trade unions.

Hammersmith & Fulham

Having avoided rate-capping only by agreeing to abandon further new growth, Hammersmith and Fulham Council is now undertaking a review of its base budget in order to identify further cuts of £6 million and thereby avoid rate-capping again next year.

To pave the way for future cuts, *all "non-essential" posts have been frozen.*

In the meantime, NALGO, whose members are most affected by the vacancy freeze, has come under open attack within the Labour Group as "not a real union" and as "representing people on £16-17,000 a year".

The results of the review will be known by mid-September.

Camden

Since June of this year Camden Council leaders have embarked on a financial strategy which is tearing the Borough apart.

The leadership, without consultation and with the backing of a hard core of right wing Labour councillors have:

- frozen all temporary posts — 900 jobs and rising;
- cancelled all temporary contracts — 300 jobs and rising;
- halted the harmonisation of pay and conditions between staff in the Borough;
- cut overtime working in frontline services such as housing and enviromental health;
- effectively torn up existing agreements between the Council and the Unions; begun an exercise to force through cuts of 5% in the voluntary sector — in real terms this will at least *double* as the year progresses.

This strategy is supposed to buy time — but for what?

The leadership have failed to indicate at any stage of the cuts process — likely to continue indefinitely — at what point they will be prepared to stand and fight.

The nine councillors who opposed the cuts package have been removed from their positions on all Council Committees. Workers have been refused workplace meetings addressed by those councillors.

Photocopying and mailing facilities have been withdrawn from councillors who oppose cuts. Trade unionists have had their pay stopped for holding meetings. When workers have refused to provide cover they have been threatened with lockouts.

Voluntary groups opposed to the cuts package have been threatened with closure. Right wing councillors have resorted to smear tactics in an effort to discredit the left.

The Town Hall has been turned into a fortresss against all groups opposing cuts.

Nevertheless, opposition is on the rise. As services collapse, and more Tory attacks are promised, both workers and community organisations have begun organising resistance. The voluntary sector, women's and Black groups, have started a campaign to reverse the Council's decision.

Tenants are alarmed at the prospect of rent rises. Lesbian and Gay organisations — which have been singled out for special attack by the right — are now literally fighting for survival.

Over 150 representatives attended a Conference called by *Camden Briefing*. Many trade unionists at the forefront of Camden's campaign against rate-capping have also pledged their support.

Following the refusal of nine left Labour Councillors to toe the Camden leadership's line, and vote for cuts, attempts to restrict debate and smear opposition have grown.

Council leader Tony Dykes said that workers would be paid to attend workplace "consultation meetings" on the cuts *only* if the nine anti-cuts councillors were excluded.

Cllr Ken Hulme, leading member of Camden's right wing caucus and secretary of the local Labour Co-ordinating Committee, spread stories in the local press about "left wing freemasonry" at the Town Hall. He claimed the Lesbian and Gay Unit's staff were all supporters of *Briefing*.

"These allegations are totally unfounded," replied Cllr Sandra Plummer, one of the nine — and now ex-Chair of the Lesbian and Gay Committee. "Ken Hulme opposed the setting up of the Unit from the beginning and is obviously using populist tactics to boost support for his own bankrupt policies."

Hulme's attack was swiftly followed by Cllr Bill Saunders, who alleged in the local press that Cllr Plummer "jumped the housing queue". She was, in fact, transferred on the grounds of sexual harassment — in line with Council policy.

Cllr Plummer, a *Briefing* supporter, is also an "out" lesbian. Tony Dykes has been asked by Cllr Plummer to condemn Hulme and Saunders, and has demanded a public retraction from both.

These tactics pander to the homophobia of the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun*. These members of the Labour Party not only discredit themselves with their smears, but also bring into disrepute the local Labour Party's commitment to Equal Opportunities.

One can only conclude that the Group leadership and the right wing caucus are terrified of open political debate. In line with national Kinnockite policy, they wish to dump any commitment, however minimal, to issues of race, disability or lesbian and gay rights.

Lewisham

This statement on the situation in Lewisham has been signed by the following councillors: Pat Waylett, Ron Stockbridge, Tony Link, Man Mohan, Tim Barnett, Jan Pedelty, Steve Padmore, Ashtaq Arain, Jon Lansman, Clifton Graham.

Two out of three Lewisham constituencies had bad general election results.

We lost many votes in traditional Labour strongholds, including large council estates that have been Labour for 50 years.

The leadership of Lewisham Council, calling on all their political experience, found an immediate answer to falling support among Council tenants: a rent rise of £3 now and another £2 in April.

Having solved that problem they turned their attention to the unemployed in the Borough. The way to keep them voting Labour is to shed 800 Council jobs, thus ensuring that they remain on the dole.

This incisive grasp of the political situation also dictated that people didn't vote Labour because Council services were too good. As well as cutting service provision with a 20% vacancy rate, they propose to close a few libraries and "restructure" the budget.

"Budget restructuring" is the latest buzz word for cuts. It means concentrating on priorities and cutting "less essential areas", maintaining the establishment of social workers by cutting welfare rights jobs, and other clever ideas like that.

We have tried very hard to see how attacking the living standards of the working class, cutting jobs and reducing services will increase support for the Labour Party — but it's obviously far too clever for us to understand.

The trouble is that we consider ourselves to be socialists. It may be old-fashioned, but we still believe that our main function in local government is to fight for the interests of the working class.

We also have some problem understanding where the Labour Group gets the authority to tear up the manifesto without consulting the Party. We don't believe there isn't an alternative, nor do we believe the answer to a political attack lies in managerial tinkering.

Hackney Briefing Launch Meeting
No cuts in jobs and services!
Speakers include:
Keith Veness, Kate Allen, Diane Abbott MP, Brian Sedgemore MP.
Chaired by Graham Bash
Tuesday September 22nd, 7.30pm
Crown & Castle pub, Dalston Junction

Against the Cuts

Contributors: Terry Conway, Graham Durham, Ian Harrison, Mike Marqusee, Tom Silverlock, Steve Taylor.

Local government: fight back now!

CUTS IN SERVICES!

At their September Committee meetings, the Association of London Authorities (ALA) decided to end their engagement with property developers.

It's to be marriage after all.

In the face of the Tories' attack on inner cities and Labour-controlled local authorities, London Labour leaders have decided ("in this post-election period") that it is best to be "realistic' and give up any pretence of fighting back.

There were, however, three honourable exceptions at the ALA Planning & Transport Committee — principally Lambeth's Chair of Planning, supported by the reps from Lewisham and Southwark.

It would be laughable if it weren't so serious.

London Labour leaders have decided to co-operate with their own disenfranchisement!

The Tories are set to impose a round of mini-Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) and Simplified Planning Zones (SPZs) for London. UDCs, like the London Docklands Development Corporation, are immensely powerful government-imposed quangos, which usurp the powers of local authorities.

UDCs are run by government-appointed Boards, made up of property developers, answerable only to the Secretary of State for the Environment. The purpose of UDCs is to enable huge public subsidies to go to the private sector.

SPZs were created under the 1986 Housing and Planning Act and the legislation allows the Secretary of State to force local authorities to create SPZs within which normal planning requirements do not apply.

In reality, SPZs become zones in which local authorities have no control over development, which is dictated by the property market.

The ALA vainly hope they will be able to "undermine or marginalise UDCs and SPZs" by demonstrating to the Tories that really the Labour boroughs are very good children and are establishing a wonderful relationship with property developers (or, as the ALA rather less disparagingly call them, the private sector) — and really there's no need to set up UDCs and SPZs.

This is naieve nonsense. The Tories' attack is not *just* about pushing Labour Councils into the arms of property developers, it is *also* about stripping them of their powers via UDCs and SPZs. Even if it *were* possible, the capitulatory starting point of the ALA means that the Tories are pushing Labour Councils into a marriage with the property market which is on the developers' terms.

Central to the thrust of the ALA is the concept of "planning gain" or, as the ALA put it, "maximising community benefit". Planning gain is about going into negotiations with developers over their schemes, promising not to do anything to oppose them, and trying to "get as much as you can" out of the developers.

One obvious problem is that planning gain does not raise a political profile of what Labour Councils want or what local people need. It is therefore seen as a "gift" from developers, as a "spin-off" from "successful private investment". Indeed, the ALA suggest that "community benefits" are not possible without such an investment.

Moreover, planning gain deals are no guarantee of anything. A particularly good example in this respect is that of Hays Wharf (3 million sq. ft. of office space), now renamed "London Bridge City".

In 1982, the developers actually signed a deal with Southwark for a 3-acre site for housing in return for Southwark not opposing the scheme. The site, next to Tower Bridge, is prime development land, and three years later the developers simply changed their minds, and told Southwark the deal was off.

One very disturbing aspect of all this is that individual Chairs (in this case Planning) can meet at the ALA, and take momentous decisions affecting the lives of hundreds of thousands of people — without having to account to anyone.

By John Turkie
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

A supreme irony exists in all this mess. The original raison d'etre of the ALA was — post the GLC — to give London a strategic voice. The fact that the ALA (inevitably) became a body solely comprised of the 15 Labour-controlled boroughs is no bad thing. In the face of Tory attacks, the ALA could have co-ordinated and maintained a London-wide united front.

Instead, the ALA boroughs decided to adopt a line of *capitulation together*. Without an ALA line, individual boroughs could always adopt a line of total co-operation with property developers in an attempt to "maximise community benefit". But to meet together to adopt such a position seems perverse in the extreme.

It also has two nasty side effects. Any boroughs determined to fight and defend the communities they represent are now more marginalised than ever before. And we will also witness the unholy sight of Labour boroughs competing amongst themselves in their attempts to woo the property market.

In the "new period", at least there is no longer any pretence. London Labour leaders are clearly saying they will not defend local democracy. In the attempt to "get as much as you can" they will co-operate with inner London's privatisation and cheap sale to the property market. Ridley and Thatcher must be delighted.



Co-ordinate the resistance!

Co-ordinated resistance to cuts in jobs and services — that's the cornerstone of our strategy to defeat the Tories and their accomplices on Labour Councils.

Developing such a strategy is vital if the fightback emerging in every London borough is to be successfully developed.

The pattern of Tory attacks is now clear. First, the Labour Councils will face huge financial deficits, this year for some, next and future years for others, as creative accounting is outlawed and the burden of past financial deals is felt.

Councils will attack their own workers, services, and communities.

Second, privatisation will be introduced, followed by the break-up of Council estates and the ILEA, and the outlawing of Council campaigning.

The Councils, locked in bitter battles with their potential allies over the financial squeeze, will be in no shape to resist.

Finally the most savage attack of all — the poll tax — will be introduced after any chance of mass, united resistance has been crushed.

The result of all these attacks will be huge job losses, widespread deterioration and cuts in Council services, huge rent rises, a further growth in inner-city poverty, the undermining of equal opportunity policies, and an erosion of democratic control over local services.

The capacity of local authorities to carry through any future progressive policies would be in doubt and it is hard to see what role could then be played by socialists in local Councils.

Hodge, Stringer, Amory and the other Council leaders argue that there is no alternative to compliance and that we therefore must make "humane" cuts ourselves to save Councils from Tory control. This is utterly bankrupt.

These people were elected on manifestos which clearly promised "no cuts in jobs and services". There was no get-out clause saying "unless the Tories win the election".

By Davy Jones
Islington NALGO

A further broken promise will only shred what little credibility Labour Councils still enjoy with their supporters.

How will Labour Councils resist the poll tax, privatisation, attacks on Council housing, etc., if they are locked in battle with their own workforce, tenants, and community groups over cuts? Will anyone take action to defend services from privatisation if those services have already been hamstrung by the Labour Council?

The argument advanced by *Socialist Action* supporters and others in boroughs like Lambeth and Islington (and in Manchester) that "no cuts in jobs and services" is "divisive" and a diversion from "the main enemy" — the Tories and their poll tax — is equally bankrupt.

The government's strategy is to *force* local Councils to act as its agents in carrying out its devastating programme. By resisting, rather than implementing, cuts in jobs and services now, Labour Councils will identify the real enemy — the Tories — to their workforces and service-users.

Cuts in jobs and services are the first stage of the Tory attack — not something separate from it.

The only successful strategy for fighting the Tory attacks is to unite all those under threat from them — the Council workforce, tenants, community and voluntary groups, and service-users. When union officials encourage their members to defend themselves and then argue for others' jobs to be cut (as has happened in a number of boroughs with NUPE and TGWU officials) they undermine the possibility of a sucessful united fightback.

They also cynically mislead workers into thinking that their own jobs will be safe if only they "co-operate". The scale of the Tory attacks is such that no one's jobs will be safe however compliant or co-operative they are.

Industrial action will be a vital component of any campaign of defiance. But simple industrial muscle wil not be enough. The extent to which Council workers will be prepared to take industrial action will depend largely on how much public support they perceive themselves to have.

Industrial action in local government often hurts those sections of the community most in need. Local government workers know that more than anyone. If they feel that there is strong community backing for their action — from tenants, community groups, and the local labour movement — they will be more prepared to take the level of industrial action necessary to secure victory.

Wherever possible, socialists should fight for their Labour Councils to lead the campaign of defiance against the Tory attacks and the financial squeeze. But it now appears that only a minority of Councillors, supporting a union-led campaign of opposition and drawing support from the tenants and community groups, will vote against cuts.

The obvious umbrella for much-needed unity should be local anti-cuts committees.

These committes should not merely react to cuts as they occur. In conjunction with all local organisations, they should also draw up a survey of the real social needs of the borough. By attracting all elements of the labour movement and community into such activity, and then demanding the provision of services which have been identified as necessary, real mass support can be built for active resistance to cuts and government attacks.

Local campaigns should demand that Councils set a budget adequate to meet the needs of the borough, and that the funds be met by cancelling the Council's local repayments and a huge injection of additional government funds.

In so far as these demands are not met, then there needs to be mass resistance to Councils' attempts to comply with the Tory attacks: no cuts in jobs or services, no vacancy freezes, no rent or rate rises, no privatisation of services, etc.

Different tactics will be required in each situation. No cover for vacancies, strikes against job losses, rent strikes, non-co-operation with cuts exercises in departments, and many other types of action wil all need to be considered.

Where possible, support should be sought from other workers facing similar attacks. In London, that means teachers, transport workers, health workers — and all those who need the services they provide, not least parents.

Cross-London unity is vital. Unfortunately, this unity will not be organised from the top — the ALA and the Council leaders. But from the grass roots we can co-ordinate the borough anti-cuts committees, the shop stewards across London, and all those prepared to fight back.

The *London Fights Back!* Conference, called by Camden NALGO and London Bridge,is an excellent opportunity for those fighting across London to share experiences, to discuss a common strategy, and to develop a co-ordinating network of militants committed to that strategy.

Make sure you're there 20th September! The future of London local government may depend on it.

Will Tories opt out of ILEA?

The government is proposing to allow London borough councils to opt out of ILEA and set themselves up as small, separate local education authorities.

Along with Labour-controlled Strathclyde, ILEA is the largest unit of local government remaining intact since abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan Councils.

It has inevitably become a major focus for government attacks, with the significance it exerts within the national education debate, not least through Leader Neil Fletcher's recent appointment as Chair of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities' Education Committee.

By Steve Cowan
ILEA member,
Westminster North

Conservative-controlled Westminster, Wandsworth and Kensington & Chelsea have all declared their intention to take control of their local ILEA services.

Kensington & Chelsea opting out would have serious implications for neighbouring Hammersmith & Fulham, the other part of ILEA's Division 1, which would them be the smallest authority in Britain, and certainly unable to provide the broad educational opportunities presently enjoyed by school age and adult students.

Opting out of ILEA will not muster much support within the community or the education profession.

Wandsworth are unlikely to opt out — despite the political bravado coming from the ruling Conservatives — because they only have a fragile single member majority on the Council. A powerful and long-standing parents' lobby is effective throughout the borough of Wandsworth, and has proved its ability to influence local Conservative opinion in the past.

The Tories may well have given Labour a major opportunity to mobilise a large section of the community not only against national government, but also against those controlling local affairs.

Notting Hill carnival



PHOTO: David Hoffmann

Police close down the Carnival

BAN RIOT POLICE!

By Paul Harrington and John Leadbetter Kensington CLP

"Carnival is a splendid event," said Deputy Assistant Commissioner Condon, the man in charge of policing the 22nd Notting Hill Carnival. "But people will have to ask themselves whether the crime side is too high."

"Ban the riot carnival," screamed the *London Evening Standard* just a few hours later, on the day after paramilitary police had brought Europe's biggest street party to a violent and terrifying close.

It was just what the Met was hoping for — a quick translation of official double speak into a popular slogan, backed up by stories of frightened residents and carnival-goers terrorised by "gangs of rioters from all over London."

But stories of inocent people trapped by brutal police maneouvres went unreported. As a searchlight helicopter hovered overhead and riot police launched indiscriminate baton charges against the revellers, it seemed that just to be in the steets aroud Portobello Road and Ladbroke Grove was a crime that night.

The tension which finally exploded at Carnival had been building for months, fuelled by police activities and an inadequate community response. One of Kenneth Newman's last acts as Metropolitcan Police Commissioner was to organise a campaign of saturation policing in the All Saints Road — the centre of the Carnival area.

In the sensitive weeks before the Carnival, the streets of North Kensington were under police occupation. The declared aim of this operation was to stamp out traffic in hard drugs. Road blocks were set up and "stop and search" procedures began. Hundreds of arrests followed — but the main charges were for possession of cannabis.

While the crime rate fell in the area of the police operation, it soared in the adjoining areas.

200 people — mainly Black youth — attended a meeting to discuss the situation. A call for a street meeting in All Saints Road was overwhelmingly supported.

Traditional Black community leaders (including Frank Critchlow, owner of the Mangrove Cafe in All Saints Road, scene of earlier clashes between Black youth and police) lent their weight to the call.

The majority of Kensington CLP officers also supported the protest. Leaflets urged the community to join with the youth in demonstrating against the police presence and calling for a reduction in tension and a peaceful Carnival.

A motion was passed at a Local Government Committee asking all Labour councillors to attend the all Saints Road gathering.

But in the week before the meeting, the Black community leaders disowned the action, stating that they didn't want to escalate the situation. In the confusion which followed, some people believed that the police had struck a deal with the community leaders.

Although this was not true, the street meeting was not a success. Only 5 out of 15 Labour councillors turned up, and even fewer Labour Party members. At a subsequent meeting of the GC, CLP officers came under attack for their decision to support and publicise the all Saints Road meeting.

The police operation continued.

It was no surprise that in the days before Carnival, the markets and streets of North Kensington were full of rumours. "There is going to be trouble," people said.

The police publicity campaign asking people to "walk light" and not take valuables added to the impression that Carnival was a dangerous and crime-ridden event and a serious public order probem.

With the exception of the tragic death of Michael Galvin, the carnival passed peacefully until the Monday evening. Carnival committee stewards have prevented serious incidents since they were set up after the 1977 riots and this year over a million people enjoyed the sunshine and music.

It was the police decision to close the carnival, early and abruptly, made without consultation with the organisers, which created the atmosphere of confusion in which the later violence exploded.

The methods they employed — normal Land Rovers replaced by riot-protected vehicles, riot squads appearing without warning on streets filled with innocent revellers — guaranteed resistance from dispossessed youth already angry at months of police harassment.

There were incidents of deliberate provocation by the police. One eye witness reported a scene where the police decided to transfer an arrested person from one van to another — and went to great lengths to carry this out in the view of a crowd of carnival goers they had penned in to a vantage-point beforehand.

The police have been successful in their concerted campaign against Carnival and the community. The Labour Party response has been unimpressive.

Westminster Workers

Union activist victimised

The struggle against privatisation in Westminster has claimed its first victim.

Steve Harris, an organiser of NUPE rank and file resistance to Lady Porter's plans, is now being victimised by management, apparently with no help forthcoming from union officers.

Steve, a founder member of Westminster Workers against the Cuts (WWAC), is a shop steward for the sweepers, and has always publicly opposed privatisation and in-house tendering.

He has now been disciplined for absence from work when visiting his mother, who is seriously ill, and for taking sick leave himself, although on both occasions he had taken care to phone in, as required.

Two council officers have been to his home, entering without permission and questioning his neighbours.

His protected overtime pay has been stopped. He is constantly watched.

Such large deductions have been made from his pay packet that he is no longer getting a living wage — £40 a week does not cover his rent, let alone such minor items as food and travel.

Obviously the Council is trying to starve Steve out in an effort to pick off the leaders of WWAC one by one, thus freeing itself to intimidate the rest of the workforce.

The two NUPE Branch secretaries, Len Showell and Larry Quilty, have done nothing. They seem more intent on conniving with the Tories to push through privatisation than in organising resistance or protecting workers' rights.

By Paula Watson Westminster South CLP

Steve and WWAC are guilty of what they see as the crime of trying to publicise the threat posed by privatisation and in-house tendering to jobs, pay and conditions.

Mobilisation in support of Steve and WWAC is urgently needed. But another problem has emerged: the attitude of the Labour Group on Westminster City Council.

Many of the group seem curiously reluctant to give any political leadership. They keep away from WWAC meetings and seem afraid of offending the NUPE Bureaucracy.

At the last meeting of the Local Government Committee they voted down a motion calling for a councillor to act as liaison between the Group and WWAC, claiming that Cllr Richard Nichols was already responsible for relations with the unions.

This conveniently ignored the fact that Nicholls, and this is no criticism of him, is supposed to deal with *all* the unions and is anyway heavily involved in struggles within British Telecom — leaving him insufficient time to cope with privatisation, a major and urgent concern in Westminster.

Even more disturbing was the view expressed by many of the councillors that it was not part of their job to intervene in an internal union dispute. This is surely a complete abdication of their responsibilities to workers in struggle.

The Labour Group should throw its whole weight behind WWAC to protect Steve, to ensure that all the facts are widely publicised, and to help organise effective resistance — which must mean a Westminster-wide strike.

WWAC will be putting up candidates against Showell and Quilty in the next union elections in September. *Briefing* urges all NUPE members in Westminster to support the WWAC candidates.

Greenwich

ACTTS boycott hits equal ops

Greenwich Council's Women's Unit is being boycotted by the local TGWU ACTSS branch — because of plans to give the unit extra funds, including money for an Asian Women's Centre.

The low point of the action came when the Council switchboard operators refused to put through an emergency call to the Women's Unit.

The father of one of the unit's workers had suffered a heart attack. The operator refused to respond to the distraught relative on the phone.

The switchboard operators are now taking further action until they receive an apology from the Women's Unit who complained about the blocking of the emergency call.

Meanwhile, the Women's Unit has also been hit by a refusal of the print shop to print its work and the non-collection and delivery of its post.

Both NALGO and the NUPE Officers Branch have passed resolutions *supporting* the Women's Unit and *condemning* the ACTSS action.

By Mandy Moore Tottenham CLP

Management have been making noises of support but taking little action even though the ACTSS Branch in Greenwich, and its secretary Charlie Maslin, have a long history of rabid opposition to equal opportunities policies.

Maslin opposed the appointment of the Women's Officer and the Police Committee Support Unit Officer when they were first agreed by the Council. He has also vociferously opposed the Council's lesbian and gay rights policy.

Dave Picton, leader of the Council, has written twice to staff about the action, confirming the Council's commitment to equal opportunities, saying:

"The purpose of this letter is to advise all council employees that, in the absence of a resumption of normal working, any individual who refuses to undertake the full range of duties and responsibilities of their post will be regarded as being in breach of their contract."

That was on August 3rd. The action by the switchboard operators is continuing. The Women's Unit is being prevented from carrying out its work and its workers feel they are being victimised.

It is simply not acceptable that trade union action should be taken against other trade unionists in this manner. If ACTSS has a policy disagreement with the Council then it should thrash it out with the local Labour Party which drew up the policy in the first place.

The NALGO shop, which includes the Women's Unit workers, unanimously voted to "take all action possible to undermine the ACTSS/TGWU action — including crossing their picket lines."

Many members of other trade unions share this view. If ACTSS step up their action or bring about disciplinary action against their own members, they will get little solidarity or support.

LISTINGS

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.

★SUN SEPT 13
★Memorial for Steve Biko. 3pm, Notting Hill Methodist Church, 240 Lancaster Road, W11. Organised by Anti-Apartheid & Southern Africa the Imprisoned Society.

★Labour Committee on Ireland London AGM. 11-5, Teatro Technis, Crowndale Road, NW1.

★Burston School rally & picnic. 73rd anniversary of longest strike in history. TGWU sponsored. 9.30am onwards, march at 11.40am.

★THURS SEPT 17
Lewisham Fightback! 8pm, Deptford Town Hall, New Cross Road, SE14. Organised by Left Forum. Speakers: Cllr Ron Stockbridge, local trade unions, London Bridge.

★SAT OCT 3
Movement for Civil Rights & Justice. Broadwater Farm demonstration. Details: 01 808 1667.

★TUE OCT 6
★Lewisham Anti-apartheid meeting. Albany, Douglas Way, Deptford, SE8. Chair: Joan Ruddock MP.

★SAT OCT 24/SUN 25
★The Socialist Conference. Winding Wheel Centre, Chesterfield. Organised by Campaign Group MPs, Socialist Society, Conference of Socialist Economists. Details: 01 734 8501.

★TUE NOV 3
★S. London LCI public meeting: Birmingham 6 & Guildford 4. 8pm, Room 119, Lambeth Town Hall.

★SAT NOV 28
★Employment Discrimination. LCI Conference. Camden Centre, King's Cross, NW1.

Evening Class
Social Anthropology
An introductory course for Marxists
Lecturer: Chris Knight (Department of Anthropology, University College, London)
7.00-9pm
Tuesdays
from September 15th
30 Camden Street, London NW1
Wheelchair access
For information ring Sue on 388 8412