LONDON LABOUR 40p
BRIEFING
No 80 SEPT 22~OCT 13 1987

Message from Broadwater Farm to Downing Street:

WE WILL NOT FORGET!

We need to show the people what we can do if we're united. We need to use our numbers to show the government that we haven't given up on our demands.

In fact, those demands are expanding. As the government's policies unfold day by day — the education bill, the poll tax, housing, immigration — we need to use the platform we in Broadwater Farm have won to mobilise others to fight back.

Our base in the Broadwater Farm struggle, our experiences at the hands of the police, courts, and prisons, and our experiences of fighting back over the years have shown us that any group of people can do the same things we have done.

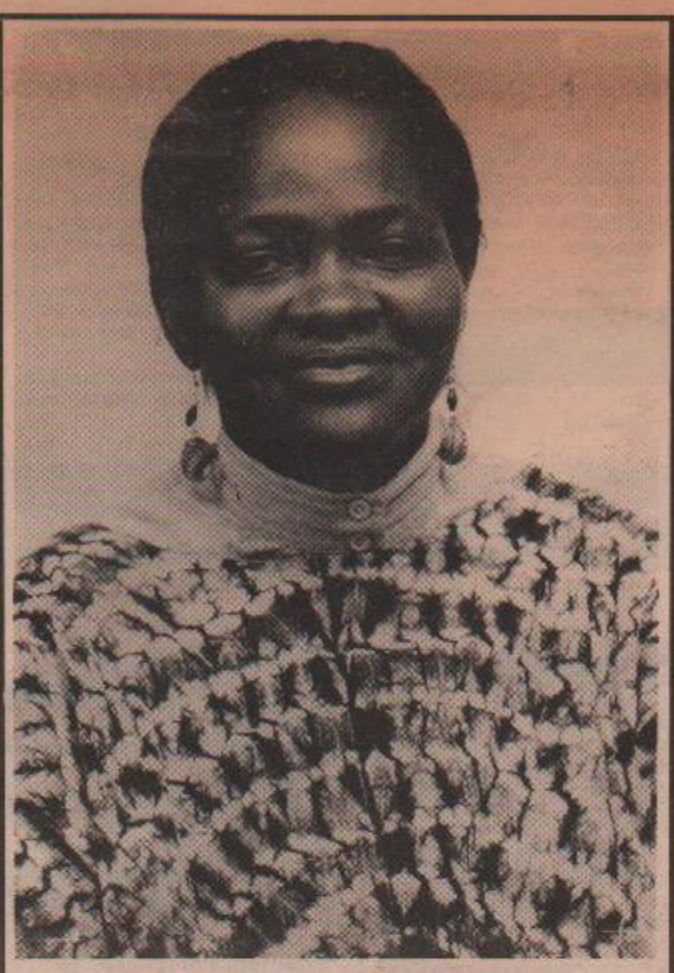
Our slogan is unity is strength.

- **We have not forgotten the death of Cynthia Jarrett.**
- **We have not forgotten the attack on our community on October 6th, 1985.**
- **We have not forgotten the efforts we made between Cynthia Jarrett's death and the evening of October 6th to avoid confrontation. We believe that if the police had wanted to, they too could have taken steps to avoid confrontation.**

They ignored our demands: to suspend the officers who went into Mrs Jarrett's house, to tell the truth about how they got into the house, to explain whether or not they had a warrant.

Instead they sent in the riot squad and increased the number of police in and around the area. They arrived ready for confrontation — a confrontation which resulted in the death of PC Blakelock.

This was followed by the arrests of hundreds of innocent people in our community. Our doors were sledgehammered down. Juveniles were interrogated without adults present. Confessions were extracted and legal representation denied.



MARTHA OSAMOR, a long-time community activist in Tottenham, has been involved in the United Black Women's Action Group, the Haringey Anti-Racist/Anti-Fascist Campaign, and the Broadwater Farm Youth Association.

In May 1987, after only a year as a councillor, she was elected Haringey Council's Deputy Leader, a post from which she was deposed in September for her courageous stand in defence of jobs and services.

Here, Cllr Osamor explains the background to and importance of the October 3rd March for Civil Rights and Justice organised by the Broadwater Farm Youth Association.

Under pressure, Howard Kerr, a local youth, named 17 people he knew from the area. These people were then picked up and interrogated. Later it turned out Howard Kerr had been in Windsor on the night of October 6th.

The media was used to try the cases before they even came up in court. We are calling for an inquiry because we believe the British public are owed the truth. We want answers to our questions.

(Continued on back page)

March!

from Broadwater Farm to 10 Downing Street

Saturday October 3rd

Called by The Movement for Civil Rights and Justice

Organised by Broadwater Farm Youth Association, Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, Broadwater Farm Residents' Association

March leaves Broadwater Farm 10.00am

Meeting points:

Seven Sisters tube, 10.30am; Manor House, 11.00am; Finsbury Park, 11.10am; Camden Town tube, 11.30am; Trafalgar Square, 12.45pm.

Rally in Hyde Park 3pm

With national and international speakers

★ A public enquiry into the uprising on 6th October 1985!

★ The immediate release of the innocent youths framed and convicted after the uprising!

★ Fight State Racism and Oppression!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Lambeth

Conference votes to fight the Tories

Lambeth Borough Conference, held on Sunday 11th September, decided by a two thirds majority to defy Tory ratecapping legislation and not to cut jobs and services or increase rents.

The Conference threw out the consultation document prepared by Linda Bellos and Dave Morgan, leader and deputy leader of the council, which proposed setting a legal budget next April.

Realising that she was rather isolated Linda tried to placate those to her left.

She argued that despite her manifesto commitment to no cuts there was a new situation now the Tories had been re elected. It was necessary to be realistic and make cuts.

She maintained that her vacancy freeze would enable black and women workers to gain, through internal recruitment. She ruffled her audience by explaining, as an aside, that she regretted making cuts and that if she was not leader she would probably be opposing the cuts herself!

Councillor Steve French, speaking for the 10 councillors who had prepared the alternative document "Compliance or Campaign?", demanded that the council leadership stuck to its promises, and maintain the local support it had won by defying the Tory government before the general election.

Representatives from Lambeth Joint Shop Stewards Committee answered Linda by pointing out that equal opportunities policies were never enhanced by recruitment freezes, and that a Tory cut felt exactly the same as a Labour cut.

By Valerie Coultas Vauxhall CLP

Ted Knight, surcharged councillor and ex-leader, also backed up the 10. He argued that there had been no consultation with the people of Lambeth about these cuts; and that the decision to renege on the manifesto was an insult to those 31 councillors in the last Labour Group who had been willing to confront the Tories.

Most delegates were aware that the battle to defend socialist policies this time round would be much harder, but felt strongly that Labour councillors should not be doing the Tories dirty work for them.

Councillor Rachel Webb's resolution, committing the Labour Group to a deficit budget, was defeated for now — clearly many comrades realise this option may have to be pursued in the future.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee, led by Councillor John Mann, tried to push the council leadership towards much greater "realism".

They demanded a "socialist restructuring of Lambeth services": more efficient cuts than Linda was proposing and a general tightening up of management in the council.

The conference rejected this position, and went on to defeat the leadership document by 62 to 16, with 11 abstentions. Norwood CLP's resolution, which mapped out a no cuts position, was carried by 57 votes to 23.

A "Lambeth Fightback Campaign" has been established and the battle is on to stop the leadership of Lambeth Council treading the same road as other "left" Labour Councils who see no alternative but to make cuts.

Haringey

Council climbs down... but Haringey fights back!

On Tuesday 15th September, Haringey's ruling Labour Group became the last in London to abandon its no cuts position.

Council Leader Steve King and Deputy Leader Martha Osamor were ousted by a 22-16 vote of no confidence — following their refusal to implement cuts in jobs and services.

Immediate cuts of £15m in this year's budget are now on the way. Cuts of over £40m are being contemplated for next year.

The capital programme is to be the subject of "a major review... in the light of the revenue position". Early retirement schemes are to be "investigated" and overtime "reviewed". The cuts juggernaut is on the loose in Haringey.

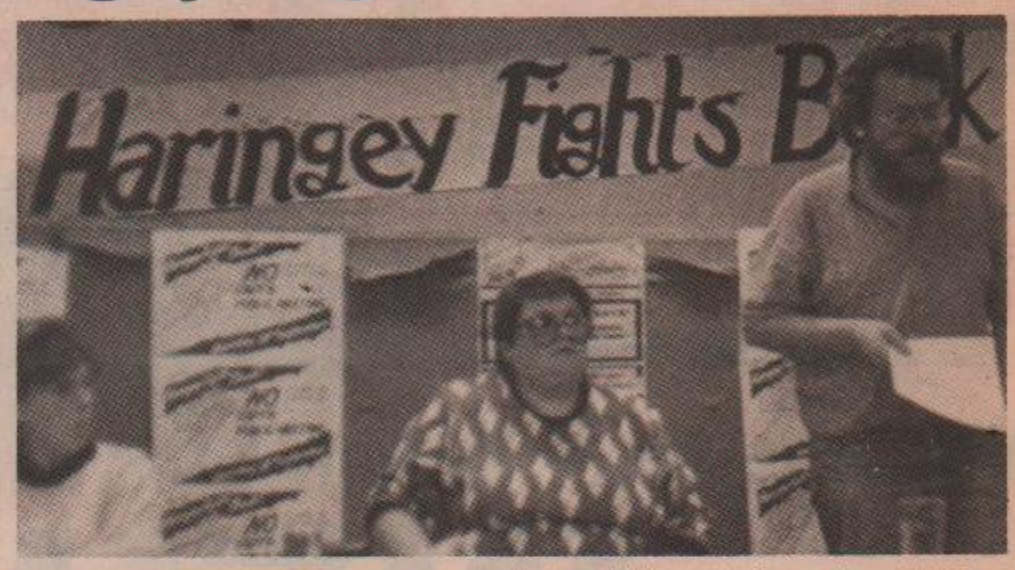
But **Haringey Fights Back!** On the Monday before the group meeting some 200 people gathered for the inaugural meeting of Haringey's new campaign to defend jobs and improve services.

Speakers included a representative of Haringey's nursery nurses and welfare assistants (currently in dispute with the Council).

In open discussion, Council workers, service users, and tenants announced their clear determination to resist all cuts — and to use this resistance as a springboard to fight privatisation, the poll tax, and the new assaults on education and housing.

The campaign, launched in a frenzy of activity by local *Briefing* supporters, has already attracted local and national media coverage. Petitions against the cuts have been circulated in the workforce and the community. Leaflets have been handed out at workplaces, tube stations and high roads. Posters have gone up across the borough.

A lobby of the full Council



By Mike Marqusee Haringey Labour Briefing

meeting (on September 22nd, as *Briefing* goes to press) is being organised, and plans are afoot to make Haringey Fights Back! a long-term presence in the Borough.

The belated collapse of the Labour Group's no cuts policy was not unexpected. A Group meeting held on the previous Tuesday, 8th September, voted by 16-15 to ask Group Officers to "produce a legal and balanced budget for 1987/88 and 1988/89". In a letter to all Labour councillors the Group Officers explained that they could not and would not do this — because it meant cuts in jobs and services. This led to the vote of no confidence and the removal of the best leadership this Borough has ever had.

Both Group meetings were attended by over 40 local Party members, the bulk of them present to show their opposition to cuts. During the first meeting, Dolly Kiffin of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association denounced the cuts and singled out Tottenham's new MP, former Haringey Council Leader Bernie Grant, for scathing attack.

Grant has turned against those who defended his stand over Broadwater Farm and now sides openly with the right wing cutters who were only too scarce in the weeks and months following the uprising of October 6th, 1985.

Grant's rightward lurch and his rambling attacks on his former comrades are in stark contrast with the integrity and courage displayed by Cllrs King and Osamor, backed up by Narendra Makanji, Peter Doble, Roger Harris and John Moore, all Group Officers now deposed by the right.

At the second and decisive Group meeting local right wingers called in a Greater London Labour Party officer to warn Party members that they were present only on sufferance. She announced she would be attending meetings of both local GCs. This was taken by many of us as a not very subtle threat of disciplinary action — and one which we fully intend to disregard.

If only Herbert Morrison House had shown such concern for Haringey during our recent by-elections!

At a special Local Government Committee in July, the left's anti-cuts position was victorious, with delegates from both GCs and both left and right breaking their mandates. Seven left delegates from Tottenham were then kicked off the LGC by the Tottenham GC. Their clear determination to resist cuts in jobs and services cost them their LGC places, and paved the way for the right's reversal of Party policy at an LGC held on Wednesday 16th September.

"Game, set and match" said one right councillor after the meeting. But while these people are playing tennis in committee rooms (with a GLLP full-timer brought in to referee) the left is getting on with a different game — one played in the workplaces, the community centres, the Council estates, and the streets.

It will not be as easy for the Labour right as they think. We aim to draw together everyone affected by and prepared to struggle against the cuts. We will shout the consequences of every budget cut from the rooftops, if necessary. We will besiege the cutters — wherever and whenever we can.

Hackney

A recent meeting of the Housing Capital Programme Sub-committee was disrupted by tenants from a number of Council owned ex-GLC estates.

They are bitterly angry at the Council's failure to implement long-promised estate improvement schemes.

The outlawing of special financing schemes started a crisis in Hackney, which will be greatly exacerbated by a budget gap of £50m for 1988-89.

The leadership are proposing, amongst other things:

- a rent increase above the level of inflation;
- disposal of capital assets;
- a limited recruitment policy;
- "more flexible working arrangements" with the Council workforce.

By Cllr Pat Corrigan South Defoe Ward, Hackney

This strategy, they argue, will allow the Council to mitigate the worst of the cuts whilst allowing time to build a defence campaign to resist further cuts — a view heard from many councillors facing surcharge from the 1985/6 delayed rate.

This position, "cut now to campaign later", is seriously flawed. The Council's credibility, already suffering from its failure in the 1985/6 campaign, will be further eroded if they attempt to build a defence campaign *from a position of cuts*.

The first cut is the hardest; subsequent cuts are easier to make. Disruption of Council meetings will become commonplace as the Council, rather than the government, is seen as responsible for the cuts.

In the short term, we must build support within the Party and the Council to defend the manifesto at the Annual Borough Conference on September 26th.

In the longer term, we must build a campaign amongst tenants, in the community sector and with the workforce on the issues that affect them.

We need to prepare ourselves for attacks from the media and the Labour Front Bench which will undoubtedly occur if we fight back.

The truth is, Hackney Council is in a no-win situation. If the no-cuts position is held, cuts will merely be delayed until the Tory government sends its commissioners in.

The building of the campaign is not just about saving face for Labour's manifesto: it is about how people live their lives. It will not be easy, but that is no reason for shirking the challenge.

Brent

A long list of 'caring cuts'

Having won a majority on the LGC for the general notion of cuts at the end of July (without discussion in branches), the leadership of Brent Council finally brought their cuts package to a Labour Group meeting on Tuesday 15th September.

However, they had reckoned without a lobby organised by Labour Party members and Council trade unionists — perhaps they believed Merle Amory's claim that there is no opposition to the cuts.

Some 80 people lobbied the Group, and decided to request that six people from areas particularly affected by the proposed cuts should address the Group in advance of their meeting.

The Labour Group voted, though, that non-Party members should leave while they discussed whether to hear the representatives. When they refused, the Chair of Group stormed out, adjourning the meeting for 24 hours.

By the following night a security firm had been hired to check the Labour Party cards of those wanting to attend the Group meeting. Having ensured that they could discuss their cuts

By Pete Firmin Brent East CLP

out of view from those who voted them in last year, they then proceeded to agree a package including:

- a review of all vacancies, freezing some posts;
- cutting 46 primary and 104 secondary teachers, and 40 Race Equality Officer posts;
- a reduction in educational visits;
- giving school milk only to those who request it;
- increasing the price of school meals (by 5p) and of meals on wheels;
- cutting youth and community spending (£½m); the discretionary awards budget (£1.7m); and college budgets (8%);
- closing 2 outdoor swimming pools and refusing to build a promised new indoor one.

Having bridged some £5.3m of the £7m budget gap, the leadership magnanimously agreed to refer further proposals to close three day nurseries and four out-of-borough homes for the elderly for further consideration.

Twenty-two councillors voted for this list of cuts — which was said in July to be "caring cuts". Twelve voted against; two abstained.

The referred proposals virtually to decimate nursery provision come just months after under-5s provision was declared a "priority". Whatever "uncaring cuts" could be, and whatever is in store for *non*-priority areas, doesn't bear thinking about.

On top of the cuts package, the Chair of Housing moved a £5 per week rent increase — some 30%. Leader Merle Amory amended this to a £2 increase. Many of those present felt that the original £5 proposal was a "plant" to make the £2 seem more reasonable, and sure enough it went through — though only by 19 votes to 18.

Meanwhile, on the Wednesday afternoon at the Joint Consultative Committee of the Council unions, an unsuccessful attempt was made to ban JCC members from attending protest lobbies and NUPE officials (who support cuts) complained that their members had been told about projected cuts by members of other unions.

In continuing its lack of accountability the Labour Group leadership do not even intend to take their cuts package to a full Council, but only to the Policy and Resources Committee

However, the lobby and subsequent panic by the Labour Group has given a boost to the opponents of cuts, who went on to build for a bigger lobby of the P&R meeting on Tuesday 22nd September, from which we hope to set up an ongoing cuts campaign.

Waltham Forest

Dangerous vacuum for 'socialist cuts'

A conference called by Waltham Forest LGC to discuss rate-capping ended in a stalemate with three proposed strategies all defeated.

Such an outcome can only be to the advantage of those who are happy to see a Labour council implement Tory cuts without a whimper of protest.

The scale of the results of rate-capping in the borough will be massive, up to 20% across the board in possible cuts. This could mean over £12 million off the education budget and over £5 million off social services. The consequent number of redundancies would be enormous.

Despite the severity of the situation, there is widespread apathy towards the implications. Some would be quite happy to accept and implement the cuts, but try to "humanise" them by

By John Wray Leyton CLP

making savings from this year's budget which can be used partially to cushion next year's spending reductions.

The most dangerous argument proposed is that any cuts can be made "socialist" if Labour councillors target them. The likelihood of this is measured by the fact that these same Labour councillors recently voted to use scab labour to break a strike by refuse collectors in support of colleagues wrongly accused of extortion of the public and later found not-guilty.

The conference did actually reject this policy but as no positive proposal was adopted the vacuum left will allow the Group to slide towards making the cuts. If that is to be avoided, the LGC will have to adopt a counter-proposal as soon as possible.

Education debate

What future for ILEA?

As promised in the Tory election manifesto, Kenneth Baker has published a timetable for enabling inner London boroughs to opt out of ILEA.

The legal and administrative machinery will be in place in 1990.

Decisions to opt out will be taken at council meetings. Once made, these decisions are irreversible.

Baker himself wished to introduce a speedier timetable, but was overruled by Ridley and the Department of the Environment, who need three years to sort out financial arrangements and bring them in to line with the poll tax.

Despite this stay of execution, nobody need doubt the deadly determination of the Tories to kill off ILEA. Decisions to opt out will be made by councillors who have no remit for education. Once the decision is taken, a future council will not have the option of opting back in to ILEA.

Despite the Tories' current obsession with parental choice, there is no obligation on councils to consult parents.

It is the Tory-controlled boroughs of the City of London, Kensington and Chelsea, Wandsworth and Westminster which have expressed the most interest in opting out. This is hardly surprising for London's Tories have never made any secret of their ambition to break up ILEA — a body they are never likely to control politically.

Also, the Tory boroughs are the most affluent ones, which contribute directly to the costs of education in the poorer areas.

City and Westminster alone contribute some 50% of ILEA's income, and consume a much smaller proportion of the budget. If just they opt out the financial effect will be so great, ILEA in its present form will break up. There may also be knock-on effects.

Given the current positions taken on cuts in their own boroughs, it is unlikely that the present political leaderships of the richer Labour boroughs will wish to subsidise a rump ILEA. Already, it has been rumoured and denied that Islington is considering opting out.

While a rump ILEA in the form of a consortium of Labour boroughs is possible, it is equally possible that education services will devolve to the individual boroughs, if the Tories opt out.

By Paul Foley
Islington NUT, Hackney South CLP

Whatever the possible permutations, the financial implications of opting out are too horrendous to contemplate. The effects on jobs and services of a 50% cut in Inner London's education budget, I leave to the reader's imagination.

But many activists are drawing a sharp distinction between defending London's education service and saving ILEA. Until recently, the two amounted to the same thing but the track record of ILEA's current political leadership has raised serious doubts about both its will and ability to lead a fightback against Baker's proposals.

Since the ratecapping debacle at County Hall, ILEA has not had a perspective of challenging the Tories. It has shown itself only too willing to pass on Tory cuts to its workforce and students. It is more than probable that a campaign to defend London's education will quickly come into conflict with ILEA over the 1988 budget.

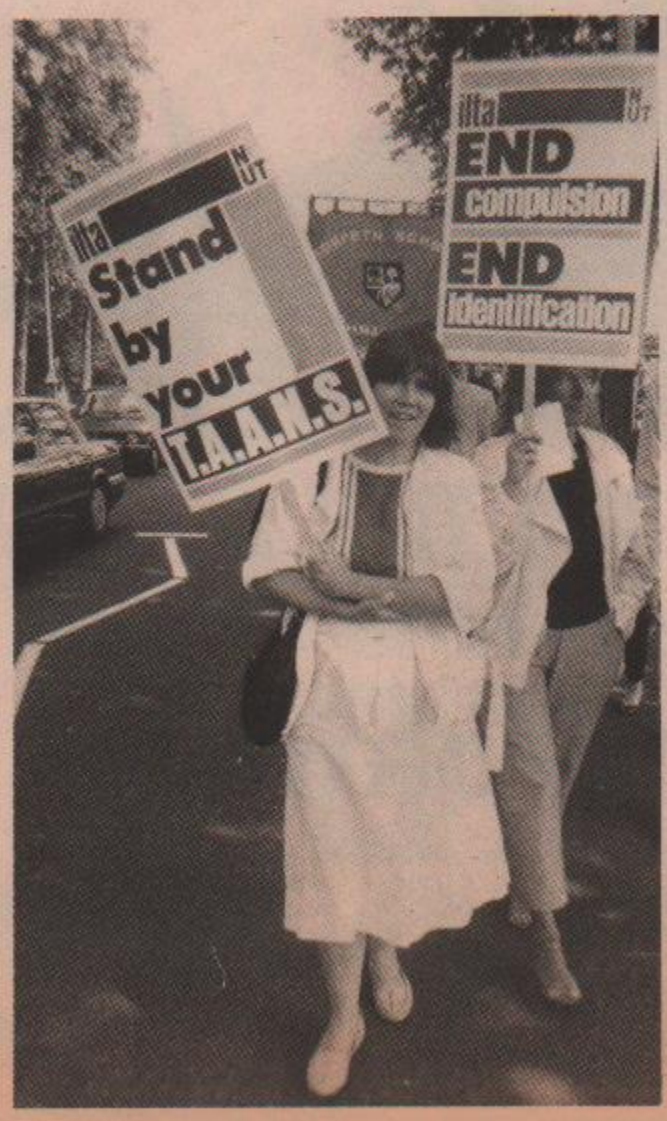


PHOTO: Morning Star

ILEA has shown itself too willing to pass on Tory cuts to its workforce

The current ILEA is hostile to trade unions. Earlier this year, ILEA refused absolutely to negotiate with the Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA) on the principles of the compulsory movement of teachers. In doing this they tore up unilaterally an existing agreement and created continuing chaos in schools and the bitterness of hundreds of teachers.

ILEA is attempting to pursue the hardest of lines in its interpretation of Baker's imposed conditions of service. This includes punitive fines for those who refuse to cover for absent colleagues as part of the continuing campaign against the Baker imposition.

In education policy ILEA is making so many concessions to the Tories that it seems to be outbidding Baker. It was the first educational authority to publish a league table of school examination results: in the current educational climate, a market survey for parents to make the best educational "buy".

ILEA's response to Baker's national tests was to announce its own testing arrangements which it claimed was more effective than Baker's. Thus it has failed to challenge the whole idea of testing, which is the hottest of potatoes in educational debate.

It is not obvious that defending London's education equates with saving ILEA. It is opportune for the left in London to debate what kind of education service it wants and not allow itself to be used as demo-fodder in defence of the current ILEA status quo.

West London Teachers' Association has organised a conference on the future of London's education. This initiative deserves the support of all those willing to defend London's education.

The London Education Conference
Planning the way forward

Organised by the West London Teachers Association (National Union of Teachers)

A one-day conference designed to bring together a wide range of people involved in education to plan out a response to the government's attacks on comprehensive education.

The Conference will be facing up to six main themes in a series of workshops led by invited speakers including teachers, parents, educationalists, trade unionists, youth workers, ILEA members and more.

- Working together: parents, governors, teachers & students
- Equal opportunities: a controversial issue?
- National curriculum and national control
- What strategy for the teacher unions
- ILEA's future and ILEA's past
- Privatising education

Holland Park School
Airlie Gardens, Campden Hill Road, London W8
Saturday 10th October, 10am-5pm
Creche
(please notify us in advance if you need it)
Conference fee: £2/£1
Further details: 01 749 5169

London Group of Labour MPs

The tasks ahead

Many Labour MPs still attach a legacy of blame to the so-called "London factor" in our electoral defeat.

We reject the notion that the "London factor" was a major cause of that defeat, but we cannot deny the effectiveness of the Tory Party and the press campaign to portray London local government in the worst possible light.

Most of it was distortion and much of its was lies, but then there is little that Joseph Goebbels could have taught either the Tory Party or the British press about the big lie.

In London we cannot simply ignore this unsavoury and unjust reality. We should not be defensive about our progressive social policies, but neither must we be arrogant or dismissive. If people do not immediately understand what we are trying to achieve, we should not simply brand them as fools or traitors.

Even in a defective democracy such as our own we must still strive to win over by argument and advocacy, taking into account sensitivities, but never pandering to prejudice.

"Jealousy factor"

The new intake of London Labour MPs includes some of the most capable and nationally known of the PLP and is in constant media demand. This gives them opportunities they are right to seize, but also leaves them very vulnerable to the "jealousy factor" which is so depressingly evident in party politics and often more potent than ideology.

London's Labour MPs must play their full part in the Commons. This is not a plea for Parliamentary exclusiveness, but rather recognition that Parliament does offer an effective platform — and in any case our parties have sent us there to do a job of work.

Links with local government

The onslaught on local democracy will continue throughout the new Parliament and this will mean more misrepresentation of Labour authorities.

No Labour Council must go undefended, but there is an organisational problem. There are now only 4 Labour Councils (Barking, Hackney, Islington and Newham) with all their Parliamentary constituencies represented by Labour MPs. The remainder have only partial representation, with Hounslow and Greenwich having no Labour MPs at all.

At present the Labour Group officers are involved in meetings with every leader to establish or cement relations, and we are allocating MPs to those Boroughs without Parliamentary representation.

In addition to defending Labour Boroughs we also intend to highlight the injustices and inefficiencies of Tory boroughs whose activities largely go unrecorded in Parliament and in our biased media.

Outside Parliament

It is trite to record that socialism will never be built in Parliament alone and thus the role of London Labour MPs' activities outside Parliament will continue to receive high priority.

The big lesson that comes out of the General election is that even the best organised campaign will not succeed if confined to a four week period.

It is my hope that London MPs will be involved in campaigns, demonstrations and picket lines not only in London but around the country, whenever and wherever there are groups and communities involved in struggle against injustice and exploitation.

This means asking a great deal of our London MPs, since all of them represent hugely disadvantaged communities and they have problems enough to deal with locally.

However, we must double our London seats if we are to achieve a Labour government at the next election. We will stand a better chance of success if the London Group is seen as an effective, well-organised and disciplined force, both within Parliament and outside.

By Tony Banks MP
(Newham North West)
Chair, London Group of Labour MPs





PHOTO Broadwater Photographics

Steve King (the Deputy Leader of Haringey Council) (left), William Silcott (centre) and Stafford Scott (right) picket the Old Bailey murder trial, January 1987: the common cause Terry Ashton either doesn't see or else must be trying to sabotage.

WE WILL NOT FORGET!

(Continued from front page)

We want answers to these questions:

- Why was Floyd Jarrett arrested for a simple motoring offence that required only production of documents at any police station.
- Why did police remove his keys but not sign them off?
- Why did police say they were let into the house or that the front door was open when in fact they used the key to get inside?
- Why were the people who met the police on the morning of October 6th not given any meaningful answers that would help cool the situation?
- Why were people stopped from leaving the Farm to go and picket the police station?
- Why was Tottenham blocked off by police on the afternoon of October 6th?
- Why did police surround and block off the Farm?
- Why was no cover given to police sent in to fight?
- Why did they use sledgehammers to gain entry to Council property when they could ask for keys if they had a warrant?
- Why were solicitors not allowed into interviews?

The media rubbished us — as if we got up one morning and decided to run mad and kill!

People must understand that we have been building our community for years.

We now have a neighbourhood office for repairs and maintenance, a day-care centre for our young ones, a Mothers' Project for single mothers, a Youth Association and Centre, a programme to feed and look after our senior citizens, an after-school club, a co-op to look for jobs and training, contract compliance so that contractors take on local labour, a representative residents' association.

We have a Broadwater Farm Panel on which all agencies operating on the Farm have a place and where efforts can be made to share the problems and maintain the stability of the estate.

All this started off when we heard the news in 1980 that the police wanted to build a mini-police station on the estate. The youths realised that the only answer they were getting to their basic demands was more and more police.

The youths helped make Broadwater Farm a better place to live, with the lowest crime rate in the area, and the police have never forgiven them for it.

People from all over the world write and visit us. They want to know how it was all done.

We spend too much of our time defending ourselves from unwarranted attacks from the police and the state, as if our efforts to improve the place were criminal acts.

We are grateful to those local councillors who recognised our potential and invested their trust and their finance. We're grateful for the help we received from the GLC. Its abolition was no accident. The same treatment is now being turned on Haringey Council.

Even if everything we have won is taken away from us, even if our whole community is criminalised, we will still have the spirit and the experience to fightback. We owe it to our children and future generations, black and white, who will inherit the decaying inner cities, to build a platform from which they can defend themselves. We know the attacks are not going to stop here.

The Movement for Civil Rights and Justice is as broad as all the oppressed people themselves. We make alliances, sometimes unholy, but the agenda is set by those who have been involved in the real struggle. Our March on October 3rd will link up all the issues and demands we've dealt with.

After that, the real journey begins. We are talking about years of struggle ahead. We have no illusions in the people who claim to represent us. We will have to fight to get back what has been taken away and what will be taken away.

If Council estates, like Broadwater Farm are sold off, we will have to fight for a roof over our heads. We have no choice and nowhere else to go.

We cannot afford to "opt out" — whether in housing or education. We've already paid for these things. They are ours and they are not for sale.

Other groups of people will begin to do exactly what we have done. Our struggles and our achievements will be a force to reckon with.

A History Lesson

The small beer of Notting Hill

We thought the day would never come when the *Daily Telegraph* would have something useful to say. However, consider this piece printed in the *Way of the World* column on September 3rd, kindly drawn to our attention by Dorothy Macedo:

"While it is understandable that sober, God-fearing, law-abiding citizens should have expressed horror, alarm and outrage at the recent disorders attending the Notting Hill Carnival in west London — leading to the traditional demands that this ancient popular festival should be banned — we must at the same time retain some historical perspective.

The belief that a carnival should be a happy, peaceful event, where people of all classes and races mingle joyfully in the streets, and where pretty West Indian girls can dance with smiling policement for the benefit of the ITN cameras, is a comparatively recent one.

Our more robust ancestors really knew how to enjoy themselves. In 1514, for instance, at the Mardi Gras celebrations in Toulouse, carnival revellers in their colourful costumes ran amok for more than 10 days. After hanging the town's bishop in effigy, they marched on the Bishop's Palace with cries of "Le diable est le roi" to hang the bishop himself with some 80 of his followers.

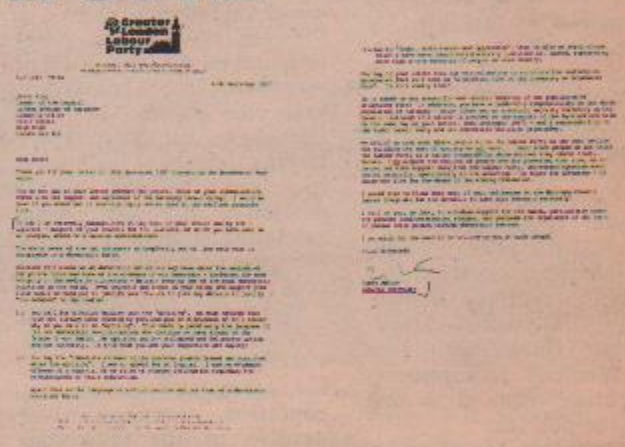
In Mainz in 1438, the traditional St Martin's Day Fair led to riots in which hundreds died and half the city was burned down.

In ancient Rome the festival of Saturnalia, which originally lasted only a day, gradually became extended by the third century to nearly a month, during which time the streets of Rome became so dangerous, and scenes of mayhem, daylight robbery and mob violence so commonplace, that it became customary for the more prosperous citizens to retire to their villas outside Ostia until the imperial troops had restored order.

Alongside such festive precedents, the carnivals of our present age seem almost boringly uneventful."

Regional Office response

Ashton's law-from another world



Former Haringey Council Leader Steve King wrote to Terry Ashton, General Secretary of the Greater London Labour Party, expressing concern at reported reluctance to circulate the leaflet produced by Broadwater Farm Youth Association advertising the October 3rd March for Civil Rights and Justice.

Below, *Briefing* publishes Ashton's reply.

We have not attempted to alter the original text: any mistakes are those of the Head of the full time regional staff, not *Briefing*.

To say I am extremely disappointed by the tone of your letter and by the — apparent — support of your Council for the leaflets, of which you have sent me an example, would be a massive understatement.

The whole tenor of the two documents is completely out of line with what is acceptable in a democratic Party.

Whatever criticisms we as democratic socialists may have about the methods of our police force and some of the elements of our democracy — including the near monopoly in the media by plutocrats — Britain remains one of the most democratic countries in the world. Even yourself and those in your Group who support your views would be hard put to justify your failure to give any details to justify "the demands" on the leaflet.

(i) You call for a Public Enquiry into the "uprising". On what grounds that have not already been covered by previous public discussion on this issue? Why do you call it an "uprising". This seems to peculiarly the language of the non democratic revolutionaries who continue to hang around on the fringe of our Party. An uprising implies a planned and deliberate action against authority. Is this what you and your supporters are saying?

(ii) You say the "immediate release of the innocent youths framed and convicted after the uprising". I see no appeal for an Inquiry. I see no evidence offered of a mistrial or of false or changed information regarding the circumstances of their conviction.

Again this is the language of revolutionaries and not that of a democratic socialist Party.

(iii) As to "fight, state racism and oppression", this is also an empty slogan which I have never heard satisfactorily justified or; indeed, repeated by more than a tiny minority of people in this country.

You say in your letter that our disinclination to circulate the leaflets on Broadwater Farm will come as "a shocking blow to the community on Broadwater Farm". Is this really true?

Is it based on any scientific and neutral sampling of the population of Broadwater Farm? In addition, you have a Leadership responsibility to the whole population of Haringey — which gives you an electoral majority currently on the Council (although this office is shocked by the results of the by-elections held on the same day as your letter, 10th September 1987) — and a responsibility to the wider Labour Party and its democratic socialist principles.

My belief is that most Black people think the Labour Party is the best vehicle for building the sort of society we *all* want. Most Black people do not think the Labour Party is a racist organisation whose motives they cannot trust. Indeed, I *do* suspect the motives of people who are promoting that view, as it cannot but take support away from the Labour Party, increasing cynicism about voting generally, specifically to the advantage — or hoped for advantage — of those who live for the dream of the coming revolution.

I would like to think that most of your colleagues on the Haringey Council Labour Group are far too sensible to take this scenario seriously!

I call on you, in fact, to withdraw support for the march, particularly under its present confrontationist slogans, and persuade the organisers of the march to pursue their points through democratic avenues.

I am sorry for the need to be writing to you at such length.

Yours sincerely,
Terry Ashton