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KING'S CROSS TRAGEDY:

BLOOD ON THATCHER'S HANDS

King's Cross should mark the beginning of the end of a crude and vicious era on London Transport.

The massive fire, in which 30 people were killed, vastly overshadows the devastation at Oxford Circus station in 1984.

The London Regional Transport Board in its 55 Broadway bunker has been sent reeling by this verdict on its pursuit of government policy at any price.

The fire has burst the bubble of LRT's slick *Towards Tomorrow's Underground* PR campaign, and revealed an outdated and shoddy safety system; a system governed by a Rulebook that is used more to discipline workers and stifle protest than to ensure the safe working of the Underground.

By Dave Welsh
Former London Transport Guard

No crystal ball was needed to predict that a major tube disaster was in the making. It happened at King's Cross, but many stations are potential fire traps.

- King's Cross was the seventeenth serious fire since 1980 — the most recent happening under an escalator at Bank Station in July.
- There are about 50 to 75 fires recorded every year on the Underground.

In 1985, a report remarked that "the London Underground system has fallen far below the safety standards elsewhere."

The report's main recommendations were rejected by LRT: "We have always been one of the safest underground systems around. We are not complacent about it."

Today, over 3 years after the setting up of LRT, the whole bus and tube system is more and more divided along lines dictated at Whitehall. LRT's strategy has been to divide the workforce up into separate businesses — London Buses Ltd, Bus Engineering Ltd, and London Underground Ltd. 190 different activities on the Underground have been singled out for competitive tendering — including station cleaning, and lift and escalator maintenance.

Over 400 jobs on stations and nearly 1,000 guards jobs have been slashed since 1984. Another 1,500 will go with the Underground Ticketing System.

Four lines have lost their guards, with London Underground introducing a scandalously flawed emergency procedure called "Leapfrogging" on the Piccadilly line.

The NUR has pointed out that "management are hell-bent on achieving the total elimination of the guards... and are prepared to bring OPO onto lines that are neither built nor modified to take account of the risks involved in having only one member of staff on each train."

Cleaning staff levels have been reduced with private cleaning firms like Pritchards winning a foothold in station cleaning. High staffing levels have always made up for low levels of safety — with the loss of staff and the increasing use of contractors, safety levels have plummeted.

Continued on back page



PHOTO: LFB Media Resource Group

Devastation after the Oxford Circus fire: the lessons were ignored

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Looking at Brent

They said it would never happen!

Brent's Fightback campaign has received a massive boost of energy and enthusiasm following the successful disruption of the Council meeting on November 11th.

At the end of a day's strike by 3,000 NALGO members, the Council chamber was occupied by a crowd of 600 anti-cuts protestors.

By Christine Clavering
Chair, Brent Fightback

The campaign had been working towards this lobby and saw it as a test of the strength of feeling among unions, community groups, and service users against the cutbacks.

The Campaign Co-ordinating Committee doubled in size following this mass protest — a clear indication that more people are now convinced that it is worth fighting back.

As early as August this year the Council officers started to make cuts, six weeks before Councillors had even debated the question. The most savage of these was the freeze on Section I spending, which social services offices use to prevent children being taken into care.

This sparked a protest by single parents, who were now deprived of their only source of childminding fees and emergency income, and stormed the Council Leader's office in anger.

They returned to lobby a Social Services Urgency Subcommittee, along with social workers and childminders, part of a crowd of over 100 who were lectured by the Chair and the Director on the virtue of self-reliance and tightening the belt.

Many of the largely black, female audience had never been to a Council meeting before and came away horrified by what they termed the "Brent fascists".

The anger and outrage increased when the viciousness of the cuts proposed by Brent's Labour Group became known.

In the first stage of cuts, designed to save £5 million, they hit the most vulnerable in the community by closing day nurseries, children's homes, and old people's homes; by increasing school meals charges and Council house rents; by cutting teaching costs and discretionary education grants; and by freezing all vacancies in departments which deliver services directly to the community.

Consumers

The consumers of these services, along with NALGO members and Labour Party activists, again organised lobbies of Labour Group and Council meetings, forcing Brent Labour Councillors to retreat behind locked doors and private security guards.

On September 22nd the Policy and Resources Committee met formally to agree the cuts package and a crowd of over 150 people came to protest. Security guards barred entry to the Council chamber and the public gallery was filled to overflowing.

Some protestors, furious at being kept out of the meeting, burst through the security guards, and Councillors too scared to voice their views in public, approved cuts without discussion.

The protestors then occupied the Council chamber and formally initiated the Fightback Campaign.

The protests succeeded in getting a reprieve for the day nurseries and old people's homes, but meanwhile all day nursery places were frozen to make room for the extra children when closures finally take place.

At this stage, many of the protestors began to feel helpless and hopeless in the face of Town Hall power. Brent Fightback was formed to stop the initial enthusiasm waning, to join together the trade unions, community groups, Labour Party activists and service consumers in a united campaign.

The Co-ordinating Committee meets on Sunday evenings to plan public meetings, leafletting and continued lobbying of the cutting Councillors.

We have also called for support from other fightback campaigns in London. Martha Osamor and comrades from Broadwater Farm addressed a disappointingly small meeting on the Stonebridge Estate but noted that if Brent already has a campaign against £5m cuts, we should be in a position of massive strength when cuts the size of Haringey's £20m are proposed.

The success of the lobby on November 11th shows what effect such organisation can have. The one day strike was held by only one of the Council unions, with manual workers crossing NALGO picket lines and NUPE members being threatened with discipline if they joined the protest.

Sixty-seven per cent of NUT members balloted for a half-day strike, but the union officials have not yet got round to organising it.

Despite this, NALGO and the rest of Brent Fightback held a massive meeting in the Council chamber, where Ted Knight gave proof that there is most certainly life after surcharge.

Members of the lobby then allowed the Councillors into the chamber to hold their meeting, but the scab Labour Councillors once again refused to make their cuts in front of Brent's workforce and electorate and the meeting did not go ahead.

This was the sort of protest that the Council leadership said could never happen. This is the community they said could not be mobilised.

It is only the beginning. With an increase in active membership and a campaign of public meetings, lobbying of trade unions and leafletting between now and Christmas, Brent Fightback will advance from strength to strength.

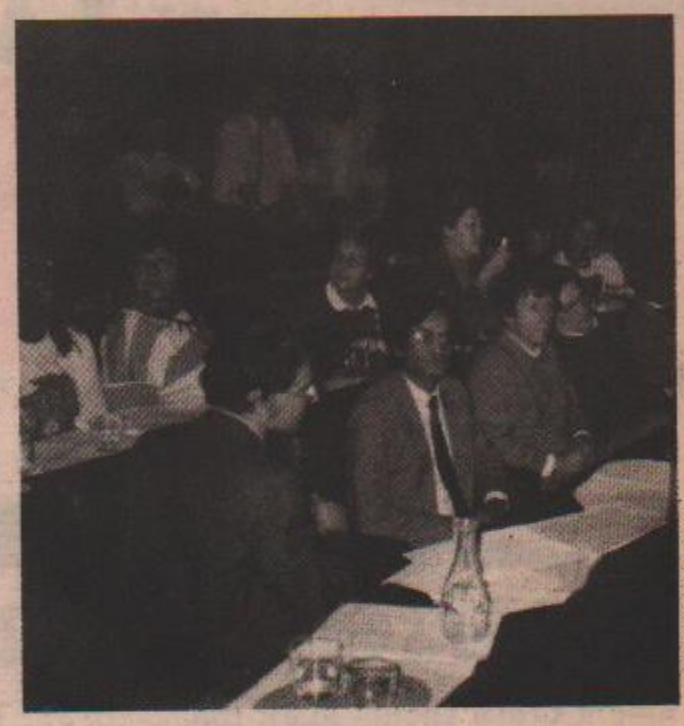


PHOTO: Geoff Cocks

Anti-cuts councillors



PHOTO: Geoff Cocks

Council lobby

Confusion clarified

At the time of writing (Friday November 20th) confusion reigns in the Brent Labour Parties over the questions of policy and leadership.

The Labour Group is split virtually down the middle between support for Ron Anderson, the Local Government Committee nominee for Leader, and Dorman Long, the right wing pro-cuts candidate of the "inner circle" of Councillors.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

After a special round of Party General Committee and LGC meetings had nominated Anderson by a majority of two to one on Monday November 9th, ex-Leader Merle Amory put forward Long at the Labour Group meeting on Tuesday 10th, and this nomination won 18-17.

Although the Council meeting on November 11th could not go ahead because Anderson supporters refused to move out of the "leadership seats" in the Council chamber, Long was endorsed as Leader by the Policy and Resources committee earlier that evening and the right have no intention of calling a special Council meeting (the next is not due for three months) and expect to run the Council by virtue of their control of Committees.

The dispute is not simply over who is Leader, but is closely tied up with policy on the cuts.

In the Leadership election *Briefing* supporters put forward Cllr Graham Durham on a "no cuts in jobs and services" platform because Ron Anderson was fudging the issue. At the hustings and afterwards, Anderson gave no clear commitment to withdrawing the £5m cuts package, but only some of them, and promised the impossible for next year — no cuts, but a legal budget.

Party nominations for Leader reflect the confusion. Both Brent North and Brent South have a pro-cuts policy, but nominated Anderson in a contest with Long (South only by 18 votes to 16, with 1 vote for Durham). After a rare mobilisation by the right, the only CLP with an anti-cuts policy, Brent East, nominated Long by 27 votes to 24 against Durham, with Anderson picking up only five votes on the first round.

Anderson was unacceptable to the (slim) majority of the Labour Group for two reasons. He is independent of the clique who have run the Council for the last two years and was kicked out as Chair of Education earlier this year for this reason. Secondly, they were not prepared to accept a Leader critical of the cuts, however confusedly.

LGC policy as decided by a majority of two to one at the end of July, after a very hurried and inadequate discussion in the Parties, is to reject a "no cuts" position in favour of making "hard decisions" after the "fullest possible consultation with the trade unions". This was used by the Labour Group leadership as a green light to push through their cuts package without reference to the Party, and little real consultation with the unions.

The votes for Leader reflect unease with the cuts package, but by no means outright rejection of the budget strategy.

brent

Because of the refusal of the Labour Group to accept him as Leader, Anderson's position has shifted under pressure from the anti-cuts Councillors and the unions. He is now committed to throwing out the cuts package, though his policy for the future is at best equivocal.

The issue facing the Party is not simply the refusal of Labour Group to accept the LGC nomination as Leader. Those Councillors (around 10) who hold a clear anti-cuts position will continue to do so regardless of who is Leader.

A majority of Labour Councillors will probably hold a pro-cuts position regardless. Simply deciding the issue of Leader will not resolve this.

The left's present support for Anderson must be conditional on his continued opposition to the cuts and rejection of any deal with the right which would mean them supporting him as Leader on condition of a commitment to a cuts strategy.

Anti-cuts activists in the Party have to reopen the policy discussion urgently, particularly as it is now reported that there is a further shortfall of £4 million in this year's budget, as well as estimates of at least £20 million next year. Party members who followed the advice of the ex-Leader and the Chair of Finance that there was no choice but to make cuts have to recognise that the "pride" of the Labour Group in always following Party policy was a con — a cynical facade to be thrown out as soon as the Party took the "wrong" decision.

If the Brent Parties can now go on to reject the cuts policy it is virtually ruled out that sufficient Labour Councillors would support this to make it Council policy. The growing opposition to the cuts in the Parties must be linked up through Brent Fightback to building a campaign amongst the Council workforce to mobilise against and resist the cuts and future government policies.

Right cuts and runs!

A right wing group of 18 Councillors have split with Brent Labour Party and intend to attempt to run the Council in alliance with Tories and Liberals.

The right wing, organised by former Labour Group Leader Merle Amory, defied the Brent Labour Party nomination for Leader — Ron Anderson — and won an 18-17 vote in favour of right wing pro-cuts candidate Dorman Long.

At the time of writing the future of the Council hangs in the balance as the right caucus face overwhelming hostility from all parts of Brent Labour Party — including the Black Sections.

Under the surface of events lies the political response of Brent Labour Party against the cuts package of £5m voted through on September 22nd. Brent North and Brent South GCs voted overwhelmingly against all three supporters of cuts and in Brent East only a massive mobilisation of right wingers secured a small victory for Long. Overall the Labour Party in Brent has become the first in London to reject the cuts packages which grow steeper almost daily.

With the huge support of Brent Fightback and Brent Labour Party, those Councillors loyal to the Labour Party must attempt to unite all those opposed to cuts. Many of Long's supporters are unhappy at the huge mobilisations and strikes directed at the Labour Council. If they are not prepared to rejoin the Labour Group under Ron Anderson's leadership then they must be disowned by Brent Labour Party and forced to resign.

***Cllr Graham Durham*, Brent**

Orpington Labour Briefing

Fighting on all fronts

We have recently formed Orpington *Labour Briefing* as an act of faith in socialist action and values.

Yes, there is a fighting Labour left in political outbacks like Orpington — and the Borough of Bromley — that often feels isolated from the inner London left and all those connected with it and with *Briefing*.

We believe that it is time for all socialists to stand up and be counted, and to join together in action to support black people, women, lesbians and gays, the unemployed, pensioners, and all those others who are in struggle.

We have a triple battle on our hands.

● The vicious Conservative-led Bromley Council's record on housing, schools and social services must rank as one of the worst in the whole of Britain. Also, the four MPs in the Borough are Tories.

● We have a Labour Group (of ten members) who, for the most part, never display any real anger against Bromley's Tories.

Instead, they appear to regard themselves as part of a rather jolly debating society where, whatever the social havoc wreaked by the Tories, "we're all part of the same club, aren't we chaps?"

We have had situations where the Labour Whip has voted against majority Group decisions in the Council chamber; where an EETPU Councillor (masquerading as a Labour Councillor) consistently does everything he can to undermine what little fightback the Group tries to mount; and where Liaison Officers to the Group are ridiculed and insulted by the hard right of the Group when they attend meetings.

By Gill Collins and Debbie Fenn Orpington *Labour Briefing*

● We have the dubious distinction of living within a short distance of the EETPU Headquarters in Hayes, Bromley, and their training college in Cudham, near Orpington.

Briefing readers may recall that, during the Wapping dispute, we organised large pickets of the EETPU Headquarters; and the GLLP-organised weekend school for PPCs at the Cudham Training College, which was also picketed.

We can see and experience at close hand all that these scabs do in the name of business unionism and anti-socialism, and we believe that their sinister works of treachery within our movement must be continually exposed.

Unfortunately the Labour Party's inherently bureaucratic structure (ECs, GCs, etc.) makes it nigh impossible to get main items of a campaigning nature on the agenda. Therefore, we don't intend Orpington *Labour Briefing* to be a talking shop!

There will be no bureaucracy; just planning what line of action we can take with others to support those in struggle, the victims of Thatcher's Britain and institutionalised discrimination. Also, we intend to fight for socialism, not revisionism!

There are those of us in Orpington

● who worked with the sacked printworkers in the Bromley Printworkers Support Group during the 86/87 Strike;

● who support the right of black members to speak for themselves in the Party's Black Sections;

● who believe that the constituency of the working class is a national one which includes many living well below the poverty line in the ghettoes that salubrious Bromley is *not* famous for;

● and there are many of us who do not believe that the Party should adopt different policies to attract the votes of Orpington's stockbrokers and shareholders, but should be appealing to Orpington's working class in the same way it appeals to the working class of Liverpool Walton, Bolsover or wherever.

In the General Election our candidate, Steven Cowan, made it clear that he stood for working class rights and on a clearly socialist platform. Subsequently, our vote rose considerably, with Orpington's working class, including many sacked printworkers, voting Labour.

We were proud of that campaign, and fortunate to have a socialist as our candidate. Had our candidate been the locally-residing EETPU Organiser of the Wapping scabs, John Spellar, we very much doubt that the votes of the ex-Murdoch printworkers would have been for Labour!

It is because we know that we have something positive to contribute towards our movement that we have formed this *Briefing* Group. Obviously we need to join together and get feedback from other groups, so please let us know about your successes.

Orpington *Labour Briefing* will be continuing the fight against right wing trade unionism — and, believe us, the fight starts here in Bromley!

Southwark

Hands off Bermondsey!

The extreme - moderate - lunatic bureaucrats in the London and National Labour Party offices have now started moves to destroy Bermondsey Labour Party, but they seriously underestimate the very wide support it enjoys.

Hell-bent in their mission to please the gutter press and make copy for Murdoch rather than build the fightback against Thatcher, the witch-hunters brigade intend to recommend the suspension and reorganisation of Bermondsey Party with the expulsion of 40 "militants" — which may well include *you* if you live in Bermondsey.

By Cllr Piers Corbyn Burgess Ward, Bermondsey

This destruction, if it succeeds, will ensure Simon Hughes stays as Liberal MP for Bermondsey, but then that might be what pedlars of a Lib-Lab pack have in mind.

The pattern of intervention by the Regional Party in Southwark (which comprises Bermondsey, Peckham and Dulwich constituencies) now makes a little more sense. We had the massive summertime re-exposure of the pretty old Nye Bevan Lodge scandal in Peckham, the suspension of Peckham Party (largely concerning its Labour Club), and disciplinary action against Councillors Tony and Anne Goss for alleged intimidation in a way which was clearly intended to associate them and their alleged activities with the Broad Left/Militant.

Now we see "the big one" — Bermondsey.

The Labour Group of Councillors, meanwhile, is in pretty deep disarray, but certainly shows signs of a fightback against these monstrous attacks on the democratic rights of Southwark's constituency parties.

Recent attempts by the Regional Office to impose draconian discipline against the minority of Councillors who have been refusing to toe the cuts line was soundly rejected by the Group as a whole. There are Councillors on all sides of the current divides in Southwark who face surcharge for the rate-capping fight.

Whatever their current alignment they remember how ineffective the "give-in moderately" leaderships nationally and in the GLC were at the time and do not want to see the local Labour Parties and what they stand for destroyed.

Of course the present potential for a fightback against the government — however limited — is also central to the witch-hunters attack. If they succeed in suspending Bermondsey Party and Peckham Party stays suspended, they can impose right wing replacement Councillors to doff their caps to the government when (if) the surcharge moves against at least a dozen current Councillors who were involved in the rate-capping fight succeeds.

With Dulwich Party carrying the banner of Socialist-shareholder-bankruptcy, what a meek and mild Council we will have... It might even welcome Mrs. T. moving to Dulwich.

London Fights Back

Local campaigns take off

£400 million is set to be cut from the budgets of ten London Labour boroughs next spring.

That's the scope of the "caring cuts" which Margaret Hodge and her Association of London Authority (ALA) co-thinkers have in store for us.

When the London Labour Council leaders decided after the general election that they had no option but to stay in office and "minimise" the effects of Tory cuts, they assured everyone that services could be defended and equal opportunities maintained.

Now we know the reality: Camden's repatriation of Irish — and maybe Bangladeshi — families (a "final solution" to the homeless crisis?); vacancy freezes introduced in the majority of London Labour boroughs; cuts of up to 40% in services in some boroughs, and huge rent rises of between £2-5 a week almost everywhere.

After initial heated debates in the Council chambers and trade union branches, it was clear that Margaret Hodge's no struggle/compliance line had won Round One in the local government battle in most areas.

But as the real meaning of the cuts has become clear, as servics are shut down, thousands face redundancy, and equal opportunities are sacrificed on the altar of the "balanced" budget, opposition has grown.

By Davy Jones Secretary, London Fights Back

Broad-based Fightback campaigns have been set up in Brent, Camden, Haringey, Islington, Hackney, Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark. And London Fights Back, the umbrella body set up from a large conference on local government held in September, now has the support of all these local campaigns, as well as half a dozen borough NALGO branches, the Inner London Teachers Association, London Bridge Shop Stewards organisation, and the Broad Left Organising Committee.

It has produced 3,000 copies of its first bulletin, giving information on the defence of local government in London. And it has called, in conjunction with London Bridge, for a London-wide **Day of Action** in February next year, involving local events in each borough, industrial action, and a London-wide demonstration in the afternoon.

The task now in every borough is to spell out the real meaning of the Tory and Labour cuts in local government jobs and services and to strengthen the campaign of resistance. It also means making London-wide link-ups with other campaigns.

If your Labour Party or trade union has not already affiliated to London Fights Back, contact: **Davy Jones, London Fights Back, c/o 23 Compton Terrace, London N1.** Affiliation costs £10.

EALING

Fightback begins on the ground

Ealing, under Labour control since the 1986 local elections, is now on the list of Authorities to be rate-capped by the Tories.

While Ealing Council has featured prominently in Thatcher's list of "loony lefts", there has been little signs of any opposition by members of the Council to the cuts budget proposed by the leadership. In fact, Ealing must be unique amongst the London rate-capped Councils, as *no* members of the Labour Group are prepared to take a stand.

Details of the proposed cuts are not yet available, but it appears that the "gap" in the Council's finances will be some £47 million — about 23% of the budget.

The beginnings of a "fightback" campaign have been established with support from NALGO and NUT activists, along with some community organisations. The first step is to try and build a core of activists necessary to give the campaign a sound basis. There is also an urgent need to build support for defence of the manifesto in the Borough's three Labour Parties.

The Council has been savaged by the local media and right wing "residents' groups" organised by Tory MP Harry Greenway, over its policies — particulary education and Lesbian and Gay Rights.

The policy of massive rate rises contributed to a humiliating defeat in the "marginal" constituency of Ealing North at the last election. There is no other alternative but to oppose budget cuts in jobs and services in Ealing; but the fight to rebuild morale amongst activists will be a long one!

Martin Allen, Ealing NUT

Wandsworth

Labour loses yet again

Southfields Labour Ward should be proud of their election campaign, with hundreds of activists giving their support from London and other constituencies over the three weeks of the campaign.

Well, it wasn't good enough. David Fanthorpe, the ex-worker of Control Risks (a dubious security firm alleged to be giving money to the Contras, and known to circulate hit lists of trade union activists) was elected on November 19th with a majority of 274 votes.

55% of the voters turned out, with 2,682 voting Tory and 2,408 Labour.

The Liberal vote collapsed. Jeremy Bash had 1,040 votes in May 1986; he only received 513 this time, making a mockery of statements and leaflets throughout the campaign — in particular his asking for John Gibbs to stand down!

Education was considered the main issue of the campaign. Labour definitely didn't get the message across that Wandsworth's low rates will become a thing of the past when the poll tax is introduced.

During the past week Thatcher has announced that the PT will be introduced in one step, except for the 13 London Broughs, including Wandsworth, which will be able to phase it in, only charging £100 the first year.

Southfields Labour ward asked the Labour Group to make a statement about rates at the start of the campaign. A majority of the Group agreed to announce that rates would not be raised more than a single figure in any one year.

This message was not believed. The crucial question is what parts of the Labour manifesto, worked out diligently during two conferences two years ago, could have been delivered with such a rates policy, when the Group did not know how much money would be made available in the coming years. It is common knowlege that the Wandsworth Tories are currently seeking ways to find savings of £4.5 million.

It was a good campaign, but socialist policies were not offered. Saying that you will only raise the Council rents by what the national Tory government demand is not very satisfactory to those who pay the second highest Council rents in the country.

It's very similar to having a lovely campaign orchestrated by Brian Gould earlier this year; no one liked the product.

Kathy Pick, Tooting Councillor, Wandsworth Labour Group

Camden's Immigration Act

Repatriation scandal

On November 16th, hundreds of local people demonstrated outside Camden Town Hall against the Council's policy for repatriating homeless Irish people.

Irish groups, Black groups, women's organisations, trade unionists and Labour Party members voiced their outrage at the latest move by the cutting Camden leadership.

They were addressed by Labour Councillors opposing the repatriation policy, but their requests for a deputation to the Labour Group meeting were denied by the Council leadership. They placed the issue at the bottom of the agenda, beneath proposals for disciplining the anti-cuts Councillors — which the leadership apparently considers a more pressing matter.

The whole affair shows the abysmal depths to which Labour Councils will sink once they abandon the principle of no cuts in jobs or services.

When the Group meeting finally considered the repatriation question, Council Leader Tony Dykes and Housing Chair Gareth Smyth defended the policy but refused to discuss any of the individual cases — nine of which had been condemned by the Camden Law Centre as racist and arbitrary applications of Council policy.

Councillors Kate Allen and Angela Birtill moved a resolution calling on the leadership to reverse current policies towards the homeless and to issue "an immediate statement to the effect that *no* members of our community will be subjected to what amounts to forced repatriation."

They pointed out that the repatriation scandal was only the latest and most objectionable move in a campaign against the homeless waged by the Council Leadership since the cuts began in June. The suspension of workers in the Homeless Persons Unit, the bed and breakfast scandal, the attacks on Irish people by Labour Councillors, the policy of one-offer-only to homeless people, and of course the severe across-the-board cutbacks in the housing service as a whole — all prepared the ground for Camden to impose its own version of the Immigration Act.

The left Councillors called on Smyth to resign.

By MARK SEATON

He was also attacked by several Councillors who have previously supported the cuts policy. Nonetheless the Leadership's resolution reaffirming the policy was passed with only the eleven left wing "Manifesto Councillors" voting against.

"Smyth spoke as though Ireland, where homeless families are being repatriated, is nothing more than a British colony, with the same laws, the same economic and social conditions, and teh same government," said Councillor Angela Birtill. "It is an embarrassment to belong to the same party as such a person."

"As a Labour Councillor representing Kilburn, which has one of the largest Irish communities in the country, I am appalled at the racist policies being put into practice by Camden. Both myself and the other Manifesto Councillors are going to continue the fight against these policies, and we would urge everyone in the Borough to join with us against repatriation."

ALA MEETING

Reassuring noises cover up retreat

"There is a tendency in our individual boroughs as we try to cope with budget crises of being dragged to the right."

I don't often agree with Margaret Hodge, but that statement, included in her opening remarks to a recent Association of London Authorities "strategy" meeting, was the most honest remark of the day.

Having decided after the election that the only strategy for Labour boroughs was to hang on to power at any price, the Borough Leaders came together for an all-day session on November 18th to give each other moral support in the face of opponents who have the cheek to demand they stick to their manfestos.

One workshop actually concluded that the main role of the ALA should be to provide a refuge for tired and harassed leaders — a kind of mutual support network!

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the prospects for London Labour local government over the next two or three years and develop a strategy to deal with the government's next onslaught; but the workshops only epitomised the bankruptcy of the current London leaderships. They couldn't even bother to discuss politics!

It never takes long at ALA Labour Group meetings for discussion to turn to slagging off the trade unions. The whole afternoon plenary was devoted to this pastime, with Glenys Thornton, Chair of the London Party, starting the ball rolling by stating that Party meetings shouldn't be used as negotiating forums by local authority Trade Unionists.

ILEA Leader Neil Fletcher couldn't resist the temptation to develop the theme. He proposed that the Labour Party impose a "declaration of interests" on all members. Presumably he thinks other Party members will be shocked to discover that the comrade speaking against ILEA's compulsory redeployment policy happens to be a teacher or that the NUPE delegate works for the Council.

By Cllr Joan Twelves Lambeth

Fletcher's ideas were a bit too reactionary for some leaders, but the shift to the right amongst most of them is such that Chris Humphreys from NUPE (not renowned for being on the hard left) was forced to spell out the historic relationship between trade unions and the Party.

He reminded the leaders that conflicts between local authorities and their trade unions have always been discussed by Party branches and that, whatever deals might be stitched up at the moment to keep them in power, NUPE would still be pressing for consolidation of bonus, low pay deals, etc. In fact, you could say Humphreys was using a Party meeting as a negotiating forum!

The ALA Labour Group needs to develop a strategy to deal with the government's plans on poll tax, housing, education and privatisation. But the future plans can't be divorced from the government's current ataticks on local authority finance.

By implementing Tory cuts, the borough leaders have demonstrated that, at the end of the day, however much noise they make, they will comply with each and every bit of government legislation in order to stay in power — and end up presiding over a wasteland of slum housing, poverty, and unemployment, with nothing to do but collect the poll tax and issue contracts to private firms.

Chesterfield comes to Haringey:
reportback & discussion of Socialist Conference.
Saturday December 5th, 7.30pm, Black Women's Centre, Lordship Lane, N17.
Followed by Disco (with bar) till late.
£3 waged, £1.50 unwaged.
All welcome

East Lewisham Labour Party
Alternative Xmas Fayre
Sat Dec 12th 12-3
Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, SE13
Stalls from CND, Anti-Apartheid, Nicaragua Solidarity, Chile Solidarity, tombola, bar, bookstall

RESISTANCE NOT SURRENDER!

Thatcher has declared war on the inner cities — London in particular. What should Labour's response be?

Should we bury our heads in the sand? Should we blame it all on those "loony lefties"? Should we ignore workers and tenants fighting to defend their living standards and just listen to the yuppie brigade telling us what policies would best suit them?
That's what some people would like us to do.
The London Labour Party is holding a special conference in December to discuss its strategy. The real purpose of the conference is to scapegoat the left for the general election defeat and to lay the basis for capitulation to the Tories — the "new realism".
There will be a meeting the weekend before to discuss the London Labour Left's alternative — a fighting alternative based on:
- socialist policies for London
- support for all those in struggle
- opposition to witch-hunts

Sunday December 6th
2.30-5.30
Lambeth Town Hall

Speakers are being invited from anti-cuts campaigns, trade union struggles, etc. There will be discussion on what our alternative strategy should be and how we win back the London Labour Party to socialist policies.
The meeting has been called by the following members of the Regional Executive: Jeremy Corbyn MP, Nadine Finch, Joan Twelves, Sarah Roelofs, Paul Moore, Dave Holland.
Phone 582 2955 for creche facilities

Hornsey Vale Labour Party
Public Meeting
Say yes to schools, housing, childcare, jobs and services!
Say no to the cuts!
Thursday Nov 26th 8-10pm
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Local Democracy Under Threat
Cllr Steve King
What's happening in Hornsey Vale?
Mandy Mudd
Haringey Fights Back! — How we can defend jobs and improve services
Plus speakers from local community groups and Council workers on how the cuts will affect you — and what you can do to stop them and improve services in Haringey.

Haringey Council By-election

Briefing supporter Richard Heffernan will be contesting a Haringey by-election on December 17th — in the (currently) Tory-held ward of Fortis Green.
Despite attempts by local right wingers to ensure the selection of a pro-cuts candidate, Richard managed to scrape on to the by-election panel — and was then decisively endorsed as a candidate by his local branch members.
Richard is pledged to oppose all cuts in jobs and services. Help in canvassing and leafletting is urgently required: meet every weekday evening at 72 Coniston Road.

KING'S CROSS

Continued from front page

At King's Cross, the staff complement had been cut to 10, and only 2 cleaning workers remained. Ticket barriers were switched around, causing confusion over station layout. Staff complaints were ignored.

Union representatives have repeatedly asked management for details of fire procedures; for example, the provision of fire notices or assembly point directions for passengers. All the requests were "noted". Fire practices on stations are unknown and there are no signs for the public on how to react to a fire.

Instead, London Underground has been searching for ways to make a further £4.5m of cuts. The Underground's official bulletin, *Tube Line*, revealed this month, that:

"The Company cannot always rely on extra revenue and the Director considers it important that the Company shows its owners and paymasters it can keep proper control of spending."

Standards of safety have been lowered throughout the Underground. Health and safety representatives have faced constant resistance to the full use of their powers under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act. Cost underlies LRT's safety policy, so does the pressure to keep services running.

LRT has set out to restructure the whole workforce by enforcing tighter discipline; introducing redundancy and raising productivity and job intensification. One-Person-Operation, for example, is just one aspect of job intensification which is causing serious health problems, low morale and high staff turnover.

Awareness of this crisis within the industry has been growing, particularly as staff and public have reacted to incidents of violence and to the dangers and discomforts of One-Person-Operated tubes and buses.

Problems of overcrowding at interchange stations and falling levels of service on the Northern, Metropolitan and Central lines have added to this crisis.

The government will now move to patch up the damage done to the capital's transport system. LRT plan to rush in £9 million of safety work at high risk stations. Nevertheless, many tube workers have quickly grasped the fact that King's Cross has changed things overnight. Tube workers are acutely conscious of the underlying deep crisis on the system. The fuse that lit the fire leads back to the LRT Board, and its "spiv" accountant management.

The unions on the Underground now face the challenge of organising a campaign for safety, a campaign which would include:

- **an immediate halt to one person operation; station and cleaning staff cuts;**
- **a full programme of safety measures;**
- **a health and safety audit of all workplaces on London's Underground.**

A public campaign initiated by the unions would show that transport workers are prepared to act for the welfare and needs of passengers. The first moves in this campaign were made ironically by British Rail workers who gave out leaflets warning of safety problems on the day of the fire.

Education

The Education Bill contains a whole section devoted to the Inner London Education Authority.

There are the long-expected provisions enabling Tory controlled Borough Councils to apply to the Secretary of State to take control of the educational services which fall in their areas.

As expected, there are no clauses requiring these Borough Councils to conduct consultations.

Clearly this will be the area where constructive amendments will be sought in both the Commons and the House of Lords.

Teachers and support staffs will be alarmed to read the powers the Secretary of State gives to himself to order the transfer of ILEA workers to the opting-out London boroughs. This Clause in particular has to be fought against by the education trade unions.

By STEVE COWAN

In the next two years, ILEA will be subject to severe constraints on its freedom to purchase goods and services and to dispose of and acquire property. Any item of spending exceding £15,000 — yes, *£15,000* — will require the consent of the Secretary of State.

Most startling of all though is the inclusion of a clause which gives the Secretary of State the power to dissolve the ILEA, should eight boroughs decide to opt out.

This clause reveals once again the long term intentions of this government to abolish ILEA.