LONDON LABOUR
BRIEFING
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LEWISHAM'S CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

The spirit of Scrooge is alive and well in Lewisham.

Just before Christmas 11 workers in the Housing Department were sacked. All were classified as temporary workers, despite the fact that some had been in post for over a year and proper procedures for temporary workers, in reviewing contracts every three months, had not been followed.

Until this time there hadn't been any real fight from the unions against the massive job losses proposed in Lewisham. When those abstract figures became real, the anger of union members was obvious.

By PAT WAYLETT
Lewisham Councillor

At very short notice, a large demonstration was held outside the Labour Group meeting at the Town Hall. It was effective in getting the issue onto the agenda and forcing the Group to hear a NALGO Labour Party member speaking on behalf of the sacked workers.

The fact that seven out of 11 workers were black swelled the numbers of Councillors voting against the sackings, but every attempt to reinstate the workers or even delay the sackings until equal opportunities implications were investigated, was narrowly defeated.

Dave Sullivan, the Leader of Lewisham Council, even had the gall to claim that the fact that the majority of sacked workers were black demonstrated the effectiveness of Lewisham's equal opportunities policy.

These sackings have finally stripped any pretence of a "bottom line" away from the leadership. For months they have been telling the unions and the Labour Party that making the cuts was the only way to avoid compulsory redundancies. Indeed, this argument created the small majority at the Lewisham Local Government Conference in favour of cuts.

The Leader publicly retracted that commitment at the last Labour Group meeting and stated that there was now "a very slim chance" of avoiding compulsory redundancies.

Opposition is growing daily. The last rent increase was voted down in Housing Committee by a combination of Labour Councillors and tenants, with cynical support from the Tories. Later, it was reinstated by Policy and Resources Committee.

As the opposition grows the right's answer is to remove any dissenting voice from policy discussions. John Lansman and Tony Link have been sacked as Group Officers. Those voting against the rent increases have been asked to resign from the Housing Committee.

At least 15 Councillors have now been subject to disciplinary action. They may even attempt to expel some from the Labour Group. Unable to answer the political questions raised, they emulate Thatcher and remove people from discussion.

The main fight will now be from the Unions, tenants, and rank and file Labour Party members. Councillors are just the expression of that fight within the Group.

The right's attempt to isolate us in the Group increasingly contrasts with their own isolation from the growing opposition outside the Town Hall.

Massive cuts loom for Haringey

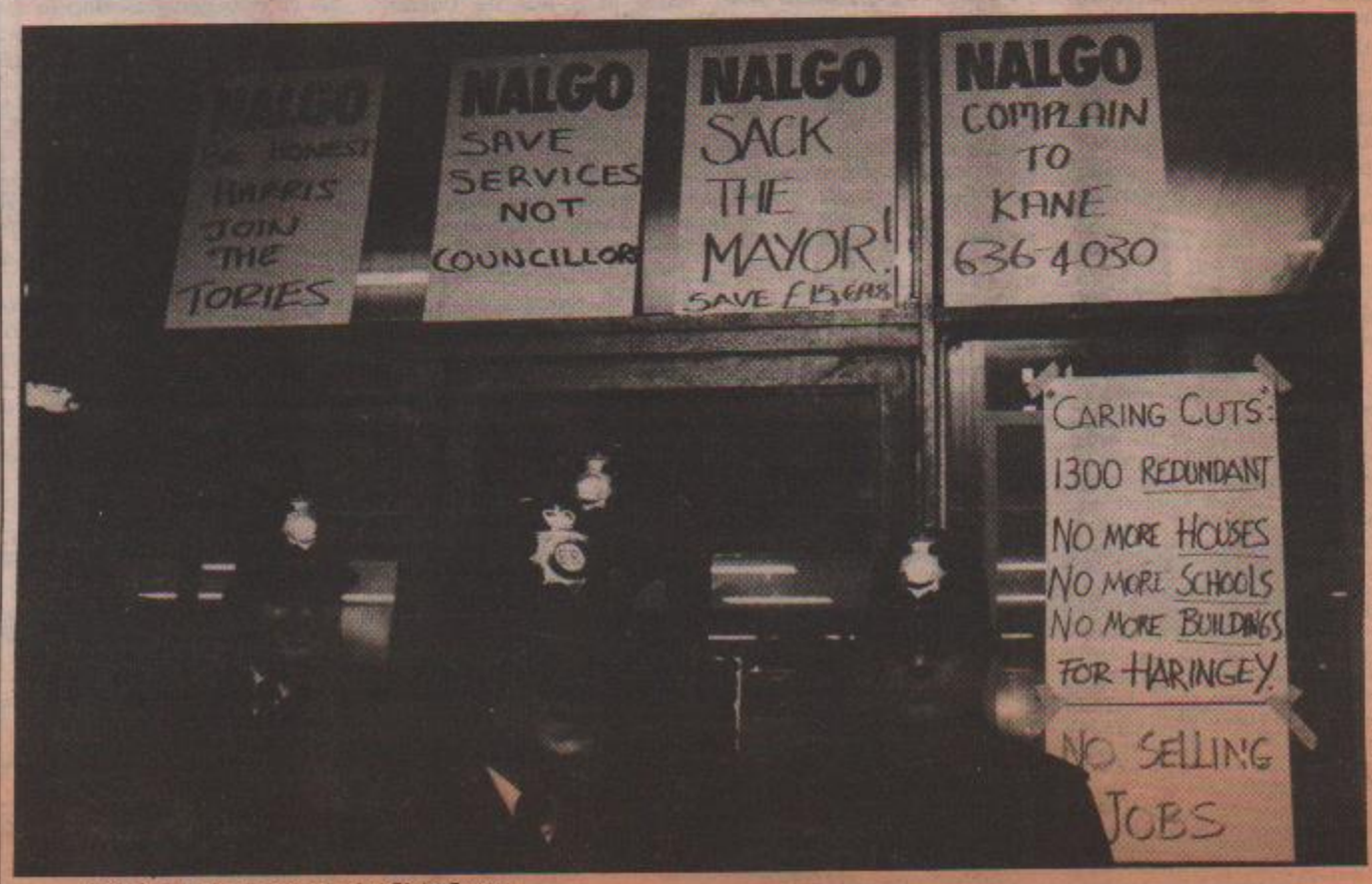


PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Cops bar the entrance to the Civic Centre

LABOUR RIGHT SET TORY COPS ON US

The battle over the cuts in Haringey became further embittered in the weeks before Christmas, when the right wing Council leadership used police against their left opponents at an LGC meeting, and left Labour Councillors succeeded in defeating a new £20 million cuts package in full Council.

The second round of cuts proposed by the right wing Council leaders (backed by the anti-working class zealots of the local LCC) would bring the cuts total to £46 million — or nearly one third of all money spent on services in the Borough.

Not surprisingly, these proposals coupled with the virtual collapse of the Council's capital programme, sparked off a one thousand-strong demonstration outside Wood Green Civic Centre when the Haringey LGC and Labour Group met there on December 10th.

Council Leader Toby Harris responded with a massive police presence and ultimately a police attack on Council workers and left wing Party members.

Eleven days later, at a special Council meeting called by Harris and his careerist flunkeys to force through the cuts during the pre-Christmas interregnum, 14 left Councillors repeatedly broke the Labour whip to oppose all the cuts proposals.

After a session lasting nearly eight hours (conducted before a silent, half empty, hand picked public gallery) Councillors, having failed to give majority support to any of the proposals before them, adjourned the meeting until January 18th.

By then Harris will have stitched up a deal with the Tories which will ensure his savage attack on jobs and services becomes Council policy.

By MIKE MARQUSEE
Haringey Labour Briefing

The 14 Councillors whose socialist courage and discipline succeeded in halting the cuts juggernaut, at least for the time being, are: Ron Blanchard, Craig Brewin, Davina Cooper, Pauline Crossan, Peter Doble, Nicky Gavron, Vince Gillespie, Kevin Hargreaves, Roger Harris, Steve King, Narendra Makanji, Dave McCulloch, John Moore, and Martha Osamor. Peter Chalk, on holiday at the time, wrote to the Chief Whip stating that he too would have opposed the cuts.

They have all been threatened with expulsion from the Labour Group.

In the weeks before the Council meeting the pressure on the ruling right wing junta had been mounting.

The Public Works Service, already facing severe cuts in its capital division, was threatened with extinction when it emerged that the Council's deferred purchase agreement was illegal. Spearheaded by women and black building workers employed under the deposed left leadership's equal opportunities policy, an effective campaign of publicity and lobbying was organised.

(Continued on back page)

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Local government round-up

Hackney

Not the Leadership Report

The following is an excerpt from the newsletter of Hackney Councillors Against the Cuts

The five, ten and 15% cuts exercise finally made its way to Labour Group on December 14th, along with a set of detailed recommendations from the leadership resulting in a package of cuts totalling around 7%.

Senior officers were invited to answer questions from Group members, which they did for two hours, demonstrating their customary ability to avoid anything resembling a straight answer. (presumably acting under strict leadership instructions).

The only thing they seemed clear about was that more cuts were needed, and that the package before us was only the beginning.

In the end, the package was given the nod after minimal debate at around 1.30am, with the vast majority of its supporters having nothing whatsoever to say. The whole thing then went to full Council on December 16th and is now Council policy.

Predictably, the package involves cuts in front line services, but protecting senior officer posts. It includes a lot of vacant post deletions and unclear "efficiency" and "good housekeeping" savings, but most of the precisely defined cuts are as follows:

- 7.5% cut in Community Development;
- 50% cut in support to worker co-ops;
- cuts in housing grounds maintenance;
- closure of all Housing Action Area offices;
- funding for Festival Support Groups deleted;
- cuts in parks maintenance;
- 60% cut in Hackney Show;
- closure of six libraries; all Council-run launderettes;
- closure of all urinals and three public WCs and reduced opening hours for the rest;
- domestic refuse collections reduced to one a week;
- 50% cut in street tree maintenance;
- deletion of all twelve directorate women's officer posts.

Total job losses are difficult to quantify at the moment, but are likely to be around 300-400, achieved through vacancy freezes and redeployment.

This package is certainly not the end of it. Another round of cuts is to be offered in February, and proposals now being investigated include a freeze on all Council purchasing, a freeze on all recruitment (unless it can be justified to the "Gang of Three"), a freeze on all manual worker overtime; further rent increases, and a proposal to force community groups to make their own cuts as a condition of grant aid.

The cuts package has not been agreed by Borough Conference or by any other Party body. Borough Conference agreed that a cuts package could be drawn up for investigation. It did *not* agree to those cuts being implemented. Nor will it have the chance even to comment on the next round of cuts, as these will be agreed in February.

This process of luring Labour Group into ever deepening cuts of ever shorter notice is the specific strategy of the Chief Executive and Director of Finance who want to avoid members indulging in any consultation with the Party.

In February we are to have another Borough Conference. It seems likely that the Council leadership will seek a blank cheque to make cuts within a set of vague priorities, on the pretext that action must be taken quickly — too quickly to consult the Party on particular cuts.

This "blank cheque" mandate must be resisted! Comrades who oppose the cuts have a lot of hard work to do if a credible policy is to be adopted at the Borough Conference in February.

One of the key criticisms levelled at those opposing cuts by Andrew Puddephat and his cohorts is that we have no strategy. In contrast, he has put his strategy before the Party in the October Leadership Report.

It gives them great anguish, great pain (he tells us), to be making cuts, shedding tears with all the sincerity of the Walrus and the Carpenter.

In this "strategy" document, he spends several pages piecing together a very accomplished intellectual argument which is unlikely to cut much ice with working class people in Hackney.

For, in the end, where is the strategy? Cut through the verbiage and heart searching and what is on offer? Very little.

The "strategy", it seems, is to remain in "power" at all costs. No bottom line, no safety valve; no plan of campaign for the next four years of Tory government.

Nicholas Ridley, or something even more awful, will not go away next year. Once he finds Labour Councils ready and willing to make cuts he will come back for more, and more, and more. The advances Andrew says we must protect are *already* being eroded, and this is only the first round of cuts. It is simply not worth hanging on to the notional power of local government when it becomes nothing more than the proxy power of an oppressive and vicious central state machine.

Socialists must never be perceived as an arm of the Tory government. To be tricked into doing *their* dirty work, and making *their* cuts, will discredit us with working people for years to come, not just because we capitulated, but because we were stupid enough to actually believe we were running things!

The leadership strategy is not a strategy. It is an insidious capitulation to disaster.

Lambeth

Cuts out in the open:

The battle lines are drawn

As we enter the New Year it has become clear that last month's decision by left Lambeth Councillors to resign from the Council positions (Chairs, Vice-Chairs, etc.) has marked a watershed for all those involved in the battle over cuts.

The first sign was a debate in the Labour Group over "redeployment". This debate consisted of a report from Linda Bellos being put straight to the vote — without anyone else allowed to speak.

The redeployment scheme is essential as part of the Council's vacancy freeze. It allows workers two offers of alternative employment.

By Greg Tucker
Lambeth Councillor

If they do not like the choices they may appeal. They will have no more than twenty minutes to explain their case. After that they will be redundant.

The first action of the new Chief Whip has been to put through Group a plan to remove the left from key committees. Enough of us have now been removed from every committee to ensure that right wing policy will be implemented.

In particular, Group agreed to remove a number of of us from the Joint Works and Staff Joint Committees. At these committees Councillors sit down with representatives of the manual and staff unions. It was obviously too embarrassing that we kept supporting the unions against the attacks from management and Group leadership.

We now have the first detailed paper listing proposed cuts. As expected, all services are seriously affected. Some whole departments are done away with, others are fundamentally altered.

Cuts include closing down three old people's homes, 21 out of 27 luncheon clubs, and three day nurseries. Seventeen out of 37 Housing Offices would shut, along with Housing Advice and Consumer Advice Centres. Three libraries would go, as would some swimming pools and all the summer play schemes.

The Labour Group's next step was to spend two Sundays discussing which cuts should be made. At one stage Labour Party branches were to be consulted during the intervening week. Even that facade of democracy has now been dropped.

If the right has been getting its act together, so too has the left. Councillors Against the Cuts have produced a bulletin explaining our case and giving details of *all* the cuts proposals. This is going out to Party members and is being circulated throughout the Council, with the official approval of the Council unions.

The Group leadership promised that the Party and workforce would be kept informed. But they have produced nothing. So our bulletin is being read avidly by workers and Party members alike, starved of information.

The Labour Party has clarified its position. No longer can the Group leadership claim any mandate. Vauxhall GC, which had appeared to waver in September, passed unanimously in December resolutions against any cuts and called on the Local Government Committee to launch a public campaign against them.

Council workers are finally waking up to the fact that this time the cuts are for real. As we go to press, there is to be a Council workers Day of Action on January 18th.

NALGO will be taking strike action with support from other unions. Voluntary sector workers are organising a public meeting and lobby the day of the next full Council meeting — January 20th.

And, after a period of retrenchment, Lambeth Fightback is beginning to get organised. It is building support for the Day of Action and planning its own conference for February 6th.

After a period of phony war, the last month has seen firm battle lines drawn up. The next two months will be crucial in determining the future of the Council.

Even with a majority of the Labour Group against us and clear weaknesses in the Council unions, we are beginning to overcome our problems and remain confident that we can win.

Waiting for the job cuts to start

The budget cuts in Hackney have hit hard.

In previous ratecapped years the Council's financial whizzkids have been able to come up with the answers with the minimum of cost to levels of employment or service.

This is no longer the case. All the methods of creative accounting used before have either run dry or are now declared illegal. The borough is finally facing the reality of cuts.

A cuts package giving options of 5, 10 and 15% reductions was passed by the full Council in December. These will be imposed over several months and will be fully effective by the start of the new financial year. This, claims the Council leadership, is the only way we can enter the New Year without carrying forward a deficit.

These cuts will include the closure of libraries, closures of launderettes and the careful vetting of all vacancies. No new temporary workers will be employed and those currently employed will not have their contracts renewed.

The Council claims it will avoid cutting the Housing or Social Services areas wherever possible. This they have done to some extent, though the ban on non-contractual overtime has had a direct effect on these very services.

Holidays for the Hackney elderly had to be cancelled recently because the staff at the hotels were not permitted to do overtime.

So far the cries of foul from the local Trade unions have been ignored by the Council. Peaceful lobbies have taken place at Council and Labour Group meetings and the unions' position has been made clear on many occasions.

By Tony Cordell
Secretary, Hackney Joint Shop Stewards Committee

The real fight has yet to begin. So far the Council maintains its position that no workers will lose their jobs *"during the lifetime of this administration"*.

After some early divisions, all of the unions on the Council are now fully committed to opposing the Council's cuts package. So far no one has lost his or her job. When the threat of this becomes reality the real fight will start.

NHS

West Middx Nurses protest

Staff at West Middlesex Hospital, Isleworth, staged a pre-Christmas protest against government plans to *reduce* nurses pay. Staff shortages mean that nurses are forced to work extra hours to maintain levels of care. The government is now proposing to cut nurses' Extra Duty payments to £1.20 per hour. This payment covers the hours that nursing staff work between 8pm and 7.30am, weekends, bank holidays and even Christmas Day.

West Middlesex Hospital alone is 100 short on staff; will they recruit at this rate of pay?

Members of NUPE, RCN and NALGO at the hospital showed their contempt for this proposal. During the day-long vigil outside the main gate, nurses carried placards and leafletted passing motorists and pedestrians, and in the evening sung carols.

The festive cheer was in sharp contrast to the Christmas horror stories of the results of the Tory attacks on the NHS.

Brian Prince, Brent South CLP

SAVE THE NHS!

London-wide rally

Sponsored by London bodies of ASTMS, COHSE & NALGO, and branches of NUPE

Called by London Health Emergency

Speakers from unions & campaigns

WEDS, FEB 3rd, 7.30pm

The Camden Centre

Bidborough St, London WC1

(King's Cross tube)

Details from LHE, 01-833 3020

Camden

New threat to workforce

The Labour Group in Camden has adopted an industrial relations policy more vicious than any other public sector employer, whether Labour, Tory or Alliance controlled.

Coinciding with this offensive against the workforce, grants to voluntary organisations have been slashed. Women's and black people's organisations have (with horrible predictability) borne the brunt of the cuts.

The Council still claims to be opposed to compulsory redundancies — though not, of course, in the voluntary sector. Their strategy, however, is to *redeploy* Council workers compulsorily — tearing up every agreement in the process.

Although NALGO had been willing to renegotiate the existing voluntary redeployment agreement, the Council has refused anything less than complete management control.

The proposed procedures feature quack-like "psychometric tests" for individuals and the right of appeal — to management!

By Camden Labour Briefing

As the Labour Group considers using Tory anti-union laws, it has given senior management free rein to victimise and intimidate staff. A consultative document sent to every employee received a derisory 70 replies. Staff were also expected to sign away their rights in regard to redeployment by January 6th. Again, the response was pathetic.

The Council's future course is unclear; one option remains compulsory redundancy and rerecruitment on new contracts. Already, workers in the Housing Department are beng threatened with the need to reapply for their own jobs.

In response, the position of the NALGO leadership has softened. It now accepts the inevitability of job losses and makes the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable cuts. This policy must be changed if a fightback is to succeed.

The cuts in grants to the voluntary sector have meant elimination of a women's centre and of Irish organisations, and the future of the main black and ethnic minority organisation in the borough (LCCR) remains in doubt.

Given the track record of the Labour Group (ominously, there is stil no decision as to whether homeless Bengali families will be deported) such racism and sexism is only to be expected.

Greater London Labour Party Elections



Jeremy Corbyn for Chair! Joan Twelves for Vice Chair!

In response to requests from Constituency Parties, trade unions and affiliated organisations we have accepted nominations for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair of the Greater London Labour Party.

The London Labour Party is at a crossroads. London is suffering from very high unemployment, huge cuts in its health service and the growing misery of the homeless.

Discrimination has always been rife in London and cuts in public spending at all levels are significantly worsening the position of women, black and ethnic minority people, and others.

In a city of great divisions of wealth and poverty, the London Labour Party has to demonstrate that it is on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the elderly — the working class. It must emphatically state its socialist objectives and explain that only socialism can offer full employment and fulfilment for all. Appeasement of the values of the Tory regime can only achieve further electoral defeat.

The London Labour Party has a large membership and contains people of great vision and talent. We want to see a more open, accountable, democratic and united London Party, not one divided by the witch-hunting of socialists.

In particular, the Officers and Executive must respond to the views of members, by implementing Conference decisions and providing back-up for initiatives at the grassroots — by CLPs, Women's Sections, and trade unionists.

We see the role of the London Party as supporting popular struggles to defend the health service, local services, and the vital campaigns against the Tories' planned social security, anti-trade union, local government, and education legislation.

The Party in London cannot run every campaign — but it can and must give leadership, space and support to campaigns for jobs, peace, anti-racism, women's, lesbian and gay rights, on planning and environmental issues, and for anti-imperialist and international solidarity. It must become a real campaigning Party that fights the Tories.

There is a crying need for a popular socialist campaign for freedom. The London Labour Party must be part of that.

We are prepared to work together to provide the leadership and commitment the Party needs so it can go out and fight to win London for Labour.

● For a fighting alternative!
● Socialist policies for London!
● Support for all those in struggle!
● Opposition to witch-hunts!

Voting takes place at the GLLP AGM on March 5th & 6th. If you would like more information contact:
Jeremy Corbyn, Red Rose Centre, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7, 01-263 9450
Joan Twelves, 3 Blades House, London SE11, 01-582 2955

JEREMY CORBYN
Chair

MP for Islington North since 1983, formerly Haringey Councillor from 1974. Hornsey CLP agent 1972-82. Member London Party Executive since 1979, currently Vice Chair. Party member since 1966. NUPE member (former full-time organiser). Honorary member of the National Union of Mineworkers. Active on health, social security, immigration and international matters. Initiated five Private Members Bills on justice for pensioners.



JOAN TWELVES
Vice Chair

Lambeth Councillor since 1986, Chief Whip May 1986-December 1987. Vauxhall CLP secretary 1983-86. Member London Party Executive since 1984. Organised Here We Go! concerts for Women Against Pit Closures on behalf of GLLP. Party member since 1980. NALGO member, branch secretary Inner London Polys branch 1981-83. Active in women's movement, especially abortion campaigns, local health, education, ratecapping and anti-cuts campaigns.

LDDC Deputy sacked

The sordid saga behind the Mills affair

On Monday November 30th, *World in Action* revealed that when John Mills accepted the post of Deputy Chair of the LDDC, he did not disclose past criminal convictions.

Forty minutes before the programme went out, a top civil servant from the Department of Environment rang Mills to tell him he had been sacked.

All Board appointments are made by the Secretary of State for the Environment (DoE).

Two of his companies have collapsed with combined debts of over £750,000. As managing director of one, Fairline UK, Mills was charged, found guilty and fined for six offences under the Trades Descriptions Act, and three under the Fair Trading Act.

By John Turkie
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

The offences included selling faulty battery-powered South Korean "Lucky Panda" toys, found to be dangerous and not tested in the UK; and selling brass-plated jewellery as gold-plated.

Whilst there's no love lost between the Chair of the LDDC, Christopher Benson, and John Mills, the LDDC Board understand the crucial political importance of Mills' role within the organisation.

The morning after Mills was sacked by Ridley, the Board appointed him "special consultant" to the Chair, with no position on the Board, though in effect doing his old job, with the same conditions: two days a week on a salary of £18,000.



Benson: who does he think he is Rik Mayall?

Ridley was having none of this, and an emergency Board meeting subsequently sacked Mills again.

The day after the TV revelations, Mildred Gordon, MP for Bow and Poplar, began organising for an early day motion, attempting, amongst other things, to establish the basis on which Board appointments to this powerful quango are made.

But the other two Docklands' Labour MPs — Peter Shore (Bethnal Green & Stepney) and Nigel Spearing (Newham South) — refused to sign, following conversations with the Front Bench, claiming that such a motion would damage a "good" Labour Party member and the Labour Party in general.

John Mills, a member of Holborn and St Pancras Labour Party, used to be Deputy Leader of Camden Council. He's on friendly terms with the area's MP, Frank Dobson, and has a "good rapport" with John Cunningham.

Mills claerly wasn't appointed on the basis of his business skills, but for his labour movement connections, and his ability to keep the Front Bench quiet. He was the perfect person to present the "human face of the LDDC" and stitch up deals between the LDDC and Labour Councils. (The LDDC's previous Deputy Chair was Bob Mellish MP, now Lord Mellish of Bermondsey).

By the end of that Monday evening, Mills had contacted all the relevant Council leaders and, crucially, John Cunningham and Bryan Gould. Mills claimed he was being set up, and what was at stake was the "historic deal" between the LDDC and Newham Council over the redevelopment of the Royal Docks by three major development consortia.

Ridley, according to Mills, was unhappy with the 'planning gain" deal that had been negotiated — which is not legally binding on the developers — and wanted to torpedoe the agreement. What he was asking the Labour Leaders to believe is that, working without the Board's or the DoE's authority, he concluded what is generally believed to be the largest redevelopment deal anywhere in Europe.

The suggestion that Ridley (always the prime mover behind the redevelopment) had not approved the deal before it was signed is treated with incredulity in the property world. And they should know.

What *is* true is that Cunningham et al were over the moon when Newham agreed the deal. For months the Front Bench had been pushing Newham to conclude the £3 billion deal with the property companies via the LDDC. Once they had, the Front Bench had every excuse to continue not to give a political lead in opposing Urban Development Corporations.

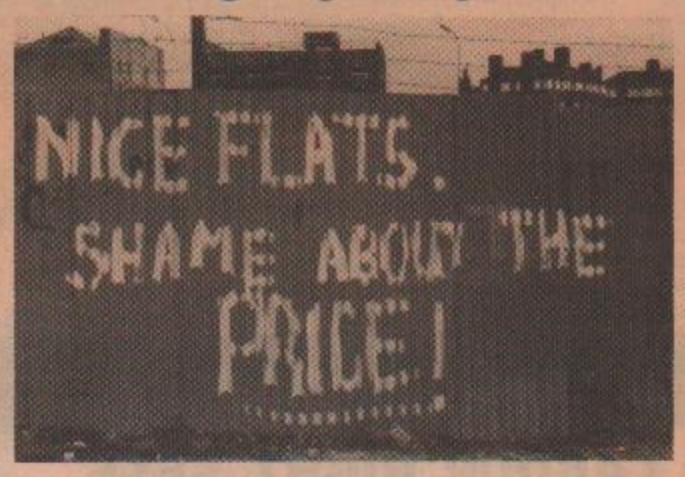


PHOTO: RLPI

Despite the Front Bench lobbying for his cause, Mills is now left pondering whether to sue on some finer point of his sacking. Initially, he had been threatening to "spill the beans", but his quest for further employment ("as a consultant") has shut him up.

Meanwhile the LDDC is left with a major problem in replacing Mills. Finding someone of equal work calibre shouldn't be too difficult. But finding someone with high-up Labour Party connections who is willing — in the limelight — to take up the position on the Board, could be tricky.

Bermondsey witch-hunt

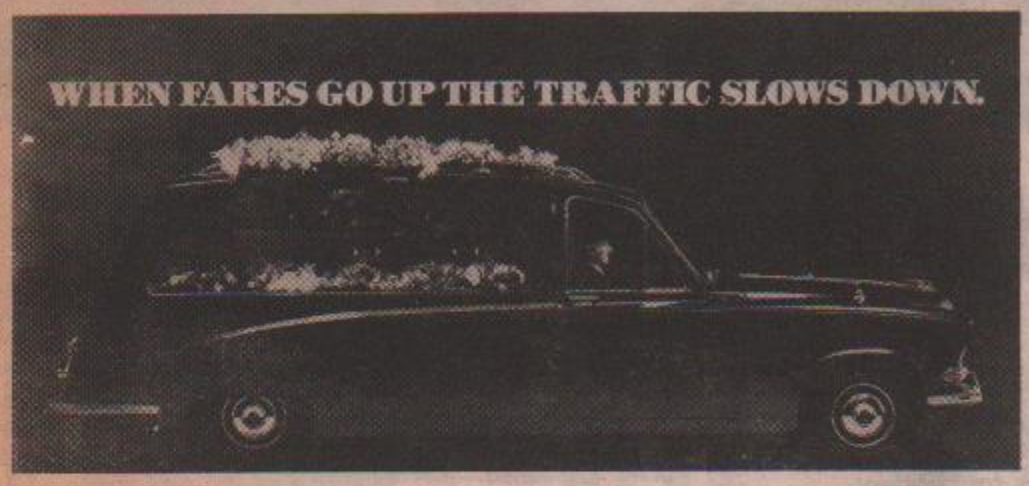
The witch-hunt in Bermondsey is being stepped up. It is urgent that all comrades pass the following model resolution.

This ..... condemns the decison of Terry Ashton, General Secretary of the Greater London Labour Party, to send a report to the National Executive Committee recommending the suspension of Southwark-Bermondsey Labour Party and the subsequent expulsion of up to 40 members.

It notes that this report was prepared secretly and behind the backs of the Party, without any reference to Party officers or any Party body. So far the Party has not been allowed a copy of this report, although information in the report appears to have been supplied to the press. Apparently the NEC could suspend the Party and expel members without the Party seeing the evidence.

This ..... is opposed to suspension and to any expulsions arising from the report and calls upon the NEC to reject the report outright.

London Transport



As fares soar:

Service cuts prepare for privatisation

Bus and tube fares in London rose an average of 9.5% on January 10th.

This is double the rate of inflation and contravenes the directive by the Secretary of State for Transport that increases should be kept in line with inflation.

The new directives for London Regional Transport, due to be published shortly, are likely to be much tougher, with a further cut in revenue support inevitable.



Subsidy has been cut from £195m to £58m in three years. Over the same period, some fares have risen by between 100-150%.

The huge increase in fares is taking LRT another stage towards being a profit-making business, not a service. The biggest increases are aimed at



groups who most depend on public transport.

- Children using buses at peak times to get to school will be paying a disgraceful 150% more than they were four years ago.

By Maria Eagle

- Night bus users face a 66% increase in one year.

LRT are also destroying the simple fare zone structure introduced by the GLC. They will now charge different fares according to the distance travelled within one zone on the buses.



They are also introducing new suburban bus passes separate to the Travelcard in outer London. They coincide roughly with Borough boundaries and give some indication of how London Buses is to be sold off bit by bit into private ownership.

LRT claims that the extra revenue will go towards improving the network, but the King's Cross fire has shown how little LRT care for the safety and wellbeing of their passengers and staff.



Everything is geared to cutting costs and becoming profitable. Any extra revenue generated by the fare increase will be used to cut subsidy still further.

The quality of service is continuing to fall as prices rise on the buses and the tubes.

Day of Action called

Build March 9th!

London Bridge, a joint union committee of shop stewards from the London Authorities, is seeking support for a one day strike and demonstration on March 9th.

It is called against the Local Government Bill, the Housing legislation and the Education Bill.

Contained within the local Government Bill are the privatisation proposals, which together with the cuts operated under rate-capping present an unprecedented challenge to thousands of jobs throughout London.

By Ed Hall
London Bridge

Many services these jobs provide will simply disappear and in the absence of other provision huge sections of the community will suffer increased hardship.

The political leaders of London who control the London boroughs have not sought a co-ordinated resistance and are now in embarrassing confusion as they unleash indiscriminate cuts on workforces and the electorate they pledged to protect.

The TUC conference *Improving Public Services* held before Christmas allowed Norman Willis, Margaret Hodge and the Editor of the *Sunday Telegraph* to expound the virtues of the "new sensibilism", and reinforce the argument that industrial action is not appropriate at this time.

The obvious confidence Ridley now has comes not only from the election result last June but also from the weakness of trade union and Labour Party leaders alike.

Weakness leads to bad errors. Brian Gould advocated share purchase a few weeks before the crash, and Linda Bellos and other London leaders are busily tearing up contracts and job descriptions, heralded once as the pillars of an Equal Opportunities policies.

It is also impossible to argue the case of an Equal Opportunities employer while blocking career progression through a recruitment freeze.

Any Labour leader who expects ALA policies to produce election success in 1989 will be found wrong, and any thought of "protecting what we have", and selling this to disgruntled and overcharged tenants and other voters will be doomed to failure. The unions at branch and workplace level have a large responsibility. Some old styles of trade unionism, including relying on a compromise worked out in a Director's or a Councillor's office, cannot work. Increases in pay, conditions, job security are no longer in the gift of such people.

Forgotten

Trade union members perhaps long forgotten, some now casualised, and some on temporary contracts will have to form into visible structures — quickly!

The Lambeth Councillors, surcharged in 1986, kept the flame of local democracy and the defence of jobs flickering, and now there is the shop stewards system, activists among the tenants and the community and an increasing number of "minority" Labour councillors to keep this flame alive.

All recognise the low base at which we start, but the public confidence in the Tories' ability to manage which relies exclusively on the media is collapsing as hospital wards close, schools are attacked, with massive cuts and horrific social services cases land staff with a workload three times above the contracted targets.

London Bridge has had the arguments surrounding one day strikes and one day demonstrations. They can only be parts of a campaign of mobilising and shifting opinion, but they have inherent value in that they bring workers together in a demonstration of the solidarity necessary to build for genuine improvements in public services, based on greater funding.

March 9th is a call for all Local Authority workers to clearly show that difficult as it will be, there is organised resistance through the unions to cuts in jobs and services, that contractors will not have an easy way into local government, and that the destruction of a whole tier of democracy is not necessarily inevitable.

Support March 9th!

For more information please write to: Ed Hall, 9-15 New Park Road, London SW2 4DU.

London Fights Back

The March 9th Day of Action against attacks on local government is gaining strength.

By Davy Jones
Secretary, London Fights Back

Its initial backing from London Bridge and London Fights Back has grown to include the Inner London Teachers Association, Southwark UCATT, and NALGO branches in Islington, Haringey and ILEA.

Industrial action in selected local government centres and schools across London is now a real possibility on March 9th.

London Fights Back is also convening a recall conference in April to co-ordinate opposition to the cuts, and is seeking support from anti-cuts campaigners in areas outside London, like Manchester.

London Fights Back is winning increasing support. Latest affiliates include the Hillingdon Council Labour Group and the newly formed Fight Back Group in Hackney. A second bulletin of information and campaigning material against the cuts is being printed as we go to press.

If you want more information from, or to affiliate to, London Fights Back, write to London Fights Back, c/o 23 Compton Terrace, London N1.

Haringey Cuts Battle

LABOUR RIGHT SETS TORY COPS ON US

(Continued from front page)

At the Hornsey and Wood Green GC the cuts package was defeated by two votes, *Briefing's* "needs budget" resolution lost on a tied vote.

The following night, on December 10th, a special LGC was held, to be followed by a Group meeting, to debate the new cuts package.

Even before the 1,000 angry Council workers, tenants, community groups and Labour Party members swarmed around the Civic Centre, a massive police presence, including units of the Territorial Support Group (formerly the SPG), was on the scene. Large green police vans, at least one loaded with riot gear, were parked round the Civic Centre.

The LGC convened in the Council Chamber and Party members and members of the public were admitted to the public gallery, on the authority of right – wing LGC Chair Paul Head. From the beginning, the gallery were vociferous in their opposition to the cuts and hostile to cuts supporters.

Head baited the people in the gallery and repeatedly threatened to use police to clear them out. Left delegates demanded that police be removed from the building and moved a named vote on the resolution.

Chairperson Head, whose speech in support of the cuts was clearly inspired by Norman Tebbit, declined to call a named vote and then refused to acknowledge numerous challenges to his ruling. The gallery erupted.

Head threatened to use the police yet again, whereupon a number of us, left LGC delegates and Councillors, joined the gallery in a show of solidarity. The LGC adjourned and reconvened in a smaller committee room — but in the meantime police, on the orders of Toby Harris, formed a human barricade to prevent anyone leaving the gallery.

Some one hundred of us were deliberately trapped in an enclosed space, an act of criminal irresponsibility.

When, after twenty minutes, police allowed us to leave the gallery, we found that votes had already been taken at the reconvened LGC — in the full knowledge that voting delegates were at that moment imprisoned in another part of the building.

By this time the demonstration outside had long since dispersed. However, a large contingent of police remained inside the building.

As the remaining Council workers and left Party members, disgusted by the whole affair, prepared to leave the building, they were attacked by police in the Civic Centre foyer.

Initially, this attack was clearly aimed at the women building workers. One left Councillor was violently ejected from the building and another denied admission. Four of us were arrested two women building workers, anti-cuts councillor Craig Brewin, and myself (present as an LGC delegate).

All this took place in full view — and with the apparent approval — of right-wing LGC Secretary Owen Tudor and the Borough's Chief Executive.

Meanwhile the rump LGC had approved the cuts and the Labour Group had been convened. Left Councillors informed the Group that one of their own members was under arrest and that others were at the police station trying to help. Right-wing Councillors refused to adjourn and the Group went ahead to pass the cuts package with little dissent.

Later that evening the four of us who had been arrested were charged with disorderly conduct and released. The following week when we appeared in court, we found that an additional charge of assaulting a police officer had been laid against Craig Brewin. We have all pleaded not guilty and will be vigorously contesting the charges when our trial begins on April 5th.

Toby Harris and his right wing colleagues must be held fully responsible for these appalling events. We in Haringey have seen that once the no cuts "bottom line" goes, Labour Groups will resort to *anything* — including police attacks and forcible imprisonment — to destroy opposition.

They will not succeed.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Public Meeting in Solidarity with the Palestinians
Organised by LMCP
7.30pm, Friday February 5th
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC2
(nearest tube, Holborn)
Labour movement speakers:
watch this space for more details!