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No ratecapping, no cuts in jobs and services!

FIGHTBACK! ALL OUT ON MARCH 8th!

Cuts of £129m in 1988, followed by abolition in 1989: the Tory gloves are off, and the London labour movement has no alternative but to roll up its sleeves for a long and bitter struggle to defend a unified and well—resourced education service for Inner London.

On March 8th we can fire an early shot in the fightback against Baker's savage attack. A strike, demonstration, and rally, involving cleaners, dinner staff, support staff, office staff, and teachers will provide a magnificent base from which to launch the struggle.

By PAUL FOLEY
Islington NUT,
Hackney South CLP

Let no-one pretend that a one-day protest action will have Baker shaking in his boots. It must be followed immediately by escalating strike action, involving all ILEA workers and a determined attempt to win over parents.

Even then, we must seek wider support. A strike call for March 8th has also come from the NALGO Metropolitan District Committee and London Bridge to defend Local Authority jobs and services.

The enemy, the Tory government and weak-kneed Labour authorities, is the same; the issue, defending jobs and services, is the same. The only way forward for a successful fightback is to link the issues and for ILEA and the town hall workers to join together, in defence of every job and every service.

Even wider links need to be made, particularly with NHS workers struggling so magnificently to defend their services. A generalised fightback can turn the Tory tide and win.

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All Out on Tuesday March 8th!

Against Cuts and Abolition

ILEA JTUC Demonstration

Assemble at 11am, Kennington Park
March to rally at Jubilee Gardens 1-2pm
Meeting & lobby with MPs in House of Commons Grand Committee Rooms

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

March 8th

No ratecapping, no cuts in jobs and services!

FIGHTBACK! All out on March 8th!

Cont from front page

By Paul Foley

Unfortunately, not all the leaders of our movement see it this way.

ILEA leader Neil Fletcher sees the ILEA trade unions at best as a nuisance and is quite prepared to offer them as sacrificial lambs.

How else can we explain his manoeuvres in the autumn, when he was quite prepared to make Baker's cuts of 15% over a three year period?

How else can we explain his deafening silence when Baker turned down his offer and demanded the cuts in one year?

How else can we explain his letter to Fred Jarvis, with copies to all London teachers, urging the NUT to call off the February 9th strike?

Fletcher's strategy is extremely dangerous. He is trying to separate the budget crisis from the abolition issue.

At a recent meeting of the ILEA parents' consultative committee in Islington, no mention was made of the budget from the platform. His strategy is for a London-wide parents' referendum on the issue of abolition alone, which will cost £120,000.

In this desperate situation, we must welcome any and every attempt to mobilise parental opinion against the Tories. But come on Neil, who are you kidding? *Do you really think* ILEA can survive if you get rid of 9,000 jobs, including 10% of your teaching staff? *Do you really think* you can ignore ILEA unions in your campaign?

Four times Thatcher has come gunning for ILEA and every time she has been beaten by a united campaign of ILEA workers and parents. If you are really honest about saving ILEA, why don't you stand up to Baker and refuse to make his cuts for him?

Powerful

Fletcher has powerful allies in the trade union bureaucracy. The Greater London Staff Association will not ballot for March 8th but there are signs of a grassroots revolt and branches of GLSA will support the strike call.

Most seriously, the NUT has refused to authorise the strike action planned by ILTA. They were against balloting ILTA members for March 8th. Their excuse is the disappointing turnout in the last strike ballot. We must agree that the turnout was disappointing, but 80% of the votes were for strike action; 256 schools voted with the necessary two thirds majority and 7,000 inner London teachers marched on February 8th. This is hardly a sign of a demoralised and apathetic membership.

Regardless

Regardless of the decision of the NUT, ILTA will be out on March 8th in vast numbers. Teachers, like other ILEA employees, have nowhere else to go; our backs are to the wall, all we can do is turn round and fightback.

We need and expect the support of all sections of the labour movement to defend our jobs, to defend the service we provide and the legacy of generations of working people.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Local days of action are now coming together...

Stewards and officers:

Organise for the Day of Action!

Four hundred and fifty stewards and reps, mainly from NUPE, ILTA, NALGO and the building unions, attended a conference organised by the ILEA Joint Union Committee to discuss the cuts and abolition.

The size of the conference was surprising as the organisers had not publicised it.

This indicates that despite Neil Fletcher calling on teachers not to strike against the cuts on February 9th and the unions' national and district leaderships' inactivity, union activists are prepared to do something against the cuts.

Although the mood for a fightback is not as strong as in the NHS, the possibility of winning union members to industrial action, even token one day protest strikes, does exist in the boroughs that are most at risk from the cuts.

That is why the ILEA Joint Union Committee, the NALGO Met District Council, and now the Greater London Association of Trades Councils, along with a dozen NALGO branches and three Building Department Shop Stewards Committees are calling upon their members to strike across London on March 8th.

By Fred Leplat
ILEA NALGO Steward

The support that exists from these union bodies should not be left at the level of paper resolutions. It will be up to the stewards and the branch officers to organise and publicise the day of action and to win their members to taking strike action.

This is even more the case today when union officials denounce one-day strikes as being token protests that lead nowhere. These are "new realist" arguments with a left tinge.

The action on March 8th is a protest action, but it is a necessary one as it will link local government workers across London to fight the cuts. The successful one-day strikes that have occurred in a dozen boroughs since September are being taken further.

It is true that one-day strikes lead nowhere *on their own*. They should be part of a campaign by the unions at regional and national level which would include as a central feature a programme of rolling and escalating industrial action.

The current upsurge of industrial action, particularly by health workers, should be used to encourage local government workers to take action to fight for their own jobs and in defence of another part of the welfare state.

Unfortunately, the mobilisation for the day of action has suffered two setbacks.

The NUT national executive has refused to authorise ILTA to strike despite a successful ballot agreeing to further industrial action after their one-day strike on February 9th.

The Socialist Workers Party members in NALGO are arguing against taking action on the day as they claim that there is no basis for it. They also argue that local government workers should instead take action on March 14th with COSHE in defence of the NHS.

However, this is not disastrous, as NUPE schoolkeepers will be closing down ILEA schools and left activists in London will continue to build for action against the cuts despite the SWP.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Please move this as an emergency resolution to GLLP Conference — see Briefing p7. for details.

Conference notes the report in the Guardian of 28.1.88 after the January NEC that the NEC had considered a reprot on Tottenham CLP member Mandy Mudd dealing with her referral to the National Constitutional Committee and comments by Larry Whitty in this report that such behaviour was not compatible with Party membership, which appeared to prejudge the results of any investigation.

Conference further notes that subsequently a press agency, *The Sun* and other gutter press newspapers have hounded Mandy Mudd to such an extent that she has had to leave home, has been unable to go to work and has had to take legal advice. Two Tory MPs and a Tory Haringey Councillor have called for Mandy to be sacked from her job. The *Sun, Standard* and other papers have carried grotesquely sexist articles on Mandy Mudd causing her deep personal distress.

Conference unequivocally condemns the *Sun* and other newspapers for their appalling sexist treatment of Mandy Mudd.

Conference calls on the NEC not to release to the media the names of those it is considering for disciplinary action, believing that it was the initial 'trailing' of Mandy Mudd's name to the press after the January NEC that incited the Sun 'rat pack' to start digging for dirt.

Brent East: in memoriam

At the AGM on February 11th of Brent East CLP, long a stronghold of the left, the right won a crushing victory, winning everything they stood for by a majority of 35-20.

The left took only those positions for which it went unchallenged, leaving it two of the officers posts and a handful of comrades on the Executive Committee and Local Government Committee delegation.

Although not totally unexpected, the scale of the right's victory was a shock to the left. While the right had made some gains recently, notably winning their nomination for Council Leader last year, the left had managed to retain a comfortable majority on policy, most importantly opposition to the Council's cuts.

By Pete Firmin
Brent East CLP

At the AGM any remnants of a "soft left" disappeared. The right, an extremely motley crew, which put out an LCC slate, were united on one central theme — support for the Council's policy of making cuts and a determination to stop the "Trots", burying deep political differences and personal hatreds to do so.

Many of those they roped in for their takeover displayed a marked lack of enthusiasm for the positions to which they were elected — indeed many functional officers posts (including those of Agent and Assistant Agent) went unfilled.

The right showed their policy intentions at the end of the AGM when they challenged affiliation to the LCI (long a position of Brent East, which has sent resolutions on Ireland to National Conference many times in recent years) and this was deferred for further discussion.

This should also be a warning to Ken Livingstone that he can no longer try to straddle the fence in Brent East and will have to work more closely with the left than in the past.

While the left may continue to win policy and whittle away the right's strength as they fail to mobilise for meetings, this cannot be the main thrust of our strategy if we are to rebuild the left.

Through its long control the left has become somewhat complacent and must reorientate itself to the many struggles taking place. Recently the left has related almost exclusively to GC delegates — we now have to rebuild our base in the branches and beyond by involving Party members in campaigns such as FAB and Brent Fightback at the same time as convincing activists from these campaigns to take up the battle against the right in the Labour Party.

Briefing is the ideal vehicle for doing this, and as a first step we need to turn the Briefing Group into a pole of attraction for activists and give serious consideration to producing a local Briefing bulletin.

Stop Press: The left has already shown it won't go away. At the LGC meeting on the 1988/89 budget, held on Monday 15th, Brent East's position of opposition to a strategy based on cuts was only defeated by 15-13.

Hackney



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Hackney Fightback's launch meeting last November — the Campaign is now winning the arguments

Conference ignores lobby

On Thursday February 18th, Hackney's Borough Conference delegates were met by an angry lobby of several hundred Council workers, community workers and tenants opposing cuts in Council services.

Nevertheless, delegates approved a 5% rate increase and gave the Council Leadership a "blank cheque" mandate by a 2-1 majority to make any further cuts necessary to produce a balanced budget.

This came on top of a 7% across the board cut, a blanket overtime ban and vacancy freeze, staff redeployment and a purchasing freeze already agreed by Labour Group.

This total endorsement of the Leadership position was achieved through the successful generation of an utterly capitulatory and defeatist mood in the Party by the Leadership. Andrew Puddephatt, the Council Leader, presented a report to Conference which put a very complacent gloss on the level of cuts and obscured to the point of dishonesty the chaotic and demoralising effect of cuts measures already imposed.

Once again, the left won all the arguments but lost all the votes.

By Peter Chowney

A selection of resolutions from the right endorsing cuts was moved half-heartedly, almost with apology. No arguments were used to support the Leadership position beyond it being "necessary" and there being "no alternative", backed with repeated allegations that the left were "living in cloud cookoo land", demonstrating during the course of the evening that the only thing the right had going for them was a monopoly of cliches.

In the event, the only cookoos were the Council Leadership and the only clouds those used to obscure the truth from a defeated and misguided Party membership.

A number of motions from the left opposing cuts were all defeated by a roughly similar 2-1 majority and the path has now been opened for the Tories to continue their process of forcing a subservient Hackney Council to make further cuts with no stated bottom line and no absolute commitment to protect jobs or services.

A document issued by Hackney Councillors Against the Cuts at the Conference entitled "Not the Manifesto" outlined how three quarters of the 1986 Manifesto had now been scrapped. The abandonment of the Manifesto and the package of cuts now combine to produce a totally dishonest administration which has broken all its promises and has no public mandate to continue in office.

However, the Council Leadership may still not have everything their own way. Tenants, community groups, service users and trade unionists are mobilising against cuts in spite of Party complacency, and widespread industrial unrest seems unavoidable amongst the Council workforce with negotiation and consultation on sensitive issues effectively scrapped.

Even Council Service Directors are openly stating their dissatisfaction and contempt for the Council Leadership approach. The new GCs and LGC, not eligible to vote at the Borough Conference, shows small but significant shifts to the left. In the end, the left may not have to wait too long to regain the upper hand and can console itself with the thought which has sustained all socialists who have refused to compromise: history will prove us right.

SURCHARGED!

In October the District Auditor held a public hearing to hear the case of two Hackney ratepayers against Hackney Councillors for their delay in setting a rate in 1985.

The name of one of these ratepayers is well known to local government watchers: Mourad Fleming.

This Hackney member of the SDP has a history of taking Hackney council to court with a degree of tenacity which emulates Thatcher's own attitude towards Labour councillors.

The other ratepayer, Dr Bulger, has failed in his attempts to be elected to the Council to join the two Conservative members.

This particular case is somewhat unusual in that it was not initiated by the District Auditor but by two failed local politicians.

The provisional judgement of the District Auditor is also somewhat unusual. Twenty five of the then Labour councillors have been found guilty, at this preliminary stage, of holding certain political intentions. (The other Labour councillors have been aquitted).

By a Hackney surcharged Councillor

Councillors have not been found guilty of delaying setting a rate as such until May: the District Auditor has accepted that there were valid reasons for this. However, 25 councillors — those who voted against setting a rate on May 23rd and against a cuts budget — have been found guilty because of their presumed *intentions*.

The District Auditor has stated that he is of the preliminary view that "the dominant motive in the minds of the majority of members voting for the quashed resolutions of March 7th and 27th was to use the non-making of the rate as a weapon, or as a lever, in an attempt to prise additional money from Central Government".

The quashed motions he refers to were legally dealt with at the time by Justice Woolf in response to the arguements made to him by — Mourad Fleming.

The 25 councillors have to pay up to £13,000 between them, essentially to pay off Mourad Fleming's legal costs. However, much more seriously all of the present and former councillors cited will be disqualified from holding public office. Fourteen of the named councillors are on the present Council, including the Leader and Deputy Leader.

Within the Hackney Labour Parties and Group at present there are strong disagreements about the cuts being advocated and implemented by the Council. Nevertheless it must be made clear that in 1985 all Councillors named by the District Auditor followed the wishes of the Party, unions and community groups in the actions taken.

All Councillors threatened with potential surcharge and disqualification must be defended because of their actions. Although there are political differences these cannot be resolved in the interests of working class people in Hackney by the forced removal from office of 14 elected Councillors.

Over the next weeks the Councillors (and Hackney Parties) will need to meet to discuss strategy and a possible appeal against the District Auditor's decision. Every effort must be made to ensure that Councillors are not forcibly removed from office by a Tory government designed to reduce local government to a collecting agency for the poll tax!

Camden

Setback suffered

The fightback against cuts in Camden suffered a major setback on February 17th when NALGO members voted against all-out strike action in a ballot over the Council's plans for compulsory redeployment of staff.

Over 42% voted for a strike — but 57% voted against in a ballot where 83% of the membership voted, there was a significant minority of workers prepared to fight.

That said, the vote gives the green light for management to carry on bullying and intimidation, and suggestive nudge to other Labour Councils intent on implementing Tory cuts.

By Padrig Jones
Camden Labour Briefing

As we go to press it is not clear whether the Council will sack its white collar workforce should they sign away their rights to remain in the job to which they were recruited.

The NALGO branch leadership is hoping to mount a legal challenge.

The union leadership failed to capitalise on the very real anger and disgust at the Council's plans, a response found amongst many far-from-militant workers. Two weeks were wasted and no siginficant concessions were forced out of the Council by the threat of a stage army on strike. Predictably, the role of the regional NALGO bureaucracy stank.

The ballot leaves many union activists demoralised. Their task must now be to build union organisation for the next fight — victimisation, possible sackings and newly confident management and Council leadership.

The 1,700 workers prepared to take strike action are the basis for rebuilding the resistance.

SOUTHWARK COUNCILLORS FACE SURCHARGE

The District Auditor has declared that 26 past and present Southwark Labour Councillors should be surcharged for nearly £300,000. Already thousands of pounds of legal costs have been incurred in their defence.

The final outcome is not yet clear but the powers of the District Auditor (as we have already seen in Lambeth and Liverpool) are draconian and totally undemocratic. He is able to decide, without even convincing a court, that a policy democratically arrived at and adopted in order to defend the citizens of Southwark against rate-capping and cuts in services and living-standards amounts to 'wilful misconduct'.

In the face of this threat the Labour movement must begin to raise large sums of money ***now***. Individual comrades who risk being held liable for massive sums of money ***must*** be supported - none should have to pay themselves - all party members must take their responsabilities seriously to raise this money.

A fund has been set up by the Southwark Borough Local Government Committee of the Labour Party. The fund will be solely devoted to paying any legal costs and surcharge sums on a collective basis. Any surplus will be donated to the Lambeth and Liverpool Surcharged Councillors Appeals.

You are asked to contribute according to income - please consider £20.00 a month if you are well paid, £10.00 or £5.00 if less well off. Any contribution will, however, be gratefully received. Please complete the Standing Order form overleaf and send it or any donation to:

Southwark Councillors Support Fund, c/o 95 Grove Vale, SE22

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To ..... Bank

Address .....

	BANK	BRANCH TITLE (NOT ADDRESS)	SORTING CODE NO.
Please pay	THE CO-OPERATIVE BANK	PRESCOT STREET BRANCH	· ·
	BENEFICIARY'S NAME	ACCOUNT NUMBER & TYPE	
For the credit of	SOUTHWARK COUNCILLORS SUPPORT FUND	5 0 2 7 0 2 1 7 X 5 0	
	AMOUNT IN FIGURES	AMOUNT IN WORDS	
†The sum of	£		
	DATE AND AMOUNT OF FIRST PAYMENT		DUE DATE AND FREQUENCY
Commencing	£	and thereafter every	
	*now		
	DATE AND AMOUNT OF LAST PAYMENT		
*Until	£	*Until you receive further notice from me/us in writing.	
Quoting the reference		and debit my/our account accordingly.	

This instruction cancels any previous order in favour of the beneficiary under this reference.

ACCOUNT TO BE DEBITED	ACCOUNT NUMBER

Signature(s)..... Date .....

Firefighter cuts

The London Fire and Civil Defence Authority have voted to cut 292 posts from its uniformed establishment.

At a meeting of the Authority on February 11th the ruling Tory/SDP/Liberal alliance voted to accept the so called "efficiency" savings proposed by the Chief Fire Officer.

The LFCDA is obliged to submit to the Home Office an annual report outlining its staffing proposals for the future year, based on a review of operations. This requirement arose from the GLC abolition legislation and is clearly an attempt to ensure that the cost of running the London Fire Brigade is lower than it would have been under GLC control.

The Home Office made it clear that they expected substantial savings to be made following this year's review, and the threat of a government imposed review being enforced on the Authority was enough to ensure the Liberals voted for the Chief Fire Officer's cuts.

The cuts agreed are dangerous, and the risk to the lives of firefighters and public will be dramatically increased for the sake of a budget reduction of just over £4m.

The main reductions affect the crew levels of special appliances and are vigorously opposed by the FBU. It is proposed, for example, to reduce crew levels of the Fire Rescue Tenders from five to two, despite claims from the FBU that many of the operational procedures require crews of at least four.

Hose Laying Lorries and Damage Control Tenders will be operated by crews of one person instead of the current two. The additional rider currently has to carry out a number of specialist duties as well as operating the horns, answering the telephone and navigating. The cutting of this post implies that the responsibility of highly skilled appliance drivers are the same as those of a commercial van driver and could lead to serious delays.

Furthermore, the government have indicated that it is acceptable for appliances to be fully crewed on only 75% of occasions. Further cuts could therefore be on the way.

At present the Authority employs 1.47 firefighters for each normal rider position. This is to ensure that, taking into account leave, sickness and training, there is full occupation of appliances on 100% of occasions. This figure is being cut to 1.40 and will have, according to the FBU, a serious effect on the Authority's training provision.

One disturbing feature was the inability of the Tory, Liberal and SDP members to put forward any political rationale for the cuts.

At the Authority meeting the protests of the FBU were dismissed on the basis that the Chief Fire Officer knew best, and we were told that if we did not follow the wishes of the government we were putting the future existence of the Authority at risk.

The lobby of the meeting organised by the FBU showed the strength of feeling within the Brigade and brought to public prominance the reactionary nature of the Authority's administration.

It is important now that the momentum should not be lost. This issue must be raised immediately at every level within the Labour Party and debated at full Council where the Borough nominee is a cuts supporter.

NAMIBIA

Over 50 people attended a meeting on February 4th called by the North London Namibia Support Group as part of the SWAPO Youth League Namibia National Student Organisation tour.

The meeting in Tottenham heard Derson Virab (22) from the SYL,and David Imbili (20) from NANSO.

They gave a very moving account of their own experiences in Namibia at the hands of teh racist South Africans. They also explained how students and youth are at the forefront of the fight against their country's illegal occupation.

They also castigated those western governments and companies that support the South Africans in their plunder of Namibian resources whilst calling for the fullest international support, they stated firmly that only Namibians themselves can liberate Namibia.

Margaret Ling, for Haringey Anti-Apartheid stressed the importance of the Namibian struggle to the fight against apartheid.

Jeremy Corbyn MP summed up the whole meeting with his emphasis on workers' sanctions. He felt that even for the working class in a rich nation like Britain "national solutions can't solve things. We need international solutions and that's why Namibia is so important."

Next meeting: Tuesday 1st March, 7.30pm, Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road.

Lewisham

Lewisham NALGO members will strike on Monday 22nd February in support of sacked voluntary sector members who have been on strike for two weeks.

The Council leadership has reneged on its policy of "no compulsory redundancies" and let 27 sackings take place among voluntary group workers.

Action in support of the voluntary sector is likely to be stepped up from 22nd despite the SWP opposing moves for all-out action the week before.

Fortunately, there are enough people working for the Council who see this as the test case for future redundancies among the statutory sector.

Deptford Labour Party supports those on strike and Lewisham Fightback are organising support and linking activity to the London-wide Day of Action on March 8th.

The NALGO branch has voted to support the Day of Action, a local march is expected, and there will be a Fightback social at 8pm on the 8th at Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove SE14.

G.L.L.P. Briefing Fringe Meeting

Time to Fight Back!

Sunday March 6th
12.30pm
Council Chamber,
Hammersmith Town Hall,
King St, W6

Nearest tube Raven's Court Park, District Line

Speakers:
Jeremy Corbyn MP
(on the NHS)
Sharon Atkin
(on FAB)
Mandy Mudd
(on the witch-hunt)
Peter Tatchell
(on Stop Clause 28)
Bernard Regan
(Defending London's education)
Chair:
Joan Twelves
(London Regional Executive)