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As Haringey Council unilaterally cuts workers' wages:

PARENTS DEMAND COUNCIL CAPITULATE!



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Who will decide the future for Haringey's children? Parents, or secret meetings of right wing Labour Councillors?

At the beginning of April the Parent Management Committees of all the Pre-School Playgroups in Haringey were instructed that their workers "clearing up" time wages were to be cut. In some cases, this represents as much as a 30% drop in weekly wages for the workers concerned. The Managment Committees were told to implement this cut within a fortnight.

By TESS KEWLEY
Secretary, Haringey Playgroup Parents Action Committee

On April 13th an angry group of parents, playgroup workers and representatives of the Pre-School Playgroups Association met to discuss what action we should take. The result was the formation of the **Haringey Playgroup Parents Action Committee.** We are committed to fighting this cut in the workers' wages unequivocally, and have written to Cllr Peter Clark (Chair of Social Services) and Cllr Toby Harris (Leader of the Council) to demand an urgent meeting to discuss our feelings on the matter.

We are determined that the Timesheets for the workers' wages should be submitted *as before*, including pay for "clearing up" time, and have advised those Playgroups who were unable to attend the meeting to continue to submit Timesheets as before, thus disregarding the Council's directive (which was taken unilaterally; without consultation with NALGO, or the other trade unions involved).

It is a disgrace that part-time women workers should be made to suffer in this way, and we are committed to making sure that this drastic cut doesn't happen. After all, as someone said at our founding meeting, if the Council win on this one, what will they cut next? Perhaps they will pay only half the playgroup rents?

If Cllrs Clark and Harris decline to meet us, we fully intend to storm the Civic Centre, accompanied by our children, until our voices are heard. We will also march to their surgeries.

We are determined to win this battle. We are not prepared to make up the shortfall in wages by increasing playgroup fees, as the Council suggested. Many parents could not afford this. The Council's other suggestion was that we should fundraise even more than we do already!

The workers only receive pay for 39 weeks of the year, so some are forced to seek alternative employment at the beginning of the summer holidays. They may then not be able to return to work, and the children have to get used to new workers, or have a string of temporary workers until new permanent staff can be found again.

Cuts in workers' wages are entirely unacceptable! We will continue to fight until the Council capitulates.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Local government

Do you really want to be under Whithall's thumb?

In March, 26 of the Lambeth Labour Group pushed through a budget of £60 million cuts.

Now discussion centres on who should hold Group positions for the next year.

A number of candidates have been travelling around ward branches, but it is already clear that few Party members still support Linda Bellos as Council Leader.

As *Lambeth Councillors Against the Cuts* explained in a bulletin put out in support of their slate:

"The current Labour Group was elected in May 1986 on a Manifesto which pledged defence of services and jobs and continued resistance to central government attacks. When the Leadership was elected by the Parties and Labour Group, it was to lead that resistance, whether against a second or third term of Tory government."

With Joan Twelves as their candidate for Leader, the Councillors against the Cuts are standing a full slate for all major Council positions on a programme of:

- a return to the socialist policies of the Manifesto;
- defending and extending equal opportunities;
- rebuilding services on the basis of political priorities determined by the Parties and trade unions which meet the needs of the people of Lambeth;
- no redundancies or compulsory redeployment; an end to the recruitment freeze; a system of workplace committees in every directorate to determine with Councillors recruitment and service priorities, to work for genuine workers' democracy;
- a commitment not to close any Council establishment or facility where there is demand for the service; for effective delivery of services, in full consultation with users and workers;
- a thriving voluntary sector, not a cheap subsitute for Council services;
- an open, accountable, democratic and collective leadership; for rebuilding a partnership between Councillors, the Parties, the trade unions and the community;
- leading a campaign for more resources for Lambeth, linking up with community and labour movement organisations prepared to fight to defend local services — fighting to turn the ALA into a campaigning body, giving the lead to other Local Authorities in the fight against Tory cuts and legislative attacks;
- preparing to defend Lambeth against all attacks — privatisation, the Housing Bill, the Education Bill, the Poll Tax, Clause 28 — resistance not capitulation.

By Lambeth *Briefing* supporters



Linda Bellos — why the resignation?

Against this principled stand Linda Bellos is standing with a slate based on those prepared to vote for cuts. Her programme comes down to doing whatever Whitehall says — as long as it keeps her Leader. Such is the contempt for consultation that the LCC have found themselves on her slate without their permission. They are now standing in their own right.

Linda Bellos has capitulated so much the LCC is able to pose as a "political" alternative to her left. They have picked up support from Councillors fed up with the current Leadership by diktat but who are not prepared to go the whole way and organise a campaign to confront the government.

Despite John Mann, the LCC candidate for Leader, using all his skills picked up from red-baiting in NOLS, the left has emerged from the wards with majority support. Norwood and Vauxhall GCs look set to endorse the Councillors Against the Cuts slate.

The only question in the Party is who comes third. On current estimates it is quite likely that the current Leadership will achieve this dubious distinction.

Even with the Parties clearly endorsing a stand against cuts it is unlikely that the current Group will want to endorse a Leadership prepared to take on the Tories. But with pressure increasing on Councillors to follow mandates their choices are narrowing.

Paradoxically, many Party members were prepared to see Councillors break mandates on cuts but will not accept broken mandates for the Group elections.

Whatever happens to the Linda Bellos clique the Councillors Against the Cuts are committed to working with the Parties, unions and community to defend Council services. The discussion in the Lambeth Parties over the Group leadership elections — like the leadership debate nationally — is only serving to help organise and mobilise the fightback.



PHOTO: Nick Hazelwood

London Day of Action, March 8th: workers march past Lambeth Town Hall on their way to all-London rally

Stop Press: Recognising her untenable position, Linda Bellos has now withdrawn from the Leadership contest along with six Committee Chairs. But rather than promising to vote for the choice of the Parties they have said they will abstain in the Group elections.

Saying they will disrupt whoever wins has only reinforced cynical rumours that their standing down is only to avoid a public humiliation from the Party to be followed by staying in office when the Group is unable to decide how to replace them.

At the same time rumours are strong that John Mann was never serious in standing and now that he faces possible electoral success the mantle of the LCC will pass to the more acceptable Dick Sorabji. Further report next issue.

Hackney Libraries

The occupation continues

The Hackney libraries' occupation has been running for six weeks.

By Dave Keane Hackney Libraries

The occupation, supported by NALGO members in libraries, members from other trade unions, local communities and Hackney Fightback, has gradually been winning wider support and has shown that it is possible to take a stand.

With substantial pressure, we can win.

The Council's strategy for dealing with cuts is to remain in office at any price, even if it means harming local communities.

But this strategy is becoming increasingly unpopular, as support for the occupation shows: the Hackney Joint Shop Stewards Committee has called for support for the action, as have the Trades Council and an increasing number of local Labour Parties.

Activists

The Library Action Committee, consisting of NALGO stewards and activists, meets regularly to consider how best to step up the action, and issues regular bulletins to library workers and local people. Support groups have been set up, pulling more people into the struggle.

The action has proved that libraries are not an easy target, but other libraries remain vulnerable. A senior councillor has allegedly said only five (out of 17) are sacrosanct. Yet the occupations have created such a political row about the Council's attitude to libraries (and thus its attitude to literacy, education, information provision) that they will face problems in making the current cuts effective and in imposing greater ones.

A euphemistically entitled "Library Development Plan", which takes as its basis the loss of three branch libraries, two reference libraries and the schools' project loans service, proposes further reactionary measures:

- charging for music libraries and commercial information services to firms (as opposed to free reference libraries);

Resources

- charging the media resources centre so that it meets the needs of business rather than community groups;
- and drastically cutting library hours.

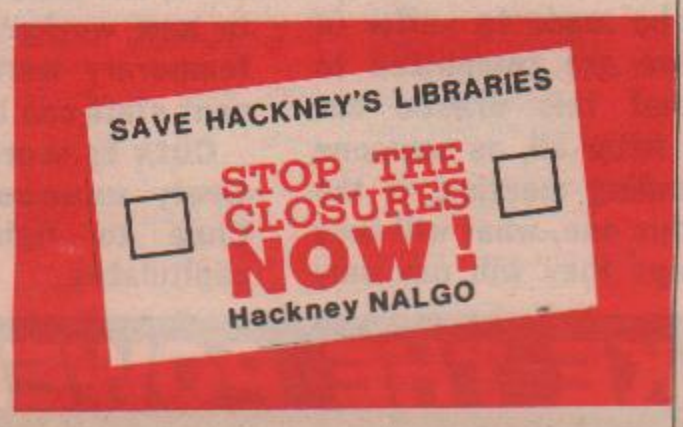
Thanks to the uproar created by the fight against the cuts, these proposals seem likely to be dropped.

Optimism

Despite our optimism we cannot hope to win without continued and increased pressure on the Council. Library workers must be prepared for further industrial action; we must hold the occupied libraries. The issue must be raised at every conceivable opportunity.

Hackney library workers are on the front line in the battle against cuts. It is vital that we win.

Help the occupations! contact:
Goldsmiths Row Library on 729 7242
Howard Road Library on 923 1840
Somerford Road Library on 985 8262 x39
Hackney Trade Union Support Unit on 249 8086



Bow & Poplar

East Enders

(or: Herbert Morrisson House has been watching too much television again)

Gor blimey, would you Adam and Eve it!

There we all was at the Firm's annual do on the Bow and Poplar manor.

By Christine Shawcroft Pearly Queen of Bow & Poplar

Wot a grand time was 'ad by all!

We was just 'avin' a sing song rahn the ol' joanna — "Roll Out the Agenda", "Knees up Neil Kinnock", "Boiled Beef and Share Ownership" — and was getting tucked in to some pie and mash.

Then the Lion's Lair, (nice bloke, used to collect on the old insurance policies for Ronnie and Reggie), sittin' at the top Kane and Abel, asked this geezer Terry Ashton, sent dahn by the Guv'nor, to say a few words. Gawd bless us and save us! Didn't 'e give us some GBH of the ear'ole! Norrar!

Nah ere's the clincher — one of the lads (nice boy, all right so 'e's got a bit of form, 'e was nowhere *near* the Blind Beggar, on my life, Yer Honour) asked why a nice little earner dahn Riverside, on the Bermondsey manor, 'ad been taken orf the Firm and given over to this old girl 'oo's only been wiv the Firm for a week, and before that was wiv the diabolical Mellish Gang.

So this Ashton geezer, 'e says the original contender for the earner was nobbled! Well, 'oo is by is what we'd all like to know?

Then 'e says that the Firm in Riverside 'as 'ad to shut up shop — only instead of *Riverside*, 'e says *Blackwall*! — which is on *our* manor! Well you could've knocked us dahn wiv a fevver!

Course, 'e tried to pass it orf as one of these 'ere slips wot that geezer Freud used to go on abaht, and then 'e says 'ow the Guv'nor really only wants old Cockneys in the Firm, like those ones from the Mellish shower.

Nah, we fought this was well aht of order! Not that we tangled much wiv the Mellish Gang, we prefers our legs *unbroken*, fanks very much. But we've only just taken this neck of the woods over from the Beasley Gang, 'oo were almost as bad! And we're all old Cockneys in Blackwall. You *can* 'ear the Bow Bells in Bangladesh. Not many people know that.

So there was a bit 'a argy bargy, but in the end we got together again for one last rendition of that dear old Cockney favourite, "Wiv a ladder and some glasses you could see the New Jerus'lem, if it wasn't for the Ashton in between".

Labour

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Workers taking action

DHSS strike

Support this anti-racist action!

HSS staff in Lewisham ave taken strike action fter refusing to work ongside known fascist ganiser Malcolm keggs.

The CPSA members are ill solid after all-out ac-on since early April in an most unprecedented how of strength against cism.

y DAN CARTER

Malcolm Skeggs is a rmer National Front can-date, who was sacked om his job at Lewisham ouncil when he was aught photocopying itish National Party opaganda.

Many of the Lewisham area F went with the Tyndall split form the BNP in the early Os. The fascists have always en forced off the street hen they have organised in ewisham and are now no nger a major threat.

Tribunal

Skeggs resurfaced at Hither reen dole office after having on his industrial tribunal gainst Lewisham Council and veral thousand pounds ong with it. He was scovered when he submitted a form to join the union.

The CPSA members told management they wanted Skeggs sacked or transferred — at Hither Green he would be dealing with members of the public and confidential files. Management refused — the workers took action.

It is up to the whole of the labour movement in London to rally round this historic strike — support is particularly needed from other CPSA members and branches, and the NUCPS, whose members are crossing the picket line.

The office at 303 Hither Green Lane SE13 near the junction with Duncrierie Road is away from the town centre and so help on the picket line, from 7.30 to 9.30am in particular, is welcome.

Facilities

Lewisham Labour Club has opened its facilities up to the strikers and Hither Green branch members and Councillors have been on the picket line. The strikers have also asked that supporters write to the manager of the office demanding to know its policy on racism and fascism, and how they justify employment of a Nazi sympathiser.

Too many London strikes have been lost through lack of labour movement support. If we lose this, it will be a victory for a fascist, as well as for an increasingly intolerant management. Your support is vital in this dispute.



PHOTO: Martine Stead

NHS workers demonstrated on March 5th (above); education workers, together with other Local Authority workers on March 8th. The bureaucrats fight to stop workers linking up.

Fight to save ILEA!

Since 1979 the Tories have made several attempts to abolish ILEA and on each occasion they have been foiled.

Successive Leaders have claimed these to be significant victories.

Yet ILEA now faces abolition by 1990.

Perspectives

The political perspectives of the majority of the Labour Group and ILEA Leaders has been to adopt campaigns similar to those of the now defunct GLC: campaigns promoting popular opinion and backed by representation in both Houses of Parliament.

During this period ILEA has juggled its finances to balance to books. This strategy has now led to the ILEA Labour Group accepting a cuts package of £93 million of which £25 million will fall on domestic staff.

At the Greater London Labour Party Conference on March 4th-6th, Neil Fletcher failed to mention these cuts and Chair Glenys Thornton refused to accept any questions or reference back.

When we rallied at Jubilee Gardens on March 8th, Neil Fletched called for unity in defending ILEA. Many workers present asked where ILEA's unity and commitment to its workers and education were.

Fletcher's speech was rightly drowned out by the majority of angry workers present — some of whom had been given three weeks notice of termination of employment.

By Pete Milson
NUPE Steward
(personal capacity)

Already some workers have been laid off or threatened with the sack if they do not comply with ILEA's present demands. This makes a nonsense of ILEA's commitment to full consultation with the unions involved.

The present situation demands action. Rank and file committees must be set up irrespective of union sectionalism. Linking the rank and file is one sure way to scupper moves by union officials to take control.

Links must be made with Local Authority workers and healthworkers because we cannot win in isolation.

We should heed the lessons of the GLC and the abortive rate-capping campaign. Let us not forget that ILEA was one of the first Labour controlled Authorities to desert Liverpool and Lambeth.

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Islington North

Left sweeps the board

By Keith Veness
Islington North CLP

Recently *Briefing* supporters may have felt a bit fed up reading about sucesses notched-up in London CLPs by the LCC and assorted centre-right groups.

It has become obvious for the last few months that a similar conspiracy was afoot in North Islington.

This would have been a particular prize for them as Jeremy Corbyn is now Secretary of the Campaign Group and thus a leading light of the left in London.

Because of the demoralisation caused by the collapse of the Council into "new realism", the LCC probably felt this was their best year for turning over the left majority. However, once the right showed its true colours it became clear that it was an all-out struggle and this helped galvanise action from the left.

In contrast to the secret meetings and telephone conspiracies that have become the hallmark of the undemocratic clique that runs the LCC, the left in Islington North organised openly at public discussions and put *political* issues at the top of the agenda.

The ward AGMs registered small swings to the left in most branches and the left swept the board at the Co-op elections. With the already assured support of the Women's Section, the Black Section and the overwhelming majority of trade union delegates, it was clear that the right's machinations had failed.

However, the "department of dirty tricks" tried one last effort at the constituency AGM — springing the key votes on one huge ballot paper at exactly 7.30pm whilst most of the delegates were still arriving. However, this miserable ploy failed and the left slate was elected anyway!

As the evening wore on it became clear that the left was winning with bigger and bigger majorities, and it was curtains for those right-wingers currently in post. Many of the LCC grouping slunk off home before the end.

The left's victory has coincided with the start of a real left fightback on the Council and the opening up of the possibility of putting class struggle politics back on the agenda.

Briefing supporters in other London CLPs can draw a lot of heart from the Islington North sucess. We must now go on the offensive and see that the cancer that the LCC represents is swiftly eradicated from the heart of our movement.

REVIEW



PHOTO: Peter Ouvry

South African theatre

Petty Nkowe in *You Can's Stop the Revolution* at the Young Vic in March (photo: Peter Ouvry).

Apartheid's assault on the townships is seen through the eyes of individual victims, presented in a vibrant surround of music and movement. For those who already knew about the struggle in South Africa, the "content" was somewhat repetitive, but this show brings alive the spirit of the people's resistance to the system in a way no objective account ever can.

The Temba Theatre Company's *A Visitor to the Veld*, by South African exile Mfundi Vundla is on at the Young Vic until April 30th.

A young resistance fighter keeps watch on a union activist in internal exile; the arrival of a Vietnam veteran brings a new dimension to their disagreements. Sounds like a "talk play", but I'm assured it's far more; direction by Albie James and music by Molefe Pheto should guarantee an excellent production.

Temba's increasing commitment to South African Theatre is a crucial development in British Theatre, and a shining example to other companies.

Steve Parry

Chesterfield comes to London

Discussing "a strong, socialist movement" in Britain!

380 people participated in the North London Socialist Conference on April 16th and 17th.

Over the two days there were 23 workshops and five plenary sessions covering a wide range of issues including Ireland, The Economy, Green Politics, Women's Liberation and the Struggle for Socialism, and Black and Ethnic minority communities in North London.

The Conference had been planned before Tony Benn and Eric Heffer announced their challenge for the Labour Leadership; inevitably the opportunities this contest afforded ran through all debates.

Tony Benn opened the Conference calling on it to work to build *"a strong socialist movement in Britain to represent and defend the interests of working people committed to democracy locally and nationally, and with an international perspective."*

He particularly stressed the need to curb the power of the city and multinationals and to build international trade union links as part of this struggle.

Sharon Atkin denounced the shameful record of the Labour Leadership on the question of Black people's autonomy in the labour movement and warned that the struggle for Black Sections was not over.

She pledged her support for the Benn-Heffer ticket and spoke of her sadness at the resignation of some of the women in the Campaign Group as, she said, this contest was our best hope for a change of Leadership.

By Mandy Mudd
North London Socialist Conference Organising Committee

Duncan Hallas from the SWP also recognised the importance of the Benn-Heffer challenge as a *"contest of ideas affecting all socialists inside and outside the Labour Party"*.

Discussions in workshops were intense and serious. There were complaints from a very well attended workshop on Ireland that the Irish struggle for self-determination should have featured more prominently on the agenda.

Sinn Fein representative Gerry McLaughlin agreed that British comrades should concentrate more on bringing about the removal of the British Army than on telling Irish socialists how to run their fight.

The uncle of Birmingham Six prisoner Paul Hill spoke of the effects the PTA had had on his family; while Geoff Bell saw the Benn-Heffer Campaign as a means of highlighting Irish oppression and challenging bipartisanship.



Sharma Vishna from the Indian Workers Association addresses the North London Conference

Questions of autonomy for lesbians and gay men, women and black people, and about whether socialists should fight inside or outside the Labour Party underlined almost all the debates. These divisions were particularly sharpened in Sunday morning's *Women's Liberation and the Struggle for Socialism* session and whenever a strategy for opposing Clause 28 was discussed.

On Sunday morning Nadine Finch spoke about Women for Socialism, the women's organisation launched at Chesterfield. Irene Breughel and Lindsey German led off with analyses of women's oppression.

Attempt

Women speaking from the floor resisted any attempt to counterpose a class anlaysis to the concept of "identity politics" — and argued that to build a socialist movement we needed to develop a class struggle perspective that incorporated the specific experiences and demands of women and recognised their right to organise autonomously around them.

The refusal of the SWP to recognise that gender, sexuality, and race affect the ways in which women, lesbians and gay men, and black people experience class oppression, and to acknowledge their rights to organise around this within the struggle for socialism, angered many comrades.



PHOTO: Martine Stead

The audience at the North London meeting

Routinistic

In Sunday afternoon's Local Government session their routinistic "leave the Labour Party, join the SWP, build for all out strike action" led them to be accused of a workerist approach and they were attacked by tenants' representatives for failing to acknowledge the role that community based organisations could play in such struggles.

Briefing comrades did not disagree with the analysis that it was all out strike action that was needed to win, but consistently put forward the argument that the arena for struggle was broader than the workplace, and that it could and should involve Labour Councillors and the community.

The closing plenary encapsulated many of the debates, with Narendra Makanji pointing out how a workerist approach disenfranchised many of the most oppressed groups from struggles and called on a socialist movement to build diagonal links across class and identity groupings.

Range

The Conference attracted a broad range of people: many Labour Party activists, SWP members, RCP members, people involved in anti-racist/anti-fascist work, trade unionists and green socialists.

Determined

The Organising Committee are determined that the weekend should not be a one-off event and are committed to building a socialist network across North London. They plan to set up a rolling programme of meetings across North London and to encourage as many people as possible to attend the recall Conference in Chesterfield in June.

Local Benn-Heffer Campaigns have been set up to ensure that the political issues raised by the Leadership challenge are spread widely inside and outside the Party.



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Nadine Finch and Irene Breughel address the North London Conference

Organising south of the river

Socialists south of the river are organising a South London Socialist Conference in the wake of the successful North London event.

A second open planning meeting has just been held, bringing together socialists from a range of backgrounds both inside and outside the Labour Party.

What united everybody was a desire to build a forum for discussing out differences, and putting socialism back on the agenda.

The meeting decided to aim to hold the Conference at the end of June and it was agreed to hold a number of workshops on broad themes.

Volunteers came forward to take up the work involved in organising such a demanding Conference. Given the broad range of viewpoints present, the high degree of collaboration was encouraging.

The only setback to this unity came with unfortunate disagreements about who should be invited to speak to plenary sessions of the Conference. Drawing up an initial list of speakers, agreement was easily reached to invite Tony Benn, Betty Heathfield, Diane Abbott, and Sharon Atkin.

By Greg Tucker
Vauxhall CLP

But Paul Foot and Hilary Wainwright were unacceptable to comrades from *Socialist Action*. The stated reason, that *"they had never lead any real struggles"*, left most of the meeting confused and despite objections from *Socialist Action* it was agreed to invite them anyway.

Despite this slight shadow over the proceedings the task now is to move forward to make the Conference into a reality. If you want to help build this united left forum come to the planning meetings! For details, contact Greg Tucker, 3 Blades House, London SE11 5TW, tel. 01 582 2955.

NHS demonstration

Tories on the march!

There are growing signs that relations within the Conservative Party are rapidly reaching breaking point.

On Saturday April 16th, 300 Tories marched through Windsor in protest at the proposed closure of most of the Departments of King Edward VII Hospital by the East Berkshire Area Health Authority.

By John Hayball at Windsor

With the light blue banner of the Windsor Conservative Association at its head, the demonstration wound its way up past the Castle and down into the town's main street where Tory women activists fervently rushed from one shopper to the next collecting signatures for their protest petition.

Ironically, the policing was provided by one black and one woman constable, who moved angrily to book a motorist too impatient to wait for the demonstration to pass by.

The march ended in a rally at the hospital itself, attended by Dr Alan Glynn, Windsor's Tory MP, who must be desperate to hold his local Association together under the pressure of this rank and file movement.

The organisers of the campaign to save the hospital were quick to stress its non-political character, which hardly squared with the composition of the march.

One senior expatriate Welsh Tory on the campaign harangued the *Labour Briefing* seller with the view that people had to queue for service in the Soviet Union — to which was replied that people had to queue a lot longer for NHS treatment in Britain.

One Young Conservative expressed concern at the lack of trade union participation in their campaign — which was hardly surprising after two terms of Thatcher-bashing.

Look out for further news from Berkshire!