LONDON LABOUR
BRIEFING
40p FORTNIGHTLY
No 100 SEPTEMBER 14-27 1988

HACKNEY REBELS DEFY BAILIFFS!



PHOTO: Martine Stead

Police and bailiffs were defeated in their first attempt to break the occupation of three Hackney libraries.

To Town Hall embarrassment, the occupiers had mobilised residents and trade unionists after tricking the bailiffs into revealing vital information. At Goldsmiths Row library alone, police were confronted by 100 people inside and outside the building.

DLO workers, previously loyal to the Council refused to cross the picket line to board the place up. The would-be spectacle of Leisure Services Director Christine Pointer screaming through the key-hole of the barricaded library as the small police presence retreated from the "potential threat to public order".

By Jim Thain
Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

Chief hate-object, Leisure Service Chair Tommy Shepperd, however, remains determined to "reclaim these vital resources for the people of Hackney." Double-speak? What double-speak?

As we go to press, the occupiers are prepared for a return of more heavily-enforced bailiffs soon. They have strengthened the 24 hour work-in and have made valuable media contracts.

The campaign has successfully made links with other struggles. Seafarers have shown solidarity; there have been collections for the postal workers; and a mass meeting voted overwhelmingly to sponsor the East London Irish Year of Action Committee, recognising the duty to help mobilise support for the freedom struggle of the oppressed Irish nation.

It is sad the self-proclaimed left wing Council is unable to draw such support.

But the people of Hackney deride their collaborationist cuts strategy. And the ex-socialists will find their defeatist policies even harder to implement when the experience gained from this six-month siege fuels the fightback to come.

The library occupiers urgently need funds to cover campaigning costs. Please send donations to: Save the Libraries Fund, c/o 4 Heathland Road, London N16.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Brent Crisis

Tragedy hits Social Services

Brent Council has hit the national press on an almost daily basis in August, with Ken Livingstone's throw-away line about Pol Pot being gleefully taken up and the cameras searching out scenes of confrontation in the Town Hall.

By Christine Clavering Chair, Brent Fightback



PHOTO: Geoff Cocks

Council lobby

What they haven't looked at is the most important factor - the tragic devastation being wreaked in the community.

After the last Social Services Committee those present who realised what had just been decided were either clinging to each other weeping in despair, or cursing the Council and vowing vengeance on the Labour administration.

In the pub down the road, blues songs were being composed and sung by some of the black women who had just witnessed years of work and commitment wiped out by a show of hands.

Social Services provision is to be cut to a minimum, leaving only statutory child care and mental health work. All grant to the voluntary sector will be stopped.

Before the tragic death of Jasmine Beckford, Brent's Social Services had been largely ignored by Councillors, which meant that, despite under-resourcing, a lot of imaginative work went on.

Some excellent, innovative services were delivered by dedicated staff. But after the Beckford affair, morale sank and many workers left for other boroughs.

The 1986 elections brought new hope. Salaries were increased, and a new, young, black, energetic Director was brought in. A report was commissioned from Bath University and everyone was intent on making Brent a centre of social work excellence.

The Report criticised management, its structure and policies, and praised the dedicated workers who kept the services going. These same workers have been kicked in the guts ever since.

At this point the cuts came in. But in response to the report, a new tier of management had been created - from the very ranks of management criticised in the report. To finance this, vacant social work posts were frozen and attempts to shut nurseries and old people's homes were made.

The officers' recommendation, carried out by the members, was that management posts should be filled, resulting in a ladder of "acting up", leaving gaps at the service delivery end.

Social Services offices were shut to the public through staff shortages and no more children were admitted to day nurseries. Again staff started to leave and again people in need of services lost out.

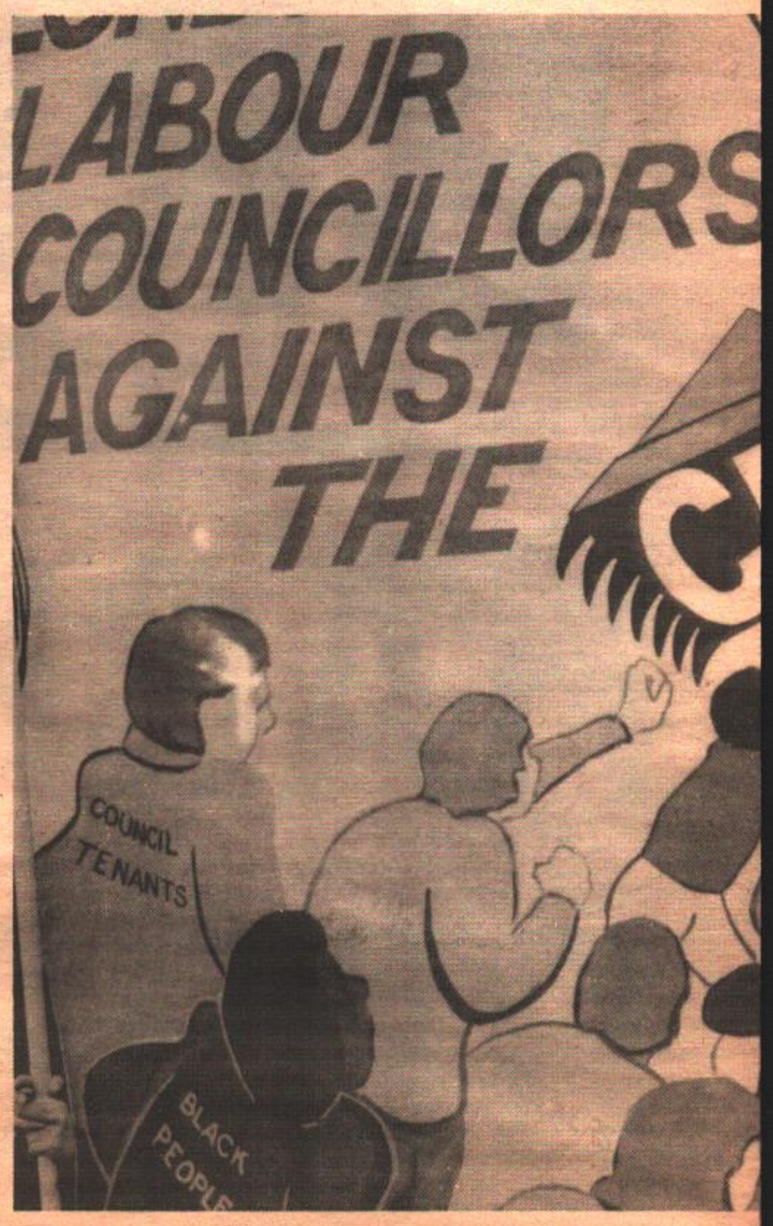
As always when statutory services fail, the voluntary sector was there to pick up the pieces. Now this has been destroyed, where are people to turn? Taken in conjunction with the cuts in housing advice, education, and the new Social Security rules, the plight of some Brent residents has become intolerable.

Consider the plight of families with elderly relatives whose home help has been cut and whose chance of getting into Part 3 accommodation has gone; the families with mentally handicapped children whose respite care has been abolished; the mentally ill who will no longer have the safety of hospital, the rehabilitation offered by hostels and day centres, or support from MIND.

The Social Services Committee report which recommended the abolition of the out-of-hours social work team said the police had the power to remove children and mentally ill people to a place of safety. The question of where that place might be was not addressed.

It will not escape *Briefing* readers that the effect of all these cuts will be to put extra pressure on women, who ultimately will be left to care for those unable to care for themselves and who have also lost the Women's Unit to fight for their rights.

Amidst this gloom, almost nightly, demonstration throughout August have given a spark of hope to women in Brent. Hundreds of women have been mobilised and as we go to press occupations and work-ins are being planned. Watch this space



It's only the beginning!

By Graham Durham and Mick Woods Brent Labour Councillors Against the Cuts

Contrary to press reports, the shameful antics of the 25 pro-cuts Labour Councillors in August was no surprise.

As in other London Authorities, the cuts began over a year ago and already totalled over £7m.

In the wake of protests, Merle Amory resigned and Dorman "asleep at the wheel" Long became Leader, in defiance of Brent Labour Party.

In March a further £15m of cuts were made and 520 jobs axed. A lease-back deal with Japanese banks has saddled the Borough with £10m annual repayments. This was meant to be the end of the pain but in July a gap of £17m opened up.

At this point a right opposition, led by former Finance Chair and *New Statesman* contributor Sandra Ernstoff, emerged and voted with the Tories to axe the Women's and Police Units and to scrap the no compulsory redundancies policy.

Throughout August, as Committees met to make £17m cuts, hundreds of protesters assembled almost nightly. Tears turned to anger as the scope of the butchery became clear.

Rents rose £7 a week, eight Social Services nurseries were closed, 120 school meals jobs lost, 233 teachers removed, day centres and respite care abolished, 60 voluntary groups lost their entire grant, 40% of refuse collectors are to be sacked, four old people's homes closed, four youth centres closed, and one fifth of all home helps lost.

A year ago it was "caring cuts". Then a "radical restructure". Now, "it would be worse under the Tories." This last point is debateable, but what is certain is that the pro-cuts Councillors are paving the way for a Tory victory in 1990. Next year's budget gap is already £43m and growing. More cuts are on the way.

The Tories have cried their crocodile tears and blamed the crisis on Labour inefficiency. Sadly, this crude analysis has been taken up by people who should know better, notably local MP Ken Livingstone.

Some unions, such as NUPE, have supported the cuts – but a gap is opening up between the local full-time officials and rank and file members facing redundancy.

There is a failure to recognise that the crisis is caused by Thatcher's devastation of local government funding and that there is no administrative way out.

Twelve Labour Councillors have stood out against the cuts. Several more contemplate resignation as they reach their "bottom line". The strategy of the anti-cuts Councillors is to unify all the forces in Brent opposed to Thatcher and mount a wide campaign around a deficit budget.

As a start, Brent Fightback has been revitalised and is beginning to link trade unionists and community groups. The disgust in Brent Labour Party at the besmirching of the Party's name is already leading to pressure on the pro-cuts Councillors.

NALGO, following a successful one-day strike in August, are holding a ballot on all-out action. The NUT Leadership faces mounting anger at its quiescence in the face of the savaging of the education budget.

Brent Briefing is giving this activity a cutting edge, demanding the resignations of pro-cuts Councillors and their replacement by socialists loyal to the 1986 Manifesto. Whatever they say in the press, the battle for Brent is only just beginning.

Waiting for Ken (to give a lead!)

Ken Livingstone has often been accused (by comrades on both left and right) of trying to face both ways at once.

His now famous report on the crisis in Brent has confirmed the allegation.

By Matthew O'Dwyer Brent East CLP

In this document Ken cites many glaring examples of chaotic administration, the Labour Group's lack of accountability, and its lack of political control over the officers.

However, in failing to concentrate on the effects on Brent of nine years of Tory rule - the withdrawal of block grant, selective ratecapping, and the antics of the Tory-Liberal Council of 1984/86 - Ken has given the impression that the cuts crisis in Brent is due to mismanagement (a notion eagerly seized on by the media).

This implies that there is an administrative way out of the crisis which can avoid confrontation with the government.

Ken states clearly that the choice for Brent Labour Group lies between refusing to make cuts and defying the government with all its attendant risks - or staying legal and making "humane" cuts.

Without naming his own preferred option, he does give implicit support to the "dented shield" strategy by urging the Council to make "service delivery" its "highest priority".

This, along with his suggestions of a policy committee, a programme office, and more consultations with unions, community groups, etc., once again implies that there is an administrative way to turn the Council round by 1990.

Anybody who has been near the Town Hall in recent weeks and still imagines that Brent Council is either making service delivery its highest priority or can possibly do so without going illegal or that a few bureaucratic changes can save Labour from the blame for the cuts is clearly living on fantasy island.

It was to be expected that to maintain his left credibility (and save his political career) Ken would put the boot into the rotten administration in Brent. But socialists have the right to demand more of him.

If he wants to be taken seriously as a left political Leader Ken must play an active role in the fightback campaigns against the closure of nurseries and respite centres. He must use his position to call for the removal of Councillors who refuse to fight, and call for and give direction to a campaign against the government in defence of the borough's jobs and services.



PHOTO: Leesa Herbert

Ken Livingstone at 1987 Party Conference

vernment

BRENT — Teachers under attack



Any Brent teacher spending the summer holiday in a remote spot with no access to local news is in for a nasty shock.

At one stage, the Council Leadership proposed the end of the school meals service (apart from free meals) and the closure of all nursery schools, as well as massive cuts in other areas.

This caused a huge outcry and a series of angry demonstrations at the Town Hall.

Later they backtracked and settled for a cut in the school meals service. The price of the concession is teacher redundancies.

The Council is looking to lose

By Colin Adams
Brent NUT

233 teachers by the end of 1988. All teachers in Brent have received letters offering voluntary severance. The threat is that failure to achieve the target will result in compulsory redundancy with minimum payments.

The NUT's response has so far been muted, to say the least. A meeting has been held between union officers and Council Leaders; a further meeting is planned for this month. The local Leadership has a problem. They mostly support the legal compliance approach, so long as it doesn't hit their members too badly.

The Council has already flexed its muscles by introducing compulsory redeployment for the first time. Many of those targetted to move were union activists. The union made noises, balloted for action, but did nothing. So some union representatives will start the new term in a different school with no timetable - sitting ducks for the coming round of redundancies.

The ballot for action (a one-day strike) received overwhelming support in all but one of the schools affected. Union members are angry about the victimisation of their reps. On the other hand, many may become demoralised and leave Brent or teaching altogether.

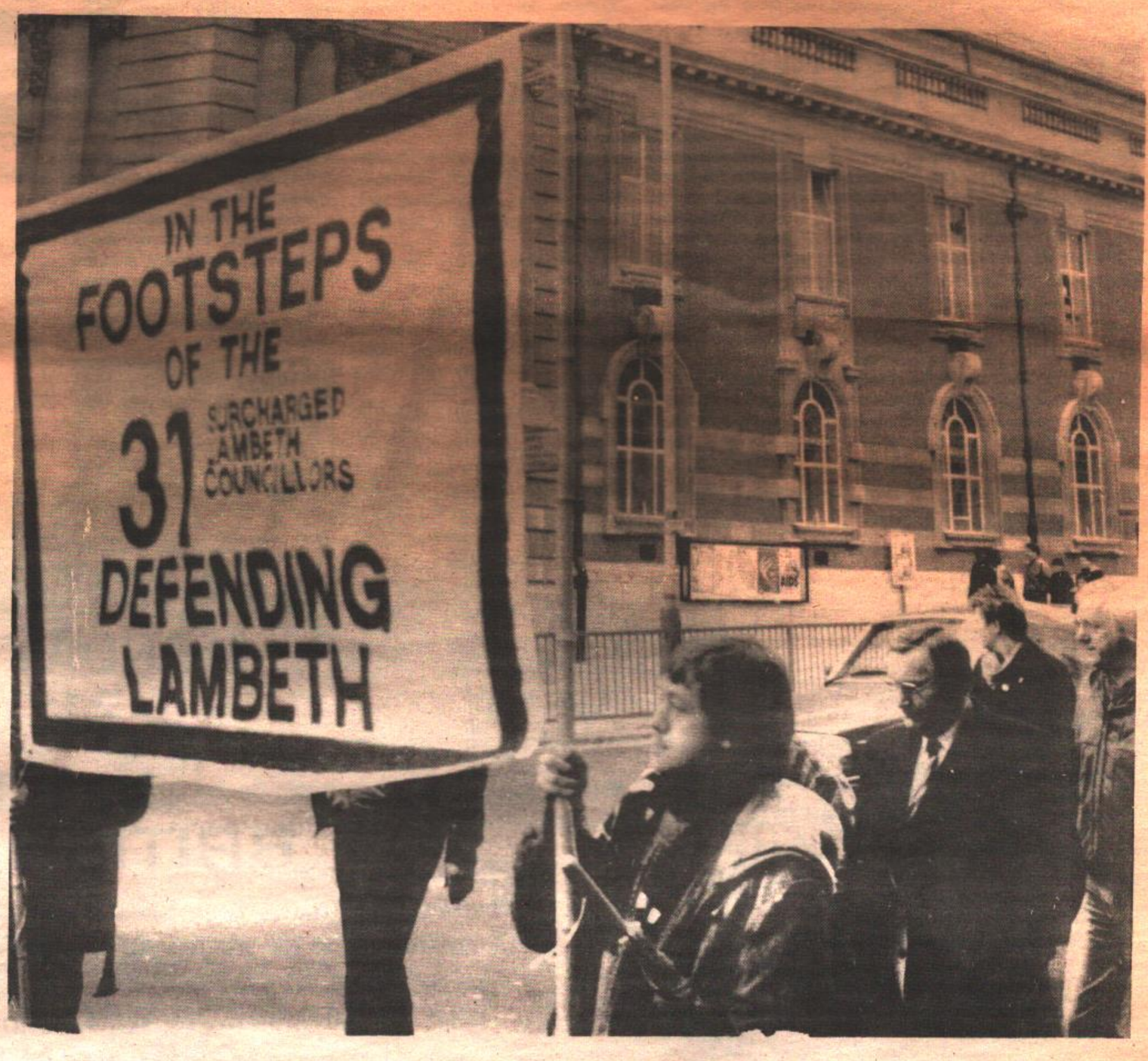
The union Leadership has always said that compulsory redundancy is the bottom line. It is highly unlikely that the cuts exercise can avoid it this time. However, there is no point waiting until the first compulsory notice hits somebody's mat. By then it will be too late.

The cuts already introduced by the Council are grounds enough for action. Classes will be larger, teachers' conditions will worsen, the curriculum on offer will shrink. A Council which has boasted about its generous provision in education will soon be back amongst the also-rans.

Everybody agrees that the ultimate villain is the government, which will look on with glee at the capitulation of another Council. If a stand is not taken this time, we will go from bad to worse.

Teachers have to unite with other Council workers to take action. We have to win the support of Council consumers - parents, tenants, etc. If we do not, local services are likely to disintegrate quickly and with them our jobs. Union activists must organise for strike action now. The Council and union Leaderships are stalling for time - we must not give it to them.

Setback for Lambeth NALGO



By our Lambeth correspondent

Lambeth NALGO members returned to work last week having been on all-out strike for three days. They had been demanding that the Council give a guarantee that no worker would be made compulsorily redundant.

Despite the fact that the Labour Group has refused to give such a guarantee an offer of negotiations on 'redeployment' was enough to split the left in NALGO and led to the defeat of resolutions put forward by Briefing supporters to continue the action.

In this weakened situation NALGO members will be hard put to fight off the attacks which will now be made on them as the Council enters the final stage of the implementation of this years round of cuts.

The Labour Group refusal to give a guarantee of 'no compulsory redundancies' marks a new low. For there is no financial justification. Staffing levels are now nearly 600 below the cuts target set for next March. Instead of cutting 1000 staff over eighteen months the Council has lost nearly 1600 in twelve. The only reason for withholding the guarantee asked of them is to be able to retain a threat, in case of any refusal to accept immediate redeployment.

The policies put forward in Lambeth by Linda Bellos and now taken up by the LCC, capitulation to the Tories in the forlorn hope of being treated slightly less worse, are bringing the Council to the point of collapse.

When Brent Council hit the headlines many in Lambeth were left bemused. For it is clear that there is no fundamental difference between Brent and a number of other London councils. Based on his experience working for Lambeth perhaps Dorman Long thought he was doing quite well.

Morale is so low that staff are leaving as fast as they can and many services are virtually non-existent. But instead of addressing this crisis situation the LCC leadership of the Council are still happily playing games of reorganising the Council — blythly promising 'better services from more efficient use of resources'.

Despite this, however, council tenants are showing that a fight is possible. A major campaign against the threat of Housing Action Trusts has been built on the Loughborough and Angell Town estates. Nearly every tenant has signed petitions and many now display 'No HATS in Brixton' posters. On other estates Tenants Associations have been holding well attended meeings to discuss the effect of the Housing Bill and a strong mood of opposition is growing.

The mass involvement of tenants has shown that it is possible to organise to defend council services. But instead of taking this road, the Council's cuts are rapidly squandering the support for Labour services built up over the last few years.

Local round-up

LEWISHAM - The Council leadership is looking for 16 million cuts for 1989/90. They have refused to rule out compulsory redundancies. Ten out of the Borough's eleven remaining luncheon clubs are stated to be handed over to the voluntary sector. Disciplinary action against left Labour councillors opposing previous rounds of cuts is now being pushed.

ISLINGTON - The Council's cuts plan for 1989/90 is being revealed in phases. A list of 130 job losses prepared in July will be agreed and supplemented by hundreds more in October. Details of the second phase are not yet available. It is certain to involve big cuts in direct services including the closure of up to three of the Council's flagship Neighbourhood Offices. A further "review of services" (i.e. cuts) is being prepared by private consultants Coopers and Lybrand. The Council is refusing to guarantee the transfer of all non-statutory jobs (including manual workers) when education is handed over from ILEA.

GREENWICH - Housing Department staff are bearing the brunt of hardline management cuts and redeployment proposals aimed at easing implementation of the Housing Bill.

Over the past six weeks, there have been several walkouts by NALGO members in support of victimised shop stewards. On August 10th, 40 Housing Benefit workers went on all-out indefinite strike action following suspension without pay. Management claims this industrial action was "in breach of contract" - a tactic increasingly adopted by Labour Councils, supported by the courts. But more strike action is planned.

Meanwhile, the Council continues to pressurise workers into abandoning the union's no-cover policy and accepting redeployment in anticipation of a second round of cuts. Even areas of so-called expansion such as education and (inevitably) Poll Tax registration/collection, will involve cuts as these rely heavily on the use of redeployees. The scene is set for a wave of confrontations.

HARINGEY - Secrecy rules amongst the ever-narrowing right-wing clique pulling the strings at Wood Green Civic Centre. After £46 million cuts were pushed through in two phases last year, no one is willing to bet just what will happen in 89/90.

The borough has escaped rate-capping for the first time, and Council leader Toby Harris and his crew are hoping to get by with a no-cuts/no-growth (i.e. no rescinding of previous cuts) budget on the basis of a small rate rise and underspending caused by a mssive haemorrhage of staff following last year's cuts trauma.

All this, however, is speculation. The leadership have kept the Group, the local Party and the community in the dark. No reports have been issued and the LGC has not met since its AGM in June, when Chair Paul Vyshinsky Head decided that the LGC must adhere to national Party model rules stipulating quarterly meetings.

Scandal at the People's Palace (or folly on the hill)

What's going on at North London's familiar landmark, Alexandra Palace? That's the question Haringey councillors and voters are asking themselves following a month of revelations which have shown the irrelevance of the Alexandra Palace Board (the member-level body responsible for the Palace) and its Consultative Committee in the face of financial mismanagement and manoeuverings by the Council's right-wing Labour leadership.

By Cllr. Craig Brewin Haringey Labour Briefing

There was already concern about the collapse of the highly-touted "Festival of London" when, on August 15th, the Board were told the cost of developing the Palace (severely damaged by fire in the early '80s) had risen by £9 million in the last year - on top of an £11 million overspend already approved. After looking long and hard at the figures, the Board approved a new level of borrowing (which will use up the surplus generated by future Palace lettings on interest payment), further development of a new hotel within the Palace, and the sale of the Pavillion, an exhibtion annexe near the Palace.

In Haringey we are used to capital contractors exceeding original estimates, but in this case much of the overspend is due to officers deciding, with no reference to elected members, to fund additional works.

For example, £137,00 was spent on canteens and bars without member approval ("to meet management requirements").

The Board's panic measures have not been well-received. The proposed hotel extension (built in partnership with Tara Hotels) will generate little income and will protrude 30 feet above the Palace walls - thus despoiling the popular and historic Palace silhouette visible throughout the Borough.

Residents and conservation groups are furious. The Council's Development Control Sub-Committee unanimously turned down planning permission. The original plan for a hotel had only been agreed on the stipulation that it would not effect the Palace's existing skyline.

Yet here we were, being harried by senior officers (and the Chair of Planning) to approve a radically different plan that had arisen because of the financial crisis caused by officers themselves.

Until the Borough Treasurer advised the Board that financial problems required selling the Pavillion, it was hoped to convert the building into a community tennis centre. Another Haringey amenity down the drain.

The loan required to pay off the deficit also means there will be no money for the redevelopment fo the East Wing of the Palace, which stands in stark contrast with the nearly-completed West Wing.

Here in the so-called People's Palace, extravagance abounds. Ornate decor, murals, palm trees, have turned it into a municipal monument the likes of which the Victorians could only have dreamed.

Left councillors have requisitioned a special Labour Group meeting to prevent the Council leadership overturning the Development Control Sub-Committee's refusal of planning permission. Already they have embarrassed us by letting the Moscow State Circus use animal acts at the Palace - a decion taken without reference to our Animal Rights Working Party and which was in violation of agreed Council policy.

We will demand answers to these questions:

1. Why did management belittle the effect of the collapse of the Festival of London on the Palace's already teetering finances?

2. Why was the Palace let to the Festival of London when it was clear that the Festival Company was not in a position to withstand any losses and its income projections were wildly optimistic?

3. Why was the projected overspend not reported to members earlier?

4. Why was the Council leadership so desperate to give planning permission for the hotel extension?

5. Is it true that the Chief Architect at the Palace is taking early retirement from the Council (and a substantial payment) in order to take up a job directly with Tara Hotels? If so, why has he declared no interest?

6. Why have there been no negotiations with other hotel developers? Why no independent appraisal of the viability of a smaller hotel?

7. Why was Tara the only company considered when its demands were clearly quite at odds with the Council's wishes?

8. Why has the Chair of the Palace Board failed to offer his resignation?

[redacted]

STOP PRESS

At the special group meeting requisitioned by left Labour councillors on Monday, September 12th, the decision of the Development Control Sub-Committee to block the hotel extension scheme was upheld. A rare victroy for the left - and just about everyone else in North London.

ASSET-STRIPPERS ON THE PROWL

Brentfords, an engineering firm in Crawley, has made 91 of its 300 workers redundant. In doing so, the company tore up all previous agreements with the workforce. It has refused to negotiate.

Workers in the plant were furious and banged their hammers on the benches demanding discussions every time a management representative set foot on the shopfloor. Yet to stand a reasonable chance of stopping the redundancies it was necessary to link up with other engineering workers in the same position. In this they got no lead at all from the unions.

Like many companies in the Southeast, Brentfords have been busy asset-stripping. The land the plant stands on is worth more to them than the building, machinery, and workers who presently occupy it. The bosses stand to pocket big profits by kicking the workers out.

AEU and EETPU officials, paid for by the workers' subscriptions, have nothing to offer when their help is most needed. The situation was wholly forseable; it has become common in the engineering industry.

A united fight in the industry is needed to stop this parasitic asset-stripping. But that requires, above all, all-out battle against th right-wing machines of Hammond and Jordan, and for unions which defend workers.

Crawly Briefing supporters produced a leaflet on these problems which got a good reception on the shopfloor of the factory. The lessons learned now can prepare effective resistance in the future.

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SOUTH LONDON DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE POLL TAX

OCTOBER 22 Assemble 12 noon Lambeth Town Hall March to Kennington Park Rally with Jeremy Corbyn Linda Bellos and Harry Barnes

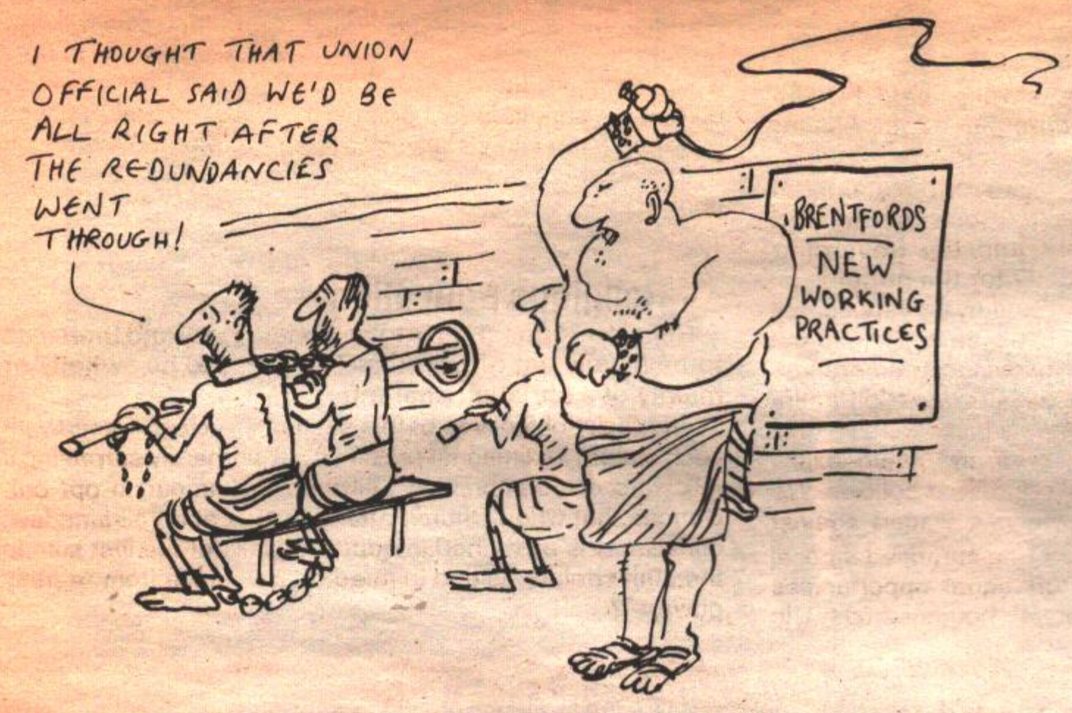
Contact Greg Tucker 582 2955

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EARLY WARNING NOTICE!

Deadline for Greater London Labour Party Conference resolutions: November 18th. Deadline for nominations and amendments: January 11th.

Send suggestions for model reoslutions to London Labour Briefing as soon as possible.



PSYCHIATRIC VICTIMS VS. PSYCHIATRY

London Alliance for Mental Health - an alliance of more than twenty mental health pressure groups - will be putting British psychiatry on public trial at 1pm. Saturday, September 17th, at Chat's Palace, 43 Brooksbys Walk, London E8. The charges include: false imprisonment, drug pushing, and defamation of character. The event is being organised primarily by survivors of "psychiatric treatments". Witnesses will reveal their onw experiences and explain how the system works - usually agaisnt those it claims to help. Dr. Daivd Hill, convenor of the Socialist Conference Mental Health Policy Group and a LAMHA member said, "The public trial will draw attention to the pervasive damage done by psychiatry. It will also encourage more survivors to speak out, despite the fear that their criticisms will be dismissed as yet another symptom of their supposed illness." Contact David Hill 567-4403 (h) or 485-3021 (w).

MARCH and RALLY

MONDAY 19 SEPTEMBER

2.15 VICTORIA PARK

IN SUPPORT OF THE DEMAND FOR

JUSTICE FOR BRITISH PENSIONERS

ASSEMBLE AT PARADISE ROW

(opp. Bethnal Green Tube Station)

at 1.30 to move off at 1.45 to the

GREAT RALLY IN VICTORIA PARK

HARINGEY BY-ELECTION - October 6th

The long-delayed resignation of pro-cuts councillor Pat Craig-Jones has given her left-wing ward, Bowes Park, the chance to stand an anti-cuts candidate in the by-election. Polydorous Polydorou has at last recevied the nod from the LGC Executive (the same crew who stopped Mandy Mudd standing in Bruce Grove) after attempts to keep him off the by-election panel at Hornsey and Wood Green GC. Polydorous will fight an unapologetic anti-cuts and socialist campaign. This is a highly marginal ward and help is needed. Canvassing every weekday evening from 20 Marlborough Road, N22. Call 888 7713 for details.

[redacted]

HACKNEY COUNCIL BY-ELECTION - October 6th

Briefing supporter Paul Foley is the Labour candidate in the forthcoming Northwold by-election. Paul is standing on a no-cuts platform. In recent by-elections, the Tories have been gaining swings of 12%. Cuts in services and library closures clearly aren't popular in Hackney. In Northwold, the opposition includes a local Council tenant who represents an anti-Labour feeling which is growing as a result of deteriorating local services. Paul and Northwold Ward need suppport from all London Briefing supporters, both to distance this campaign from the Council's cuts policy and to show that an anti-cuts stand can win votes. Help is needed. Contact Pam (806 5083), Andy (806 8433), or Nick (806 4457). Or just pop along to 141 Northwold Road, E5 at 6pm each weekday (except Friday) or Sunday mornings at 11am.