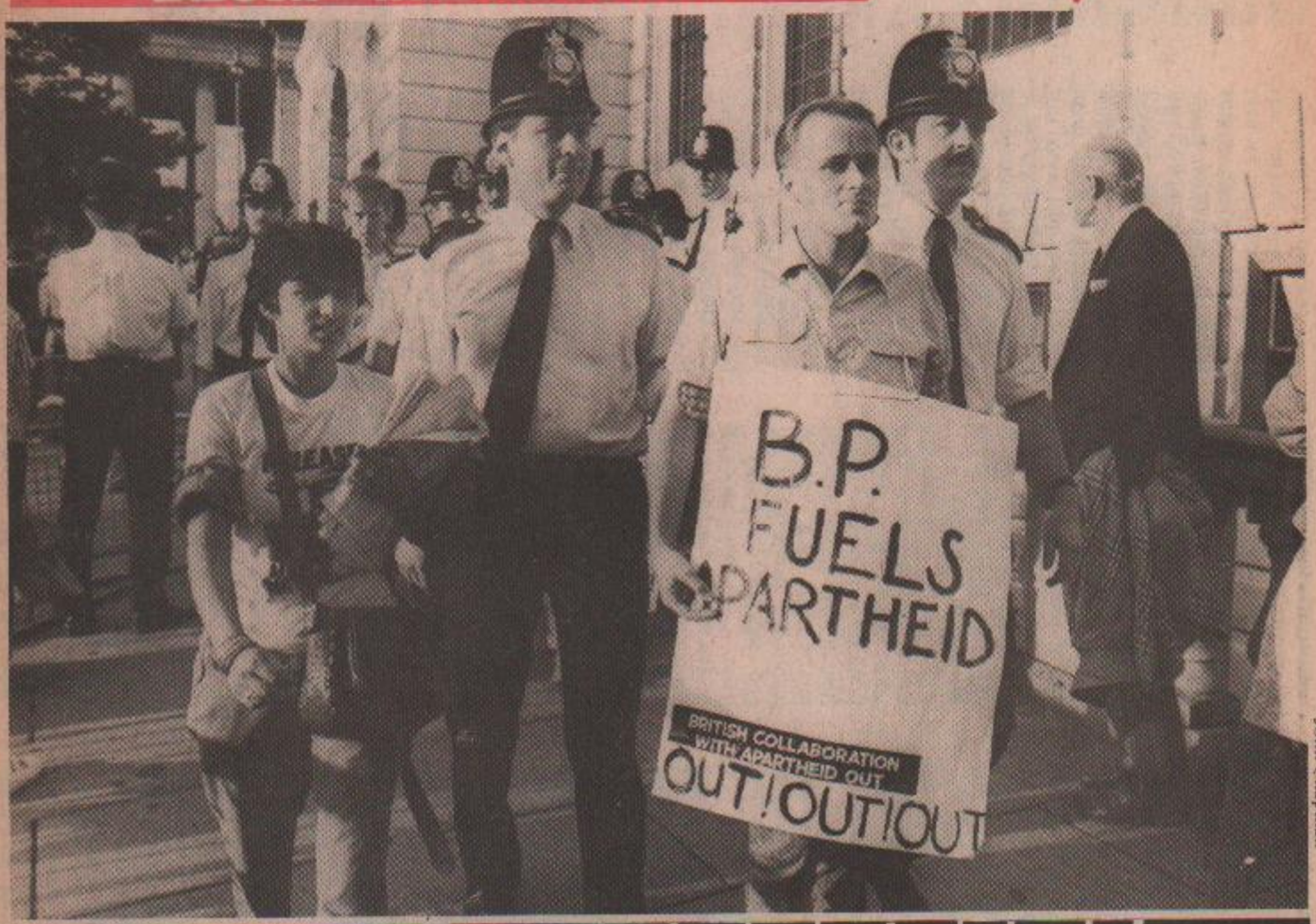
LONDON
LABOUR
BRIEFING
LABOUR — TAKE THE POWER!
Pilot issue 40p



John Chapman

SMASH APARTHEID!

Picket the embassy!

The State of Emergency in South Africa demands urgent action from us to expose Britain's collaboration with apartheid and express our solidarity with the South African people. The Non-Stop Picket which was launched by 1500 people on 19th April and is pledged to continue until Nelson Mandela is released, has become a focus for such action aimed at the symbol of apartheid – the racist embassy in Trafalgar Square. Thousands of people have already joined the picket, but it is vital that it continues to be supported and strengthened.

The Picket goes on for 24 hours every day, but on every weekday from 1-2pm and 5-7pm there is a special rally meeting on the picket. Wednesdays are specially for women, and Tuesday evenings for lesbians and gay men. Saturday afternoon is children's hour and on Sundays there is often a big rally.

- Come to the picket regularly and bring your friends, and delegations from your Labour Party, trade union, etc.
- Take leaflets, posters, petition forms.
- Collect money for the picket. Money is being sent to political activists and the families of political prisoners in South Africa, as well as being used for leaflets, etc.
- Send the picket food, messages and tokens of support.
- Sponsor the picket and invite a speaker to address your Labour Party and trade union.

SMASH APARTHEID!
SOLIDARITY WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE!

Camden looks to the future

Councillors Kate Allen, Steve Bevington, Angela Birtill, Sandra Plummer, Graham Shurety.

The article which appeared in last month's *London Labour Briefing* outlining recent developments in Camden is substantially correct. The control of the Labour Group has been hijacked by a small majority of Councillors who have formed a Centre/Right Alliance, and who have quite deliberately rejected the clear mandate of the Party in appointing themselves into all the positions of authority on the new Council.

However appalling as their behaviour has been, the reality for the Left in Camden is not as depressing as first appearances might suggest.

To begin with, the Alliance between the Centre and the Right was not put together on the basis of common policies and an agreed strategy, it was formed purely in order to prevent the Left from taking control of the Council. From the Right's point of view, it was simple ideological loathing of all things socialist, but from the Centre's perspective, the Alliance has a purely functional role — it gives them power.

Although the Right has very clear ideas about the way in which the Council should jettison the Manifesto and develop policies on the basis of co-operation with the Tory government, the Centre are less precise in their attitude to both the Manifesto and the development of policies and strategy.

Content?

It is fairly obvious that the Alliance has neither the cohesion nor the coherence to hold together in any meaningful way. It is difficult to see how the Centre can argue against a widening of the franchise in next year's elections within the Labour Group, and it is impossible to imagine the Right being content with their role as voting fodder for the leadership's legitimacy.

On a purely individual basis, Alan Woods, the chief Whip, has already stated that he will challenge Tony Dukes for the leadership next year, and Roy Shaw, a hard Right Councillor, has already begun voting with the Tories on the Employment Committee. It is unlikely that the chaos which surrounds the current leadership has either the ability or the inclination to organise itself into an effective policy-making body.

It is therefore incumbent on the Left in Camden to fill this vacuum, to develop policies and to put forward a strategy that will actually force the implementation of the Manifesto. And it is on the basis of this promise that we must organise for the future in Camden.

Widen the Franchise

The starting point of such a programme must be a widening of the franchise: the full involvement of both the Party and the wider labour movement in the development of policies and strategy. Central to this objective is the accountability of the Labour Group to the local Labour Party. This must be a prerequisite for a deeper and more formal involvement of the Party's membership.

At the moment, it is absurd to expect Party members to give up their time and to devote their energies to a detailed policy programme, if the ruling clique are then going to turn round and kick them in the teeth.

This broadening of democracy must not only include the local Parties, from branch level upwards, it must also include the Women's Section, the Black Section, and the trade union delegates to the constituency parties.

Involvement

Secondly, this wider Labour Party must be prepared to take on board other sections of the labour movement tend to involve them in every level of policy making. The community organisations, the tenants associations, the local government trade unions, and an entire cross-section of campaigning and specific issue groups, must be brought into the democratic process. Again, it is absurd to expect individuals and organisations to devote their time and energies to policy and strategy if their importance is not formally recognised.

The question of accountability is absolutely vital to the broadening of the democratic process. Camden has lagged behind other Labour parties in both London and elsewhere in developing and strengthening the accountability of Councillors to the wider Party, and this position must be rectified in the immediate future. It is cucial to the implementation of the Manifesto that a majority of Labour Group members, and an overall majority of the full Council, are prepared to accept the mandate of the Party.

Without this key element, the wider policy and decision making process will not only stagnate, it will be made irrelevant. If a majority of the Labour Group refuse to accept the discipline and the responsibility of the Party, the entire thrust of local government strategy in Camden will be completely divorced from the labour movement in the Borough.

Grounds for optimism

We believe that there are some grounds for optimism. The current leadership are undoubtedly aware that their actions have angered and alienated a broad cross-section of opinion in the Party, the hope of reaching any lasting Alliance with the Right is minimal, and if the Centre are to retain any credibility at all they must acknowledge that they are not the sole policy-making body in the Party. Indeed, unless they are prepared to accept the widening of democracy and their accountable place within that process, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to either exercise even minimal control in the Labour Group, or retain any support with the local Labour parties.

However, while it is essential that the Left continue to press for a more democratic and open forum for positions within the Council, it is also vital that we begin the business of identifying and targetting key policy areas on the basis of the Manifesto.

In consultation with all the various levels of the party and the wider movement, we must develop a coherent political strategy for implementing the manifesto. In addition to determining the most important areas for growth and consolidation, we must ensure that resources are made available to meet the increasing demands of our community.

We are aware that the Centre/Right Alliance will do everything in their power to limit growth and curtail additional expenditure. This is not based on a conscious political programme, or a particular ideology, it is merely to limit both the expectations of the community, and to control the demand for resources that is being made by those in need.

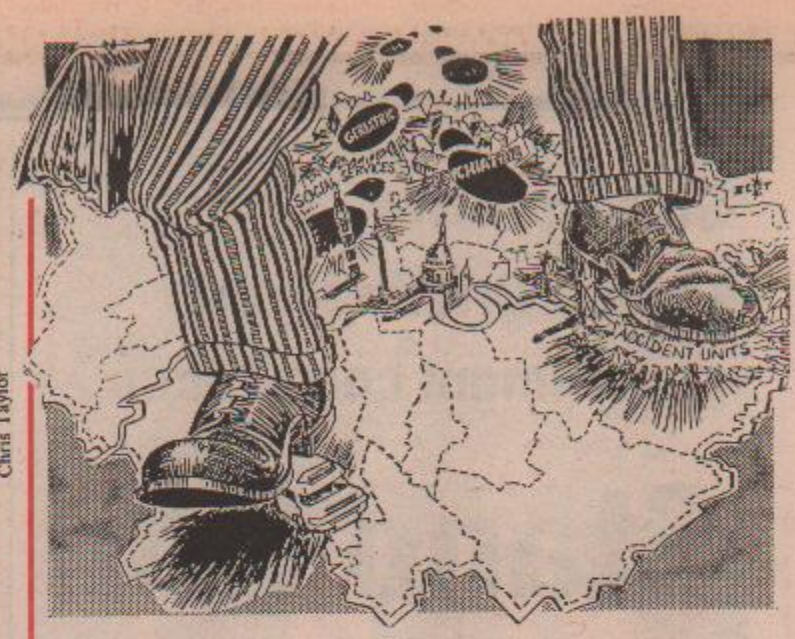
We must base our programme and our strategy on this need, identifying specific areas where more resources are needed, and putting forward firm proposals for releasing those resources. These proposals, drawn up by the entire labour movement in the Borough, must then form the basis of demands that are placed on the ruling Centre/Right Alliance.

We must ensure that the entire Manifesto is properly costed, and then targetted for implementation over the four year period of the Council. The Centre/Right are bound to advance the argument that resources must be held back until a Labour Government is in power, but this argument is entirely spurious. The resources can be made available prior to the next General Election, both by capitalisation (essentially borrowing money) and by raising cash from the sale or lease of unwanted assets. The demand for resources, and for a political programme to meet this demand, is immediate — the homeless, the overcrowded, the disabled, the elderly, women and ethnic minorities — should not be insulted by being told that Kinnock will appear on a "white" horse in two years' time, banner unfurled, declaring "Socialism is here, comrades, the rhetoric was just for Fleet Street!"

We need to act, and we need to act now. In Camden, both in terms of democracy and accountability, and in terms of meeting people's needs, we have already left it too long.



Camden against ratecapping 1985. Camden Civic Centre.



Chris Taylor

Where are our ambulances?

"WHERE are our ambulances?" has been the collective cry from thousands of patients across the capital, since the introduction on March 1 of a new management scheme for the London Ambulance Service, which brought an instant cut of 40–60% in some non-emergency services.

London Ambulance chiefs had proposed a new pay structure for ambulance crews which appeared to offer salaried status and improved basic rates: what they did not point out was that it eliminated overtime working equivalent to 233 full-time staff, and that they had no plans to make up the difference!

In order to maintain emergency services, extra staff had to be diverted from non-emergency work collecting patients for routine clinics, day hospital and other treatment. Thousands of sick, elderly and disabled patients were left stranded.

But behind this cutback lies a continual rundown of London's ambulance service over the past several years, that has denied thousands more patients their right to ambulance transport.

In 1979, restrictive new "quotas" were introduced to cut back on the numbers of non-emergency patients carried.

The result? While government ministers talk endlessly about the fact that the NHS is treating "more patients than ever before" (even in London with its falling population) the fact is that London's ambulances are carrying FEWER patients than in 1977!

Between 1977 and 1984, the annual number of non-emergency patient journeys carried out by the London Ambulance Service (LAS) fell by 330,000.

And between now and 1994, instead of increasing to meet growing demand, spending on London's ambulances is due to *fall* by 5%, leaving tens of thousands of elderly, disabled and seriously ill patients, maternity cases and even accident services without the required standard of cover.

Regional health authorities covering London were asked in March to reduce their caseload of "walking" ambulance patients by 40%. The result was chaos:

- **Handicapped children were told to use buses or taxis between their home in Croydon and their regular treatment at the Maudsley Hospital, Camberwell because they were judged "able to walk";**
- **Radiotherapy patients at Charing Cross and other hospitals missed vital out-patient appointments because their ambulances never arrived;**
- **Thousands of elderly patients waited in vain for their ambulance transport to day hospitals and outpatient treatment;**
- **Hospital general managers joined the growing public outcry at these cuts, over which they had not even been consulted, pointing to the wholesale disruption of clinics and day hospital services.**

In the face of this pressure, South West Thames regional health authority which runs the London Ambulance Service decided to cut back other spending in order to appoint an extra 100 ambulance staff: but this will still leave the LAS short-handed and lagging even further behind.

All the available figures — even those produced by SW Thames itself — show that unless more staff and resources are deployed, patients in London face growing inconvenience, expense, discomfort and misery as a result of a devastating shortfall of service compared to need.

These cutbacks in an emotive and popular sector of the NHS offer local Labour Parties and health campaigns fresh ammunition in the fight against Tory attacks.

Further details and an easy-to-read tabloid factsheet on the ambulance cuts are available free from London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1. 01-833 3020.

Anti-apartheid in Brent

Charlie van Gelderen
Brent South

BRENT'S anti-apartheid campaign reached its climax with the flying visit of the Rev. Dr. Alan Boesak on Thursday, 26th June. In an oratorical performance which reminded one of the late Martin Luther King, Alan Boesak drew a powerful word-picture of the struggle going on in South Africa today. This despite the fact that he was handicapped by the restrictions of the state of emergency.

He could not, he said, talk about people who had been detained under Botha's draconian emergency regulations, nor could he refer to 'missing persons'. He could only say that people had disappeared — leaders of the organisations of the liberation movement, trade unionists, church people, children. He spoke of children who had died under police fire or been beaten to death by the police — children who died before they could enjoy being children.

South Africa was in a state of war. This was true even if one side was armed with the most modern sophisticated weapons, and the other side had only the weapons which lay to hand — stones, bricks and so on. Mrs. Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Dr. Kohl were allied to Botha, helping to prop up the apartheid regime. He was disparaging about the proposal to send an EEC delegation to be headed by Howe to South Africa. The EPG had given all the information they needed. He was tired of outside statespeople meeting to decide the fate of South Africa, without consulting the people of SouthAfrica.

Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign
Sunday 20th July

Assemble for March Sunday July 20th
12 noon underneath Tangmere
Broadwater Farm London N17
Move off 1pm from Willan Road
Rally at Finsbury Park:
To Join the Anti-Racism Festival

March against Police Harassment

FIGHTING BACK IN '86

A London-wide forum for health unions and campaigners

Saturday July 26, 10am–2pm
Mary Ward House, 5–7 Tavistock Place, WC1
(Russell Square Tube)

Campaigns in London have been gathering strength and even notching up some small but significant victories in defence of the NHS.

- **Protests have held back savage cuts at the Maudsley**
- **Fear of public opposition has persuaded Health Ministers to postpone a decision on the closure of Westminster Hospital.**
- **Big campaigns are building up against cuts and closures in Riverside (West London Hospital); Wandsworth (St James) and Hampstad (New End and Royal Free).**
- **More Joint Shop Stewards Committees are producing their own local bulletins to inform and mobilise health workers.**
- **Norman Fowler has been forced to declare that nobody will be evicted as a result of the sale of NHS housing.**

An open forum on July 26, organised by London Health Emergency, will aim to pool information and experiences from these and other struggles and campaigns across London, and give a lead to those seeking to build campaigns in their own districts.

Campaigns, unions, Labour Parties and affiliates of LHE are invited to send representatives or observers to participate in the discussion. There is no conference fee.

For more information, contact London Health Emergency 01–833 3020.

Statement for Labour Briefing local government conference

Stand firm against Tory Diktat

On July 5th London Labour Briefing organised a conference of left wing councillors to co-ordinate the fightback across London. We print below the statement presented to the conference.

We challenge the right of this Tory government to impose its policies on democratically-elected local councils.

We recognise that the strategy of this government is to shift the balance of power and wealth even further away from working people. Mass unemployment, increased repression, ratecapping, abolition of the GLC and metropolitan counties, privatisation, cuts in services and benefits, are all part and parcel of this strategy. The Widdicombe Report signals yet a further attack on local democracy by proposing more centralised control through unacceptable restrictions on the democratic rights of local authority workers, on local councils' rights to challenge government policy and on the internal workings of the Labour Party.

We reject this strategy and will take whatever steps are necessary to defend and extend the rights of all the sections of the working class.

We call on all Labour-controlled local authorities to unite and to:

- ★ campaign with the trade union movement and their local communities to challenge and resist central government
- ★ refuse to make cuts in services
- ★ refuse to make council workers redundant
- ★ refuse to privatise any council service
- ★ refuse to increase council rents
- ★ implement policies which provide real equality of opportunity for all sections of the community by taking positive action to redress disadvantages of class, race, sex, sexuality, age or disability, and by developing meaningful anti-racist strategies, which must include full disinvestment from any companies which have dealings with South Africa.

We applaud and support those comrades in Lambeth and Liverpool who stood by Party policy and refused to make cuts in jobs or services. We deplore the actions of unelected judges and district auditors in surcharging and disqualifying elected councillors. We believe it is the duty of the whole labour movement to support these comrades.

We are fully committed to the election of a Labour government and will campaign to achieve this as soon as possible. But we believe that this will be achieved, not by watering down or discarding Labour's programme, but by mobilising all sections of the working class in support of socialist policies which serve and advance the interests of our class. We are totally opposed to the witch hunting of socialists from the Party and demand that those who have been expelled are reinstated immediately and that all charges against other comrades are dropped.

We demand that the next Labour Government implements the policies of the Labour Party Conference. In particular, we demand that:

- ★ all repressive Tory laws are repealed, especially those relating to local government, public order and the trade unions
- ★ retrospective legislation is enacted to remove all penalties and disqualifications from surcharged Labour councillors and the powers of the district auditor are repealed
- ★ democratically-elected strategic authorities are restored to London and elsewhere
- ★ a massive investment in jobs, housing, education, etc, with Labour's commitment to full employment being reinstated
- ★ the renationalisation, without compensation, of all services and industries sold off by the Tories and the nationalisation, under workers' control, of all major financial institutions and industries.



New war on local authorities

Thatcher's government is preparing for a new battle with Labour local authorities. Its objective — the total annihiliaton of radical local government as seen in London, Liverpool, Sheffield and other left-controlled cities and town halls. Its strategy will combine abolition of rates and the introduction of poll tax, privatisation of council services, disqualifying large numbers of people from political activity, increasing the power of bureaucrats, depoliticising council procedures and the establishment of urban development corporations (such as LDDC).

Narendra Makanji
Haringey councillor

The arch-monetarist, Nicholas Ridley has been installed as the environment secretary to begin a five year plan to achieve this objective. Ridley arises out of the ashes of Heseltine, King, Jenkin and Baker to promise "more legislation which will be unpalatable, contentious and difficult" in his own words. (*Local Govenrment Chronicle*, 27th June). In order to buy off Tory, Liberal and some right wing Labour authorities, there will be a temporary easing of public spending — mainly through education spending.

Close Co-operation

As with previous confrontations, Labour authorities can only survive if there is close co-operation between authorities, with the Party, the unions and the community organisations. It is important for activists and councillors to begin this debat by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of Labour's record in local government. In the run up to the general election, there will be considerable pressure on the leaders of Labour councils to keep their heads down and not to rock the boat as a means of winning that all-important general election.

The main strength of Labour in local government has been the successes achieved in all the democratic tests.

Wherever left wing policies have been pitted against Toryism in local elections, Labour has won; in the process, the Tory party has ceased to exist in many parts of London (and other cities). Labour has also increased democratic accountability by working closely with the local parties and with local community organisations. Labour town halls are always full of people coming to meetings, lobbying councillors, advising council staff, participating in campaigns and so on. Through publicity and campaigning, local people are more aware of what their councils are up to than ever before.

Labour has also opened up the way for greater participation by women, Black people, lesbians and gay men, people with disabilities and other oppressed groups. A refreshing variety of ways have been tried and the successful methods quickly transmitted to other areas — so that the wheel was not being reinvented all the time. However, the language of all these intiatives has been social democratic; for example, the arguments are for "equal opportunities", and not for ""equality". The legislation containing our activities such as the Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act, etc., were all passed during the period of social democracy in the mid seventies. Socialist councils need to review their positions and raise the stakes for socialism.

Police accountability, the health emergency and nuclear free zone campaigns are successes which must be built upon. By these efforts, there has been a massive shift in public opinion on all these issues, despite the hesitations and sellouts of Labour's front benchers such as Jack Cunningham and Gerald Kaufmann. However, the accountability of pubic services to the consumers needs to be taken further. Co-ordinated campaigns need to be mounted regarding the energy sector (Gas, and electricity suplies) and the communications industry (Post Office, Telecom, BBC radio/television and transport); local authorities should accept the role of "voice of the people" and pressurise these authorities in all these policies.

In the longer run, we should be prepared to use the financial muscle of the councils to force the changes in policies, with the aim of full public accountability to elected authorities.

The main shortcomings which need to be addresed are the deteriorating housing, increased unemployment and the rundown of the education service. Whilst government policies are at the root of all these issues, Labour authorities should come together to confront all the problems that exist in these fields. Labour must use all its financial, technological and ideological resources to ensure that new houses are built, existing houses are repaired and renovated, school buildings are upgraded, school meals service is improved, more books are provided in schools colleges and libraries, etc., etc. If Labour is to continue increasing its support, collective action will be needed so that there are no families living in bed and breakfast hotels, the schools staff is well-motivated and jobs are being created by the thousands.

Someone very famous once said "It's socialism or barbarism." The choice facing councillors is the Tory road of privatisation, centralisation and inequality or Labour's one of democracy, equality and accountability. In the battle, Labour councillors can expect no support from our Parliamentary front bench; hence the over-riding priority must be to work together with all the left wing local authorities to bring about the types of changes in society which would pave the way for victory in the general election.

Taking over in Lambeth

There is always a problem for a new Labour Administration taking over from a previous one. In the first place we want to establish our distinct identity. On the other hand we have no intention or desire to oppose decisions made by the previous Labour Group. This is the position that the new Labour Group at Lambeth are faced with. And we have a special moral and political duty to the surcharged former councillors to honour their struggles and sacrifices. Having said that it has also been important for me as a black woman to establish myself as Leader.

There are many individuals, both officers and members of the public, who have grown accustomed to dealing with white men in positions of authority and seem to be suffering from culture shock in having to deal with me. The black communities in Lambeth are also expecting, rightly, that many changes now take place as a result of there being a black leader. I hope I shall not disappoint them.

The last two months have for me been taken up with looking at the structures and systems. My conclusion at this stage is that structural changes have to be made to ensure that the needs of black people, and all previously excluded groups are met in all aspects of service delivery.

The main argument I have to confront is how we achieve our objectives, not so much what those objectives are. I have yet to find an officer, union member or Labour councillor who is opposed to equal opportunities initiatives, but that does not necessarily mean that initiatives are adopted and pursued. For my own part I believe that the only way the Council's services will be relevant to the whole community is when we have set up structures and systems that allow oppressed people to speak for themselves and when Council policies reflect the demands made upon us. The setting up of a Race Equality Unit, Lesbian and Gay Equality, Disability Unit, (we already have a Women's Rights Unit), are part of the process of change, and should not in my view be underestimated by those wishing to see significant improvements in the delivery of Council services.

Linda Bellos
Leader, Lambeth Council

London Labour Briefing **has consistently supported self-organisation of Black people in the Unions and in the community; its support for Black Sections in the Labour Party hs been unwavering. It's a stronger force than many of its opponents (and some of its supporters) realise.**

Cllr Narendra Makanji
Secretary, Labour Party Black Sections

Your letters

Wandsworth Labour meets its Waterloo

Dear *Briefing*,

In the June issue of *Briefing*, Peter Cooper and Mark Hager brought to light the fragility of low-key Labour policies in face of a determined Tory campaign in Wandsworth for the borough Council Elections. Labour did "blow it".

A unique aspect of this Tory 31-30 victory (for the third time in a row) in Wandsworth was the eve-of-poll party Political Broadcast which, on averge ratings, would have been seen by a third of the electorate.

The PPB was *entirely* devoted to turning out the Wandsworth Tory vote by a combination of "the frighteners" (comparison with superficial aspects of the Lambeth administration) and bribery (the PPB ended with actors modelling Councils handing out £10 notes to passers-by as "rate rebates").

In the event the PPB achieved its purpose. Even compared with the Falklands year election of 1982 the Tory vote went up.

The Labour vote failed to respond to our very well organised and presented flow of election literature in two crucial Tooting wards and in Putney where an overall swing of nearly 10% was inadequate. That was the real bad news becaue Putney, unlike the other two constituencies of Tooting and Battersea, does not border on other Labour Boroughs.

My own personal experience on the doorstep was that my generation, the older section of the voters which accounts for nearly one in three of the electorate, were either sceptical of the worth of our policy or else (by some inversion of thought) blamed Labour for their present plight. In particular the high-rise blocks of flats, where a very high proportion of the elderly live, gave the impression of having far deeper problems than our policies recognised.

Also, having brought up families themselves in the more difficult times of the fifties and sixties they were often totally hostile about our policies, or lack of policy, for the younger element (usually disadvantaged one-parent families) decanted into their midst by the Tory Council as a way of sweeping this social problem "under the carpet". A similar, but less aggressive, attitude was encountered on the housing estates.

This absence of recognisable "project" policies for the over-60s and the under 25s lost us a lot of votes and was characteristic of the evasion of socialist policies for key social issues which ran through our campaign. We went into the election as though we were a Party of permanent opposition and the voters kept us that way. We avoided presenting ourselves as a Party confident of the power and influence we could exercise if returned to office.

It must be recognised, though, that this inadequacy was only shown up in the election campaign because it was characteristic of much of our work as Constituency parties (and as an all-Borough confederation) for a long time *before* the election.

Returning to the detailed work of local politics after fifty years of Party membership, I was perplexed by our lack of local profile: in the ward, in the constituency, in the Borough. It took a lot of dogged persuasion to get my ward to run a campaign over Post Office closures under our own banner: it was very unpopular to be similarly obstinate that we should campaign as the Labour Party against local Health Authority cuts. There were majorities on committees and at meetings for "broad movements" instead of Socialist, Labour Party campaigns. The principle of we lead, others follow was regarded with a scepticism bordering on hostility.

The Party was either contented with Town Hall in-fighting and tactics (the deposed Labour leadership) or else dissolving itself into grand sounding, social purpose, fringe movements (often funded by GLC money) which castrated the recognisability of our own efforts but at the same time failed to produce practical results, except that of making the activists feel virtuous.

The loss of Wandsworth was a political tragedy but one that, as in any ancient Greek play, we brought upon ourselves.

Frank Brown
Branch Secretary,
Northcote Ward.



Posturites?

Dear *Briefing*,

I write in response to the gratuitous insult from your Hampstead posturites Woody Haut and Steven Taylor that Regents Park is a "right wing" ward. They confirm the general Camden rule that the further comrades live from the roots of socialism in St Pancras, the further their flights into fantasy.

These are the facts:

1. Our ward was the only one in Camden to ask a sitting councillor to resign as he was unable to give the required commitment concerning possible surcharge and disqualification over ratecapping. I do not recall seeing either of your correspondents at the subsequent by-election. Perhaps they thought the candidate too right wing?

2. Race has been a major issue in the ward. The only possession proceedings on grounds of racial harassment arose here. Proposals for a possible support network have been discussed with the Bengali Workers Action Group. We would point to the high black and ethnic turnout at the May elections.

3. Many comrades have merely talked about decentralisation in Camden. We have opened a local housing office in the ward, with proposals for a local repairs team, and local committee.

4. The ward's support for the miners, the Wapping dispute and for liberation in Southern Africa, is best demonstrated by the fact that two of our councillors have been arrested for their picketing activities.

5. In the recent leadership elections, our councillors followed the policies of the ward, GMC, and EC of the GMC. The Holborn and St Pancras GMC subsequently endorsed the decision of the majority of the Labour Group.

We echo the words of the Poplar Councillors – if we stand to be condemned by our record, we are proud of it. Woody Haut and Steven Taylor should be judged in the same way.

Comradely Greetings,

Lyn Roberts, Chair,
Regents Park Ward.

A flight of fantasy?

Dear Comrades,

The article "Camden: the abuse of power" was an extraordinary flight of fantasy from two Hampstead Labour Party members whose grip on reality appears to have deserted them.

A few simple points will give comrades some idea how unreal the article was:

1. The Regional Executive Commission of Enquiry which agreed to reinstate on the Camden panel of candidates "right-wingers" (rejected, narrowly, by the LGC) included Joan Twelves... or is she too now a "right winger" in Hampstead fantasy land?

2. The joint LGC/Group meeting of May 10 was *not* "accepted as fundamental to Party democracy by all sections of the labour movement in Camden." Neither the branches nor the affiliated Trade Unions had been consulted, and the Holborn and St Pancras EC had voted unanimously that the meeting could only be advisory in the election of the Labour Group leader. The GMC has subsequently endorsed the concerns of the Labour Group about the procedure adopted for the joint meeting.

3. The individuals dubbed "right wing" by the Hampstead authors include Councillors with proven records of radical initiatives in service delivery, comrades arrested during the miners' strike and outside the South African Embassy, comrades with years of commitment as Trade Unionists and tenants activists, and, naturally, Councillors from the most deprived parts of the borough.

4. The Campaign Committee of the CLP did not "organise a series of election meetings which excluded Left candidates from platforms and build support for their own candidates". The Campaign Committee organised press conferences with a variety of speakers and produced election addresses, intro leaflets and ward leaflets for *every* ward in the constituency.

Amilcar Cabral once told revolutionaries, "Do not confuse reality with the ideas you have in your head." Our Hampstead authors might like to take note.

Gareth Smyth
Holborn & St Pancras CLP.

A reply to Christine Shawcroft

MAYBE "Labour didn't lose" in Tower Hamlets (interview with Christine Shawcroft in LLB 61) but Christine Shawcroft seems to have lost sight of the issues in the local party and on the council.

Instead of any idea of what the new Labour Group leader proposes to make sure that Labour can take control of the council over the next couple of years, we get a poor attempt to rake over, rewrite and mythologise the recent past of Tower Hamlets Labour Party.

On the leadership election, where Christine Shawcroft narrowly defeated Susan Carlyle, Christine thinks "a lot of people voted for us on the basis of our record". Does this explain why all the old guard right wing councillors and their supporters, without exception, voted for Christine at the Party Congress, or why in some wards in Bethnal Green and Stepney, her nomination was pushed by Party members who were last seen organising to secure Peter Shore's renomination as Parliamentary candidate?

Incidentally, Susan Carlyle did vote for the Budget strategy that was adopted this year. Why does Christine want to now deny this?

On the 1985 council budget: the tactics followed by Arthur Downes, Susan Carlyle and the rest of the "accountable" Labour councillors, with the exception of Therese Shanahan and Chris Rackley, were agreed by the Local Government Committee — which is, after all, the body that decides party policy on such issues — and the LGC has not rescinded its support for those tactics.

Christine's statement that Cllrs Shanahan and Rackley were doing a "GLC 10" by voting against the Labour Party's budget during Council debates is absurd. We are told they were "fighting to hold the Councillors, *and the LGC for that matter*, to party policy". Sounds more like Neil Kinnock to me: when the body that decides Party policy on a particular issue (in this case the LGC) votes for a policy you disagree with, you refuse to be bound by that policy, and try to obstruct and overturn it. The "GLC 10" had the support of the GLLP, GLC unions and community groups for their stand; perhaps Christine can tell us which local union branches and community groups were backing the brave stand of Cllrs Rackley and Shanahan?

Will Adams
(Bethnal Green and Stepney CLP)

Hackney council:

Fighting racism

The number of Black councillors in the new council has gone up from five to eleven, the increase is not confined to numbers alone. The Annual Borough Conference elected four Black councillors to prominent positions. The first Asian woman councillor ever elected in London was elected as Chair of Community Development Committee and myself a complete newcomer became the Deputy Mayor. Two old-timers were elected as the Chair of Social Services and Race Relations Committee (when in operation).

There was no clear and unambiguous commitment in the manifesto for a Race Relations Committee, yet there is a surge of support among all socialists in the Labour Party. We the Black councillors are totally committed to the establishing of a Race Relations Committee with the active support of the Party.

BLACK SECTIONS

Now the question is why we are only eleven and not twenty-four or twenty-seven Black councillors which would have been more appropriate if the population ratio is taken into account. Therefore we suggest that the way forward for the time being is through a Black section which would mobilise, organise and above all give Black people some sort of sense of belonging to the society and socialist causes.

Nasrullah Syed
Deputy Mayor,
Hackney Labour Council

Perhaps the Labour Party in Hackney had not got the full-blown commitment to achieve the parity with the percentage of the Black population and the number of Black councillors selected. But they had the commitment to put all the Black women on the panel forward to be selected as Labour candidates. Also all Black councillors were selected in previously safe seats and all got elected. Therefore we must give credit for the actions of the Party where credit is due.

In the last four years we have come a long way in getting a foothold for Black workers in white collar jobs, especially in Housing. Those days are gone when the majority of people in the queue outside the Housing Office are Black and the people on the other side of the counter are all white. Still we have a long way to go to see that:

(a) equal opportunity policy is vigorously implemented in both the service delivery and employment terms, and all the different groups in the ethnic minority population get their fair share.

(b) racism must be confronted with all the commitment and resources available, whether the issue is racial harassment in the council estates, racial harassment by the police, racist immigration laws, fascist and racist organisations, or any other form of racism in the wider community, including institutional racism.

(c) to build up a fair and equitable multi-racial society we must have equal representation in proportions to our population in all the decision-making bodies of the country, including Hackney Council. In particular, Black women who are in the bottom of the pile must get their fair share.



I am a new councillor and consider myself very lucky to come to the council at a time when the socialist leadership has indicated total commitment to all the equal opportunities and race issues and all other issues that are dear to me. We are proud that all eleven Black councillors elected are committed to the emergence of a socialist society based on the principles of peace, jobs and racial equality.

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Strange goings-on at ILEA Labour Group



When I watch the new ILEA Labour Group members at work at County Hall I often find the strangest of thoughts passing through my head during the long hours of *ennui* between interesting items of business on their crowded agenda. Last time I thought of taking a cultured Martian in with me and testing him/her to see if he/she could guess what the Group were doing. He/she would probably work out that it was very important and that there were a great many complicated things to *manage*. But would he/she guess that it was all about education? I doubt it very much.

Keith Lichman (Delegate from London Labour Party Regional Executive to ILEA Labour Group)

Of course a sharp Martian might notice the word 'education' in the title of some of the committees that appear on the agenda and that just might give the game away. On the other hand, I have been to four or five of the meetings since the election and I have barely heard education mentioned at all. Naturally one wouldn't expect it of the former members of the old authority. They chewed the issues over a long time ago and know all the answers — or at least know all the answers that are *possible* or *feasible* or *achievable within the present constraints*. But shouldn't there be a few starry-eyed idealists among the new crowd? A few headbangers with bees in their bonnets and a determination to make London education different and better?

Last time I was privileged to witness the Labour Group being lobbied by a joint deputation from all of the major ILEA unions, NUPE, NUT, NAS/UWT and NATFHE. They had heard that the current ILEA budget was adrift by £40 million and they had come to ask the members not to make cuts. When I stumbled on the Trades Union deputation, on my way to the loo, they had been waiting for an hour and a half. Many of their number had given up hope of being seen at all and had left for other meetings. Those remaining were concerned that they had been forgotten. Such little faith. Within fifteen minutes, they were invited in, told to put their case in five minutes, allowed to respond to questions for five minutes and then they were asked to leave. They could have had no more eloquent statement of their employers' concern for them.

When, two hours later, the budget was discussed (another ten-minute job) a polite reference was made to the unions who were then promptly forgotten. I am on my honour not to reveal exactly what was said in case the cat gets out of the bag along with the hot air but Steve Bundred, the Chair of Finance, said that capitalisation of revenue items was bad but better than anything else he could think of at the time except a Labour Government. That said, they all voted for it.

That wasn't all that happened at the Group meeting. They also revised the composition of governing bodies of schools to increase ethnic minority and parental representation. When someone asked whether they would also increase teacher representation, Barry Stead, Chair of Schools Subcommittee, replied that he would not do so unless they asked! Let's hope nobody tells them Barry. If only the authority could get on with its proper business without interference from teachers. Then we might really get something done.

Marylebone: not the end of the line?

Tessa van Gelderen (Marylebone NUR and Brent South CLP)

BRITISH Rail has withdrawn the closure notice relating to Marylebone station and depot, four other stations and the lines between Marylebone and Northolt and Harrow. The BRB has been forced to do this because London Regional Transport could not cope with the extra volume of traffic closure would entail.

The statement from British Rail announcing the change of plan made it clear that it was not a change of heart. Over the last decade, very little investment has been put into the area: stock is falling apart, the track and signalling need updating (Marylebone is the only London terminal to have semaphore signalling) and conditions for passengers and workforce are disgraceful. Do BR now plan to change this? Hardly. The Board issued a statement stressing that 'rationalisations' of the stations and lines affected were under discussion. They have a number of options: reduce the number of platforms, close the depot and run the High Wycombe service into Paddington; make the service a rush-hour service only (like Fenchurch St.) and so on. In a nutshell, BR and the government still want to see the run down of the railways, yet more jobs lost and the profitable bits privatised.

So the news at present is good news. The unions, the work-force and the passengers have a breathing space and some repairs have been forced on BR with their Network South East cosmetic exercise. At least the roof won't leak quite so much. But unless the unions take up the offensive now and argue for more investment in the line, the passengers will be only too happy to see it closed. Who wants old, uncomfortable trains that fail, and unlit, unheated stations to wait for the train that might not come? We should not be satisfied with fighting simply to *save* jobs, although that is our first priority. We want an industry that provides an excellent service to its users and which *creates* jobs.

