LONDON LABOUR
BRIEFING
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LAMBETH: TORY RATEPAYERS' ARMY PROMPTS
PANIC RETREAT !

What is a "major breakthrough" to Lambeth Tories' "ratepayers" groups, and is also approved by three out of four Lambeth Labour Party General Management Committees? Answer: a package of cuts in council services agreed by Lambeth Labour Group on March 9th. So how did Lambeth – once in the front line against Heseltine – take such a sudden backward step?

The answer is contained in two words: supplementary rate. Many on the left of the party seemed genuinely surprised that the Tories were able to organize opposition to a rate increase equivalent to around 70 per cent on a weekly basis, at a time when no other council was putting up rates! Ratepayers' rallies and posters saying "NO" in shop windows caused some party activists to press the panic button.

When the party discussed the budget, members were offered the option of no rate increase and therefore bankruptcy. This was rejected as handing over to the Tories when alternatives were available. Ted Knight offered a proposal for around 10 per cent – ie. £11 million – cuts. This was based on papers drawn up by committee chairs, papers commissioned by the Labour Group to "show what the effects of cuts would be on services". The exercise had been blacked by NALGO, and the union's position has been vindicated: the papers became the basis for wielding the axe. It should be pointed out that amongst the £11 million savings were many which would have been made anyway, but the most generous estimate of those would be about £4 million.

The right wing of the party were delighted with these proposals. "But if only we'd done this earlier it would be less painful now" they chorused. The council leadership was refreshed by support from parts which previous policies could not reach. A new spirit of unity prevailed. If it continues it will become the unity of the grave, with Labour councillors as the undertakers for Lambeth services. Will Labour supporters remember Lambeth Council under Ted Knight as the one which raised rates by 37 per cent rather than 47 per cent? Or will they see it as one which – like so many others – allowed services to deteriorate while rates were *still* high? Do we distinguish ourselves simply by the fact that we destroy services bit by bit, instead of all at once, as the Tories would?

The left must fight on for a policy of maintaining budgets, raising rates accordingly for as long as we are allowed. If financial penalties are increased, or new laws passed, different policies may be needed. But until then there is no room for retreat. There will be no point in taking over the GLC if we then run away from the rate increases necessary to implement our programme.

Paul Moore (Lambeth Councillor)

LAMBETH CUTS – Examples
- **Council-owned industrial sites to be sold.**
- **Cuts in grants to voluntary organisations.**
- **Vacant jobs to be left unfilled.**
- **Cuts in library service, open air swimming pools, parks equipment, seasonal playschemes.**
- **Reduction in maintenance of council buildings.**
- **Cuts in control of environment.**
- **Cuts in street-cleaning.**
- **Unspecified cuts in "running costs" of social services.**
- **Cuts in housing maintenance.**
- **£2 rent increases in April, £2 in October.**

Briefing Editorial Statement

Lambeth Council's fight against the cuts has been an inspiration to London socialists since *Briefing* was established eighteen months ago. It is the staunchness of Lambeth's stand in the past which makes the present retreat so painful and indeed unacceptable.

Lambeth Council is implementing cuts. Retreats may be forced on us to the extent that we lack power to resist, but to assume responsibility without power – and to become the instruments of Tory attacks on the working class – is to retreat in a dangerous way, confusing and disillusioning our supporters when we need their strength most.

Briefing, however, does not place the prime responsibility for this betrayal upon the leadership of Lambeth Council. The betrayal – and betrayal there has certainly been – stems primarily from different quarters.
been left to fight alone, and the responsibility for this rests (a) on the shoulders of the leadership of the Labour Party and the leaderships of Labour Councils both nationally and in London who (with few exceptions) have failed to mount any serious resistance to the cuts and (b) on all those of us on the left who have talked much about "resistance" but done precious little to put ourselves in the firing line by replacing our own right-wing councillors and standing for council ourselves.

Labour—Take the Power!

THE VITAL MARGINALS IN THE GLC ELECTION

The list below is the Regional Executives identified key marginals which we have to win in order to control the GLC. Comrades in safe Labour or Tory seats should make an effort to put in some work in their nearest marginal seat. Out of 92 seats, Labour has to win 47 for a simple majority of 2.

We do not yet have a full list of those seats where the Social Democratic Alliance (led by George Brown) intend to stand in an attempt to defeat left-wing candidates. Comrades also need to work in those seats in order to ensure that we convincingly crush the new centre party in its first electoral adventure:

No. of Lab. Seats	CONSTITUENCY	May 1979 % lead	CANDIDATE	AGENT	ADDRESS TO CONTACT	PHONE No.
41	BATTERSEA SOUTH	+1.1	VALERIE WISE	Ms.A.Creighton	177 Lavender Hill, SW11	223-5306
42	DULWICH	+0.3	LESLEY HAMMOND	T.Ritchie	95 Grove Vale, SE22	693-1826
43	PADDINGTON	–0.3	KEN LIVINGSTONE	V.Carpenter	39 Chippenham Road, W9	286-9692
44	HORNCHURCH	–1.6	ALAN R. WILLIAMS	H.Rivers	Edwin Lambert Hall, 11 Park Lane, Romford.	70-42674
45	EALING NORTH	–2.4	GARETH DANIEL	J.R.Searle	462 Greenford Road, Greenford Middlesex.	578-5668
46	FULHAM	–3.5	BARRY STEAD	Mrs.J.McMahon	861 Fulham Road, SW6.	736 3045
47	ILFORD SOUTH	–4.1	ED GOUGE	R.Clark	Central Labour Hall, 298/300 High Road, Ilford Essex	478-1639
48	PUTNEY	–5.3	ANDY HARRIS	Ms.J.Chegwidden	35 Felsham Road, SW15	788-8961
49	WOOLWICH WEST	–5.8	NEIL DAVIES	B.Goldbart	132 Westmount Road, SE9	850-4014
50	ENFIELD NORTH	–6.7	TONY McBREARTY	The Agent	3 River Front, Enfield.	363-0280
51	HAMPSTEAD	–8.5	ANNA BOWMAN	Ms.S.Wynn	37a Broadhurst Gdns, NW6.	328-9439
52	BRENTFORD/ISLEWORTH	–9.0	ROY GREGORY	G.Duncan	367 Chiswick High Rd, W4.	995-7289
53	CROYDON N.W.	–9.3	MARY WALKER	S.Boden	47 Eversley Road, SE19.	653-2365
54	HORNSEY	–9.9	TONY HART	J.Corbyn	28 Middle Lane, N8.	340-7362
55	HARROW CENTRAL	–13.3	ALF ELDERTON	C.Harrison	2 Marlborough Hill, Wealdstone.	427-3963
56	ILFORD NORTH	–14.0	MIKE KILLINGWORTH	G.Lane	41 Rawlinson Point, Fox Road, Canning Town, E16.	474-6735

LAMBETH CENTRAL RATES DEBATE

Lambeth Central CLP called a special GMC on Thursday 5th March to discuss Ted Knight's new rates strategy. The proposed package involves up to 10% reductions in the 1981/2 council programme with something in the region of 37½% increase in rates.

Reg Green (GMC Delegate, Lambeth Central.)

The debate polarised around two major motions – broad support for Ted Knight's strategy and the motion moved by Angell ward and supported by Larkhill ward. This motion urged no more attacks on local residents (no rates increases; no cuts in services; no sale of council houses) and no attacks on workers or the unemployed (no cuts in jobs; no recruitment drag; no run-down of direct labour).

Speakers tended to address themselves to the Angell motion and there was much to-ing and fro-ing with regard to the political wisdom of such a confrontation strategy given the local reaction to the recent supplementary rates levy.

Supporters of the Angell motion pointed out that sympathy for Ted Knight's strategy would be represented by the media as a substantial retreat by Lambeth Council and that this would have a devastating effect on the morale and credibility of the council. It was also pointed out that no matter what strategy Lambeth Council adopted there was going to be substantial opposition and that the approach which should be most welcomed by socialists was that of no cuts, no rates increases. The mover of the Angell motion, Ian Wilson, drew attention to the fact that Lambeth has provided a national focus for local government struggle against the Tory government. He reiterated the point that any cuts in services would be seen as a massive climb-down on the part of Lambeth council.

Speakers against the no cuts, no rates increase position were particularly concerned to point out that Tory mobilisation over the recent supplementary rates levy had been greater than many delegates were prepared to admit and that the confrontation which would result from a no cuts, no rates increase strategy would expose Lambeth Council at a time when support for the council was at a particularly low ebb.

The mover of the Angell motion accepted that such a strategy carried high risks but pointed out that the risks were no less high in adopting a strategy involving a 37½% increase in rates accompanied by a 10% reduction in services. The Angell motion was defeated when put to the vote and the motion which was carried came from Clapham Town ward and read as follows:

'This branch supports a rates strategy of involving up to 10% reductions in the 1981/2 council programme provided that there are no sackings and there is some recruitment to cover sackings where redeployment cannot be negotiated, and no rent increases beyond those proposed in the Leader's paper, in the belief that such a policy can result in a rate increase of around 37½%.

London Labour Conference 1981

On March 7th and 8th there took place at Camden Town Hall the last AGM of the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party – we are now re-named "the Greater London Labour Party".

It was a low-key affair. The manifesto for the elections, after all, had already been agreed by Conference last October. From the chair, Arthur Latham pointed to the coming GLC elections as a crucial test of our support in the political climate generated by the defections of the Social Democrats and their press backers, and to some extent this prospect softened the edges of internal conflict during the Conference.

One important decision was a crucial rule-change, which not only binds GLC candidates to the Manifesto but makes it clear that policy developments agreed by annual meetings will be binding during the GLC's term of office. Similar ground was covered by the two separate debates on local government finances and on the Tory cuts. The developing threat posed by the figure of the District Auditor was discussed, and we passed an emergency resolution from the EC calling on a future Labour Government to relieve Labour councillors of any financial or democratic penalties imposed by a District Auditor.

Frank Hansen (Brent East) highlighted the problems of a council in Lambeth's position. "Everyone's got a lot to say about what Lambeth should do", he declared, "but we'd be better served doing less talking and more to actually replace right-wing councillors and change the nature of our own Labour councils, so that Lambeth doesn't remain the sole focus of resistance." Ted Knight's reply on behalf of the EC was effective, but he could have used it better if he'd been allowed to reply to the Tory Cuts debate which followed in the afternoon.

The cuts debate itself was poorly balanced. Eddie McParland from Greenwich, Anne Beales of the LPYS and delegates from Southgate, Deptford, the NGA, Enfield North and Hayes and Harlington all articulated the "no cuts, no rent rises, no rate rises" formula. These were interspersed not with comrades who could effectively counter them from the left (those of us interested in resisting cuts *in practice* as opposed to propaganda), but with speakers like the Leader of Tower Hamlets, who totally lacked credibility. A frustrated Ted Knight sat on the platform above the succession of speakers urging "go out and campaign", "we must explain to the people" etc. etc. His reply could have brought Conference to a sense of the realities – but he had had his say earlier in the day.

Saturday was completed by the Employment debate, in which the two major contributions were those of Sam Brown (Deptford) and Michael Ward for the EC (who was forced to reply, in effect, to four debates in one, and was given just five minutes to do so).

The results of the Executive elections, announced at 5pm, produced few surprises. Ben Birnbaum (Tower Hamlets) was replaced by Alan Hughes (Ilford South), and the election of comrades Barker and Black from the TU section were seen as a gain for the left.

Sunday began with the debate on transport, and it was significant that opposition to free fares received but a handful of votes. Ken Livingstone's reply for the EC pointed to the threat posed by the District Auditor to the proposed 25 per cent fares cut. "We will put our policy to the electorate on May 7th, and we will use that mandate to call the District Auditor's bluff", he said. "If he wants to prevent the implementation of our policy – and we are determined to implement the manifesto in full – then he'd best start canvassing for the Tories now."

On Party democracy, there were no speakers forthcoming who were prepared to speak against the democratisation of the PLP, or against the motion opposing reintroduction of the three-year-rule. The LPYS emergency resolution on the Social Democrats contained provision for all candidates to sign a pledge that they supported the party manifesto, with provision for the removal and non-endorsement of those who refused. Tony Banks replied for the EC, giving Michael Foot (who sat further along the platform) a few home truths about party democracy and the role of the PLP. "If you, Michael, are so keen on party unity, why did you invite MPs to work to change the decision at the end of the Wembley Conference?"

The debate on racialism was strong and emotive, with the New Cross fire as a terrible backcloth. Merle Amory spoke of her selection as Britain's first-ever black woman councillor. She firmly confronted the party with the problem of uprooting the hidden racialism and unconscious as well as conscious racialists in the labour movement's own ranks. Diane Abbott (Paddington) spoke about the twenty-five years of betrayal by the labour movement of blacks. "This is a pious resolution", she declared, "when are you going to face up to the racialism in your own unions and in your own local authorities – when are you going to confront this?"

Michael Foot finished the morning's session, making a speech for twenty minutes and saying nothing. He failed to give any specific pledge to back Labour councillors against the District Auditor. And replying to Tony Banks, all he could say was that Labour Party Conferences were not infallible!

Andy Harris
(Greater London Labour Party EC)

Labour *Must* End Tory Rule!

The Labour Party manifesto for the GLC election is a very clear document. Clear in its commitments, and clear in its aims for a total change in the GLC after the elections on May 8th.

There is no doubt that the inheritance a Labour GLC will face is a horrendous one; no housing programme, a run down and totally demoralised workforce, transport chaos and planning policies that would do credit to a laissez-faire tax haven.

In this context the work already put in by Labour candidates and EC members in preparing action papers on each area of GLC policy for implementation from May 8th onwards is to be welcomed. Too often Labour councils and Labour governments have gained office but lacked the political resolve to fight their policies past the bureaucracy, and lacked the political resolve to fight beyond the confines of council chambers or Parliamentary debate.

A Labour GLC will be elected having had the opportunity to learn all these lessons and with the clearest possible mandate on its programme for making the GLC work in the interests of working people.

Labour Party members and Labour supporters need to be convinced that the leadership will be determined to rid the GLC of Tory policies straight away. This means totally rejecting the Cutler budget and the accompanying manpower budget. Both these documents envisage continuing cuts and redundancies amongst GLC employees.

So far the present GLC Labour Group has failed to give a clear undertaking that there will be a total change after May 7th, or given the undertaking sought by GLC unions that redundant workers will be offered employment by the Labour administration.

It is essential that these guarantees be given by the Labour Group to ensure the support of the members of all GLC Trade Unions.

Jeremy Corbyn

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LONDON LABOUR AND NUCLEAR WAR

In the last issue of *London Briefing* Eleanor Lewin wrote "In this GLC election campaign, London Labour has an opportunity to alert London voters to the meaning of nuclear war". This election campaign, she went on: "is coinciding with a tremendous groundswell of feeling of horror for the implications of nuclear war".

That is true, and if we fail to respond to the rising tide of public fear and revulsion at the prospect of a nuclear holocaust our plans for a better life for London will appear weird and irrelevant. Our manifesto should have recognised that a Labour GLC with its strategic responsibility for the welfare of seven million Londoners will have to speak out with all its authority against the bland acceptance of total oblivion for our city which is part and parcel of the Government's plans for participating in a nuclear war. The nearest we came to saying anything about this at all was the brief sentence on page 82 "Labour will terminate the present wasteful expenditure on so-called home defence". And the GLC Labour Group in December tabled an excellent statement expressing the fraudulent deceit of the Government's home defence plans and demonstrating that the only conceivable defence is to abolish the network of nuclear rocket bases, nuclear weapon stores, hidden headquarters, communications which infest our country – and of course to say no to the new infestation of Cruise Missiles, under Reagan's control, which will begin to spread across our land in two or three years' time.



Here are some positive measures which should have been in our manifesto. They should be elaborated in every candidate's campaign:

- carry the message of the December statement into every home;
- follow the lead of Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire and – to date – 42 other councils in telling the people the truth about nuclear war. Campaign for the removal of nuclear targets from a hundred miles round London. Demand that no nuclear-laden aircraft overfly London.
- arrange to show "The War Game" repeatedly throughout London, offer free halls for public discussion of the nuclear threat;
- refuse to take part in future nuclear exercises but insist on full publication of the results of the recent "Square Leg" exercise.
- affiliate to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the World Disarmament Campaign;
- prepare to send a delegation to the UN Special Session on Disarmament in 1982.

Labour's London Executive should include these points in a supplementary manifesto.

Tony Hart

What London Labour Can Do To Campaign Against Nuclear War

Hackney Borough Council has joined Lewisham Council in the vigour of its response to the threat of nuclear war. Lewisham enterprisingly referred back Home Office circulars on "civil defence", and decided to have a week of public showing of "The War Game" instead.

Hackney has given the following undertakings to the local branch of the CND:

1 To give free showings of "The War Game" throughout the borough;

2 To allow CND to stage exhibitions in libraries;

3 To publish a special issue of the council newspaper devoted to peace and disarmament;

4 To provide a venue – free of charge – for a spring CND festival in Hackney;

5 To grant a free market stall licence to the local group for its Saturday morning literature sales;

6 To put up CND posters on council notice boards;

7 To bring pressure on the education authorities to allow Hackney CND access to schools to make contact with teachers and older students as well as staging lectures, film showings and discussions on the nuclear issue.

This is a very fine example, and it should be followed by every Labour borough in London, as a matter of the utmost urgency, in order to influence voters in the GLC elections.

Even in safe seats it is important to have a good turnout of voters and large defeats of Tories.

In marginal seats in Labour boroughs, such as Hornsey, in the borough of Haringey, rapid action on these lines could have a very important effect.

Tory Boroughs

In Tory held boroughs, such as Wandsworth, which includes the marginal seat of Putney, the Labour groups should vigorously press for all these kinds of assistance for CND, at the same time quoting from the excellent GLC Labour Group's report "Can the Population of London be Saved in a Nuclear War?" (This report can be obtained from the Labour Group's office at County Hall, phone 01-633 3432.) Even in boroughs where there is not much prospect of Labour victories, such as Barnet, Labour councillors and CLPs should raise these issues. By doing this they will present a clear alternative course of action in relation to the threat of nuclear war which it will be clear the borough council *could* follow *if it wanted to*. This would help to win support from voters, especially younger ones, and from women (in the general election these were two of the groups where Labour lost votes). They will also help to build up the widespread anti-nuclear campaign which can not only improve Labour's election results, but also, as we all know, improve the chances of the survival of the human race.

ELEANOR LEWIN
Finchley CLP

80,000 March In Glasgow Demo



After Conference Victories on Party Democracy . . .

NOW MAKE ACCOUNTABILITY WORK!

Once upon a time the word 're-select' meant to choose again, with the comfortable implication that you chose the same sort of thing next time round.

Like choosing another cherry from a bowl.

But that was certainly before 1972, when the Campaign for LP Democracy was formed.

And life is no longer a bowl of cherries for those Labour Members of Parliament who still savour the flavour of the words of an earlier Member for Bristol: "I cannot indeed take it upon me to say I have the honour to follow the sense of the people. The truth is, I met it on the way, while I was pursuing their interest according to my own ideas" (Edmund Burke, Conservative MP for Bristol, in 1870).

How the fight was born to make Labour MPs accountable not to their "own ideas" but to ordinary members of the Labour Party is charted in Chris Mullin's valuable pamphlet, *How to Select or Reselect Your MP* (50p, CLPD and Institute for Workers' Control).

Party Policy

As Chris clearly illustrates, this fight has been no "arid constitutional debate" but a struggle to ensure that the betrayal of Party policy that has happened time and again from 1964 onwards whenever Labour has been in government shall not happen again. The definition which he offers of the role of Labour MPs is crucial:

> *"Labour MPs have no rights more or less than the ordinary card-carrying Party member. They are simply the Party members to whom has fallen the honour of giving practical expression to the ideals of the Labour movement."*

The 21-page pamphlet contains, however, a great deal more than an analysis of how the need for accountability became so widely apparent in the Party.

The mechanics of the selection process are described, and useful points are made on some pitfalls and the reasons for apparently trivial minor provisions.

The pamphlet's "scoop" is the publication for the first time of the "complete unexpurgated" guidelines for Parliamentary selections, issued on the authority of the National Executive Committee, which, for some inexplicable reason, have not hitherto been made widely available to Party members, but have remained the preserve, largely, of full-time Party officers. This has meant that responsibility for interpretation of the guidelines has usually rested with these officers.

Shortlist of One

One significant change has occurred in the mechanics of selection/reselection since the pamphlet went to press in January this year. At the following month's NEC meeting the protracted argument about the acceptability of a 'shortlist of one' concluded with a decision that a General Committee, on receiving its Executive Committee's recommendations for shortlisting, could decide, if it wished, to have a shortlist of one.

In a situation where the existing MP is one of the nominees, this means of course that he/she would be reselected without opposition. The Mikardo compromise under another guise? Certainly one hopes this provision will not prove to be a foothold for reaction to re-establish itself.

How does a Party make sure, before or after reselection, that its MP is showing, by his/her actions, that he/she IS being responsive to the Party's views?

I would take issue with Chris Mullin on one point in this respect – his suggestion that "special management meetings" should be one of the means by which constituencies develop a truly accountable relationship with their MPs. Chris proposes these as a solution in situations where a constituency party has had insufficient time to establish a view on an issue and communicate it to the MP in advance of its coming up in the House of Commons.

He says: "Where time does not allow a leisurely consideration of the issues, constituencies should be prepared to hold special management committee meetings (at which any party member may attend and speak but not vote)."

Branch Democracy

It seems to me that we should resist the temptation to move in the direction of mass meetings of party members as a substitute for our present democratic system of decision-making through branch discussion and voting (where the individual member has a real chance of making his/her views felt) and the subsequent feed-in of this grass-roots democracy, via the branch delegates (who may or may not be mandated by the branch on particular issues) to the ordinary meetings of the constituency GC.

The question of what to do when time is too short for this full process to take place is a false hare. Almost any meeting of a GC experiences situations in which branch delegates have to take decisions based on their broad understanding of their branch's views rather than on specific branch decisions. For instance, fellow branches are unable to consider their views on each other's motions if those motions were passed at a branch meeting immediately prior to the GC at which the motion comes up. Amendments and emergency motions also come into this category.

In what other ways can accountability between Party and MP be made REALLY to work? Two essentials are insisted on – INFORMATION (Hansard tells you what your MP has been saying and how he/she has been voting in Parliament) and REPORT-BACKS (preferably a written report by the MP, available at or before GC, with the MP present to answer questions).

MP's Voting Record

Knowing an MP's record is vital – in fact it's worth 50p on its own for the list of ten crucial issues on the last page of the pamphlet, with dates on which they were debated and appear in Hansard.

Which way did YOUR MP vote in 1976 on the Labour government's economic policies following the IMF loan; in 1977 on the Agee and Hosenball case; in 1980 on the Continuation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act?

Some of these action checklists and democratic techniques have been in use a long time in "good" parties with "good" MPs. But in others they represent a whole new strange world against which the forces of reaction and self-interest will muster.

The tide of accountability, hitherto a fitful, occasional wavelet in many parties, now has the chance to flow strongly. *How to Select or Reselect Your MP* tells how.

Pauline Ashbridge
Hornsey Labour Party

***How to Select or Reselect Your MP* by Chris Mullin, pub. Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Institute for Workers' Control, 50p. Available from CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW11.**

Stand by Wembley

It seems that there has been some complacency and dragging of feet following the victory at Wembley. It is almost as if the left are so used to losing, that when they win they are bemused and don't know what to make of it.

This is a crucial political error. Our opponents are now mobilising as never before. Whole pages in *Labour Weekly* and *Tribune* have been taken up by adverts. Many trade union leaders are rallying behind Healey and Hattersley. And only 24 Labour MPs voted at the PLP in favour of the Wembley resolution. Only if we launch a campaign to counter these attacks and defend Wembley can we expect to retain the important democratic gains that have been made.

If our opponents succeed in overthrowing the Wembley resolution, this will be only the start of their counter-offensive. They will then turn their attention to reselection and to the other reforms. And the campaigns on PLP democracy and local government democracy will be pushed aside.

Balanced Expression

So the defence of Wembley is absolutely crucial. Comrades must argue its merits, explaining how it gives a balanced expression to all sections of the Party. We must insist it is given a fair trial. The College gives 61% of the vote to the Party's political wing and was carried at Wembley by over 5 million votes to less than 2 million. Some comrades are still arguing for a change to 1/3:1/3:1/3 on the grounds that this is far superior to the Wembley proportions. It must be patiently explained to these comrades that logically there is very little difference between 30:30:40 and 33 1/3: 33 1/3:33 1/3, and that what they are doing is opening the door to our opponents.

To defend Wembley requires three actions in particular:

1 A resolution from your CLP to the NEC calling for the machinery to be put into motion to set up the electoral college;

2 A resolution from your trade union branch to your trade union Executive Committee calling for the Wembley decision to be given a fair trial;

3 A resolution from your CLP to Annual Conference demanding that the Wembley decision be given a fair trial.

Pete Willsman
(Assistant Secretary CLPD)
(in personal capacity)

ISLINGTON BRIEFING

GLC Selection
A Huge Step Forward

The political battle which has been waged in Islington North since 1969, and which has witnessed violence and corruption being used to maintain right wing supremacy in the past, has taken on a new intensity recently as the left stands close to winning outright control for the first time.

Already the left has captured the huge St. George's Branch where the right abstained in the face of a turnout of 138 left members at the Branch AGM; and Hillmarton Branch has also fallen to the left for the first time, thereby removing the Party Secretary and the Leader of the Council from the GC. With the left retaining its comfortable majorities in Hillrise and Highview Branches, and with a split result in Junction Branch, the majority of the seven Ward Branches are now firmly in left control.

Only in Sussex Branch, where despite an AGM turnout of 59 left members, the right scraped a disputed win at the second attempt, and in Tollington Branch where 38 left members were defeated by ten votes at the AGM, do the right retain real influence. However, they are staging a fightback in Hillmarton where a "no confidence" motion has been tabled to remove from office everyone elected at the AGM, even though GC delegates do not take up office until March.

Co-op Suspended

Meanwhile the battle has switched to the Women's Section, where the left won the AGM but looks like having to fight it out again at a reconvened meeting; and to the Co-op which has been suspended by the London Co-op Political Committee following vote fiddling at the AGM and the exclusion of 21 people who applied for Co-op Party membership last July, as the right tries desperately to retain power regardless of the tactics it has to use.

Of a total of 650 members attending this year's Branch AGMs, 425 supported the left ticket for GC candidates, and attempts are now being made by the right therefore to have the Party closed down and to prevent the Constituency AGM from taking place in order to stop the left from assuming office. To this end the usual disruptive tactics are being deployed and they may yet succeed unless the Regional Executive and the NEC are vigilant.

But if Southgate and his Council cronies responsible for the recent savage cuts, huge rent rises, and other departures from Manifesto, Regional Executive and Conference policy, are now on the run, few things have done more to send them into retreat than the crucial victory gained by the left in my selection as the candidate for the GLC Election in Islington North. After a partial success in 1979, the left suffered defeat at Branch and Constituency AGMs in 1980 and the safe GLC seat, currently held by Louis Bondy who is retiring on grounds of age, seemed set to fall into the hands of right wing political thug Jim Evans, the current Mayor of Islington and one of those whose support of Council house sales provoked the present breach between the LGC and the Labour Group. But the struggle for the selection has been a continuing saga ever since.

First of all, the left secured an impressive number of nominations for myself and another veteran of struggles within the North Islington Labour Party, Keith Veness. Then the right used its majority on the EC to ignore these nominations and produce a shortlist containing some names which had received no nominations at all and which did not include anyone who had received as many nominations as me or Keith Veness, both of whom were of course excluded. A narrow vote in contested circumstances saw this shortlist adopted by the GC but when those named on it came before the GC for selection at a later meeting, the left found itself in a majority and threw out the whole lot by defeating the motion to ballot.

The selection process then began again and by this time the antics of the right on the Council had already strengthened the left throughout the whole Party. I was nominated in every Ward and the EC could find no excuse to repeat its previous manoeuvre. It therefore put forward a shortlist which included me, three right wingers, and Ellis Hillman (whose real political allegiance has been the subject of much speculation in earlier issues of *Briefing*). At the next GC the left was once again in a majority but resisted the temptation to go for the kill and instead removed the names of just those two right wingers (including Evans) whose incoherent speeches had bored everybody at the first selection meeting and contributed to their rejection by the GC on that occasion.

Full Flight

By now the right was in full flight, and confident that a selection meeting in the Constituency would be certain to choose me as the candidate, Southgate and Co. had begun frantically searching for ways to stop the meeting from going ahead. They found one with an obscure challenge to the eligibility of two delegates from the Islington Fabian Society (which has always been in left control), which prompted further challenges to trade union delegates and enabled Bill Jones, the Regional Official who is sent along on such occasions to referee, to abandon the selection meeting before any of the candidates had been heard.

Naturally reluctant to intervene in a decision which all would agree should be left to the CLP, the Regional Executive offered the GC a last chance to go ahead with the selection, but this was rejected out of hand by the right who enthusiastically handed the decision over to the Regional Executive in the hope that anyone but me might emerge from the darker recesses of Walworth Road.

Their confidence was short-lived. Despite inital wavering, the Executive decided to respect the wishes of the majority of North Islington Party members, and I was selected with 27 votes against a combined total of 11 for other candidates. The reaction of the right was predictable. Amidst talk of standing alternative

STOP PRESS
Athough several delegations remained in dispute, a stormy AGM took place as planned in Islington North on 11 March, and narrowly elected left tenants' activist Maureen Leigh as Party Chairperson. This post has never been won by the left before, but further victories were prevented by right wing vote-rigging which stopped subsequent ballots going ahead. A reconvened AGM will now be held soon.

candidates, and covert attempts to starve the campaign of funds, successive GC meetings have seen efforts led by Evans and Southgate to reject the Regional Executive decision. But following a visit to the GC from Regional Chairman Arthur Latham, the right is still wondering what hit it as it contemplates one of the biggest defeats it has ever suffered in North Islington.

Fighting Socialist Party

Meanwhile the left has already started organising for the election campaign. For the first time, ordinary Party members are being invited to play a part in genuine political activity; grass roots mobilising and political skills are being learnt by new members; links already forged between rank and file left members in different wards are being cemented; and formerly disillusioned Labour voters are being made aware that a fighting Socialist party, different in character from the Labour Party which has represented them so inadequately in the past, is now being created in the Constituency.

Regardless of its impact on voting within the GLC or ILEA Labour Groups, that is the real victory which the GLC selection in Islington North represents. It will ensure the first ever textbook election campaign in the Constituency and bring canvassers to the door of many voters who have never had any contact with the Labour Party in the past. It will be a morale boost for the left on the GC as it limbers up for the coming battle over reselection; and it will be an important aid to future Party recruitment.

But perhaps most significantly, it could finally mark the end of Southgate's chances of leading Islington Council after 1982 as the left gains confidence, experience of election techniques and increased organisational strength from the GLC election. This should be enough to carry it through future battles over Council selections so that the expected left victory at the GC AGM can be converted into a left victory at Islington Town Hall in a year's time.

Steve Bundred
(GLC Candidate, Islington North)

HOW ISLINGTON DECIDED THE RATE

The battle between left and right on the Islington Labour Group – which has been raging ever since the present Council was elected in 1978 – has come to a head as usual in the annual rate-making process.

Cllr. Chris Smith
(Treasurer, Islington South and Finsbury CLP)

From the right has come the demand for substantial cuts and the lowest possible rate rise; from the left has come a stand for no cuts in direct services, no compulsory redundancies and (reluctantly) a rate rise necessary to achieve this. Two years ago, the right won, by one vote (the one Tory present at the Council meeting), and a package of cuts was implemented. Last year, the vote was tied, but the right won – by two votes – at a subsequent meeting, and a further large package of cuts went through. This year the process has been different, and the right – represented by the leadership of the Group – have played their game more subtly. Again, they have won.

What happened was this:

Summer/Autumn 1980: The Programme Plan committees – sub-groups of the main committee and dominated by the right – combed their budgets for possible savings, and came up with some genuine savings, some direct cuts, some proposals for growth.

Autumn 1980: The Labour Group, in a sudden fit of fraternity, set up the so-called Gang of Eight – four from the left of the Group (left in Islington terms but nonetheless representing, in any normal Labour Party terms, a spectrum of opinion running roughly from Neil Kinnock to Roy Hattersley) and four from the right – the Leader (Gerry Southgate), Deputy Leader (Bill Bayliss, arch-cutter and real power-holder of the Council), Chief Whip, and Chair of the Group (the right might be described as running roughly from Shirley Williams rightwards to Rhodes Boyson). This Gang of Eight met a number of times, supposedly to hammer out a compromise formula to bring back to the Group. Papers were produced by both sides. For several meetings a dialogue of the deaf took place. Then, suddenly, a supposed compromise was eventually produced by the Leader – and produced on his terms. His package included three per cent savings/cuts from the programme plan; growth in housing maintenance and social services; £4 or £5 million from balances (standing at £7.6m. at present); a 33 per cent rent rise; and a 29 per cent rate rise. He explicitly argued that if his rent rise proposal was not accepted by the Group, he would go for a further package of cuts to make up the difference.

January 1980: The Labour Group met to discuss the Leader's proposal on rents – in theory, in isolation from any discussion on the rates. But – in the face of the Leader's threat of further cuts, three of the four 'left-wingers' of the Gang of Eight argued and voted in favour of the 33 per cent rent rise. The other one dissented. The left were over a barrel: go for the high rent rise and penalise tenants (and still face a possibility of further last minute cuts) or go for a lower rent rise and face the certainty of further proposals for cuts. Because of this, the Leader's proposal was carried.

February 1981: The Group met again, this time to discuss the rate. Notwithstanding his earlier commitment to his own package of proposals, the Leader sat idly by while Bill Bayliss moved that we take *all* of this year's balances, plus a further £½million from next year's anticipated housing subsidy rebate, in order to abate the rate increase down to 21 per cent. The Leader even voted for this. It was passed.

This particular decision was quite crazy. It leaves the Council totally unprotected from any raid Heseltine may make during the year; it leaves the Council severely under-budgetted for pay and price inflation; it leaves no slack for increasing GLC precepts under a Labour-controlled GLC; and it guarantees a massive rate rise – or massive cuts – next March, two months before the Borough elections.

And therein lies the *real* reason for the policy: the present leadership, right wing to a person, fear that the next Labour Council in Islington will be more radical, more forward-looking, more anxious to avoid cuts in services, and closer to the thinking of the Constituency Parties, the LGC, tenants' associations, unions, and community groups. So they've implemented in advance what has been called a "scorched earth" policy: ensuring that the Council is so starved of cash in May 1982 that it will be difficult for it to do anything. At the time of writing, the full Council rate-making meeting has still to take place, and there will be another battle there. But the sad lesson is that the Council's present leadership have achieved everything they want – and more.

HERE TO STAY !

by Jane Ansell (CARL London Labour Party Co-ordinating Committee)

The Tory government is presently trying to bring in a new Nationality Act which will divide the British people into 3 kinds of citizens. The Bill has now finished its second reading in Parliament, and if it is passed it will have the following drastic consequences for millions of people.

- Thousands of Black Commonwealth citizens will effectively become stateless.
- Black settlers will have great difficulty in obtaining citizenship, and in turn in transmitting it to their children.
- Black women will not gain citizenship through marriage to a British citizen.
- There is a strong likelihood that Civic Rights (eg to vote) will be restricted, particularly for Black, and possibly Irish people.

The Bill will create a two-tier system of British citizenship, relegating Black people to a 2nd class category. It will divide people on the grounds of colour, and overall, will intensify the pressure for Black people to have to prove their right to be here.

ACTION has already started to take place around the country to fight the existing racist immigration laws. In November 1979, nearly 20,000 people took part in demonstrations organised by the **Campaign Against Racist Laws** (CARL) against tightening immigration controls. CARL was begun in 1979, to mobilize support against the 1971 Immigration Act. It was set up as a broad movement, with support from many British organizations, trade unions, anti-racist groups and some Labour MPs. There are now many local CARL groups in London and around the country.

It is *vital* that the Labour Party pledge themselves to fight the present nationality proposals, as part and parcel of their fight for the working-class. The last Labour government failed to carry out party policy and repeal the 1971 Immigration Act. It is important that the Labour leadership is pressurised by its movement to actively oppose this Racist and Sexist Bill. Anything less than this will lead to a divided labour movement, and will prevent an organised fight for the realization of peoples democratic and human rights. To this end CARL calls upon all the labour movement to –

- **give full support to the National Demonstration against the nationality proposals on** *Sunday 5 April.*
- **to attend the All London Labour Parties' Conference on** *Sunday 29 March*

For further information contact Charlotte Atkins 129 Ramsden Rd., SW12 (675 3874)

NATIONALITY BILL DEMONSTRATION

Bernard Misrahi

On Saturday April 5th thousands of black people will march against the British Nationality Bill. Will the Labour Party by its absence show that solidarity with black people who are being attacked by the state is a low priority for us?

I've room here to mention only a few of the features of this racist Bill. It is important to see it as part of a general state offensive against people, involving the immigration authorities, the police and even the DHSS. It helps increase the feeling of insecurity felt by black people and encourages racists to attack them further. While it will not *immediately* and *directly* harm most black people living here, it not only creates the framework for their rights to be removed in the future, but its whole tone is to declare that black people who have spent most of their lives here do not really belong.

The Bill divides United Kingdom Passport Holders (UKPH) into three main groups:
1. British Citizens (BC's) who will have full rights to enter Britain. They will be, more or less, 'patrials'. That is, those born in Britain, those who have acquired British Citizenship or those with a British grandparent (though some of these people are citizens of other countries).
2. British Overseas Citizens (BOC's) and Citizens of a British Dependent Territory (CBDT – mainly from Hong Kong) – ie non-patrial UKPHs. They are already prevented from entering Britain by right (a few can get in on a quota system) by the 1968 Immigration act, but the inferior BOC passport will make it more difficult for them to enter any other country. What will be the status and rights of BOCs living in Britain? The Bill says nothing about how or whether different classes of citizens will have different classes of rights. It strongly suggests that it will in the future deny rights – say to free medical care or to social security – to some classes of citizens. Some immigrants are only allowed in on the condition that they aren't 'a burden on public funds'. The Home Office has a disturbing ability to change the rules and practices quietly and without publicity. The Bill will give them numerous opportunities to do so.
3. Commonwealth citizens, such as Jamaicans or Bangladeshis, can now 'register' as British by right after 5 years 'settlement'. If the Bill is passed they will, like non-Commonwealth citizens or 'aliens', have to pay far more (about £200) and they can be turned down if they fail Whitelaw's "loyalty test".

There has been maintained a centuries-old British tradition of granting citizenship to everyone born here regardless of the status of the parents. No longer! If both a baby's parents are overseas students or work-permit holders (that is, if the immigration authorities limit their stay in this country) then the child will not be British unless s/he can stay in this country for ten years. Furthermore, children of 'illegal entrants' won't be British either. By definition, parents who are 'illegal entrants' will have to go past Britain's extremely exacting immigration control. Yet the authorities can decide years afterwards that you entered illegally. As in the case of Mohammed Zamir, they may say you entered by deception because you didn't answer questions that you weren't asked. Your children will then lose their British Citizenship.

How will the authorities determine which babies are British? Will the mother have to bring her passport along to the hospital?

Labour have shown their opposition to this Bill (though it is based on a Green Paper issued by the last Labour Government). Roy Hattersley, the Shadow Home Secretary, has promised that the next Labour Government will repeal the Act. The Labour Party participates in the Campaign Against Racist Laws, which has called the April 5th demo. The London Labour Party Standing Conference on Racialism has also declared its support for the demo and for a campaign to educate party members about the Bill.

So what are you waiting for?

- Get leaflets and posters for the demo from the ANL, which is distributing them. Ring 351 2823. Bring your party banner to the demo.
- Call a meeting to explain the Bill. Invite speakers from the local black community. Invite a CARL speaker. Show the excellent slideshow (with soundtrack on tape cassette) which is distributed by AGIN, CCRJ and BBC.
- Take copies of the CARL paper 'Here to Stay!' 10p each. Get involved in your local CARL group.

Don't use the GLC elections as an excuse for putting off the fight. Even from a purely electoral point of view, people will vote or not vote Labour this May according to their judgement of Labour's credibility on all issues – not just transport. Too often Labour have confined their anti-racism to resolutions and kept it off the election leaflets. Lets change this practice now.

Some useful addresses

AGIN (Action Group on Immigration and Nationality, c/o Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, 44 Theobalds Road, London WC1. 405 5527.

CCRJ (Richard Zipfel, Catholic Commission for Racial Justice, Church Hall, 1 Amwell Street, London EC1R 1UL. 278 5880.

BCC (British Council of Churches) Community and Race Relations Unit. 2 Eaton Gate, London SW1. 730 9611.

'Here to Stay!', Campaign Against Racism Laws, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5, or phone Bernard on 720 2328.

FASCISTS IN CROYDON ...AND LEWISHAM



On Saturday 28th February the police gave permission for the National Front to hold a march and rally in Croydon for the first time. The march assembled at Woodside Green and passed through Addiscombe to East Croydon, where a rally was held in a quiet residential road behind East Croydon Station. The police estimated that there were about 120 National Front members and their supporters taking part in the march. Most of them were teenagers – some as young as thirteen or fourteen.

The march and rally came as the culmination of several months of racist and fascist activity in the Croydon area. Walls and sub-ways in the centre of Croydon have been covered with National Front and British Movement stickers and with racist and fascist graffiti. The offices of the Community Relations Council have been daubed with slogans, a synagogue at Thornton Heath has been attacked and there have been at least 250 known attacks on black people living in the borough. Several attempts have been made to raise the problem with the Chief Executive of Croydon Council and with Croydon's four Tory MPs, but there has been little or no response. When the Deputy Leader of Croydon Council's Labour Group asked the Leader of the ruling Tory Group what the Council were going to do to remove racist graffiti, he simply replied that all graffiti was a nuisance and that removing it was expensive. He, like the other Croydon Tories, refuses to acknowledge that there is a difference between slogans which attempt to incite racial hatred and the kind of adolescent obscenities which have been appearing on lavatory walls for generations.

No Traditions

Increased activity by extreme right-wing groups in an area like Croydon is disturbing because it proves that they have the capacity to establish themselves in communities where they have no traditions of support and where there is little or no history of racial conflict. Croydon, possibly more than any other London borough, has always typified the affluent South East. It is a major town in its own right with a booming town centre which dominates the sky-line like a mini-Manhattan. The private roads and the big houses in the southern part of the borough create an environment which is so unlike that of Brixton, the East End or other parts of inner London that you could be forgiven if you thought you were on a different planet and not in the same capital city. You could also be forgiven if you found it difficult to understand how the National Front or the British Movement could make any inroads in this kind of an area.

The reason is, of course, that Croydon, like other parts of the South East, is beginning to feel the effects of the recession and to suffer from the present Government's policies. Since the Thatcher Government took office unemployment in Croydon has risen from 3,925 to well over 8,000, and many of those 8,000 are young people and school leavers. The job situation in Croydon has deteriorated to such an extent, that recently there were 250 teenage job hunters applying for 16 craft apprenticeships at British Rail's Selhurst apprentice training school.

Many small firms in Croydon have gone to the wall and even the larger companies, such as Philips Industries and Fords, are laying off workers at an alarming rate.

Croydon is also an area of surprising contrasts. The big houses and the private roads of Purley and Woodcote are in the same borough as the New Addington council estate, which sits on top of the Addington Hills and is so bleak and remote from the rest of Croydon that the residents have very aptly nick-named it 'little Siberia'.

Unemployment on the New Addington estate is now as high as it is in the North East, with more than one in ten of the potential workforce signing on at the Labour Exchange.

Feel the Pinch

Sandwiched between the well-off in Purley and the unemployed in New Addington are street after street of owner-occupied terraces and semis whose owners are beginning to feel the pinch. Despite the savage cuts in public services by Croydon's Tory Councillors, rates are being increased by 30%.

With a rapidly rising cost of living and disappearing services a lot of people in Croydon are beginning to see their living standards decline and their much cherished lower middle-class status threatened. They are beginning to grow scared.

Croydon, therefore, has all of the classic ingredients for racists and fascists to work with. It doesn't have substantial communities of ethnic minorities; but it does have a growing number of poor young whites who live on barren council estates, who often have inadequate parents, and who are suffering because of bad education and a lack of opportunities. They are angry and frustrated because they are unemployed and cannot get the material things which an acquisitive society tells them they must have. They see the comfort and affluence of the people living in the southern part of the borough and they know that they have little hope of achieving it.

Their anger, their frustration and their sense of alienation makes them ripe for an ideology which gives them simplistic solutions and a chance to make scapegoats on whom they can heap all of the problems which a fundamentally bad society has created for them.

Equally Croydon is the home of many small businessmen whose firms have either closed down or are being forced to close down. It is also the home of many executives employed in middle or lower managerial posts on fixed salaries. Rising prices and declining services are a threat to their way of life and they see that the lack of job opportunities for both themselves and their children will very quickly force them back down the social scale which they have probably spent years trying to climb up.

They are equally ripe for an ideology which promises to maintain traditional standards and values, and which demands a firmness in government which will protect and guarantee their material possessions and their social status.

Of course we must always protest as loudly as we can whenever and wherever racism and fascism rear their ugly heads. But all of the protests, counter demonstrations, festivals, carnivals and anti-racist 'rock gigs' are meaningless unless we attack the root causes of racism and fascism. Until we have found a cure for unemployment, deprivation, lack of education and the inevitable sense of hopelessness which comes from living within a social system which can no longer maintain itself and is beginning to decay, we will continue to witness the kind of scenes which we saw in Croydon on 28th February.

Peter Spalding
Croydon Trade Union Council

It's a pity the fascists weren't allowed to march in Deptford on March 8th – it would have been the last anyone would have heard about that particular contingent of the National Front. Anger over the burning to death of 13 young people (in a house virtually next door to Deptford Labour Party headquarters) has raised feelings to boiling-point, and the Front wouldn't have stood a chance. As it was, the march was banned. The fascists said they would leaflet in the area around the burned-out house instead, so enough of us turned up to make sure they didn't and found ourselves surrounded by a population consisting of about 50 per cent policemen. They were everywhere, walking in twos throughout Deptford. But no sign of the fascists. In the end, about forty of them were spotted handing out leaflets around the Clock Tower in Lewisham more than a mile away, heavily protected by police. One extremely brave woman comrade went straight for the Nazis with fists flying and was immediately arrested (she was later released). No-one took the fascists' leaflets, and they were obviously demoralised by their own derisory turnout. All in all, the tradition of our borough – particularly Deptford – as a "no-go" area for Nazi marches was upheld.

Chris Knight
(Lewisham East CLP)

Pay More Get Less

When Margaret Thatcher was given the freedom of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, she remarked that everything the Tories had done locally was what she would wish to do nationally.

But now, Mrs Thatcher's favourite London borough has been forced to the top of the rates league by the Heseltine rate support cuts. They are planning a staggering 52.6% increase.

The increase is all the more staggering as it is to be coupled with a further 15% cut in services. All this in a borough which has the highest council rents in Britain and one of the lowest levels of service of any local authority.

Council leader Nicholas Freeman has said "I do not believe we could have done more without causing real hardship", but the working people of the Royal Borough have for many years been experiencing the bitter hardships of Tory 'stringencies' and were at the sharp edge of the cuts even before a Tory government came to power.

Last autumn, council tenants suffered a 47% increase in their heating and hot water charges. This came on top of a 20% rent increase and a 'comparability study' for ex-GLC tenants which pushed rents up by as much as £10 a week in many cases.

This year, rents are to go up by 27½%. Already they are nearly double the national average, 56% above the London borough average and 42% over the figure for neighbouring Tory Westminster.

Tenants on the World's End estate in West Chelsea will suffer the highest increases of all. Come April, a bedsitter flat on the estate will cost over £30 a week, a one-bedroom flat over £33, a two-bedroom flat over £47, and what is euphemistically called a 'three-bedroomed studio' over £68 per week. It is worth mentioning that this 'studio' is likely to be on the 18th floor, no joke when the lifts fail as often as they do on World's End.

The local Tories make much of the fact that council tenants are 'subsidised' by ratepayers. They show much concern for Harrods and the other exclusive traders of Knightsbridge, but what they conveniently ignore is that council tenants are ratepayers too. And many tenants on the World's End estate, which has a very high rateable value, pay far more than their Knightsbridge counterparts for similar sized flats.

In fact, if debt charges, Government grants and rate contributions are removed, the borough's Housing Revenue Account is in fact nearly £1.5million in the black.

But it is in the co-ownership housing field where the real scandals are occurring. Labour councillor Neil Kearney estimates that losses here could total over £1million. Described by a past Housing Committee chairman as "accommodation for those on average incomes" these have now become schemes "for those with a bit above middle incomes". In fact, only people earning high five-figure salaries and with very substantial deposits could possibly afford them.

In one part of the borough, the highly marginal Earl's Court ward, the council established its very own quango to work with the property developers. It even agreed to underwrite any losses that might arise. These losses are rattling up thick and fast. 22 flats developed in this way have recently been sold at a real loss of over £120,000.

One recent development has worked out at an average £84,000 per flat with a loss to the ratepayer of over £44,000 per unit.

Life in Kensington and Chelsea is far from privileged for its ordinary residents. Dulled into submission over the years, they are only now beginning to stir at the savage cuts being inflicted on already poor services. This year's rate and rent increases could be the last straw.

It is an unedifying spectacle to hear embarrassed local Tories trying to justify charging over 50% more for even poorer services. Labour controlled ILEA has traditionally been their scapegoat, but this year ILEA has maintained real spending and the massive increase in its precept is entirely due to the new rate formula of the Tories' comrade Michael Heseltine.

The Labour Group on the council are committed to a restoration of the cuts, a rents freeze, and some expansion – they admit that this would mean a rate increase of over 70%. The task now facing the Kensington and Chelsea Labour Parties is to mount a massive campaign denouncing both national Tory policies, which make the provision of decent services in the borough almost impossible, and local Tory policies of vicious cuts.

Although we are looking to Labour-controlled councils to spearhead the fight against Heseltine, we will play our part – for Kensington and Chelsea was singled out by the prophet herself as the Thatcherite 'promised land'. Like all her promises it was a cheap con. It has so obviously failed that it could mean some nasty shocks for the Tories at local elections. Even in Kensington and Chelsea.

by Edward Playfair
(Chelsea CLP Election Agent)

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
exists as an organ of communication for the left of the Labour Party in London. Through such communication we hope to be better able to coordinate and organise our activities.

May Day 1981

The London Joint May Day Committee, which is comprised of representatives from the GLRC of the Labour Party, the Regional LPYS, GLATC, SERTUC and the Co-ops, has made arrangements for London's traditional May Day March to be held on Friday 1st May. The March will assemble at Clerkenwell Green at 1.00pm and will be addressed at approximately 1.30pm by Michael Foot. It will move off at 2.30pm and follow a route which will take it through Fleet Street and on to Belvedere Green by County Hall where there will be a rally which will be addressed by various speakers including Joan Lester MP and Terry Marsland, the Deputy General Secretary of the Tobacco Workers' Union.

The assembly point for the March, Clerkenwell Green, has many historical associations for the trade union and labour movement in London, being the starting point for many of the great marches and demonstrations of the last century. County Hall was chosen as the site for this year's rally because this year's May Day March will take place just one week before the GLC Elections on 7th May. A massive turnout by London's labour movement will demonstrate to Horace Cutler and his pint-sized municipal monetarists that their days at County Hall are numbered.

The theme of this year's May Day March will be Peace, Jobs and Freedom.

Peter Spalding
(London Joint May Day Committee)

SOCIALIST ORGANIZER FACES LIBEL SUIT

We would like to appeal for support from the readers of *London Labour Briefing* against an attempt to stifle and bankrupt, through the capitalist courts, the socialist newspaper 'Socialist Organiser' and its printers.

The attack comes not from some capitalist concern or the district auditor, but from Vanessa Redgrave and the Workers' Revoluntionary Party, and follows criticism of that organisation in the pages of 'Socialist Organiser'. Far from attempting to answer the criticism, their reply was to try and buy silence by using their wealth and the threat of the capitalist courts.

A series of proposals made to the WRP, including that of a jointly-agreed labour movement inquiry into the issue, were immediately answered with a High Court writ for libel and n otice of an injunction being served on the printer.

What the WRP are trying to do to 'Socialist Organiser' now could, of course, by done to any other labour movement publication if they succeed.

'Socialist Organiser' is not prepared to be intimidated and silenced by these threats. If the WRP force it on us, we are prepared to defend ourselves in the courts. To do that we will need support, particularly financial. We would ask readers of *London Labour Briefing* to send donations to:

'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund',
c/o 'Socialist Organiser',
214 Sickert Court,
London N1 2SY.

LETTERS

Dear *Labour Briefing*,

We in the Polish Solidarity Campaign welcome any genuine expression of solidarity with Polish workers in their fight for independent trade unions. For this reason we were pleased to find an article in the last issue of *Labour Briefing* dealing with Poland. However we were shocked to see that this article, signed by Chris Knight, contained a number of gross inaccuracies and was in large part devoted to attacking our own efforts to mobilise support for *Solidarity*. We hope you will allow us to set the record straight by publishing this letter.

The article in question urges support for a "socialists only" demonstration "called by the Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee" for March 15th. The article goes on to suggest that the Polish Solidarity Campaign is a right-wing organisation which should be excluded from this demonstration. It states that "the Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee has no connection whatsoever with the 'solidarity campaign' sponsored by (among others) Kate Losinska of the CPSA, and has in fact made stewarding arrangements to ban any non-socialist or anti-communist presence from the march and demonstration. This (it says) is in direct response to *Solidarity*'s own requests."

Hardly a word of this is true. The demonstration (now unfortunately concelled as a result of Whitelaw's blanket ban on London demonstrations in March) in fact was called by a number of organisations, including ourselves, grouped together as the "Hands Off Polish Workers Committee". The organisers rejected Chris Knight's proposal for a "socialists only" demonstration, wishing to see the widest possible support from the labour movement and being suspicious of any attempt to ban or censor political views.

Chris Knight seems exceptionally keen on bans; he does not seem similarly fond of the truth. Few censors are. He insinuates that PSC is a right-wing outfit because it is connected with Kate Losinska. In fact Kate Losinska is one of over 20 sponsors of an appeal we launched in January to raise funds to send printing equipment to Poland. At that time the TUC had yet to break its official silence on Poland and we were glad to receive the support of figures from all wings of the labour movement for this urgent appeal. Other sponsors included Eric Heffer, Mike Cooley and E. P. Thompson. Hardly non-socialists. In any case their role was to sponsor the Polish Trade Union Appeal Fund and, though we hope for their support for our wider activities, they have no commitment to support PSC beyond this issue, nor do we hold any responsibility for their wider political views.

As for Chris Knight's proposed bans and exclusions being in response to direct requests from *Solidarity* we can say with certainty that the Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee has no direct contacts with *Solidarity* whatsoever. For the Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee, an organisation which has only existed for three weeks and done nothing to date to support *Solidarity*, to pose as though it had direct contacts with *Solidarity* and at the same time to attempt to smear and discredit the PSC which has been actively mobilising support for the Polish unions since August, does not seem to indicate much concern for genuine solidarity.

We regret having to devote so much space to answering these slanders, but we do so because unanswered they could undermine the efforts we have made to gather support for *Solidarity*. We urge your readers, including supporters of the Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee if they are genuine, to co-operate with us to ensure that Polish trade unionists, so long denied any rights, gain the depth of support in the British labour movement that they deserve.

Yours fraternally,

Steve Murray
Convenor
Polish Solidarity Campaign
82, Belgrade Road
London N16

Chris Knight replies:

The Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee has no connections whatsoever with the forces of the right, whether inside or outside the trade union movement or Labour Party. We think it essential to stress this, because one of the major factors inhibiting socialists in Britain from expressing support for Poland's autonomous trade union movement in the past has been their reluctance to appear in any way to be assisting the efforts of the Tory press and their allies, who are cynically exploiting this issue for cold-war purposes. Dissociation from the right in the West is the *precondition* for effective working-class solidarity with "workers' Poland" (as it is hopefully becoming) and a big march. It is as important as dissociation from Stalinism and the Soviet bureaucracy.

Secondly, it is a fact that the leadership of *Solidarity* itself, although divided politically on many issues, is united in its opposition to both bureaucratism *and* capitalism, and has made clear that it does not want "support" from pro-imperialist elements in the West ("support" which in fact only helps Moscow's hard-liners anxious to find an excuse to invade Poland militarily). *Solidarity*'s militants themselves have been stressing this point firmly to those of us (I am referring here particularly to our close comrades around "Labour Focus on Eastern Europe") who have been engaged in discussions with them recently, both in Poland and in this country.

Finally, it is a fact that the Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee first called the demonstration (now scheduled for April 12th), and that we warmly welcomed the subsequent participation of Steve and his hard-working comrades only on the understanding that ours was to be a labour-movement-only march. This was agreed between the several organisations combining to form the "Hands Off Polish Workers Committee", and it should be noted that stewards will have instructions to ensure that this condition is enforced. Steve has made strenuous efforts, at our planning committee meetings, to open up our march to "all democratic organisations". Since the Tory Party claim to come into this category, it would be difficult on that basis to exclude anyone at all. Our demonstration would embody a "unity" stretching from the International Marxist Group and the Socialist Workers' Party (both of whom have pledged full support) to the far right. All I can say is that Steve is welcome to "unity" of that sort, and can organise his own march on that basis if he wants to try. I don't think it implies "censorship" if the rest of us think that a line has to be drawn somewhere.

Our own demonstration organisers (myself included) agreed to a small compromise in Steve's direction by broadening the character of the march from "socialists only" to "labour movement only". There was in fact no argument about this. But Steve has continued to press for the formula "all democratic organisations". This has been turned down. The march will therefore have a strictly working-class character, as was originally intended. Preliminary indications are that it will be successful and big.

Perhaps never before in the history of the labour movement internationally has the use of general strike action for working-class political ends been demonstrated more powerfully or inspiringly than in recent months by the workers of Poland. The Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee was set up on the assumption that class-solidarity knows no frontiers, and that what's good for Poland's workers is good for us in Britain as well. On the day when "friends of Poland's *Solidarity*" such as Kate Losinska, Frank Chapple and Tom Jackson support British trade unionists' right to prepare general strike action against the present Tory Government, our committee might take their "support" for our Polish comrades seriously. Until that day, we will continue to treat it as a hypocritical sham, and will fight to expose it as such.

Polish Trade Union Appeal Fund

Dear *Labour Briefing*,

In response to requests from the leaders of *Solidarity*, we are writing to urge all sections of the British labour movement to fully support the Polish Trade Union Appeal Fund.

In their battle with the authorities, the *Solidarity* unions desperately need the support of the international labour movement. They urgently need technical support and assistance. Even the most basic office equipment – duplicators, stationery, staplers and printing equipment – they cannot buy in Poland.

Many western trade union federations have answered *Solidarity*'s appeal for support. But, to date, the British TUC has offered no such help.

For this reason we are launching this appeal and calling on all sections of the British labour movement to support it with donations of money or equipment, or to send their support directly. We believe that at a minimum the British labour movement should be able to send a small offset litho and other basic material to help the work of our Polish brothers and sisters.

We urge you to endorse this Appeal and contribute to this fund. Donations should be sent to: W. Moszczynski (Polish Trade Union Appeal Fund), 107 Grange Road, London W5.

Yours,

Tony Ayland (NALGO NEC, personal capacity)
Edmund Baluka
W. Brus
Robin Cook MP
Mike Cooley
Pat Duffy
(Amnesty International, personal capacity)
Frank Field MP
Peter Hain
Eric Heffer MP
Kate Losinska
(President CPSA, personal capacity)
Ken Weetch MP
Philip Whitehead MP
Walter Kendall
E. P. Thompson
S. Wasik (President, Polish Socialist Party)
P. Iglikowski (President, Association of Polish Students and Graduates in Britain)
Mike Johnson
T. Prokopovicz (Chairman, Polish Workers and Artisans Union).

Hackney Swings Towards Socialism

Undetected by the media, virtually unnoticed by *London Briefing* itself, Labour politics in Hackney have quietly been experiencing probably the most fundamental upheaval of any London borough. With the recent complete change-over in control at the Hackney Central AGM – the left triumph was absolute – the scenario is now set for a solid socialist majority on the 1982 Council, one expected to comprise a minimum of 36 committed members of the Broad Left (16 in Hackney North & Stoke Newington, 12 in Hackney Central, 8 in Hackney South & Shoreditch). Two of the three CLPs in the borough are firmly in the grip of the left, whilst the Shoreditch & South Hackney left are in a minority – but by a short neck. Previous assumptions that after boundary changes the new South Hackney Party would see a simple fight for parliamentary candidature between the two Solidarity First MPs, Ron Brown and Stanley Clinton Davis, no longer stand; the possibility of a serious left/right struggle for the candidature has now emerged.

How has this promising situation come about? Basically two main factors have been at work. Firstly, the council establishment forces have become dependent on ageing hacks no longer capable of doing the donkey work in the wards – the old machine now creaks to the point of collapse. The nadir of this basic rottenness was achieved a few months ago in the near defunct Wenlock Ward in Shoreditch, where the Liberal took the seat at a bye-election with a massive majority. Typically, one ex-councillor was heard to remark during canvassing that "No councillor should allow himself to get involved in tenants' associations – if he did, he'd end up as an association messenger boy". The Liberal programme amounted to a slick capitalising on years of local neglect by the council, with the absurd promise of "independence for Shoreditch".

Secondly, the pressures from an extreme Tory government have ripped apart the already declining credibility of the leadership on the council, whose commitment to a socialist approach has been seen increasingly to be purely rhetorical. Their contemptuous and cynical treatment of the 1978 election manifesto is a prime example. The manifesto commitment to put three co-opted tenants on the Housing Management Committee was only approved after three years of infighting because of leadership resistance. The major pledge to re-introduce estate caretakers has hardly got off the ground (due to the sabotage of Cllr. Cable, Housing Management chairman, supported by the council leadership). Despite an unequivocal manifesto statement that rents would not be raised in periods of wage restraint, rents have been raised twice in such circumstances. Despite a commitment to reach a *modus vivendi* with squatters' groups, the leadership has set its face against any compromise. On the question of "Let Live" – the virulent anti-abortion group – the leadership plumped for providing them with a council property, where they could indoctrinate pregnant girls with their doctrines.

What has brought matters to a head vis-a-vis local Labour activists has been the half-hearted and generally inept handling of the struggle against Heseltine and Tory cuts. The leadership block vote forced through in Group the implementation of the sale of council houses without consulting the trade unions. NALGO stewards found their position undermined from the start and were furious. Only under left pressure has the leadership conceded consultative processes with the public or tenants – and then these have been aborted in practice. In January the Housing Management Committee agreed to hold a consultative meeting with tenants before deciding on a rent increase – a meeting that never took place, whilst the rent rise was agreed with unabashed rapidity.

Alternative Strategy

What, then, will be the alternative strategy of the new council leadership next year? Already the gulf in fundamental thinking between it and the current leadership has been exposed over the question of a potential rent-and-rates strike by tenants in revolt against Tory cuts. An amendment at council on these lines, proposed by Ron Heisler and seconded by Patrick Kodikara, was defeated by 22 votes to 11, with several abstentions. Such a commitment to tenant-led militancy will be a foremost plank in next year's platform. The re-integration of the Labour Party – and Council Group – into the labour movement will be a priority. Accountability will be given teeth, and the whole process of council decision-taking on major issues rejigged so that Party branches as well as GMCs will be properly involved in advance. Council trade unions and the Trades Council will be brought into an effective alliance with the Labour Group in order to launch a full-blast anti-Tory campaign.

Whatever spending standstills are inevitable elsewhere, publicity expenditure will be the one guaranteed area of growth in 1982. Above all, the forthcoming 1982 manifesto will be regarded as an inviolable commitment to be implemented – at whatever cost!

Cllr. Ron Heisler

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE RACIST NATIONALITY BILL

Sunday 5th April 1981
LONDON

ALL LONDON LABOUR PARTIES CONFERENCE

– The Fight-Back Against Racist Immigration and Nationality Laws –

Sunday 29 March 1981

TARGET '82

Greater support is being shown every day for the TARGET '82 programme of getting left wingers elected to control Borough Councils in May 1982.

By and large the existing Borough leaderships have shown an abysmal lack of fight against the Government and a criminal refusal to develop and stick to common policies against the Tories. The aim of Target '82 is to get Labour Councils to unite to fight the Government and not to allow Boroughs such as Lambeth to become isolated.

The next Target '82 meeting will be on Monday March 23rd at 7.30pm at County Hall.

It will be receiving reports from Boroughs and discussing selection procedure and the formation of election policy.

Anyone wishing to receive information on future meetings should contact London Labour Briefing or write to Jeremy Corbyn at 28 Lausanne Road, N8 0HN.

Jeremy Corbyn

HANDS OFF THE POLISH WORKERS!

FOR A WORKERS' POLAND!

Labour Movement March to the Soviet Embassy

Sunday April 12th
Assemble Speakers' Corner, 1.30pm

All socialist and labour movement organisations welcome. No cold war slogans.

"All democratic Socialists should support the efforts of the Polish trade union *Solidarity* to introduce real democratic accountability into Poland." *Tony Benn, February 15th 1981*

Supported by the International Committee of the Labour Party NEC.

Sponsored by Tony Benn, MP, Reg Race, MP, Lewisham East CLP, Brent East CLP, Hendon South CLP, Ilford South CLP, Labour-Poland Solidarity Committee, Polish Solidarity, Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, *Socialist Challenge*, *Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Organiser*.

Organised by the "Hands Off Polish Workers Committee".

Contact: Graham Bash, 158 Thorold Rd, Ilford. Tel: 01-514 0060.

Articles for *Briefing* will not be printed in future unless they are submitted TYPED, on one side only of A4 paper, with very wide margins (1½" on the left, 2" on the right) and using double line spacing (4 clicks of the platen knob). This applies to everyone – councillors and MPs included. No-one on the *Briefing* team can do the typing for you – you must do it or get it done yourself.

Chris Knight (production editor)

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Friday March 27th, room 133c,
County Hall, 6.30pm.
Deadline for articles: April 10th.

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