LONDON LABOUR 20p

BRIEFING

No 16 DECEMBER 1981

JUDGES—KEEP OUT!

The extra-parliamentary power of the judiciary has now become a grave and immediate threat to Labour Local Government. The mere fact that Lord Denning could have ruled the G.L.C.'s fares reduction policy "unreasonable" in the Court of Appeal – regardless of the House of Lords' subsequent decision – is of enormous significance and can have only one meaning. From now on, every progressive manifesto policy and every defence of jobs and services is in danger of falling foul of the Judges' Law. If this threat from the Tories' state machine succeeds, local government will have become unworkable and local democracy will have been crushed.

The battle for London – for a quiet, efficient, pollution-free city fit for its inhabitants to live, work and travel in – is now on. Much of the future of the labour movement nationally is being decided in London here and now. The "Fares Fair" policy, moderate a reform though it is, poses in embryo all the essential issues of socialist planning versus capitalist chaos not only for London but for the country as a whole.

And it poses *the question of power* point-blank. Is the electoral and parliamentary road to socialism possible? Or will we be driven to seeking alternative means? If the ruling class and its courts can threaten so moderate and socially-necessary a reform as this on the grounds that it challenges capitalist principles of commercial profitability – in pompous pronouncements which completely ignore the *social* costs and benefits involved – then what would they stop at in crushing an elected Labour Government with a mandate to implement full employment, withdrawal from the EEC, nuclear disarmament and the abolition of the House of Lords? Would they stop at court decisions, or such stratagems as inviting the Crown to refuse the Royal Assent to a Labour Government's bills? Or would they – as did their very "English" and "civilized" counterparts in Chile in 1973 – move in the troops and the tanks to drown us in a sea of blood?

Briefing

SPECIAL LONDON LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

DEC. 12th

CRUCIAL FRINGE-MEETING

THE BATTLE FOR POWER

12.30pm

CAMDEN TOWN HALL

Speakers:
TONY BENN
JO RICHARDSON
KEN LIVINGSTONE

Chair: Jeremy Corbyn

Admittance 50p

●

london labour briefing

Let's be clear: there are two systems of law, not one. There is one law for the rich, another for the poor. So it's not some abstract search for "legality" that we are involved in: it's our law, or theirs. We need to understand this with crystal clarity and act accordingly. The Judges and their Courts are part of the extra-parliamentary reserve forces of the Tory Party. The Tories will not hesitate to use their extra-parliamentary powers whenever they feel under threat. We must be equally resolute in mobilising every resource at our disposal to defend our manifesto commitments. And if and when it becomes clear that we can no longer continue to operate local government within the legal and financial constraints imposed upon us – whether these contraints come from Heseltine's legislation or Denning-type judgements – the time will have come to disengage from office and resort to other means.

If they declare our law – the law of the elected G.L.C. – to be "illegal", then we have no choice but to answer in kind. By labour movement standards it is *illegal* for judges to poke their noses into the political process and thwart the results of elections. It is *illegal* for them to allow their prejudices concerning commercial profitability and the inevitability of capitalism to influence the judicial rulings they make. It is *illegal* for them to usurp a political role when no-one elected them at all and they cannot be deselected or removed. **And let them all be warned: when Courts and Judges, with all their magisterial splendour, render themselves illegal in the eyes of the people, then they invite us – the moment we are strong enough – to sweep them away.**

Labour—Take the Power!

PARLIAMENTARY REPORT

BY REG RACE, M.P. FOR WOOD GREEN

The Queen's Speech is full of anti-working class legislation. There will be a Trade Union Bill to restrict the powers of trade unions to carry out their functions on behalf of their members. There will be a Local Government Finance Bill to impose referenda on local authorities who spend money on providing decent social and community services on behalf of the people they represent. And there will be a Bill to privatise the assets of the British National Oil Corporation and British Gas – the most significant hiving-off of assets yet from the public sector.

The response of the Labour Party to the Trade Union Bill and the energy measures is likely to be clear in Parliament. There will be concerted opposition to the undermining of the 1906 Trade Union Act, which gave legal immunities to the unions. But there must be extensive pressure to ensure that the opposition to these measures includes not only Parliamentary opposition, but a concerted campaign of obstruction involving the rank and file of the trade union movement.

The response of the Labour Party on energy will also be clear. Tony Benn made the Party's policy clear when speaking on behalf of the Opposition in the debate on 10th November – renationalisation of those assets sold to private enterprise, without compensation.

But it is in the area of local government legislation that the response of the Party is halting and less certain. There are those who wish to oppose the Bill on the grounds that it changes fundamentally the relationship between central and local government; and that strand of opposition will be strengthened by the outrageous decision that the GLC could not pursue its mandate to cut transport fares. Such a response, on constitutional grounds, is hardly enough. We require much more.

Principally, we require a united campaign of refusal by Labour-controlled local councils to implement the cuts demanded by Heseltine. And if we are to obtain a united opposition in all the differing circumstances that individual



local authorities find themselves in, we need a clear lead from the NEC and the PLP.

What should that lead consist of?

First, there must be a clear assurance given by both the NEC and the PLP, that it will indemnify local councillors who refuse to implement the Heseltine Bill.

Second, the major plank in all the election manifestos on which we fight the May 1982 elections *must be* the defence of jobs and services – so that, when we win the Borough elections, there will be a clear mandate from the people which will override any referenda imposed on local councils.

Third, there must be a massive campaign to involve the trade unions in the battle against Heseltine. The objective must be to build up such a political crisis that the Tories are forced to back down.

This is the central task of the Labour Party over the next six months – to build such a campaign against the Tories and in support of conference policies, that it will be impossible for the SDP to claim that they represent working people, and which will mean the beginning of the end for the Thatcher Government.

That fight must not be delayed any further.

●

FOOT MISCALCULATES

Michael Foot's decision to go over completely to the Right is a serious miscalculation. He seems not to understand that the only place in the party where the Right have substantial backing is in the P.L.P.; and it is clear that the tactic of the Right is to put down resolutions at Shadow Cabinet which seek to fudge or nullify Conference decisions. His willingness to isolate Tony Benn is therefore certain to mean a further impetus to this Right-wing pressure.

It is clear that we must continue to fight for party policy; and we must insist that collective responsibility is, firstly, applied to everyone who is a member of the Shadow Cabinet, and, secondly, that it must embrace an overriding responsibility to implement party policy.

Foot's acceptance of the Right-wing position is therefore certain to mean – whether he likes it or not – further attacks on Labour Party policy. That is the problem, and we must mobilise against it.

Reg Race

Why join the Labour Party?

by Tariq Ali

We are living through the most important developments on the British Left for decades. The traditional right-wing leadership of the Labour Movement is today confronting its most serious crisis since the thirties. This crisis won't blow over quickly. Why? Because it is not an internalised disorder, but a reflection inside the Labour Party of the economic, social and political predicament which confronts the British capitalist class. The only way for Labour to become the 'natural party of government' would be to serve the interests of the ruling class at home and abroad. That was the essential function of the Wilson and Callaghan governments. Real problems arose when these Governments could no longer deliver the goods as far as the bosses were concerned because of discontent from below. In conditions of continuing crisis the dominant social class prefers to rely on more direct instruments like the Tory Party or Tory-dominated coalition governments.

It is in this context that we should study the formation of the SDP. It is a blatant attempt to forge a new political weapon which will, it is hoped, weaken the Labour Party electorally and dent its left-wing. The real function of the SDP is to provide a loyal opposition to the Tories, without any *organic* links with the working class. It is the objective weight of trade-unions in British society which disgusted the SDP leaders much more than constitutional reforms of the Bennite bogey. The haemorrhaging of the PLP is therefore likely to continue till the next General Election. Then, if the SDP hold the balance of power, there could well be a real rush to swell its ranks, even if Denis Healy is still the Deputy of the Party and the Shadow Cabinet predominantly right-wing.

The only way to defeat the SDP is to transform the Party into a campaigning organisation on every level, including Parliament. A mass movement against unemployment and low pay, for a minimum wage and a 35-hour week; a real pledge that the next Government will disarm unilaterally; a direct appeal to blacks and women on the basis of recent conference decisions as well as an audacious and frontal assault on racism and sexism within the movement. These are the sort of activities that could revitalise the party and give it a base in mileus which have, till recently, been hostile (and with good reason) to politics. A necessary corollary to all this, of course, is to make a new beginning in terms of building workplace branches and thus creating the basis for ultimately abolishing the block vote.

The last Conference saw some gains for the Right, but it also gave us a glimpse of something else: the remaking of the Labour Party. It is difficult to judge what the final impact of the Left will be in re-shaping the LP, but, in my opinion, it would be an act of gross irresponsibil-

(continued on page three)

Editorial statement

Our reply to press onslaught on re-selection

The manufactured outrage at our article 'Reselection and the Myth of Tolerance' in the last issue of *London Labour Briefing* was less than surprising.

Once the right-wing's elation of Brighton had worn off, they awoke at Westminster in the cold light of day to realise that although Healey was still there, although their 'hit-list' had succeeded in removing five left-wingers from the NEC, they were still saddled with a set of policies to which they were implacably opposed.

Even worse from their point of view, the constituencies who had voted overwhelmingly for Tony Benn were in no mood to applaud those who had given victory to Healey and, into the bargain, kept Audrey Wise off the NEC.

Since their realisation that perhaps the tide had not turned against socialism in their own reactionary favour, they have initiated a new attack under the Manifesto Group's blood-curdling war-cry of 'unity'. Astonishingly, they turn this innocent little word into the most sinister and menacing threat.

Under this new spirit of 'unity', they have:

1. **Called for the expulsion of Pat Wall in Bradford North.**
2. **Opposed the election of left-wingers to any positions of influence on the NEC or in the PLP.**
3. **Made provocative speeches against Party policy — for instance, Healey's blatant opposition to unlateral disarmament voiced in Parliament on 5 November.**
4. **Begun to undermine Michael Foot's leadership because he has been 'too soft on the left'. The pathetic 'donkey-jacket' furore was an example of this.**
5. **While blaming constitutional wrangling for Labour's poor by-election form, hypocritically called for a continuation of the constitutional debate by proposing changes to castrate the electoral college.**

As they demand 'unity' and 'tolerance' from the left, these are the terms on which that 'unity' is being offered — ditch Conference policy, don't operate the re-selection mechanism, neuter the electoral college, sit down, shut up and do as you are told.

We cannot accept that. As socialists, we shall continue to fight for Conference policies and insist that Party spokespersons advocate those policies. We will continue to press for Parliamentary candidates who are going to reflect those policies and be accountable to their local parties. AND IF THAT MEANS REPLACING THOSE M.P.s WHO DO NOT MEET THOSE REQUIREMENTS, THEN FAIR ENOUGH.

It is also, as argued elsewhere in this issue, the only way in which Labour can present any kind of credibility to the electorate and beat the SDP/Liberal Alliance.

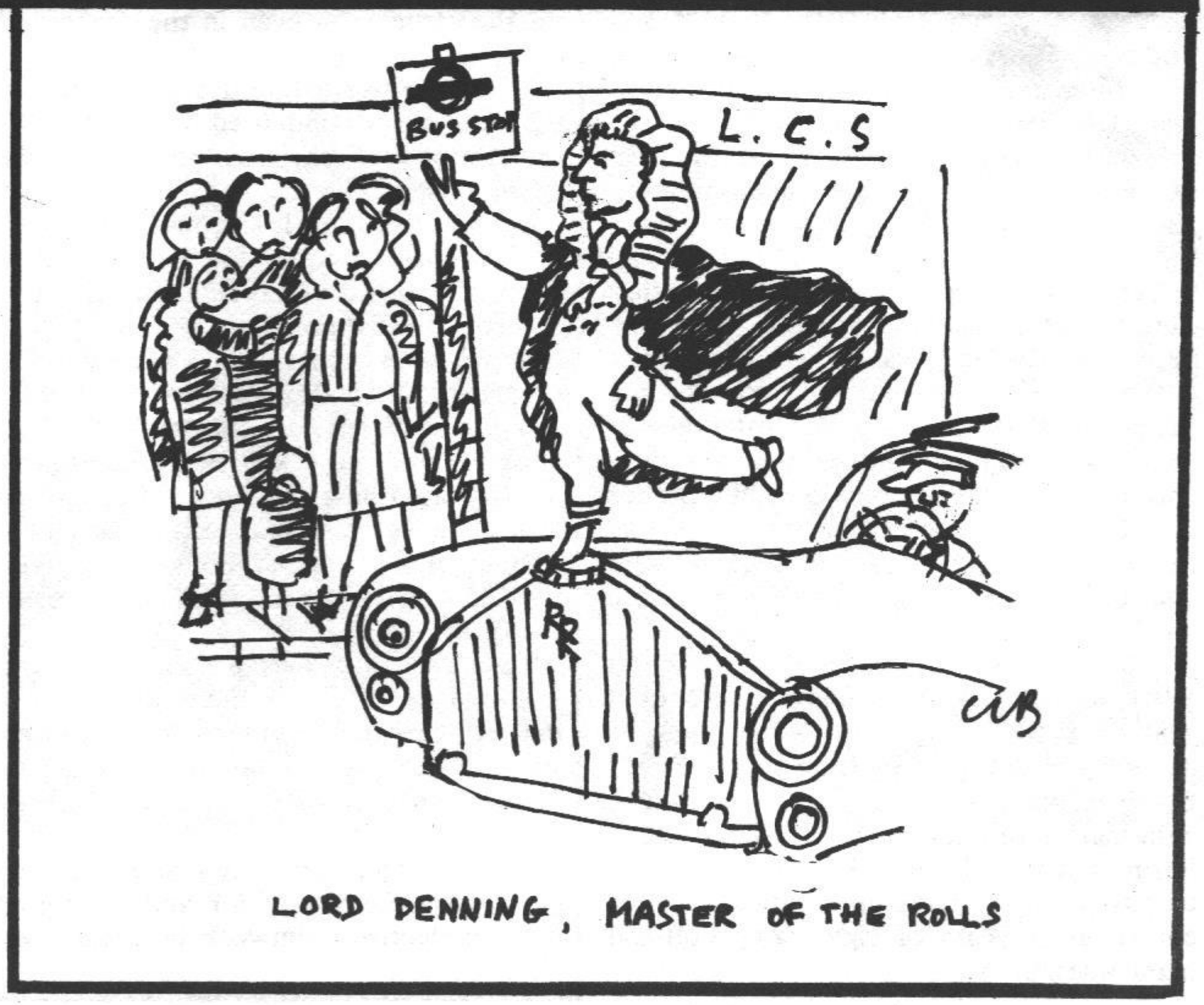
Let us not forget that Dickson Mabon was re-selected by his Party only weeks before he defected. He was not pushed. Yet had his constituency anticipated his action and selected someone else, who can honestly put their hand on their heart and say that the right would not have accused them of 'intolerance and bullying'?

Ben Ford, defeated by Pat Wall in Bradford North, told his local party that he opposed Party policy on disarmament, the police and the EEC. Had he been allowed to fight the next general election as a Labour candidate openly committed to undermining Labour Party policy, he would have been an electoral liability. The same probably goes for many others like him.

Working people are now under the gravest attack in years. The ruling class are being whipped into a state of vindictive frenzy by Edwardes, Heseltine, Denning and Tibbett. Both in the unions and in Parliament, and at every other level, we have a duty to our people to ensure that Labour is represented by those with the stomach for the fight.

(continued from page two)

ity for socialists today to snipe from the outside. I think socialists outside the LP, whose activity has been vital in the past decade and a half, will find that linking arms with the left inside the Party is crucial today in order to reverse the situation inside the working class brought about by Thatcherism and the experience of the Wilson-Callaghan Labour Governments. It is not an easy decision for many comrades who have spend the last ten years engaged in polemics against Labourism. Much of what we stated was correct, though dispensing with some the ultra-left verbiage and rhetoric would be beneficial wherever we are active. An important task for socialists is to be able to discern the direction of the next step forward. I believe that, in the present period, this can only be a united front of the left *inside* the LP and the trades-unions.



SOUTHWARK

EARLY RETIREMENT FOR OLD GUARD

Radical changes in the composition of the new Southwark Council following the local branch elections in May next year now look certain. No fewer than ten of Southwark's committee chairs and vice-chairs have failed to be reselected by the three constituency parties of Bermondsey, Peckham and Dulwich which make up the London Borough of Southwark.

The rejected councillors include John O'Grady, for 13 years leader of Southwark Council, and a number of other key right wing committee chairs and councillors such as Eddie Rowe, Charlie Sawyer, Len Tucker, Joe Lees and Harold Young. At least three councillors, Pat McSorley, Frank Brean and Kitty Clunn, had forestalled any such procedure by quitting for the SDP. Already five of the councillors have lodged appeals with the Greater London Labour Party and the first appeal hearing was on 16 November.

KEY RIGHTWINGERS

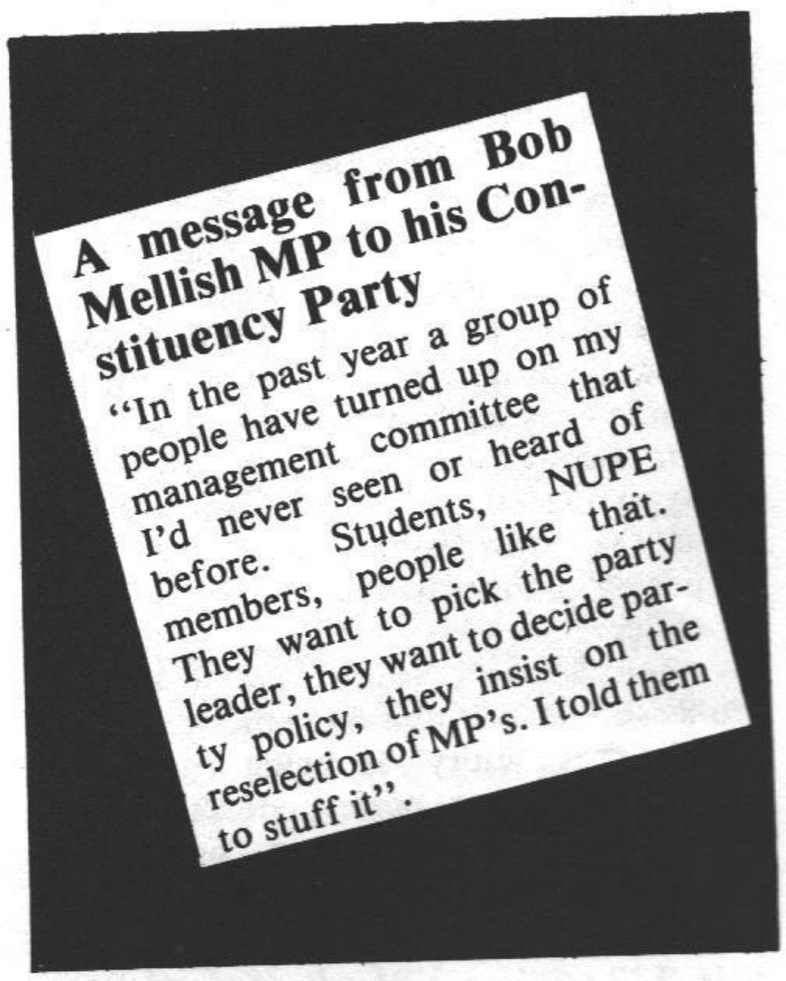
Most of the councillors deleted from the panel of candidates or 'long list' were nominated through the Bermondsey constituency where some of Southwark's key rightwingers have always been located. A special sub-committee of the Bermondsey EC exhaustively interviewed each nominee and asked questions about their attitude to the party, their willingness to implement party policy, their accountability, and their performance as councillors. Most were rejected because of their unsatisfactory performance as councillors – not turning up to ward surgeries for example – and their hostility to the Party and refusal to implement party policy. A number of these councillors – incredibly – had actually refused to support the official Labour candidate at the GLC Election and still expected to be given the opportunity to stand again as Labour councillors.

OVERWHELMING REACTION

The councillors were thus rejected on their performance as councillors – it was not a vindictive right-wing 'hit list', as the presence of right wingers on the final list of approved candidates demonstrates. As Bermondsey's Party Secretary, Peter Tatchell, put it:

"There has been an overwhelming reaction against them which has built up into a determination to replace them with councillors who will do what ordinary working people want them to do. Our interviewing panel to select candidates was carefully chosen to include not only left-wingers but members in the middle and to the right of the Labour Party – the moderates were just as reluctant to select O'Grady as the left."

The replacement of the Southwark old guard with a new set of councillors should lead to a strong, radical council such as has never been seen in this part of South London for many years and marks the culmination of a long struggle by the left in Bermondsey and the other constituencies to put the Party back on a radical socialist course after years of right wing political manoeuvring.



At the GC which approved the deletion of the councillors from the panel John O'Grady declared: "This Party has made a grave tactical error on the effect that this decision will have on the people of this borough." A master of real politik to the end, O'Grady could only think of the power game, of "tactical errors", when the people of Bermondsey (who have had to live with a council which prefers to do deals with speculators on development sites like Hay's Wharf instead of fighting for jobs and housing for local people, who have seen the repeated failures of Southwark to fight for working people, and who have seen the only political spark of opposition to come from O'Grady to be an attack on the Labour GLC through his wretched free civic rag *Southwark Sparrow*,) know that they have a right to choose councillors who will fight for socialist policies and for a socialist strategy which will restore the battered prestige of the Labour Party in the old right-wing fiefs like O'Grady's Southwark.

Nick Murray

VICTORY FOR NEW SOCIALIST POLITICS

Peter Tatchell writes for Labour Briefing following his selection as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Bermondsey:

My selection is a very special victory for the older working class members of our local Party. They stuck by Bermondsey's radical socialist tradition and never gave up the struggle – even in the darkest of days.

It is to these comrades in particular, that we are all indebted for laying the foundations of socialist renewal in the Bermondsey Party.

But my selection is also in a sense a victory for everyone in the Labour Movement who has worked to create the new style of socialist politics.

It has been achieved through a process of sharing and learning from our different struggles. From our cumulative experience and the exchange of ideas, we have created new structures of accountability and a new campaigning style of Labour politics based on a mass membership and a radical socialist vision of the future.

Together with Bermondsey comrades, I intend to translate these ideas into a *new* style of parliamentary politics, a *new* style of MP and a *new* style of relationship between the MP, the Party and the local community.

It is my intention to de-mystify and de-glamourise the role of MP and establish a more collective teamwork political practice.

In order to act as a genuine spokesperson for the local movement, I am committed to develop strong links at grassroots level, not only with the Party, but also with Bermondsey trade unions, tenant's associations, women's and ethnic minority groups.

To avoid being co-opted into the political establishment and losing touch with the experiences and interests of working class people, I plan to take only the wage of a skilled worker, plus expenses, and use the rest of the MP's salary for the benefit of the Labour Movement.

It is now the task of the Party to wage a crusade to convince and inspire the electorate that Labour has a real socialist alternative worth fighting for. We must openly and honestly argue that only through a radical socialist transformation of society can we ensure Britain's economic recovery and prosperity together with social justice and equality for all.

I look forward to going to the House of Commons with like-minded comrades to carry these ideas into the PLP in order to transform that 'gentlemen's club' into an instrument by which Labour's historic goal – the socialist transformation of society – may be achieved.

Peter Tatchell
Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Bermondsey
(subject to NEC endorsement)

HESELTINE'S DOCKLANDS EXPERIMENT

While constituency Labour Parties throughout London are engaged in selecting their parliamentary and local candidates, there is bound to be intense debate around the issues of greatest importance for Labour policy, both locally and nationally. Naturally, much of this centres of agreeing ways to meet and reverse the present government's thorough-going attack on the structures and powers of local government.

In East London one focus for the debate is the newly-imposed London Docklands Development Corporation, the brainchild of Michael Heseltine, for the rapid and profitable redevelopment of the Docklands area. The Labour Party's present position on the existence of this body is far from clear. Labour MPs opposed the passage through Parliament of the Act that brought it into being, but Bob Mellish (at present MP for Bermondsey) is the Vice-chairman. Labour councils, whose powers were being removed, opposed it at a Select Committee hearing at the House of Lords but the leaders of the three Docklands councils have all accepted seats on the Corporation's board. Their reasoning seems to be that the Corporation is now a reality, it cannot be ignored, and by being there on the inside it can be influenced to benefit Docklands through its direct access to Treasury funds.

These arguments ignore a massive weight of evidence about the structure and policies of the LDDC, as well as the major reasons for its creation. The LDDC was set up to develop Docklands in the 'national' as opposed to the local interest. This means that projects do not have to be seen in relation to local needs – for new manufacturing industry, for low-cost, low-rent family housing and for improved community facilities, like health centres, district centres and schools. One aspect of the 'national' interest is the stress which the Government places on rapid results. The LDDC has been designed to speed up redevelopment of Docklands as one of the prime inner city sites in Western Europe. This means taking planning control out of the hands of local government and by-passing any effective form of public consultation over particular schemes. The existing plan for Docklands was drawn up with the participation of local groups to meet the needs of people living and working in East London – the LDDC have made it clear they will follow this only insofar as it zones areas of land for particular uses (housing, industry, etc.). The principles of the plan have been completely set aside.

PRIVATE DEVELOPERS

As part of their programme of rapid development, the LDDC have 'vested' 624 acres of publicly-owned land in Docklands. They will assemble packages of land and sell them off to private developers for whatever uses for which there is a demand. They have said they will use industrial sites for such developments as warehousing or large retail outlets, which provide low numbers of mainly unskilled jobs. Particularly within the Enterprise Zone on the Isle of Dogs, safeguards against nuisance from noise, pollution or traffic will be minimal. *All* the LDDC housing development will be private – taken in conjunction with central government Housing Allocation Programme cuts, this means that no publlic housing will be built in the Docklands boroughs where currently 45,000 people are on the housing waiting list. Old riverside wharves are being converted to luxury flats at £150,000 each and even out in Beckton, where family-style houses are proposed, the costs (at a minimum of £28,000 each) will be too high for local people to afford. And the land on which they build is lost forever to public housing.

This overall picture is not one that fits well with Labour policies, so is this where the argument about influencing the LDDC from within comes into force? It seems not. Since the LDDC was given the go-ahead in July it has become clear that there is no possibility of them changing or softening their policies. In many ways, of course, they would not want to change – the staff and the Board have been recruited to reflect the interests of speedy facilitation for private investment. But even if it were possible to persuade them of the strength of local needs, funding for every project they propose has to be individually authorised by the DoE, and to date over 200 such applications have been refused. The LDDC has been set up by Heseltine and will continue to be tightly controlled from Whitehall.

MODEL FOR TORY STRATEGY

Docklands is a model for Tory strategy on local government. If you took all the provisions in the Local Government, Land & Planning Act of 1980, magnified them five times and placed them in one are to 'test' both their ineffectiveness and the public response, you would have Docklands under the LDDC. It is a most dangerous model and one against which all London Labour constituencies, not just those in Docklands area, must make a clear stand. Local workers and residents in Docklands, with the support of some of the Labour wards, have begun a campaign to protect local democracy and to ensure that any incoming Labour government is pledged to repeal the legislation setting up Urban Development Corporations. They believe that political opposition to the structure and policies of the LDDC is essential. The Government has made it clear in this issue that there is no middle ground – what is happening in Docklands today will be happening in the rest of the country tomorrow.

Jean Lowe
Joint Docklands Action Group



Demonstrators protest against planning application for luxury flats at Corbetts Wharf.
Photo by Chi Chan of the East End News.

PLANNING FOR LONDON'S JOBS

A programme of proposals for Labour to put to the electorate in May on local jobs was the subject of Briefing's "Target '82" manifesto conference on employment held at County Hall at the end of October.

Underlying much of the conference debate was an acknowledgement that national and international capitalist control of finance places strict limits on what a "local economy" can achieve in the way of socialist policies. But, equally, there was much agreement that local manifesto commitments on employment can show that there are alternatives to Tory policies and thus have campaigning value as the "crunch" period of confrontation with the Tory government on local government approaches, as well as forming a basis for the practical working out at local level of wider economic strategies.

A detailed list of proposals emanating from the conference will be available from the beginning of December. Here, in the meantime, is a brief account of some of the issues dealt with:

Structural change: Having lost manufacturing jobs, London was now losing service jobs as well. There was no evidence of a massive shift of jobs to other regions of the UK. Only sustained state intervention and planning could succeed in providing jobs where the private market had failed.

A policy of jobs-for-jobs sake would not necessarily benefit working people. Labour councils' job creation should take account of the *form* of employment that was being created, e.g. they could encourage new forms of co-operative enterprise that questioned the nature and need for profit. Other means by which councils could influence local employment included purchasing policies that generated jobs with local suppliers; building up their own workforces; providing information; e.g. by assessing employment potential of enterprises; funding and consulting of local trade union resource centres; encouraging the development and implementation of workers' plans; and promoting direct and indirect training schemes for workers.

Unemployed Workers' Centres: The importance of not losing to the Labour movement a new generation of young people who would in previous times have become involved through their unions was stressed. Councils should find ways of involving women and young people in unemployed workers' centres, and could also help with provision of premises (e.g. local authority halls, empty shops, etc.) grants towards rates and rents, part-sponsorship of full-time worker(s).

Municipal enterprise: This should be considered as part of a co-ordinated local plan. Councils needed to put up and control the capital required, do much planning and organisation and protect municipal enterprise from market forces, by public sector purchases. A local plan would also prevent clashes of interest, e.g. between municipal enterprise and co-operatives. Labour councils should appoint teams of economic planners, and should also be prepared to campaign vigorously against criticisms from capitalist lobbies about "unfair competition", "featherbedding" etc. by citing employment stability and other arguments.

Disadvantaged groups: black youngsters. More apprenticeship schemes should be encouraged; councils should radicalise the 1949 Education Act to take account of multi-racial school populations; unemployment centres for the young unemployed should be aware of education and training needs; affirmative action policies should be specifically initiated in the field of employment.

Alternative funding – pension funding. It was pointed out that big development schemes or single purchases, e.g. of office property, are beyond the range of London boroughs unless they go into partnership with other funds. Examples of what pension funds money can do: development of industrial sites, e.g. reburbishment; offers of loans to co-ops; participation in local investment boards.

Co-operatives: Councils could assist in setting up local Co-operative Development Agencies by making grants for staff, and helping with premises, setting grant conditions such as democratic control and running of CDAs. Other areas for attention could be an investigation of ways of strengthening links between workers' co-operatives and the local labour movement, and planned trading of co-ops with the Labour movement and Labour councils.

Pauline Ashbridge
Hornsey CLP

WAR ON LOW PAY

By John Suddaby

Following the retreat at British Leyland, the spotlight on pay this year has turned on over one million local authority workers and the water workers who both have settlement dates pending. Other groups of public service workers will be soon to follow.

Local authority manual workers contain among them some of the lowest paid workers in the country. The basic rate of the lowest grade is £59.00 per week and in London with London allowance of £12.80 per week, take home pay for many full-time workers is in the mid-fifties.

The gap between this reality and the TUC/Labour Party target of a national minimum wage equal to two thirds of national average earnings proclaimed in 1978 has widened dramatically in the last few years – this target officially endorsed as an objective for this year at the 1981 NUPE national delegate conference now stands at around £95.00. This ever widening gap is responsible for the frustrations and hardship felt by public sector manual workers and also in large part for the disillusion and cynicism felt by these workers towards their Union Leaderships when at appointed times each year they break their collective silences and produce circulars calling for support, activity, even action on pay.

HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF

This year the unions, NUPE, TGWU and the GMWU, are asking for a pay rise at least equal to the rise in the cost of living and a cut in hours. So far history looks like repeating itself. That was the claim last year and when the local authority manual workers negotiated 7½% – 1½% over the Government limit – the NUPE leadership then announced this as a victory. No wonder that many shop stewards and members are suspicious that the present claim of an increase in line with inflation – in itself no solution to the problem of low pay – will shortly be discarded for a few percent over 4%.

But there are differences this year. There is for a start a developing co-operation and coordination at a national level between a wide range of public sector unions. It is suggested that claims due later on next year be brought forward and that the alliance should not allow one group of workers to be isolated and picked off by the Government. However, this liaison between civil service unions, local government unions and health service unions is not only in its infancy, it is also as yet restricted to meetings between top union officials. It will not therefore on its own deliver the kind of action necessary to breach the Government's limit on pay. The involvement in the campaign of a large section of the rank and file memberships is necessary for that and in these times of mounting unemployment a fighting response cannot be miraculously conjured up. Local authority workers may well be frustrated and bitter like British Leyland workers but their low pay makes them consider very carefully the pros and cons of industrial action. In the present economic climate, the slogan of 'One man's pay increase is another man's job (or even your own job)' has been allowed by the union leaderships to exert a stunning impact on workers' combativity.

John Suddaby is Branch Secretary of Camden Council Branch of NUPE and chairperson of the London Divisional Council of NUPE.

RANK AND FILE CONTROL

What is needed is a national campaign on low pay and safeguarding jobs which begins to involve the union memberships

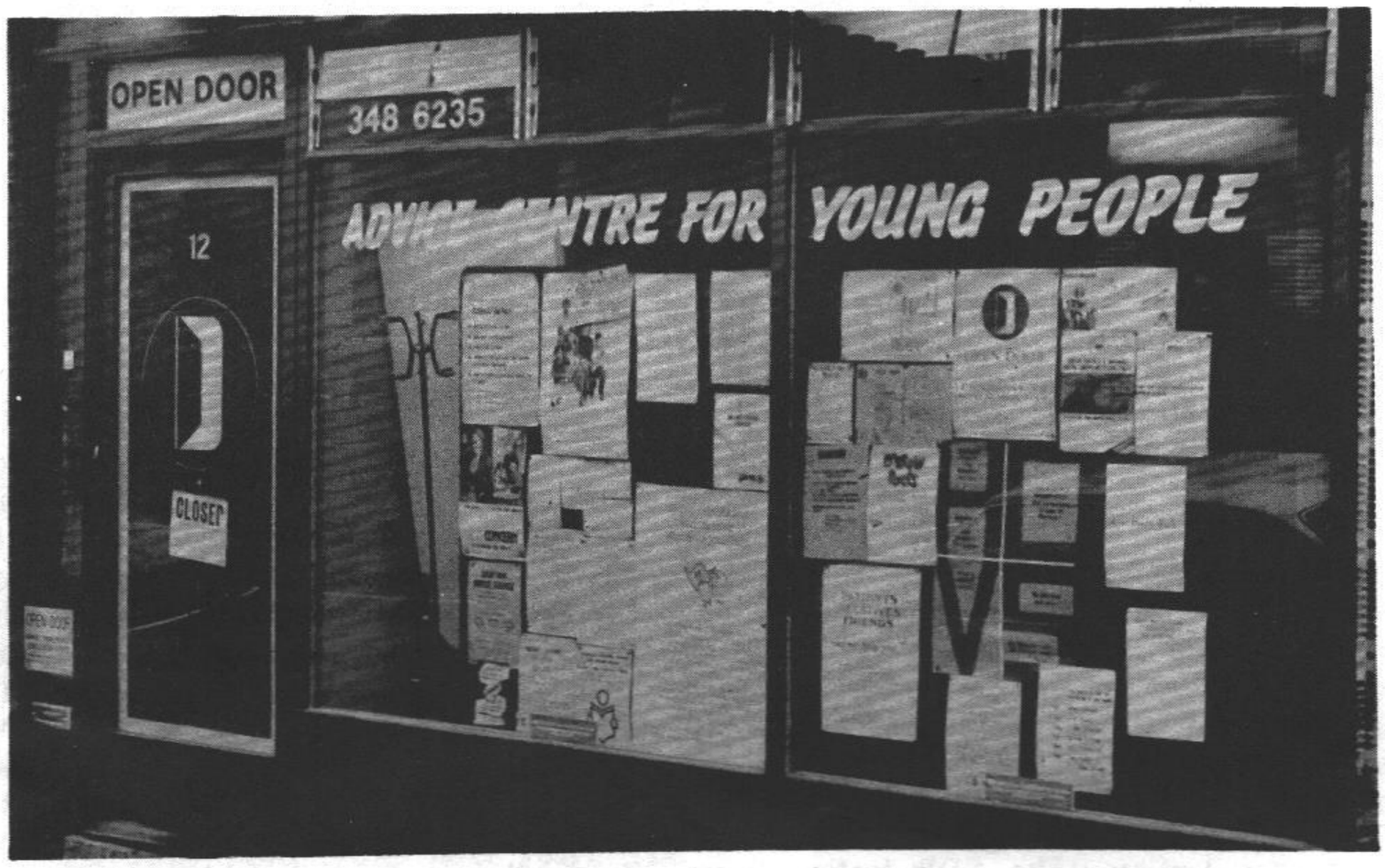
(continued on next page)

London's Youth Service - Who Cares?

In Comrade Bryn Davies's article in last July's *Briefing* – "ILEA – Giving London's Kids a Chance" – one is pleased to read his commitment as the Leader of the Inner London Education Authority – "to defend ILEA's expenditure against further cuts and restore those already made."

Although Comrade Bryn Davies did not refer in any way to the ILEA Youth Service – we would like to believe that it was not intentional – and that the Youth Service is in the minds of those who are at the helm of affairs at ILEA and that they have a policy towards the Youth Service. If not, they ought to have one!

The Youth Service began in the 19th century – primarily in the voluntary sector – in response to the needs of the young living in appalling conditions in the working class areas of London where the under privileged felt totally alienated from society. This was at a time when Great Britain ruled the biggest empire ever in the history of man.



DIFFERENT KIND OF SQUALOR

No doubt some inroads have been made in redressing some of the problems but there is a very different kind of squalor and alienation in our midst today – calling for a more thoughtful and urgent attack on the conditions that produce frustration, violence and bitterness among the under-privileged and the youth of today.

The Youth Service should not only make provision for the needs of the majority of young people – seeking education, wide experience and healthy occupation for their leisure hours after school, college or work. It should also address itself to the problems of the young arising out of truancy, unemployment, illiteracy, delinquency, homelessness, drug abuse, racial tension etc. It cannot afford to ignore problems and must direct its resources to form a first-aid service in such cases.

While there is enough expertise available in the Youth Service – to carry out the policy in relation to the needs of the young in our society – the real direction of such a policy should come from the elected members of the Authority.

They cannot and ought not delegate such a role to any one else. The London Youth Committee and twelve Area Youth Committees together with hosts of other voluntary and quasi-statutory organisations form a reservoir of talent and ideas as to how the problems relating to the young should be tackled.

In seeking to formulate such a policy there should be no arbitrary or all-knowing approach from individuals who refuse to listen to grass-roots opinion. Decisions should be arrived at in the open and with respect for the various views that make up the Youth Service.

PRINCIPLES NEGLECTED

Of late, principles of accountability, consultation and democratic processes – on which people of London voted Labour into power – seem to have been neglected by some of our comrades in the County Hall.

Two important reports – *Restructuring of London Youth Committee/12 Area Youth Committees* and the *Senior Staffing Report* which seek to alter the very fabric of the ILEA Youth Service had been rushed through without due consultation. In both cases the views of the London Youth Committee, the Area Youth Committees and other professional bodies had been ignored. It happened in the very last meeting of the ILEA Sub Committee before the present Administration assumed office.

There is a feeling in the Youth Service that both these reports seek to limit and shackle the principles of open government, democratic processes and accountability – the tenets on which the Manifesto rests.

Furthermore, there is a feeling in the Youth Service that these reports seek to institute cuts in the Youth Service at a time when more rather than less resources are needed to enable it to meet difficult problems engendered by the ruinous policies of this worst ever Tory government.

FRESH HOPES

The new regime brought fresh hopes for those of us who are opposed to cuts. We thought that comrades who fought these reports when they were being pushed through during the previous right-wing Labour administration, would now pay attention to the views of those involved in the youth service.

But alas – that was not to be! The very comrades who had voted against these reports in the past now refused us even the right to be listened to! Resolutions both by the London Youth Committee and the Area Youth Committees failed to evince any response from the Chairman of the Further & Higher Education Sub-Committee who claimed to have taken the decision "after reading the paper".

What papers? – whose papers? What about people? Twelve Area Youth Committees, and the London Youth Committee – hundreds of very committed people in the Youth Service – their personal and collective appeals were not listened to – We ask – why?

Just before the May election – Sir Ashley Bramall – the then Leader of the Authority – told us that over £900,000 was to be put into work with the young unemployed. With the new Administration – our hopes were raised only to be dashed when we learnt that the Youth Service was to receive only £20,000 from the £900,000. Comrades – we ask – why is the Youth Service being treated in this way?

NEGLECT

As if this is not enough – the elected members of the Authority have not even appointed a Chairman of the London Youth Committee not to speak of other members of the Authority who sit on the L.Y.C. What neglect by the very people who ought to be giving new impetus to the policies which ought to meet the needs of the young in these hard times.

We were no doubt encouraged to receive a letter from Ken Livingstone assuring us of his support. But it's not just words we want. It's action that's needed to prevent some vandals who are out to wreck the Youth Service while the members of the Authority squabble among themselves and ignore such an important need which is crying out for their attention.

V.S. Anand – Ilford South Labour Party
ILEA London Youth Committee
Hackney Area Youth Committee

(continued from previous page)

in consistent activity. Support for this and for rank and file control of it has been growing at NUPE national conferences. Inter-union cooperation at rank and file level received a boost on October 28th when seventy London local authority manual worker shop stewards from the TGWU, NUPE and the GMWU representing workers in twenty Boroughs met to discuss the building of a joint union campaign on pay and in defence of jobs. A recall conference is planned and for the first time for many years the setting up of a permanent London-wide joint shop stewards' committee for local authority manual workers seems on the cards.

Rank and file involvement and control over the campaign is vital for success and so is a suitably bold response to the Government's attack on pay and jobs. Union activists must not only show that inaction over pay does little to safeguard jobs, as many workers have found to their cost, but we must take up the Government's challenge and in our resistance to cash limits and to the new Heseltine Bill firmly identify the Government in the minds of an ever-widening circle of people as the deliberate creators of yet more unemployment.

LESSONS OF ST PANCRAS

Mildred Gordon

The lessons we learn from our defeats are every bit as important as those we learn from our victories. On October 29th, St. Pancras North was revealed to have changed from a safe Labour seat to an SDP marginal.

The unpalatable pill we must swallow is that there are now *no* safe Labour seats. On the same day that we lost St. Pancras North, we also lost a Borough election in the formerly solidly Labour ward of Leyton in Waltham Forest, as well as a number of others.

No seat is ours by right, we must fight for every one. (Remember in 1931 Barnet Janner represented Stepney as a Liberal, and Percy Harris was the Liberal MP for Bethnal Green.) We have a vital threefold task. We must continue to fight for leaders who will unequivocally present Conference policies to the public. We must enter a period of concentrated membership drives and party-building to enable us to claw out every Labour vote. But above all the whole party must be alerted to the threat of the SDP.



LOCAL CAMPAIGN

The local campaign in St. Pancras North was as good, if not somewhat better, than could have been expected in a snap election. The special factors presented by the Supplementary Rate Demand, the media hate campaign against Ken Livingstone, and the money, time and effort the local Labour Party had put into publicising Anne Sofer only five months earlier, all worked to our detriment. But there will always be 'special factors' in every campaign, and the main reasons for our failure go much deeper.

Although the few issues on which the SDP have declared themselves are profoundly unpopular; support of the EEC, maintenance of British nuclear deterrents, and increases in fares with no reductions in rates, all our attempts to attack these policies and to present our own, were thwarted by the media who universally promoted the SDP as a new, glossy and exciting party. It is therefore essential that we set up media groups in every area as soon as possible, in which Labour Party members who work in the media are called together to try to improve Labour's coverage in their papers and to use their expertise to improve the technical quality of our leaflets. The SDP leaflets were sophisticated and well produced. We urgently need to design and distribute nationally a number of short punchy leaflets attacking the SDP. We must lose no time in taking the offensive against them.

NOT AWAKENED

The London Labour Party, locked in battle with the Tories over the cuts and rates, has not awakened to the very real threat of the SDP. Although Ken Livingstone came to St. Pancras North a number of times for press conferences and meetings, not more than six other Labour members of the GLC appeared, even though a Labour Group meeting was cancelled to free them to turn up. *Labour Weekly* and *Briefing* hardly mentioned the campaign. Comrades came from all over London to help on Polling Day, but it was too little and too late. We must continue our attack on the Tories, but it is imperative that we recognise that the SDP is electorally the main enemy.

Haringey Feedback

Haringey Briefing has begun to hold regular meetings over the last three months, the last being the best attended so far.

Obviously with May 1982 in mind, a major part of the meetings have centred around the selection of candidates for the Borough elections and the drawing up of the manifesto.

However discussions have also been held on the future of the left in the Labour Party, including the aftermath of the Conference and the need for left co-operation. Also discussed has been the attack on local authorities, including reports from Lothian, and Heseltine's legislation. What has emerged is the need for a coordinated fight from Labour Councils and a campaign to get across to workers the effects of cuts and the consequence of the Tory Government policies.

The first round of selections has almost ended with significant gains for the left. Of the 22 candidates selected so far 14 are Briefing supporters. But the right wing Wards have yet to select. There is also a danger that current Tory Wards which might go to Labour due to SDP intervention may pick right wing candidates by default.

A key element in the success of the left in the Borough elections will be to ensure that the election will be fought on a socialist manifesto. The seven manifesto working parties are now finalising their reports to go to the Wards in December; there will be a policy conference open to all members in January. Over-riding all the specific policy areas, will be the strategy to adopt to fight the withdrawal of central Government grant and the fundamental attack on local democracy launched by the Tories through Heseltine's bill. The major task over the next few months will therefore be to ensure that the Ward parties commit the Labour Group through the manifesto to a confrontation with the Government over local authority expenditure. This makes it all the more crucial that the left should work out a common strategy based on the model resolutions proposed in November's 'Briefing' and to mobilise support for their adoption at the special London Labour Party Conference on December 12th.

Outside the Party we need to mobilise public support for a socialist defence of local Government. Hornsey CLP has organised a public meeting on the Heseltine Bill for November 17th, which will be the first step in the campaign. To back this up 12,000 leaflets are being distributed.

With the Borough elections in mind it is important to get across to people exactly what the consequences of the legal restrictions and financial cuts will be in terms of local democracy, school closures, cuts in social services etc. But at the same time as attacking the Tory cuts, we must put forward positive socialist alternatives to expose both the Tories and their more urbane capitalist friends, the Social Democrats.

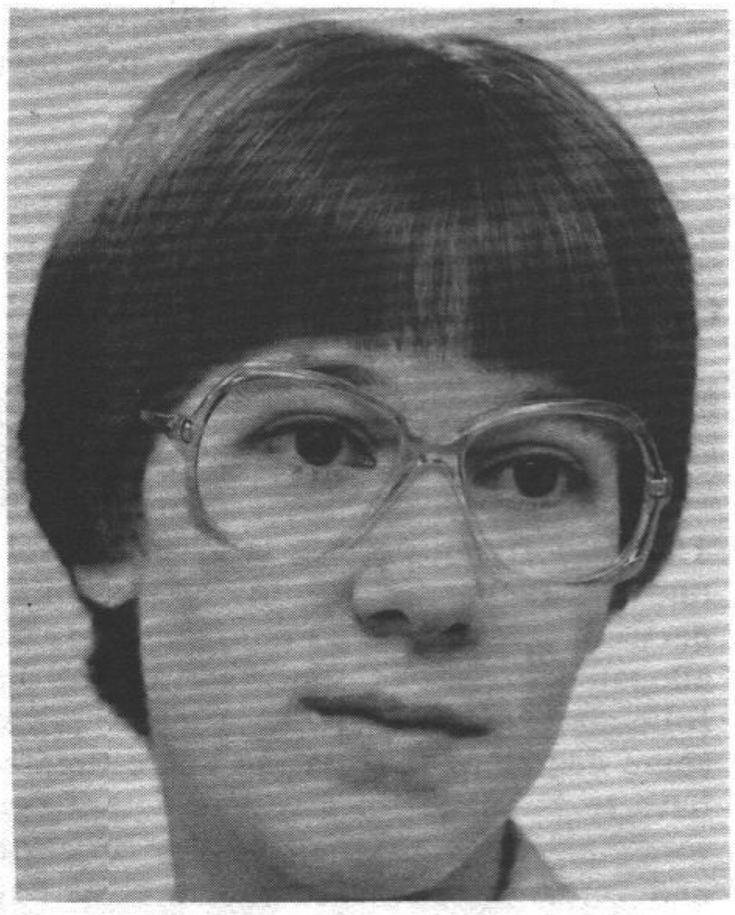
Jeremy Short
Hornsey Labour Party

HESELTINE CHALLENGE:

BRIEFING SPECIAL 4-page SUPPLEMENT

As we go to press the fate of Heseltine's legislation appears to hang in the balance. The following articles were written in response to the initial proposals contained in the Local Government Finance Bill.

County Hall News



Valerie Wise
Member of the Greater London Council
Wardsworth, Battersea South

The Heseltine Bill on Local Authorities has now had its First Reading and it is extremely bad news for the GLC, ILEA and other high spending authorities. The aim of the Bill is to set limits for expenditure of local authorities in England and Wales. This will be done by the following means:

A local authority must fix its main rate before 1st June. If the local authorities' spending plans are above the Government's set limit then the local authority has to pass a resolution by 1st June stating its intention to levy a supplementary rate and specifying the amount proposed. (In other words at the same time as it makes its main rate.) Only one supplementary rate will be allowed.

REFERENDUM

The proposed supplementary rate has to be approved by a referendum which has to be held on the first Thursday following 21st June (24th June next year). The referendum will be conducted according to regulations made by the Secretary of State who will decide the question to be asked.

Authorities who win the referendum will then be allowed to levy the supplementary rate but will have to levy it differentially as between their domestic and non-domestic ratepayers. In other words it will be a bigger burden on domestic ratepayers.

The bill puts Councils into different classes e.g.

Metropolitan District Councils	(mostly Labour)
Non-Metropolitan District Councils	(mostly Tory)
Inner London Borough Councils	(mostly Labour)
Outer London Borough Councils	(mostly Tory)
Metropolitan County Councils	(mostly Labour)
Non-Metropolitan County Councils	(mostly Tory)
GLC (ILEA)	(mostly Labour)

The Secretary of State has complete discretion to apply different rules to different classes of Councils. So it will be possible for the Government to set rating limits which only affect Labour Councils. So the Government could decide just to pick off the GLC and ILEA if it so desired.

Secondly, it is up to the Secretary of State to determine what proportion of the supplementary rate falls on domestic ratepayers and again he can vary this between different classes of Councils. He could decide, for example, that the GLC and ILEA supplementary rates fall entirely on domestic ratepayers.

So this Bill is enabling legislation giving the Secretary of State enormous powers to which he does not even have to answer to Parliament. It is up to the Secretary of State to decide how much each local authority will be allowed to spend. If a local authority wishes to spend more than the Government limit and if it wins a referendum to allow it to do this, the Secretary of State then has the power to say what the split between domestic and non-domestic ratepayers should be.

The Bill has to be defeated if Councils like the GLC and ILEA are going to be able to carry out their election promises. The Tory Government's aim is to break us to put us in an impossible position.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee has recognised the importance of this battle and is calling a special meeting of Tribune Group MPs and Councillors to discuss the campaign against the legislation. Obviously there has to be strong resistance in Parliament but no matter how much the Bill is fought line by line, through all its stages the Government has the whip hand as it can (and will) impose a guillotine. So additional methods will have to be found. We are all aware that while Parliamentary procedure is not helpful to the introduction of constructive changes, it certainly lends itself to *obstruction*. Normally this does not happen, but at a time when central government is disrupting and destroying local government, then MPs are justified in using every possible Parliamentary weapon against that government. If our MPs fail to do this, then they are allowing the time to come when Labour Councillors will be faced with impossible or illegal choices. The Labour Co-ordinating Committee meeting is to discuss ways and means of obstructing and preventing the Tory legislation this session. If MPs decide to go along with this then they will need the backing of the Party at large. The GLC Labour Group had adopted a policy one of the points of which is an advocacy of Parliamentary obstruction. Many other Councils and Councillors are desperately anxious about the situation and would welcome such activity.

Lots of people may be under the impression that the Labour Group has decided to levy a 42p in the £ rate and that this will mean the GLC will be making cuts. This is not the case. The Group has not yet decided what rate to levy next year. We have asked the Policy Committee to report on the effects on (a) existing services, and (b) Manifesto commitments, after a rigorous examination of priorities aimed to achieve a revenue rate of 42p.

This whole budget exercise is being carried out in case the Heseltine legislation does not get carried through Parliament. 13 Members of the Group opposed the above resolution, not because we are against looking again at the budget, but because we were worried that the Group was being led into the position of levying a rate which is not sufficient to carry out our Manifesto commitments.

If the Heseltine legislation is defeated the GLC and ILEA will be alright. However the Boroughs will still face a problem because they will be talking about huge rate rises a month before the Borough Elections.

FIGHTING HESELTINE:

Much has been written recently about the possibilities of defying Heseltine either by a no cuts/ no rent or rate increase policy or by disengagement, but little thought has been given to the consequences that would follow.

The problem posed by either option suggested is that they do not bring the Council into direct conflict with Heseltine. There is no possibility of Commissioners being sent in to run Town Halls. There is no statutory means by which this could happen. Equally there is little possibility of Councillors being sent to prison. This could not happen at the hands of the District Auditor. Surcharge is a possibility, but the establishment is likely to be much keener to simply disqualify councillors from holding office.

The rate fixing process is a very simple one. In January or February the initial decision is taken as to the budgets to be allocated for each Council service for the following year. This inevitably involves some degree of speculation and estimates have to be made for a wide range of factors ranging from the level of inflation and interest charges to the level of pay awards. The block grant allocation is known, and a decision is made on the level of rents.

Any Council pursuing the no cuts/no rent or rate increase option would have to go through this process in order to protect services for the year ahead. The next step is to fix the rate at a sufficient level to finance the agreed budget. The Director of Finance and Chief Executive would advise on the appropriate level, and even though there could be some proper disagreement as to the size of certain estimates, it would immediately become apparent were the Councillors to ignore the advice and fix the rate at the same level as the previous year. No argument could be raised about the possibility of later cuts, as these should have been reflected in the initial budget allocations. The moment a Council fixed the rate at a level insufficient to cover its budget, their chief officers would advise that the councillors actions were illegal. Three possible consequences could be:-

1. A refusal by officers to levy the rate at the agreed level.
Officers would probably argue that they could not obey an unlawful order. No disciplinary action could be taken against them in these circumstances, and if attempted, the courts would intervene. Were no lawful rate to be agreed by the beginning of the financial year, the officers would further advise that it would be unlawful to incur any expenditure. They could even refuse to pay the wage bill for that week.

2. Immediate bankruptcy
Councils need to borrow not only to finance their capital expenditure, but also to finance the fluctuations of their current receipts. As soon as city institutions thought that their money was at risk they could refuse not only to lend, but also call in their outstanding loans. It is probable that officers would insist on honouring these debts despite instructions to the contrary. The Council could face an immediate cash flow shortage and be unable to meet its weekly wage bill.

The effect of a local authority going bankrupt would cause havoc on the money markets, similar to a large bank going under. There would be an immediate loss of confidence and the Bank of England might feel obliged to intervene. The government's ability to borrow would also be affected and it might also feel obliged to intervene rather than sit back and wring its hands.

3. Legal action
The District Auditor would not intervene until any illegal expenditure had actually been incurred. He would then carry out an extraordinary audit, and apply to the High Court for a declaration of illegality and ask for councillors to be disqualified and/or surcharged. It is possible that a legal action could be brought in the name of the Attorney-General at an earlier stage seeking such a declaration. The Attorney-General would have no power to seek either disqualification or surcharge, but he could apply for an order compelling them to levy a lawful rate.

THE NEW BILL

The Local Government Finance Bill allows Councils to put off the day of confrontation because it prohibits Councils from levying the initial rate above a prescribed level (the governments Grant Related Expenditure Assessment plus a tolerance level of 30 – 40%). Heseltine has not announced either the GREA or the tolerance level that will apply, but figures issued by the A.M.A. suggest that almost all the authorities caught by the legislation will be in London and that the main targets will be the G.L.C., I.L.E.A., Camden, Hackney, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Tower Hamlets.

The situation for all these Councils is that were they to budget for no cuts, then the initial permitted rate would probably be no higher than that for this year, and in some cases could be significantly lower. These Councils when fixing a no cuts budget, would be required to declare the level of the supplementary rate that would be necessary at their rate fixing meeting. If their budget were to necessitate a supplementary rate, they would be forced to levy the initial rate at the maximum level permitted by the government, or they would breach the law.

Having agreed the budget, the outgoing Councillors would have no further responsibility for the supplementary rate as no referendum can be held before June 1st. Heseltine is therefore creating a situation where deficit budgetting is permitted. A Council may be unable to levy an initial rate at a level sufficient to balance the budget, and its ability to do so with a supplementary rate depends completely on the whims of the electorate at a referendum. The outgoing councillors carry no responsibility, if the post-May Borough Councillors decide to boycott the referendum.

DISENGAGEMENT

A Councillor can only be surcharged or disqualified by the District Auditor if he is responsible for 'incurring or authorising' any unlawful expenditure. A person who votes against a proposal bears no such responsibility. A person who abstains is probably also exempt. No liability would therefore arise if labour councillors resigned committee chairs and consistently voted down Tory proposals. Unfortunately, it would be necessary for them to vote in favour of expenditure if services were to be maintained.

Consider first the possibility of disengagement before the 1982 budget is approved, because councillors were not prepared to act as Heseltine's henchmen and introduce a cuts budget. They could consistently vote down Tory proposals with apparent immunity. However, as April 6th approached, it would be essential to agree some budget. If no budget or rate had been agreed by the start of the financial year, council officers would advise that any expenditure would be unlawful, and the complete collapse of the

the real problems we face

Council could ensue. This year Camden Councillors came under increasing pressure as the financial year approached and they were unable to agree a budget which included cuts in the Building Department.

The second opportunity for disengagement would be after a referendum had been lost, possibly having been boycotted. The Council would face an immediate crisis. An unbalanced budget had been lawful up to this stage because of the possibility of a supplementary rate. It would now be necessary to balance the budget by either cuts or borrowing. Under the Bill, borrowing would only be legal if approved by Heseltine.

At an early stage the Director of Finance would advise that the budgeted income would only be sufficient to cover existing committments, and that expenditure on any further committments would be unlawful. Lothian reached this point and were advised that it would be illegal to enter new contracts with 1,100 part time teachers who were due to be reengaged for the new term.

Even without disengagement, there is bound to be a major confrontation with Heseltine if a referendum is lost. Heseltine will have complete control over the Council's affairs through his control of their ability to borrow. He will not send in officials to draw up a detailed budget. He will insist that the Council produce a budget that he is prepared to sanction.

There is no time here to consider the legal implications of the other options of defiance. The point has been to emphasise the immediate crisis that will arise once a deficit budget has been approved. This reply has been largely negative, but a lot of thought needs to be put into developing a realistic policy of defiance.

Robert Latham
Holborn and St. Pancras South Labour Party

Some hard questions for BRIEFING

Les Tate from Lambeth writes to Briefing about the problems of going on the Council next May. Robert Latham replies to the legal questions raised. Readers are asked for their views on the other points raised in the letter.

Dear **Briefing,**

I would like to ask your advice on the surcharge law.

To explain, I'm standing for Lambeth Council next year and it seems obvious to me that the council will have to refuse to draw up a detailed budget in April, but will have to simply set the same rate as last year (or possibly a lower one in line with Heseltine's financial requirements backed up by legislation – and we should debate whether we should adopt his 'base rate' or the full 'percentage tolerance'). Simultaneously they would declare their intention of no cuts or rent rises and explain that they do not intend to go for any of Heseltine's supplementaries to beef up the budget.

The problems I want to raise with you are:

A. Who gets surcharged? The councillors who voted for that budget, or the councillors who would be running the budget in July when the council runs out of money?

B. If the Tories and the SDP take over in April and make the cuts required to balance the books, would the Labour councillors who had voted for a low rate/ no cuts the month before still be liable to surcharge, even though the council would not go bankrupt?

C. Could right-wing councillors vote for a low rate in April and avoid surcharge by claiming that they did it with cuts in mind?

D. Are councillors who resign the committee chairs and use the Labour majority to vote down Tory proposals liable to surcharge? Have you any views on what would happen to such a council which had its business paralysed? Commissioners perhaps?

The other point is more general about council tactics, but I would be interested in your views.

It seems to me that whether you go for bankruptcy or the resignation strategy the right wing in most Labour groups (particularly GLC ILEA) are bound to refuse their mandate, and refuse to be surcharged – especially in Boroughs where they have not been selected to stand again in May.

That means that when the budget is set in April the right wing will side with Tories/SDP to call for cuts. The question is, how will this opposition express itself? Both sides will be calling for a budget to keep the rates down; perhaps motions of no confidence in the 'party (Labour of course!) leading us to financial ruin'? I ask, because it seems crucial to me that we prepare the ground on the Left for an incredibly bitter confrontation with the right wing in the party over next April's budget. It seems likely to me that it will be a minority of Labour councillors who will stand up and risk surcharge when the time comes and the party will have to decide how best to back them up. Should we, and can we, expel the right wingers? Should the left councillors resign their seats? And what happens in the May elections when you're going round canvassing and two names you're asking people to vote for are councillors who enjoy the party's support and who have gone for bankruptcy, and one is a Labour candidate who has refused the mandate and voted against party wishes over the April budget? We can't say 'Vote Labour, but only two out of three'!

This may sound theoretical and very much a projection; but I believe that a call for bankruptcy (which I support) must be seen in the light that the right wing in Labour groups won't let it happen. The bankruptcy will not materialise. What will happen is that there will be open warfare in the Labour Party (which, of course, would be even more the case if we went for cuts). What we need to plan is a left strategy to win that confrontation, and the council elections and the confrontation with Government that would follow in June or July. It's going to be very difficult to win in May if the party and the councillors are not 100% in the same boat.

We should also bear in mind that winning is not everything; it is getting the argument across that counts. The problem there is that people support a winner and desert a loser, so you can only get them to listen if you are beating the Tories/SDP/Labour right wing.

Yours fraternally
Les Tate

(REPLY ABOVE)

Progress Through Chaos

The London Labour Party Conference on December 12th, if it runs to the usual form of such special conferences, will prove yet another wasted day, at the end of which the only commitment likely to be made is to a bland formula resolution meaning all things to all men, draped, naturally enough, in a sacred pledge to 'fight' Heseltine's policies to the bitter end. Such a 'cop out' would be tragic for the Labour Party, leading to worsening chaos and demoralisation through lack of direction. It would also be an even greater defeat for the London Left, which will have demonstrably failed to have rallied around a coherent policy.

The Labour Right nationally, as part of their current witch-hunt, have now seized upon London – and particularly upon the group associated with *London Briefing* – as principal villains in the piece. Jack Straw, that accomplished careerist, has taken a lead recently in spear-heading this particular emphasis. From their point of view, they are tactically right. If they destroyed the Left's strong London base, from which has sprung CLPD and much else besides, the fall of the Left in the res rest of the country would duly follow. The Right are now cynically citing Croydon, St. Pancras, Bermondsey, etc., as omens of ultimate disaster and claim the Left is responsible for extravagant rate policies. In fact, if truth be told, the high rate – and supplementary rate – policies implemented by progressive Labour councils in the last couple of years have been jointly agreed by the Left, the Centre and the Right, opposed only by the Labour ultra-Left and ultra-Right. However, there is no doubt that substantial sections of the working class are now being pushed into poverty by a combination of government policies and the inevitable high rates that are a product of those policies. The day of an 'acceptable' high rate increase is over for Labour.

What can we confidently predict about the course of events over the next several months? I think the following propositions are incontestably true:

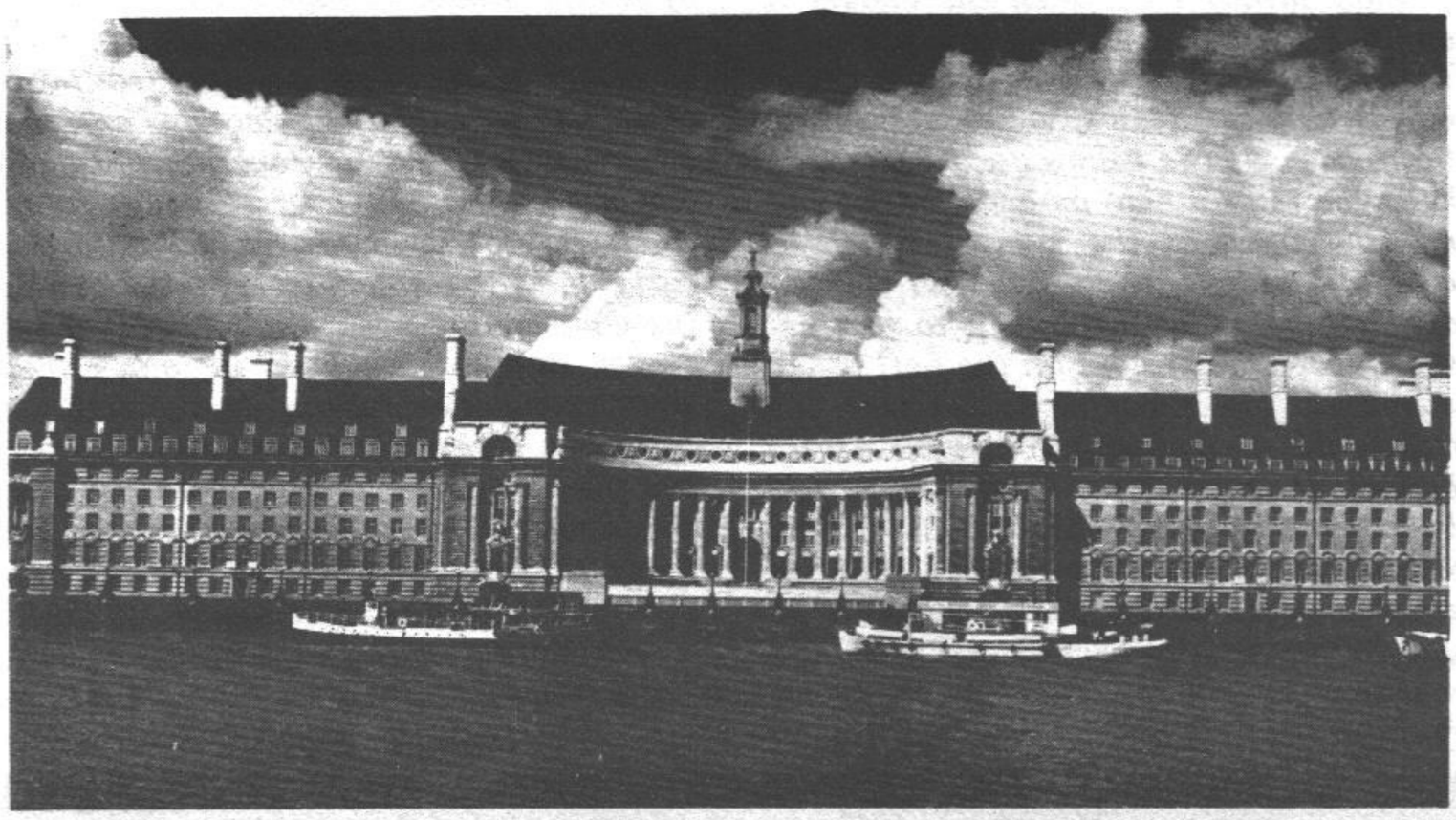
1. Heseltine now has a Bill before Parliament to control rate increases by high spending local authorities. Because of a Tory mini-revolt, this particular form of legislation may not get passed into law;
2. Even if the Bill fails, Heseltine knows he has a Tory mandate to limit Labour rate increases, which he can effect by other, simpler legislative means. Whatever happens, next year high spending authorities will have their rate setting controlled by central government;
3. Allegedly 'over spending' Labour councils next year will not be allowed to set a rate sufficient to avoid cuts in services;
4. It follows that any high spending council 'officially' controlled by Labour will be implementing cuts next year.

Labour in London has another problem looming on the horizon. Over thirty Labour Manifestos will be presented to the electorate in 1982; and Labour will have the majority on a number of councils. If still a member of Hackney council, I will be committed to two manifestos – GLC and Borough. Conscious of our commitments to areas such as the social services and housing, I will rather resent it if the GLC precept, which is the first charge on our spending, includes a factor for a growth spending spree next year. The fares cuts are the major electoral pledge which must be underwritten for the next three years; but apart from that, the London Labour Party must ensure equity between Boroughs, GLC and ILEA. There is a real necessity for a formula to be worked out for the balance to be kept right. If the balance goes wrong, there will be old people and children dying in Hackney in 1982 because of a Social Services Department collapsing for lack of funds.

The 12th December Conference should be saying the following things:

1. No rate increases in real terms (in Hackney, opinion is moving towards taking the average wage rise as our percentage);
2. No cuts in services;
3. The Executive should set a growth percentage figure for Boroughs, GLC and ILEA in 1982/3, e.g. 0%, 1% or 2%;
4. There should be an all-London publicity campaign, funded by councils with Labour majorities, in defence of local democracy and highlighting government policies;
5. The GLRC Executive should be prepared to sanction the general policy next year of Labour, where it is either the majority party or the largest party on a council, refusing to become the official ruling party, when this would involve implementing cuts. It is important that Tories, Liberals and SDPers be seen publicly as Heseltine's hatchet-men. We should be prepared to run a campaign in the 'vanguard' Boroughs on guerrilla lines, as has happened in Liverpool, where Labour refused to take office, although the largest party, and has consistently voted down, or against, Liberal-Tory cuts. Heseltine has made local government unworkable. Let's acknowledge the fact and develop tactics that fit the situation.

Ron Heisler (Hackney Council)



Strategy for Survival

Sheffield, Lothian, Stirling, Dundee and the GLC Labour Groups are sponsoring a conference on a "strategy for Survival in local Government" on December 5th at County Hall in London.

It is high time leading Labour Councils were seen to stand together in public. They will demonstrate by doing so that it is a few "irresponsible overspenders".

The latest proposals to curb the powers of local Councils amount to a major constitutional change. The government's aim is to use fascist style referenda to overrule the electoral mandates of Labour Councils.

The renewed attack on local government is not motivated by mainly desire to cut public spending, since Council spending is falling while central government spending has not been cut.

The attack is part of the government's onslaught on all those democratic channels – like trade unions – through which working people can organise themselves to express pressure to meet the needs of society. Through these channels ways of running society can be developed which are superior to the shallow commercialism which the Tories promote. That is the reason for the renewed attack.

On past performances there is little reason to expect Labour's establishment in local government to put up any effective resistance. The Labour Party conference of Labour Groups on December 19th is important, but we would be wrong to expect much to emerge. It is therefore important that the December 5th conference, and the London Labour Party conference on December 12th, should be successful. It will be left to the more radical Councils to put up any real resistence.

The December 5th conference is open to all Labour Party members. The attendance fee is £3 (£1 unwaged). Bookings should go to LCC, 9 Poland St, London W1. Conference papers will be sent to people who book.

Alan Taylor
(Labour Co-ordinating Committee)

Which Way for the L.C.C.?

On 8th November, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee held its AGM in Glasgow. As a newly elected member of the LCC Executive who had spent two years on CLPD executive I could not avoid comparing the two major extra-parliamentary organisations of the Labour Left.

Organisationally, the LCC has the advantage of a paid full-time organiser and free office facilities in Central London while CLPD struggles on from two rooms in a Golders Green semi with only voluntary help.

LCC also benefits from public prestige and a high-profile media image which allows it to take much of the credit for recent Left advances.

And yet it is CLPD which has made the running in the campaign within the unions and CLPs, and in developing the Left's strategy. Even on the level of membership and affiliation figures, CLPD has proved the more successful.

In part this is because CLPD chose to campaign on issues which were crucial to the balance of power in the party rather than the policies to which the party has a paper commitment. Although party democracy proved to be the vehicle of Left ascendancy in the party, the LCC cannot be blamed for taking a back seat since it was created to supplement and not to replace CLPD.

But the real failing of the LCC thus far lies not in its organisational efficiency or ingenuity relative to that of CLPD, but in its whole style, its approach to the Labour Left as a whole, and its timidity.

The LCC executive consists to a great extent of over-committed famous persons with little time to devote to the nitty-gritty of activism, and earnest intellectuals happier in theoretical discussion than concrete campaigning. A full-time organiser means that most executive members are able to confine their contribution to little more than attending executive meetings. And even that they are not very good at – the average attendance last year was ten.

Furthermore, although there are several active and effective local groups notably in Scotland and Manchester, little attempt is made to involve the membership let alone other sections of the organised Left such as London Briefing.

The result is an executive inclined to be remote, didactic and often elitist, without being representative of very much.

One might hope that the LCC would nevertheless be a source of some inspiration and leadership. Its 'Trade Unions and Socialism' initiative offers some prospect of this but, so far, much more has been achieved by CLPD and the Benn Campaign. The hope of the LCC acquiring more concrete objectives in its trade union work were reduced by the AGM's rejection of a call to campaign for an agreed left slate for the NEC elections. The tired old men in Congress House may sleep more soundly.

The LCC will probably repent on this; it did after all support Tony Benn's candidacy, after heated debate, and participate in the RFMC, despite reservations. Unfortunately the AGM, while endorsing the executive's decision to withdraw from the RFMC 'in favour of new forms of Left unity' (unspecified), also called for 'a switch in the Labour Left's priorities' (from democracy to policy); it rejected the claim that 'support for democratic reforms and the pursuit and popularisation of policies are not mutually exclusive, and indeed must go together'; and it called for a 'moratorium on the deputy Leader question' until next Spring. In effect this would, if observed, exclude the LCC from contributing to the discussions which will certainly take place amongst the broader Left over the next few months.

There is much that is cause for concern in the state of the LCC. Recently it has been an organisation which has been content to be led rather than to lead, and which has failed to establish a clear role for itself. But it still has potential, and could achieve much especially in its work on economic policy and within the trades unions. There has been an influx of new people onto the executive which could produce an improvement.

I hope that I have been too hard on the LCC. If I have not and there is no dramatic change, the LCC could fizzle out when its Rowntree Trust grant expires next year. Or, worse still, it could become an extra-parliamentary 'Stan Orme Tendency'.

Jon Lansman
Greenwich CLP

WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING TO FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM?

There is no doubt that the next election will be desperately hard fought; there is equally no doubt that the media will always seek to portray our policies in terms of personalities or that the right wing parliamentary Party will fail to put over the policies of the Party or to fight on class lines.

As part of the process of developing the campaigning abilities of the Party to positively campaign for socialism *Briefing* would like to hear from comrades throughout London on what activities they have to mobilise support for the confrontation with Heseltine, what they are doing to right racism, to take the arguments to the factory floor, the depots and offices, what steps have been taken to produce multi lingual leaflets, to build links with community groups and to increase the sense of community identity with the Labour Party.

***Briefing* would also like to hear from comrades outside London about similiar activities, and in particular whether they are thinking of producing a *Briefing*-type journal in their own areas.**

This winter will see an intensifying of the battles against the Tories with the likelihood of public sector industrial action; activists should be preparing now to build contacts and support for this action so that the Labour Party becomes a fighting force locally that can be relied on by all those who suffer from Toryism, to fight back with them.

The columns of *Briefing* are open for this work to be reported on.

Jeremy Corbyn

ANOTHER APPEAL TO OUR SELLERS AND READERS

London Labour Briefing is now operating at a very serious financial deficit. We're very anxious both to maintain the quality and size of Briefing and to keep the price down to 20p. We have appealed in the last two issues for comrades to complete the standing orders mandate (see this page). So far we have received a commitment adding up to £47.50 per month. Thanks to everyone who has contributed. But if we are to maintain Briefing, we must get this up to at least £100 per month. We appeal *urgently* to all supporters.

1. **Please send us a donation**
2. **Please complete the standing orders form**

All contributions to Jon Pickering, Flat 10, Scoresdale, Beulah Hill, SE19.

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

To. . . . . Bank Limited . . . . . (address of your bank)

Please pay Co-operative Bank, Croydon Sorting Code Number: 08-90-79

for the credit of LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING Account number 50120176

the sum of £. . . . . (amount in figures). Amount in words:
commencing . . . . . (Date of First payment). Amount of first payment: . . . . . .
and thereafter ever month until you receive further notice from me/us in writing.
and debit my/our account accordingly.

Account to be debited:

Account Number . . . . . .

Signature(s) . . . . . .Date . . . . . .
. . . . . .
NAME (PLEASE PRINT) . . . . . .ADDRESS . . . . . .

London Labour Briefing, December 1981, page 14

1/4 of a million against the bomb

Mary Woolfe, Islington CND



A quarter of a million against the Bomb. London, October 24th. Photograph: John Brennan.

Quarter of a million supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament recently formed one of the largest demonstrations ever seen in Britain. The rally came at a time when hundreds of thousands of people were joining similar demonstrations in Germany, Italy, Spain and France.

In Greece, Yugoslavia and Rumania there is a growing movement actively campaigning for a nuclear-free zone in the Balkans. Similar demands are being made regionally in Scandinavia. Increasingly, European governments are being pressurized from within to reject their traditional role as keepers of cannon fodder for the nuclear Superpowers.

CND's reappearance as a mass movement is partly a result of further escalation in the nuclear arms race. The proposed purchase of Trident and siting of American cruise missiles in Britain has resulted in massive opposition to the Tory government's support for America's warmongering policies. A previous generation of campaigners, active in the early days of Polaris and before, are now being joined in their work by three hundred new activists each week. However, it is also important to consider the success of the campaign as an organised movement of mass opposition.

Today's campaign for nuclear disarmament has obviously learnt many lessons from the Women's Movement. Specifically, it has established a powerful organisation based on active local groups working on a non-hierarchical basis. There is no oppressive leadership structure. Importantly, many of the demonstrators in Hyde Park were participating in what they considered their first overt political activity. Local CND groups (and there are over fifty in London alone) include members active in a wide range of Left organisations as well as those who describe themselves as "non-political". This ability to involve women and men with different political and religious commitments within a single, non-hierarchical movement has important implications for CND's role as a politically educational and active movement. In practical terms, for example, the experience of joining CND demonstrations has changed many members' attitudes towards media coverage of other campaigns.

GRASSROOTS

CND's success as an effective national pressure group is a logical development of this strong grass roots organisation. The achievement of securing a place for nuclear disarmament in the forefront of political action and discussion in 1981 is a result of active campaigning by thousands of comrades within their political organisations. This year the Labour Party, the TUC and the Liberal Party all passed motions at their annual conferences in support of disarmament at different levels. It will be part of our work next year to ensure that these decisions are actively pursued.

A further challenge facing activitists in 1982 will be the planned NATO war manoeuvres in Britain and mainland Europe. These exercises, code-named "Hot Rock", will be actively opposed. Within CND, the trend towards direct action is growing steadily.

In terms of more local achievements, well over one hundred local councils (including ten London boroughs and the GLC) have passed motions in support of nuclear disarmament. These range in content from opposition to Cruise missiles, to local bans on the transport of nuclear arms, to calls for a European nuclear-free zone. We have no reason to suppose that this government will heed any such locally-made decisions. However, there is an ever-growing number of people, many of them politically uncommitted, who have drawn their own conclusions about Westminster's continued warmongering.

PACKED MEETING

Many different examples of positive developments can be seen locally. For example, Islington Council followed up their recent motion in support of disarmament policies with a clear programme of information. The local CND group was given free use of the Town Hall to hold a public meeting where local and national campaigners explained their position to a packed meeting of over eight hundred people. At the same time the Council funded the printing of a broadsheet outlining clearly the reasons behind their policies and explaining the futility of so-called "Civil Defence" to local residents. Every such example of more open government is another step forward in the campaign for more accessible information in all areas.

Readers of London Briefing will be aware of positive achievements within other boroughs and specifically within the GLC. It is vital that the issue of disarmament is taken to every ward, GC, reselection and branch meeting as well as to every Council.

Together we can stop the bomb.

A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK



Women Demand their Rights, Labour Party Conference, 1981. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report).

The Labour Party will be deciding, this month, the date of the national 'event' around A Woman's Right To Work. It is vital that the whole of the Labour Movement supports this 'event', which will consist of a demonstration/rally along the lines of the CND demo in October.

At a time when women's unemployment is rising at double the rate of men's and when cuts in social services, school meals and hospitals push women out of jobs and back into the home, it is crucial that the Labour Movement organises a united protest against these attacks on basic rights by the Tory policies.

These attacks divide the Labour Movement and weaken its ability to mount any threatening protests to the Tories. Women, black and youth unemployment as well as unemployment in the regions are the worst hit sectors. The fight against women's unemployment should not be seen as divisive. To the contrary, it is part of the effort to unite around these sectors to add strength to our protests rather than divide it.

Women are now over 40% of the labour force and 30% of the trade union movement. They can no longer be ignored as a 'secondary' labour force. Yet despite the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act women earn only 72% of men's wages and are still employed in traditionally women's jobs like catering and cleaning, social and health work and teaching. Often these jobs are part-time and low paid as we are expected to have our proper jobs at home and be supported by the man's family wage.

We want the right to paid work, to independence, and the end to job discrimination – and these rights will only be possible if we fight for childcare provisions, maternity and paternity rights, the end to racial discrimination, the need for adequate contraception and abortion services, the end to sexual harassment at work, and the end to discrimination against lesbians.

This is why supporting the call for an 'event' on A Woman's Right To Work is so important. We have the support of Ken Livingstone, the NEC of the Labour Party, along with many trade unions and women's organisations and unemployment groups.

At a time of recession it is more important to unite the Labour Movement and fight back against these Tory policies which are threatening our rights to decent standards of living. We need to show our strength and determination to stop all forms of discrimination within our society. Women have been discriminated against for centuries and we need positive action to make up for that.

RESOLUTION

This branch/region/trades council/note that women are bearing the brunt of unemployment and therefore calls on the leadership of the Labour and trade union movement to set the date and organise a national event for a Woman's Right To Work. We agree to sponsor the event.

An event around A Woman's Right To Work would take our Labour Movement forward as well as challenging discrimination against women. As women have been in the forefront of struggles for jobs – Lee Jeans women in Greenock, who won their strike; Royal Pride women in Manchester led their strike and many women were on the march in Liverpool, Birmingham and the People's March.

The TUC has a ten-point Charter for Equality for Women as well as resolutions for women's rights at this year's conference. The Labour Party has agreed the idea of an 'event' around A Woman's Right To Work and will be discussing this at two crucial meetings this month to set the date and details. What we need now is ACTION. We need to fight – in strikes and occupations – and show our strength together. The People's March and the Labour Party Unemployment Demonstrations in Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow and Birmingham are a start – but we need to see the Labour Party and TUC calling out all our members to defend those hardest hit, before it's too late.

Argue in your branch for support for this 'event'. If you're told it's divisive to fight for women's rights then remind your colleagues that they're feeding the kind of divisions that the Tory Government wants – hitting women, black people and youth creates a split workforce, and we'll be so busy fighting amongst ourselves we won't notice what the Tories are doing.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW!

On December 9 at the South London Poly, Rotary St., SE1 at 7.30pm there will be a public meeting to discuss the 'event' to be called for next year. Invited speakers are:

Joyce Gould
Jo Richardson MP
Judith Hart, AUEW
Francis O'Grady
Susan Shell

This will be an opportunity to find out more about the 'event' and put your point of view.

Also put resolutions calling for the date to be set in your LP and TU branches.

If you would like to have a speaker from our Action Committee For A Woman's Right To Work at your meeting then write to us at 181 Richmond Rd, E8.

We meet regularly at GLC County Hall so if you would like to get involved in the Labour Party or Trade Union Subcommittee then come along on the 9 December or write to the above. A national organising conference will be held on February 20, at University of London Union.

I/We support the event for A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK and would like some more information:

name: . . . . . .

address: . . . . . .

phone: . . . . . .

London Labour Briefing, December 1981, page 16

SDP

THE LEFT RESPONSE

Whether we like it or not, the SDP is now a serious force in British politics. Yet until now, the Labour Party has failed to campaign against them. Cheap jokes about claret and credit cards, the only response the right can offer, are an inadequate substitute for a genuine political campaign.

This places a tremendous responsibility upon the left who must conduct the fight against the SDP where the right cannot.

It is a cop-out to claim that a political campaign cannot be mounted because the SDP has no policies and no politics. "Keep politics out of politics – vote SDP" may be witty, but it does nothing to promote Labour's socialist alternative – surely our strongest campaigning point.

It is not surprising, of course, that the right-wing use this alleged lack of policies as an excuse for their failure to campaign politically against the SDP – we all know that politically there is very little difference between, say, Owen and Williams and Healey and Hattersley. But it is disturbing to hear the left as well glibly proclaim that the social democrats have no policies.

Certainly they may not have a coherent long-term strategy, but they do perform a function as the 'safe' alternative for the bourgeoisie who no longer regard Labour as the 'safe' alternative government it has always proved in the past. And that function is becoming increasingly important, particularly for that section of the ruling class associated with manufacturing as opposed to banking capital who now believe that the destruction of British industry is too high a price to pay for the Thatcherite experiment and its failed attempt to defeat the organised working class.

ON THE SIDE OF THE BOSSES

Those are the politics of the SDP. As for its policies, well they are what one would expect from a party which, as Reg Race said recently, is "quite clearly on the side of the bosses". They are pro-nuclear weapons, pro-EEC, pro-incomes policy, anti-trade unions. Hardly a platform which commands mass support with the electorate.

No wonder, then, that they seek to play down their policies. So that is the first point – the SDP does have a set of policies. And those are anti-working class policies incapable of generating mass support, and which Labour must expose.

The second point is the logical corollary of this. Labour must promote and campaign around the policies of Conference. It must re-establish its base as the party of the working-class. In other words, it must emphasise its fundamental differences with the SDP, not seek to imitate them.

Labour's policies on nuclear weapons, the EEC and the alternative economic strategy now command mass support. Trade unionists who deserted Labour in May 1979 after years of incomes policy under Healey are not likely to be attracted to a party like the SDP which offers more of the same. Nor are they likely to return to the Labour fold under a leadership which has not learnt the lesssons of those years. The message is clear – we have the policies capable of generating mass support and we must now promote them.

NEW KIND OF UNITY

But thirdly, to do that effectively will require a new kind of unity between the PLP and the party in the country *behind* the policies of Conference. There remains that basic need, defined by Tony Benn at the Tribune Rally in Brighton, "to try and win the PLP for socialism". Labour will not be equipped to defeat the SDP until that happens, and certainly will fail under the spurious unity of the right that papers over their own defiance of Party policy.

When Denis Healey admits that he would not serve in a Labour Cabinet committed to unilateral disarmament and yet is re-elected deputy leader, that can only damage our electoral credibility. The uncertainty as to whether Labour means what it says, whether the next Labour Government will implement its alternative polices, has increased.

The struggle, then, is not to create, as the right allege, a party of 'socialist purity', but merely a party of 'socialist credibility' capable of defeating the SDP and which will prevent Labour from consigning itself to the wilderness for a generation.

The responsibility for creating that unity and credibility lies with every single member of the Party – but it cannot be brought about while leading spokespersons are attacking the Party and undermining Party policy.

On the night of the Croydon by-election, Healey was on BBC television agreeing with a Tory minister on the need for nuclear bases in Britain. On the day of the GLC by-election in St Pancras, Labour MP Ken Weetch, who does not even represent a London constituency, was on London's commercial radio station talking about extremists and Marxists in the Labour Party in exactly the same terms as the SDP by-election address, and using phrases almost identical to the smears in last May's Tory manifesto!

CROYDON

A similar attitude was displayed by Stan Boden in Croydon. Although his election address did stress Labour's alternative policies, his attempt to distance himself from Ken Livingstone and the GLC supplementary rate, rather than explaining how it was the Tories who were responsible for the crisis in local government, was disastrous. Nor was Tony Benn, who attracts thousands wherever he speaks nowadays, invited to the constituency.

Fourthly, then, Labour's right must not be allowed to use the SDP in order to derail the socialist advances in the Party of the last two years. The conclusion drawn by the right from the SDP successes – summed up in Roy Hattersley's claim that "we must return to the values of the Callaghan years" – is a recipe for certain defeat.

Have they forgotten that those years were also the Jenkins/Owen/Rodgers/Williams years, and that their policies lost us the last general election? Yet the leading members of the Shadow Cabinet stomp the country 'reminding' us of how marvellous the last Labour Government was. It wasn't, and the electorate told us so. We cannot, in the face of the SDP challenge, now expect the electorate to return to Labour simply as the lesser of two evils because the Tories have, not surprisingly proved to be even worse!

BREAKING THE MOULD

That leads us to the fifth and final point, and the most important lesson to be learnt from the SDP phenomenon. The electorate geniunely desires, in a time of crisis, a 'wind of change', a 'breaking of the mould' or whatever one wants to call it, in British politics. It is ironic that anyone believes that the SDP can offer that. Nevertheless, that desire for fundamental change exists. Our message must be that only Labour can satisfy it by challenging capitalism rather than merely seeking to manage it better than the Tories or the SDP.

Furthermore, that is the only way we can attract that quarter of the electorate who never vote at all because politicians and parties are "all the same". E.J. Hobsbawm points out in 'The Forward March of Labour Halted' that Labour's landslide in 1945 was founded on just such votes. The Tory vote remained almost stable compared with the previous election of 1935 (10.7 millions against 11.4 millions) and the Liberal vote increased by 0.8 million. Yet Labour's vote rose by over 40% from 8.5 to 12 millions. This was due, then, not to a swing from the old parties, but to a flood of previous non-voters and first-time voters – and this was under a poor electoral register and with 40% of the forces unable to vote. It was also, of course, an election which saw the most radical Labour manifesto in the last 35 years. The lesson is there for us to learn.

The SDP are a classic case of old wine in new bottles. What a tragedy if Labour was to continue to present itself as nothing more than the same old wine still in the same old bottles. The right are showing that Labour is still suffering, at least, from a hangover from that old wine. It is up to the left to show that we do have a clear head for the task before us.

Nigel Williamson
Orpington CLP

WHO ARE THEY?

The SDP is essentially a party created from the top downwards and without resorting to force there is no recent example of parties constructed in such a way surviving for any length of time.

The SDP's leaders are mostly right-wing ex-Labourites whose individual defections represented good news for Labour since their continued presence within our ranks was an obstacle both to unity and socialist advance. However, it would appear from daily press rumours that not all who should have gone have done so and we can only encourage those currently poised to make the break that will be to our mutual benefit. They will be relieved to go and we will be delighted to say farewell.

Of those already gone, some left to establish a political party more worthy of their own personal ambitions. Others because they resented the challenge from Labour's rank-and-file to hold them accountable for their actions. Some because they should never have been in the Labour Party in the first place and the rest because they were too stupid or corrupt to be able to survive. Whoever ends up in partnership with such a motley crew of careerists, elitists and deadbeats will need all the media support they can get.

So much for the leadership. What about the credit card carrying membership? Few of them appear to be ex-Labour Party members and most do not previously appear to have been politically active. This is perhaps the main achievement of the SDP, although a Party which shows itself unwilling to spell out policies and restricts political debate to mere cliches is unlikely to get far beyond the initial membership level.

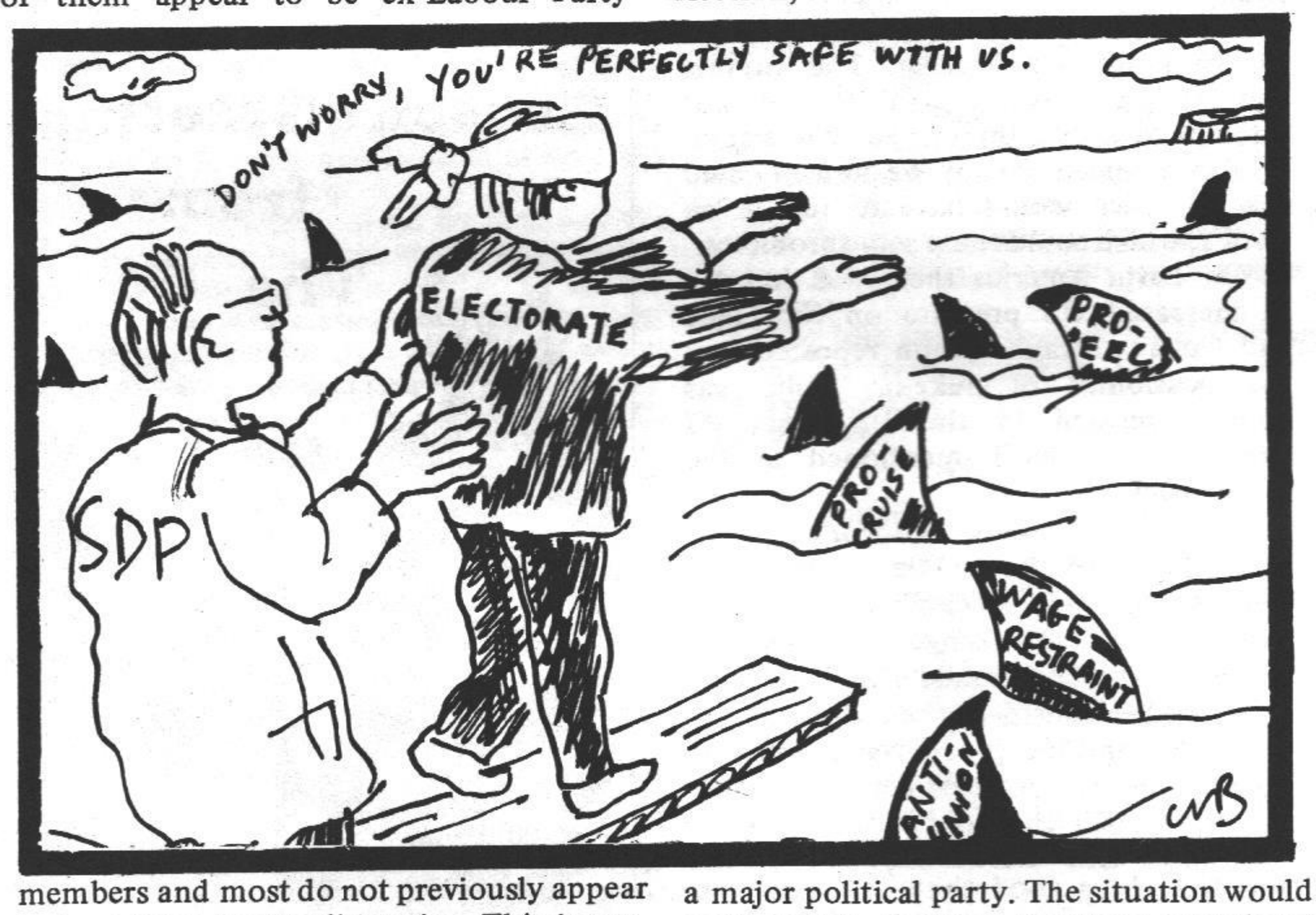
WHAT ARE SDP POLICIES?

Although the SDP is anxious to avoid publicly formulating any policies it would be wrong to assume that the party, or rather its leaders, do not have very fixed views on a wide range of issues. The SDP is clearly committed to welfare capitalism. It is anti-union in the sense of attempting to deny the unions political power although certain of its leading personalities gratefully accepted right-wing union support in the past. It is fanatically pro-EEC, pro-NATO and pro the nuclear deterrent. It is fiercely anti-communist in the Frank Chapple tradition, but from time to time can be heard saying nice things about 'acceptable' socialists who are now safely dead.

In other words it represents a mish-mash of all the right-wing policies and attitudes either rejected or discredited within the Labour Party, as indeed were the SDP's leaders themselves.

IS THE SDP A THREAT TO LABOUR?

In the very short-term the simple answer is yes. This is not the first time that a third force has gained success during the mid-term of a highly unpopular Tory government. However, to move from protest to government requires sustained political demands from the grass-roots and a political programme that is evidently more radical than that of existing political parties. On both counts the SDP clearly fails and although it might achieve some successes during the life-time of this government and indeed at the next General Election, the SDP will not establish itself as a major political party. The situation would only change if either the Tory or Labour Party completely disintegrated, or proportional representation was introduced.



Whilst the Labour Party remains firmly based on the unions, its political future is totally assured although we would do well to examine why such an amorphous grouping as the SDP has been able to achieve so much opinion poll support in a very short time.

THE REASONS

First, the real threat posed by the SDP is to the Tory Party. Although it is by no means decided, it is clear that the SDP is being encouraged by the British ruling class as an insurance policy in case Thatcher's ideological determination seriously threatens to destroy the very economic system she was put there to maintain. Advanced capitalist systems, even a reactionary one such as our own, depend for survival on an ability to head off possible threats. In the past, pragmatic Tory governments, or right-wing Labour governments, have provided the necessary safety-valves. Now we have a situation shaping up where a dogmatic and extremist Tory administration could lead to its replacement by a left-wing socialist one and that has set the alarm bells ringing in the highest echelons of international capitalism.

Secondly, generations of mind-dulling propaganda in the broad sweep of the media has created an electorate which is largely politically sophisticated and unaware and thus open to the superficial appeal of the SDP. It has also created an electorate on the surface resistant to socialism, although economic factors such as unemployment and falling living standards break down this resistance. Because of the lack of general political awareness, there remains a desperate desire to believe that there is an easy way out of Britain's economic decline which in fact has been continuous since 1918. Because of this we have an electorate dangerously susceptible to political deception and the SDP has, just like Thatcher in 1979, been able to exploit it.

Thirdly, the past devotion of the Labour Party of far too much of its energies to devising ways of more effectively running the existing economic system rather than effectively changing it. We face a media universally hostile to socialism and we have failed to penetrate the barrier which separates us from the electorate. We can only do so by linking our policies to a much wider set of political objectives. In other words spelling out our vision for a future socialist society which is essential if we are ever to lift the sights of an electorate grown politically cynical and economically brutalised by a capitalist system now needing to devour its own creations in order to survive.

THE MULES OF POLITICS

The situation for Labour is serious in the short-term but not terminal as the rump of the Party's right-wing would have us believe

If the voting pattern of Warrington, Croydon NW and St Pancras North were to be repeated at a General Election it would result in a House of Commons where the Tories have 10 seats, Labour has 153 and the SDP-Liberal Alliance 455.

A 5 %shift back to the main parties by the election would reduce the Alliance to 87 seats. All this merely demonstrates the need to keep the rise of the SDP in proportion.

It was an Irish Nationalist MP of the last century speaking about the Liberal-Unionists (another strange alliance) who provides us with the best description of today's SDP. They are 'The mules of politics; without pride of ancestry or hope of posterity.'

Tony Banks
Tooting CLP

LABOUR PARTY FOREIGN POLICY CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE:

DON'T MENTION IMPERIALISM COMRADES

This conference, the first of its kind, was called to mull over the NEC discussion document 'A Socialist Foreign Policy'. It was chaired by Judith Hart with several other Tribunite worthies much in evidence. (E. Heffer, F. Allaun, J. Richardson, J. Lestor). Actually they chaired all the working groups, and the conference itself was very much a 'stitch-up' by the 'soft' Labour left. There were two plenary sessions separated by working-groups. The working-groups corresponded to the topics of the discussion document, namely, 'Europe', 'Defence and Disarmament', 'Middle East', 'Southern Africa', 'Latin America', 'Third-world Development'. Delegates expressed concern at the absence of such areas as 'Asia', 'USA', and 'Soviet Bloc'. One delegate had the temerity to ask for a discussion on Ireland. He was promptly ruled out of order by the Chair.

APPROPRIATE LEFT NOISES

The first plenary session consisted of an over-view speech by one, Denzil Davies, a 'leading member of our shadow foreign office front bench team', and fraternal greetings from the secretary of the Socialist International, Bernt Carlsson. Davies' speech contained all the appropriate left noises: support for Unilateralism (although this part of his speech was a little foggy), South Africans out of Namibia, sanctions against Apartheid, Get out of the Common Market, implement the Brandt report and so on. Carlsson gave a brief snap-shot history of the Socialist International which he claimed was founded by Karl Marx. Apparently some socialist numbers wizard has calculated that it should be called The Fifth International. The Frankfurt Declaration (1951) was being replaced since it was felt that it had been unduly influenced by cold war attitudes . The SI was interested in human rights in general, "not just bourgeois rights", by which he meant that 800 million people of the South should not be forced to starve to death in the cause of the Free World.

It is not possible to report in detail on the discussions of all the working groups since we were encouraged to remain with our first-preference group. Only the more critical points that emerged during the report-back final plenary session will be given.

ACADEMIC THEORISING

In the Third World Development working-group a major effort was required by constituency delegates to prevent vital questions and issues being dissolved in the thin acid of academic theorising that issued from several 'development' experts who were present. These people, it appeared, had been responsible for the, by general agreement, wholly inadequate section of the document on the Third World. It made no mention for instance, of the multinationals and imperialism (definitely not an IN-word at the conference). It was agreed, however, that the role of multinationals was central to the problems of the Third World, from the rape of its natural resources to the 'de-stabilising' of its political institutions. J. Hart seemed to think that there was little point in spending too much time on this issue since we were 'unlikely to come up with any answers". Having made this announcement she left us, to cast a maternal eye over the other groups.

In .the final session the most telling point was made by a delegate who pointed out that the document had no theoretical framework for discussing international issues. This, he felt, was necessary in order to generate some strategic thinking. One must agree with him; the document is very much a patchwork of sometimes contradictory views and policies stitched together by pious platitudes. (e.g. "The Labour Party is committed to changing the relationship between the rich and poor countries in favour of the poor." page 72). Another delegate wanted to know why the political representatives of Multinational Capital, Thatcher and Reagan, did not enthusiastically accept the Brandt report since it was clearly intended to save the day for the capitalist world order. The experts and the professionals (MPs) did not attempt to answer this intriguing question. It also emerged that if we implemented the AES we would have to renege on GATT, which could cause some problems.

On Latin America there was concern at increased US pressure on Nicaragua and Cuba – Frank Allaun reported that the possibility of nuke-ing Cuba was being discussed in the US press. El Salvador was NOT mentioned in the report-back.

On the Middle-East the working party was split down the middle on the question of PLO recognition. Concern was expressed at the dangerous effect of Reagan's anti-communist simplicities on the complex politics of the area.

On Europe the group was strongly in favour of more East-West detente. Bilateral (very much the conference IN-word) meetings with Eurocommunist parties was thought a good thing, as was town-twinning.

The Defence and Disarmament group thought that, on balance, we should eventually leave NATO and withdraw the BAOR.

LACK OF WILL

Southern Africa was uncontentious – Sheffield Council was trying to estabish an Apartheid-free zone i.e. no Cape apples in the shops etc. There was criticism of past Labour Ministers who had refused to see anti-Apartheid delegations personally, on advice from foreign office protocol experts. Joan Lester gave "lack of will" and "lack of belief" as an explanation for the failure of past Labour governments to do anything about Apartheid.

Very few trade unionists were present, Alex Kitson and a small group from the TGWU being the only noticeable ones. Perhaps the most salutary note was stuck by the delegate who was of the opinion that, if a Labour government attempted to carry out a fraction of the proposals debated at the conference, it would, itself, become a target for the 'destabilisation' experts of the CIA. One even had the uneasy feeling that any attempt to discuss the international situation in terms of such ideologically biased notions as 'imperialism' would get oneself noticed by the party apparatchniks for all the wrong reasons.

David Hookes
Hornsey CLP

Season's Greetings from The Gang



Socialist Greeting Card £1 for 8
or order in bulk £7.50 for 100.
Available from Cath Tate, 39 Kingswood Rd, SW2. (671 2166). Produced by Lambeth Central CLP.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

QUANTITY ..... PRICE .....

LETTERS

Dear Comrades,
Please find enclosed a cheque for £2.50 for one year's subscription to London Labour Briefing (I am afraid a students' grant does not extend that far that I am able to make a further donation).

I feel I must congratulate you on producing not only a very readable but also a highly informative magazine. I was particularly pleased to see that the Briefing is not afraid, as some other publications are, to stimulate debate on the Irish problem. However, the article which I found must gratifying to read was "The March of the Moderates". Being a constituent of Newham North East, it was great to see that somebody is at last exposing these phoney Labour Party members and councillors, Jenkinson, Philpotts and Billups for the hypocrites they are. Thankfully, it looks as though the tide is turning in Newham and we shall be able to start pushing for real solialist measures.

Thanks again for an engrossing read.
Yours fraternally,
Andy Spencer.

Dear friends,
Enclosed cheque for subscription.

The short answer to Pauline Ashbridge and others who seek to promote 'socialist' co-operatives is that it is not possible. 'Co-operative' is a word as much abused as 'community' – with differing interpretations for different people. The danger of seeing 'co-ops' as some magic answer by the left (well those who find them more interesting than a diversion) was touched on by both contributions to the CSE/AES conference recently.

Having said that – co-ops do offer possibilities for developing alternatives – alternatives which question the whole concept of work – of enjoyment – of exploring new ways of existing together. But for these interesting developments to have more than marginal relevance they must be rooted in and supported by the T.U. movement. I feel it is only with such roots in the labour movement that the climate of political awareness of the limitations and contradictions of co-operatives day-to-day work will be brought home. And believe me it is not easy trying to hold the pressures of economic context at bay – to survive and enjoy it – to avoid individual blame.

So then – how should Labour Councils support co-operative development? The case is well spelt out in SERA's leaflet – following the principle of working with existing co-ops and giving them control over where funds should go. Indeed there are now so many researchers on co-ops that the chinese 'time in the fields' principle would not go amiss. But it seems to me funds will need to go to T.U. co-ops (though hopefully nursing the TU bureaucracy) – to people who realise the contradictions of Labour having control over capital in our present society and who realise that the great revolution (the 1000 mile journey) requires a small revolution at every step. This is not easily worded into a manifesto.

David Sutton
Buildit Co-op Ltd,
Bristol SE CLP

Dear Comrades,
Congratulations on such a funny cartoon on page 9 of the November issue of *London Labour Briefing*. However if you continue to show signs of such an excellent sense of humour you may well be expelled from the Tony Benn fan club. Is this too high a price to pay?

Comradely yours,
Jeff Rooker MP

Dear Briefing,

The massive CND London demonstration illustrates some of the points Peter Tatchell (November Briefing) makes about putting out case to the mass of ordinary working people. When will we resist the dictates of the Police and route our demonstrations through the areas where we want to reach out to, and to the people we want to take with us.

Why do we continually have to make our way past the Roll Royce showrooms, clubs and hotels of the ruling class down Park Lane and Picadilly, instead of Londoners rallying simultaneously in Hackney's Victoria Park, Wormwood Scrubs and Clapham Common, picking-up comrades at the central railway stations in the case of national demonstrations, and then converging on Hyde Park via Oxford Street on Saturdays.

Last years Unemployment demo in Liverpool was excellent in reaching out to tens of thousands of residents, shoppers and shop workers.

Yours fraternally,
Malcolm Thomas
(North Islington CLP)

BREIFIG MISPRINTS (No.1)

Dear Comrade,
Thankyou for publishing the article that Valerie Wise and I wrote – 'Women, the GLC and the Labour Party.'

I would like to point out, however, that my name is *Kathryn Riley* and not *Kathryn Ridley*. I point this out because I would hate anyone to think that I was related to a certain *Nicholas Ridley*, currently sulking somewhere in the Treasury and perhaps best known for his recent illuminating comments on the state of our economy:

"The high level of unemployment is evidence of the progress we are making."!

Yours fraternally,
Kathryn Riley.

(No.2)

Dear Comrades,

Could I correct an incorrectly type-set word in my article "Who Does Oppress Women" in the previous issue? The sentence in question should have read: "As socialists, I think we have to begin to find ways of living together without *reproducing* (not "repudiating", as your typesetters put it) in our personal lives everything we are fighting against in capitalism."

Yours sisterly,
Ann Bliss,
Lewisham East C.L.P.

COME AND HELP BRIEFING. . .

after the special Conference there will be a

BRIEFING SOCIAL

Caxton House, St. John Way N19
(nearest tube: Archway)
Hot Food. . .Curries. . .Discotheque
. . .Bar
Tickets £1.00 Open from 7p.m.

Tickets from your Briefing seller or
Jeremy Corbyn (340 9069)

Dear *Briefing*,

F.A. Ridley – Publishing Committee

F.A. Ridley, the Grand Old Man of the Movement is now in his 84th year. His fertile pen has produced countless books and pamphlets over half a century, ranging from "The Green Machine" to "Mussolini Over Africa"; from "The Jesuits" and "Julian the Apostate" to "The Revolutionary Tradition in England", and from "Spartacus" to "Socialism and Religion".

His many admirers in Luigi's are now anxious to form a Committee to ensure the publication of his massive backlog of unpublished works which include: "The Rise and Fall of the English Empire"; "Jerusalem versus Rome: A Dialectical Study of the Origin and Rise of Christianity" and Mohammed and Lenin: A Study of the Cyclic Theory of Human History".

Any readers of 'Briefing' who are interested in assisting, please contact Ellis Hillman via the Editorial Board.
Fraternally,
Ellis Hillman

Dear Comrades,

I read with interest the copy of *London Labour Briefing* I bought at Conference this year—it is always interesting and helpful to find out what is going on elsewhere in Britain, particularly where a Labour Council is actually trying to implement socialist policies. I enclose £5.00 as a year's subscription and a donation towards funds. Keep up the good work!

Yours fraternally,
Alison Stopher,
Lenton, Nottingham.

Labour cut fares in London to 68% of what they were last month. The Conservatives would have increased them about 25% – with more to come and axing of services as usage plummeted. 68 is about half of 125, so the Conservatives want doubled fares – as do the SDP.

Heseltine wants this also.

A senior civil servant, normally a motorway planner, Irving Yass, has been asked to write a report on what fares in London should be. Irving Yass lives in a large home in plushy Hampstead and has a uniformed maid. As Yass normally promotes motorways, it's a safe bet that he'll recommend doubled fares unless we tell him we don't want them.

We suggest that you point out that if one allows for how much people earn, fares in London are still double those of Paris and many other successful European cities, while services are still among Europe's worst.

You can point out that London is already dying economically and socially because people can't afford travel by public transport and take to cars which jam the streets, so that Yass's idea of doubling fares will kill London completely a dying slum along Detroit lines.

George Stern, STAMP
6 Eton Court, Shepherds Hill, London N6

Letters continued

Dear Briefing,

So, Lord Denning, Master of the Rolls, has publicly stripped away the thin cosmetic veil of democracy from local government, to reveal the real face of British political power for all to see—the Judiciary and Establishment.

Denning holds that public transport is not a social service and should be run as a profit-making business. That is a **political** view which London Labour does not share (and which even Cutler's Tory administration did not adhere to).

Presumably, these rulings stem from the Public Transport Act, 1969, which was passed by the Labour Government of the time. So, we can thank Messrs. Wilson, Jenkins, Williams, Old Uncle Tom Cobbly and all for that piece of law—a typical example of the political mish-mash that lies in store for the electorate if they allow themselves to be lured into the trap of voting for these self-styled 'Social Democrats.'

Denning also held that the GLC should have heeded the Officers' advice to determine a fair balance of interests between those ratepayers who do use public transport and those who don't. So elected Labour GLC Members should have acted upon **political** guidance from paid officers! The whole idea is absurd. We all contribute to the education service. But, of far greater significance in this respect is the sale of council houses: There is no "fair balance of interests" between ratepayers who are **not** asset-strippers and those that are.

Even more to the point is the fact that the balance between ratepayers weighs heavily, in terms of both social and economic costs, against those who do us public transport: delays, immeasurable time lost and pollution resulting from traffic congestion; costs of maintenance and repair to highways, and the uneconomic use of finite energy resources are among the costs inflicted upon all London ratepaying families and the wider community, by those ratepayers who do not use public transport. Labour's fares reduction policy was aimed precisely at those people who need to be encouraged away from their anti-social use of private transport.

Denning accused the GLC of making a political decision to cut fares. What does he think councillors are elected to do—if not to make political decisions? And where were he and the other 'champions' of the ratepayers in 1977, when Horace Cutler's Tories took control at County Hall and ripped off London ratepayers with their political decision to sell council houses at knock-down prices to convert votes? Not to mention their decision to waste £50,000 on changing the name of the new 'Fleet Line' to the 'Jubilee Line'.

Moreover, according to Lord Denning, the electorate vote for a party-package, not the policies in a manifesto which don't matter anyway. Presumably, then, the people were voting for Socialism as opposed to Capitalism. The distinction he made here is, arguably, justification for a far more radical transport policy than the one he has ruled illegal. He insults the intelligence of electors by suggesting that they do not consider policies put before them. It is a reflection of his own political view and outrageous to suggest that policies set out in an election manifesto are not to be taken seriously.

If, as the British people are led to believe, we live in a democratic society, the Judiciary should have no right whatsoever to interfere with democratically-determined political decisions such as the Fares Fare policy so clearly was.

Bob Geis,
Lewisham East C.L.P.

LAST YEAR, Tony Benn announced at the Labour Party conference that the next Labour government would abolish the House of Lords. Lord Denning said that the courts would step in to stop it.

Now Denning has put his principles into practice, declaring the Labour GLC's cheap fares policy illegal. As soon as Labour starts to use parliamentary or local democracy to change anything seriously, the Establishment changes the rules!

The cheap fares policy is not only one backed by the electorate, but one decided by the London labour movement after full democratic debate, with the unions playing an active part. If the Lords upholds the Appeal Court ruling, the labour movement must mobilise to defend our policy.

We urge Labour Parties, union branches, and trades councils to pass resolutions:

*Congratulating the GLC Labour Group on its implementation of the cheap fares policy;

*Calling on the GLC Labour Group to defy the judges and instruct London Transport to retain the cheap fares;

*Calling on London Transport unions to black any moves to increase fares;

*Urging the London Labour Party regional executive to approach other labour movement organisations for a joint appeal for industrial action to force the government to make good the money due to the GLC under the 'illegal' supplementary rate.

*Pledging support for such action, and for a mass campaign to rouse opposition to the Lords decision.

*Calling on all London Labour Groups to go into majority opposition if, despite such a stand, the Tories move in to surcharge the Labour councillors or instal commissioners.

Finally, the lessons should be learnt.

If such legal decisions are the response to the GLC's cheap bus fares, then what will be their response to serious socialist measures by a Labour government?

Not just court decisions, but all the might of the State machine—from civil service sabotage to guns and tanks—will face us.

GRAHAM BASH, Ilford South CLP
MARTIN THOMAS, Islington Central CLP

I would like a year's subscription to BRIEFING and enclose £2.50.

Name .....

Address .....

Send to: Graham Bash,
158 Thorold Rd, Ilford, Essex.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE

Sat. Dec. 5th

County Hall,

Details: L.C.C.,
9 Poland St, W.1.

PUBLIC MEETING

on the

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO WORK DEMONSTRATION

Invited speakers:

Joyce Gould, Jo Richardson, Susan Shell, Frances O'Grady, and a woman speaker from the trade union movement

DATE: December 9th
TIME: 7.30pm
PLACE: South Bank Poly Students' Union, Rotary Street SE1

BAN SEXIST ADVERTS ON TUBES AND BUSES

Women are subjected to advertisements of films, clothing and other products in a manner which many women find degrading. The films 'Dressed to Kill' and 'The Shining' are two examples – others are the advertisement for 'Aristoc' tights and the 'Lovable' range of underwear, with their now familiar slogan of . . . 'underneath, they're all loveable'.

As a result of a letter of protest sent to the GLC Transport Committee Chairman, Dave Wetzel, a meeting has been arranged, where Labour women are invited to put forward their views on this subject. The meeting will be with Dr David Quarmby (Managing Director for buses) and Dave Wetzel.

It will be held on:

FRIDAY 27 NOVEMBER at 7.30pm
at
COUNTY HALL, York, St, SW1
Tube: Waterloo (York St exit)

The CLPD Women's Action Committee believes that it is important for as many women who are able to attend this meeting to do so and thereby ensure that the men who control **our** *transport system understand that sexist advertising is not an issue which is insignificant or petty. It affects fundamentally the perceptions which men and women have of each other – and of themselves.*

Women wishing to attend this meeting should contact the secretary of the CLPD Women's Action Committee:

Heather Gaebler
10 Park Drive (lower flat)
London NW11 7SH
Tel: 01-458 1984

WOOD GREEN LABOUR PARTY
Saturday 5th December
X-mas Bazaar – 11am to 4.30pm
X-mas Social – 7.30pm onwards

Both at Trade Union Centre
Brabant Rd [Off Station Rd]
London N22
[Nearest Tube:–
Wood Green (Piccadilly Line)]

TARGET '82 MEETING

Tuesday December 8th at 7.30pm
At County Hall, Room 166

Subject:
"THE THREAT OF THE S.D.P."

Any activists who want to be involved in Target '82 activities should send names and addresses to Jeremy Corbyn, 28 Lausanne Road, N8 0HN.

Next Editorial Board
Tuesday December 1st
County Hall 6.30pm

Published by London Labour Briefing, 158 Thorold Rd., Ilford, Essex.
Typset by Bread 'n Roses, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1.
Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), Forster Road, London N17.