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Double Issue

ALL-OUT INDUSTRIAL AND POLITICAL ACTION TO DEFY THE LORDS!

BY VALERIE WISE AND KEN LIVINGSTONE

The GLC Labour Group has decided to stick by the Manifesto and has voted to defy the Law Lords' decision to put up the fares on London Transport. This decision is in accord with the decision of the London Labour Party Executive Committee who voted 25 to 7 for non-compliance.

There must now be a massive campaign to ensure that the fares do not go up. The GLC must campaign alongside the London Labour Party and the transport unions and all other sections of the Labour Movement.

The campaign has to include public meetings, leafleting, posters on the buses and tubes, meetings of LT workers. **There must be full support from the Labour Group for any industrial action taken by LT workers to ensure that the Lords' decision cannot be implemented.**

If the Law Lords get their way then:

- fares will go up by 100% on March 21st
- fares will probably go up again by 50% of their new level in June
- pensioners' concessionary fares will end
- there will be a 25% cut in bus services
- threatened closure of tube stations and some branch lines
- at least 5,000 jobs on London Transport will be lost.

In other words, London Transport will be decimated.

It is clear that the Conservative Government is quite prepared to stand by and let this happen. The Minister of Transport has said he "regrets" the fares having to go up but blames this on the GLC. We have to show Londoners that it is the Government and the Law Lords who are to blame if the fares do go up and services are cut. The Government doesn't have to stand by and let this happen. It could quite easily introduce emergency legislation so that the GLC can continue to pursue its sensible transport policy.

CONSEQUENCES

If the fares do go up on 21st March this will have disastrous consequences for everyone in London. Nobody is talking about the effect it will have on people. High fares will particularly hit families. Most families who have a car, only have one car, which is almost invariably used by the man in the family and so women with children will particularly suffer. So too will the unemployed who will not be able to afford to use public transport in their search for work. In fact all people on low incomes will face real problems being able to afford to use the limited public transport system that remains in existence. Many pensioners will become housebound as they will not be able to afford to pay the full fares.

Many people are assuming that the Government will step in and introduce legislation so that we can continue to have concessionary fares for the elderly. We wouldn't count on this, but even if this happens what is the use of having concessionary fares if your bus route has been cut? So many of the elderly will still be housebound.

Businesses in London will also suffer. Prior to the GLC election in May many firms gave poor public transport (and not high rates) as a major reason for leaving London. As more and more people use their private cars congestion on the roads will increase and increased pollution will cause the environment to deteriorate further. This will inevitably force firms to cut, to close or to move out of London and thereby to increase unemployment.

Together the GLC, the London Labour Party, the trade unions and the public can defeat the Law Lords and the Conservative Government, but it will need a tremendous amount of effort.

HOW THE LABOUR GROUP VOTED

For compliance with the Law Lords:
Bramall, Branagan, Dawe, Dimson, Garside, Handy, Harrington, Hart, Hinds, Howard, Jenkinson, Judge, Little, McBrearty, McIntosh, Morgan, Sieve, Stead, Ward John, Ward Mike, Williams, Wilson.

Against compliance with the Law Lords:
Banks, Boateng, Bundred, Carr, Daniel, Davies Bryn, Davies Neil, Gouge, Hammond, Harris, Herbert, Kay, Livingstone, McDonnell, MacKay, Moore, Morrell, Nicholson, Pitt, Rossi, Wetzel, Wise, Wood.

Absent:
Edwards, Ross, Turney.

Labour—Take the Power!

PARLIAMENTARY REPORT

The last month of 1981 was a bad one in Parliament. The Tories continued their attack on working class people with a mini-budget which further burdened the less well-off.

First, an attack on people's health. Extra charges on routine dental treatment (up from £9 to £13), and on NHS spectacles (up from £8.30 to £15 per lens), and an increase in prescription charges from £1 to £1.30 (bringing the rise in the last three years up by 650 percent) will hardly encourage poorer people to go to the dentist, the optician or the doctor. Then an attack on people's rents. They are to go up yet again by an average of £2.50 a week. Those who are working will have to pay increased national insurance contributions, and for those on an average wage that will mean an extra £1.50 a week. And for students the maintenance grant will go up by only 4 percent – 6 percent less than the Government's forecast for inflation – with no allowance for inflation in either the minimum grant or in the scale of parental contributions. That will mean hundreds of students will have to quit because they cannot cope under the grant.

Those on supplementary benefit, the unemployed and others on special benefits fared no better. The Government refused to make good the shortfall of 2 percent in benefit increases in November and this has pushed the longterm unemployed and about a million children deeper than ever into poverty.

TV licences were increased, and the Government refused to consider ways urged by the Labour Opposition to give concessions to pensioners.

As if that were not enough the Tories announced plans to conscript 16 year-old school leavers for training, paying them only £15 a week (in 1983) and withdrawing supplementary benefit from 16-17 year-olds. The discredited Youth Opportunities Scheme has already been shown up for the sham it is, and that pays only £23.50 a week.

All these proposals were bitterly attacked by Labour's Opposition, and will be fought hard throughout the country by the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.

But more was to come. The new Heseltine Local Government Bill, replacing the original dictatorial curbing of local authority powers, may appear less fearsome than the first, but will still shackle local government. And the judgement of the law lords against cheap fares has thrown not only the GLC and London Transport into confusion, but will badly hit local authorities who have levied the extra rate and will now have to pay it back.

Worst of all, the judgement will increase fares for millions of Londoners, perhaps by as much as 150 percent, will cause thousands to lose their jobs, and will involve the closure of some Underground stations and the reduction of bus routes.



In Parliament, Labour MPs seized the chance of a Private Member's motion to attack the decision, and got a second bite at the cherry with a special debate a few days later – but the Government simply refused to bring in amending legislation.

So we are faced with the extraordinary situation of a popular and beneficial measure, voted for by Londoners and carried out by a properly elected body – the GLC – in conjunction with a public undertaking – London Transport – outlawed by one elderly judge and five law lords. Where's the democracy in that?

Labour will obviously use every opportunity in the Commons to try to force the Tories to put right what successive Parliaments as well as local authorities believed was legal, but it will need the massive opposition of the whole of the Labour Party outside the House of Commons, and the whole of the Trade Union Movement, to hit out at the Government in every possible way to ensure that the will of Londoners and others is not frustrated.

Footnote. Full marks to Michael Foot for creating a new Opposition spokesperson – on Women's Rights. No marks for using Parliament to announce his intention not to endorse Peter Tatchell.

Jo Richardson
MP for Barking

The Ballad of PETER TATCHELL

The following anonymous ballad has been circulating in Bermondsey.

As I walked down Jamaica Road
One night of winter frost
Upon my way to Rotherhithe
By way of Surrey Docks

I met a man at Dockhead
Who told to me this tale
Of dark intrigue and wickedness
That made him weep and wail

The story that I tell, said he
Is of a blighted youth
Whom folk had picked for Parliament
Until a hand uncouth

Arrested him and blocked his way
And said he should not stand
Because some folk had slandered him:
An evil, scheming band

Who did this evil deed, said I?
I'll break his nose and teeth
It was a man called Michael Foot
Who lives on Hampstead Heath

He is a very learned man
Who reads a lot of books
But oftentimes he lends an ear
to charlatans and crooks

Who tell him lies and fill his mind
With fantasies and fears
That lead him into foolish ways
He'd shun in earlier years

Young Peter Tatchell must be stopped
They said with wicked leer
It's true he's innocent of vice
But we'll invent some fear

Some nameless threat or false alarm
That ignorance inflates
We'll poison wells and slander him
To feed our petty hates

So round a table they all sat
In Walworth with their leader
Some barons doubted what they did
But none would be a pleader

For Peter Tatchell whom they'd picked
To burn as they did witches
They knew that he was blameless
But feared for their own pitches

For people must not choose, they said
And must not raise their voices
The rabble must be underfoot
We must not heed their choices

Yes, brothers, we must close our ranks
And guard our castle walls
We cannot risk their being breached
By people's cannonballs

We are agreed, old Foot declared,
He paused (he'd lost his glasses)
That Tatchell is our enemy
And not the ruling classes

That's right, they cried, as of one voice
Each one was filled with glee
A socialist they'd finished off
And just in time for tea.

Editorial

Party Unity — an alternative view

It is being suggested that the approach of a General Election must bring us all to our senses, forget our faction-fights in the Labour Party and unite in order to present ourselves to the electorate as a credible alternative government. In this context, the last thing we need – so this argument runs – is a repeat of last year's follies surrounding the contest for the Deputy Leadership of the Party. Tony Benn must be told in no uncertain terms, by friends and opponents alike, "enough is enough!"

As a grouping with some experience of involvement in the Deputy Leadership campaign last year, *London Labour Briefing* is in no position to duck the issues now. We must adopt a position one way or the other. Either we want to win the election or we don't – either we will do our bit to heal the wounds of the Party in time, or we will be seen as blinded by factional concerns, and held responsible for whatever electoral disasters might follow from the continuance of Labour's perennial in-fighting and splits.

So let us make it clear at the outset: Yes, we *do* want to win the election, and we *are* for the unity of the entire Party in booting out the Tories and securing office for ourselves. Every genuine Labour supporter and activist in the country must be feeling this way, and we ignore such sentiments at our peril. We are not sectarians. We are interested in the class struggle and in our own class power, and that power means *class unity before all else.*

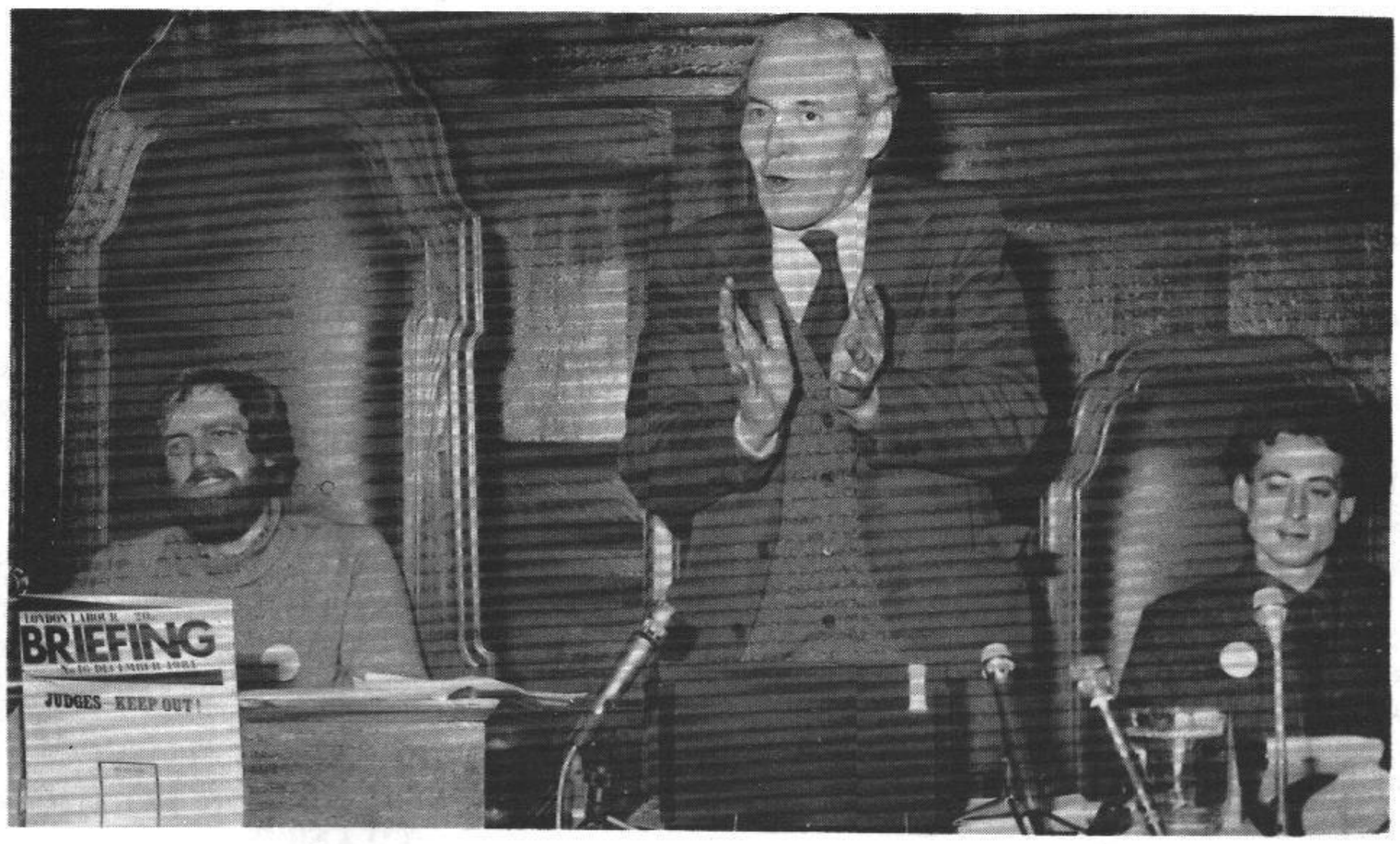
So we are open to proposals for unity from any quarters. We ask only that the give-and-take come from all sides.

We should make it clear, however, that if the Right continue with their "civil war" in the party, then civil war is what they will get. It would be the gravest error for Tony Benn to make any commitments whatsoever in connection with a decision on whether to contest the present Leadership or Deputy Leadership positions in advance to the most unambiguous signs of movement from the right:

1. Peter Tatchell must be re-instated as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Bermondsey.
2. The witch-hunt against the "Militant" comrades must be called off and all threats of non-endorsement and/or expulsion withdrawn.
3. The block on Tariq Ali's application for membership of Hornsey Labour Party must be removed, and all London Parties permitted to admit into membership whomever they wish.
4. There must be no challenge to the constitutional changes achieved in recent years.
5. Denis Healey must retract his statement to the effect that he would refuse to serve in a Labour Government committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament.
6. The Parliamentary Labour Party and N.E.C. must reflect Conference decisions on key issues such as withdrawal from the E.E.C., nuclear disarmament and the alternative economic strategy.

If these conditions were met, we would be on the way to a *real* unity of the Party, promising not only victory at the next election but also a strong Labour Government as a result.

If they were to be met, then that would be an advance for the whole movement of a magnitude so immense that beside it, the question of who held the post of Deputy Leader in the Party would pale into insignificance. Yet for Tony Benn to allow Foot and Healey a clear run under anything remotely like the present conditions – when Bermondsey Labour Party is being denied its constitutional right to select its Parliamentary candidate, Tariq Ali and the *Militant* comrades are being persecuted, the democratic constitutional gains of recent years are under threat and Conference decisions are being brazenly flouted by Labour's spokespersons in Parliament – would produce anger and feelings of bitterness and betrayal among countless activists who in the past have pinned their faith on us not to capitulate so easily. For Benn to prove manipulable or beyond accountability to his own supporters at this point would be to undermine disastrously not only the Left but ultimately the credibility of the Labour Party itself. *There must be no back-stage deals.* Either the right in practice, and in full public view, calls off its present "civil war" against socialists in the Party, or the struggle goes on with renewed force. And just to make one minor point particularly clear: unless Joan Lestor and Neil Kinnock come to their senses remarkably soon, BRIEFING will be doing all in our power to organise so that they are knocked off the Constituency Section of the N.E.C. at Annual Conference next year. Those who are calling for unity in the face of the Tories are making an important point. But "left-wingers" who talk of "unity" whilst in practice voting for witch-hunts and expulsion-threats against large sections of their own Party can expect no sympathy from us.



John Brennan.

Tony Benn speaking at packed Briefing *meeting at London Regional Conference*

MELLISH SPILLS HIS BEER OVER BRIEFING

Date: *Tuesday 15 December*
Time: *10pm*
Place: *The Members Bar, House of Commons*
Scene: *Intrepid Briefing supporter Janet Pickering approaches Bermondsey M.P. (not retiring) Bob Mellish.*

"Would you care to take out a subscription to London Labour Briefing?" she innocently asks.

Mellish splutters. Finally composing himself, "You're pulling my leg, luv" he says.

"No I'm not. Honestly. I thought you might want to find out what's going on in Bermondsey".

Mellish spills his beer and heads for the door, coughing and spluttering. He is not seen in the Members Bar again that evening.

Janet returns, undaunted, to continue her relentless pursuit of right-wing Labour M.P.s on behalf of 'Briefing'.

HOW MANY MORE LABOUR M.P.s CAN SHE DRIVE OUT OF THE BAR?

WILL THE SHADOW CABINET HAVE TO BECOME SECRET DRINKERS?

OR WILL THEY OPT FOR THE QUIET LIFE AND TAKE OUT A SUBSCRIPTION TO BRIEFING? WATCH THIS SPACE FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS.

LORDS TAKE THE POWER

Robert Latham
Holborn and St. Pancras South C.L.P.

'The true test of a man, the test, the true test of a people is power. It is when power is given into their hands that the trial comes'. (Watkins L.J. in the Court of Appeal judgement in the G.L.C. fares case, quoting Gladstone in 1890)

'When I use a word', Humpty Dumpty said in rather scornful tone,' it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more or less'. 'The question is', said Alice,' whether you can make words mean different things'. 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.'

The Court of Appeal judges in the fares case had no doubts as to who was master and the trigger happy way in which they grasped power from the G.L.C. and were prepared to decimate London's transport amazed even the Tory media. All assumed that the decision would be reversed on appeal. Lawyers remember the Newport Corporation case in 1951 when the House of Lords accused Denning of 'a naked usurpation of the legislative function under the thin guise of interpretation' or those of Lord Wilberforce (who actually presided in the House of Lords) that 'the very fact that decisions are of a type to attract political controversy shows that they are outside the range of discretionary problems which the courts can resolve'.

THE LORD'S DECISION

The arguments before the House of Lords were that:–

1. The fares reduction was beyond the powers of the G.L.C. as defined by the Transport (London) Act 1969; and
2. Even if they did have the necessary statutory powers, the fares reduction was an invalid exercise of their descretion unlawfully, basically that they had exercised it in a way that no reasonable authority could exercise it.

The Lords decision to uphold the Court of Appeal was based mainly on this first ground. However, there are plenty of comments to suggest that the Lords would also have ruled against the G.L.C. on this second ground had it been necessary to do so.

The Lords did no more than pay lip-service to the principles of judicial impartiality. Although they state that they can hold no view on the desirability of running public transport as a social service, they make constant references to the facts that only 40% of the electorate are ratepayers, and that 62% of the rate base comes from the commercial sector. In the Tameside case (1977) the Lords had placed considerable weight on the Tories election pledge to reintroduce selective education but this case was 'distinguished' because that had involved questions of 'reasonableness' rather than 'legality'.



"Don't think you can get away with it here, either!" **Cath Tate**

The Lords showed no understanding of the problems of Inner Cities or those faced by local authorities who are trying to maintain services. Heseltine is assumed to be acting legally when he arbitarily withdraws block grant, and local authorities are expected to jump to his whip. Three judges in the Divisional Court had had no difficulty in ruling that the G.L.C. decision was legal. It is difficult to find any consistency in the arguments of the eight judges in the Court of Appeal and House of Lords who ruled to the contrary, apart from the consistency of their conclusion. Both arguments used by the Court of Appeal to support their decision, namely that promoting an 'economic' transport facility meant running one on arthodox business lines and that there had been no formal resolution on the decision, were rejected by the Lords. 'Economic' was construed as meaning running it efficiently and without waste. The second argument was described by Lord Wilberforce as 'hopeless'. It is difficult to identify what was the basis of the Lords' decision, and the general view is that they have done more to confuse the law than to clarify it. Numerous questions emerge from the decision that need to be clarified.

(1) IS ANY SUBSIDY PERMISSIBLE FOR LONDON TRANSPORT

At one extreme, Lord Diplock was prepared to consider that the 25% fare reduction and additional subsidy of £69m might have been legal, but for the consequential loss of a further £50m in block grant (it is unclear how the actions of Heseltine can be legal for Heseltine, but make an otherwise lawful act of the G.L.C. unlawful – and this point is considered below). At the other extreme Lord Scarman stated that the L.T.E. should ensure 'so far as is practicable, that deficit is avoided', i.e. no subsidy. Lord Wilberforce reflects the wooly centre ground when he says that he was 'willing to accept' that the fare levels under the Tories had been legal, albeit that they involved a subsidy of £80m. Until this uncertainty is clarified, no one can know the extent to which fares must now be increased to make them lawful.

(2) DOES THE DECISION AFFECT OTHER TRANSPORT AUTHORITIES

The main limb of the Lords' decision rested on their interpretation of the Transport (London) Act 1979, and is not relevant to the Transport Act 1978 which applies to transport authorities in other parts of the country. There are some grounds for arguing that the 1978 Act should be interpreted more widely. The second limb of the Lords' decision which was judicial comment on the exercise of discretion apply equally to other authorities. The position is uncertain and the West Midlands County Council is now being sued over its low fares policy.

(3) HOW CAN THE LONDON TRANSPORT DEFICIT BE MET?

The L.T.E. is at present accumulating a large deficit and this will continue until fares are raised again. Presumably Heseltine will now repay the £50m penalty The remainder of the deficit could be met either by a grant from the G.L.C. or through an even greater increase in fares. Although the supplementary rate to finance the low fares policy has been held to be illegal, it is possible that it might be legal to finance the deficit through the rates once fares have been increased. The alternative of financing it through fares would accelerate the decline in London Transport. The effect could be reduced if the deficit could be capitalised and written off over a number of years, but while the L.T.E. lawyers are suggesting that this would be legal, the G.L.C. lawyers disagree.

(4) ARE CONCESSIONARY FARES LEGAL?

The Prescott case in 1954 ruled that free fares for O.A.P.s were illegal, and this was promptly reversed by statute

(contd. from previous page)

to protect the numerous authorities who had introduced such schemes. The current provisions in s40 of the 1969 Act and s138 of the 1968 Act, are unaffected by the Lords' ruling. The G.L.C. is generous enough to grant free use of London Transport to the metropolitan police and others. These schemes could be illegal.

(5) WILL THE SUPPLEMENTARY RATE BE REPAID?

The Chief Finance Officers of London Boroughs have now met and decided not to refund the rate paid unless it is individually demanded. They will credit it against an individual's rate liability next year. The I.L.E.A. element of the supplementary rate would still seem to be lawful (coming from a separate precepting authority), but this element is being challenged by the Westminster Chamber of Commerce. The biggest scandal is Council tenants on supplementary benefits. They are expected to pay the increased weekly rate liability, but the D.H.S.S. has refused to increase their benefit to compensate them for this.

(6) WILL THE DISTRICT AUDITOR INTERVENE

If Ian Pickwell, the District Auditor, intervened there is the possibility of surcharge and disqualification, unlawful expenditure having been incurred. Any such action is unlikely as all the G.L.C. Councillors thought that they were acting lawfully and this is a complete defence for them.

(7) IS IT LAWFUL TO DEFY HESELTINE?

The main plank of the Diplock judgement was that the fare reduction was unlawful because of the block grant penalty. The loss of £50m which had to be met through the rates was in his view 'clearly a thriftless use of monies obtained by the G.L.C. for the ratepayers and a deliberate failure to deploy to the best advantage the full financial resources available to it by avoiding any action that would involve forfeiting grants from central government funds. It was thus a breach of the fiduciary duty owed by the G.L.C. to the ratepayers.'

The I.L.E.A. has been penalised to the tune of £125m for refusing to make cuts, albeit that these would have had to be 30% or so. Diplock's argument taken to its logical and absurd conclusion, would mean that it was unlawful for the I.L.E.A. not to make those cuts which were necessary to protect its entitlement to block grant.

One element of the Camden Ratepayers Association action is that labour councillors are individually liable for the loss of £5.2 R.S.G. in 1980/1 and £20m block grant in 1981/2. The absurdity of their claim is that the High Court has now ruled (in the action brought by six labour authorities) that Heseltine acted illegally in withdrawing the initial £5.2m. That judgement at least places the blame where it lies.

(8) WHAT IS THE AFFECT ON OTHER COUNCIL DECISIONS?

In August I listed a range of decisions that the court might rule to be unlawful. These ranged from decisions to hold down rents, pay minimum wages, hold down school meal prices, preserve direct labour organisations, giving financial support to community groups, to issuing council newssheets. To this must now be added the L.B.A. publicity campaign. All that can be said is that the judicial attitudes evident in the fares case make it more probable that such decisions might be ruled to be unlawful. A field day has been created for 'cranks and busybodies' (the apt phrase used by Walton J., to describe the C.R.A. last year), who wish to use their financial resources to undermine local democracy.

CONCLUSIONS

While the fares case is a lesson to democratic socialists who wish to understand the institutional changes that will be necessary before socialism can be introduced, the first priority must be to force the government to introduce legislation to reverse the decision and save public transport. Many Tory authorities should be getting cold feet, and there are numerous Tory M.P.s in marginal London seats who are realising how popular the low fares policies was.

The threat of surcharge is now ever present in the council chamber – for both labour and tory councillors. Any councillor who acts in the honest belief that a decision is legal has a complete defence to a surcharge action. The advice to the cautious councillor is to seek the guidance of the High Court on every questionable decision. A flood of declaration applications would soon bring the courts to a halt, and it may be that we should not leave the initiative to ratepayer groups. In the early part of the 19th century, local magistrates were responsible for the functions now performed by local authorities. In the 1980's the higher courts may well reclaim that power, remembering those words of Gladstone in 1890 that the exercise of power was the best test of a class.

Higher Education fightback:
No time to lose!

Despite the most massive representations from the highest in the land – the University Vice-Chancellors' Committee – to "ease the impact of the proposed government cuts in the university sector", Sir Keith Joseph – the newly installed Tory Minister for Education – has refused to budge from his hard-line position. Mr William Waldgrave, the young Junior Minister, has expressed some 'sympathy' with the universities' case, particularly over the speed at which the cuts are to be implemented. The firm and inflexible Treasury line has prevailed backed up by Mrs. Thatcher and her Treasury Minister. The letter from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors stated that it believed that current policy towards universities was "profoundly mistaken and highly damaging". The effect of the cuts would lead to a reduction of some 10,000 places in the university sector, narrowing still further opportunities for young people to study at universities – by one in seven.

The Association of University Teachers has estimated the loss of academic jobs at six to seven thousand, and figures of £250,000,000 are being bandied around as the possible cost of compensating staff for dismissals. Here we are clearly dealing with the monetarist "Alice in Wonderland economics of the government's public expenditure 'savings' ". The university of London with its vast concentration of colleges in the Greater London area will be badly hit. Chelsea College will have to cut £1.8million (11% of its total budget) this year and "expects" to lose 30% of its total budget in the next three years.

THE POLYTECHNICS

London's eight polytechnics – five within the Inner London Education Authority's area – are also being threatened with severe cuts. Six London polytechnics – North London, Central, City, South Bank and Thames (ILEA) plus North East London – would face a cut of the order of £15,000,000 or 25% of their total budget! North East London Polytechnic is high up in the firing line where cuts amounting to £5,000,000 might have to be absorbed in a budget of around £22,000,000. Threatened cuts for next year could lead to the loss of 115 to 125 jobs for £1m. and £1½m. cuts and 350 to 400 jobs for the most extreme option – £3½million cuts.

The Inner London Education Authority under its new leader Bryn Davies has given a positive lead in mounting a massive campaign against the Heseltine Bill. This campaign must now extend to Greater London to involve the outer London Education Authorities.

What we must do now!

1 Cooperation between all unions must be ensured. No more exclusiveness – ASTMS, NALGO, GMWU, NATFHE, UCATT, the AUT and the NUS must all work together against the cuts.

2 NATFHE and the AUT should set up a joint fighting committee to ensure that all efforts are pooled and that one sector is not played off against the other!

3 Our Councillors, our MPs, our trade union representatives are the key to a successful battle against the cuts. The public must be involved, and a series of mass meetings must be held – and quickly!

4 We must resist the cuts – with all our collective resources!

Ellis Hillman,
Waltham Forest NATFHE

BERMONDSEY BRIEFING

Guilty without trial

Nick Murray
Assistant Secretary
Southwark-Bermondsey CLP

Michael Foot's extraordinary Commons Renunciation of Bermondsey's prospective candidate, Peter Tatchell, on 3 December – surely one of the most bizarre episodes in the post-war history of the British Labour Party – left the Bermondsey Party stunned and incredulous. How could the Leader of the Party have been so badly informed about the situation in Bermondsey? Who were the people responsible for the 'disinformation' that could lead Michael Foot to condemn in such an unprecedented manner a lively, vigorous constituency party which had such an excellent record of building up membership and involving ever increasing numbers of people in Labour Party activity in Bermondsey?

Michael Foot's action – and its subsequent endorsement by the NEC – came as a bitterly unseasonal Christmas offering to the local party. The sense of disappointment, even of betrayal, which ordinary party members were expressing after the attack on Peter Tatchell – widely respected in Bermondsey both as prospective candidate and as a prodigiously energetic and hard-working party secretary over the past two years – was deeply felt. What has been happening in Bermondsey that could have provoked the recent crisis?

SIGNS OF LIFE

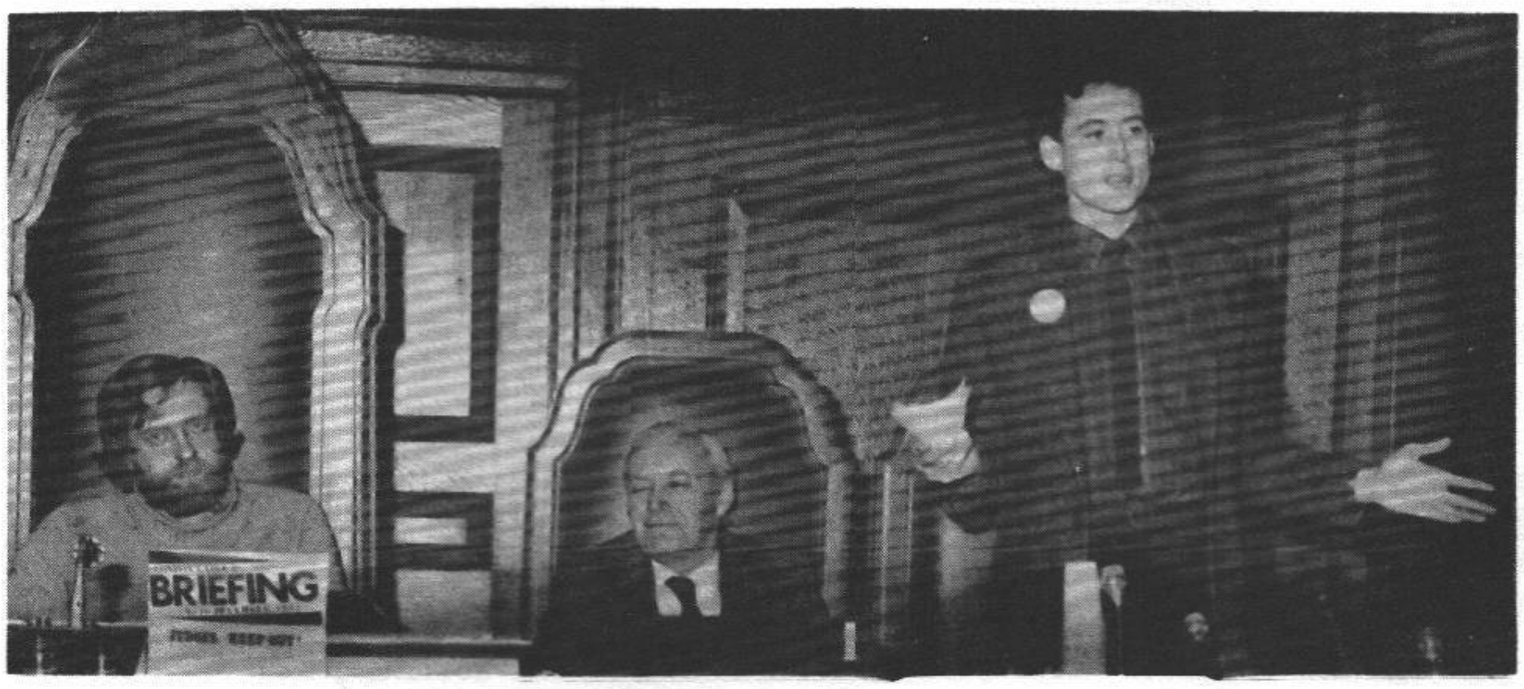
Following the election of new party officers in March 1980 Bermondsey – hitherto by general consent a moribund and inactive constituency party – began to show signs of life once again. An immediate recruiting drive led, in the ensuing 18 months, to a *doubling* of party membership. A regular feature of general committee meetings became the reading out of long lists of membership applications from people who for the first time for years had been approached by the local party and asked to join in the fight "for a better Bermondsey". In certain wards in Bermondsey in the past it had required extraordinary persistence just to join the Labour Party.

Attendance at ward meetings increased and a new excitement appeared to be generated as the Party once more assumed an active role in the local community, building links with trades unions, tenants associations, community groups, and other local campaigns. A Fight Unemployment Committee was set up which immediately launched a "Jobs for Bermondsey" campaign to fight local closures and redundancies. The Party threw itself into the campaign to prevent the closure of St Olaves Hospital and organised a "stop-the-traffic" protest outside the Hospital in Lower Road during the summer. An Action Committee was formed and it organised a recruiting newsletter delivered to every household in the constituency on two occasions.

FEMINIST TRADITION

The Women's Section was revived, after a break of several years, and the Party's early feminist tradition was recalled. More and more women joined the Party and took a major role in Party activities.

Another strong local issue was the future of docklands. In spite of Bob Mellish's Canute-like declaration that the docks would be closed "over my dead body" this major Bermondsey industry had dwindled to nothing. All along the riverside the old warehouses and wharves rotted away, and instead of seizing the opportunity to transform those derelict acres into new industry employing local people, into housing land, open space and other amenities, the local council, under the leadership of John O'Grady, preferred to back a massive speculative office development – equivalent to 14 Centre Points – on the Hay's Wharf site between London Bridge and Tower Bridge.



Peter Tatchell addresses Briefing *meeting at Regional Conference*

Local people were enraged, and the Party gave its support and a large financial donation to a community group which was co-ordinating the local community's opposition to the speculative scheme. The Action Committee organised an occupation of the HMS Belfast, moored off Hay's Wharf, to draw attention to the local community's demands for jobs and housing on Hay's Wharf.

VIGOROUS DETERMINATION

The list of activities and achievements could be extended indefinitely. What they all had in common was a vigorous determination to make the Labour Party be seen to be acting on behalf of local people, articulating their demands and answering their real needs. The aim was also to *involve* as many people as possible, to make a politics that was genuinely popular in place of the old oligarchical manipulations that had given Bermondsey such a bad name in the recent past and put the term "Bermondsey Mafia" in every journalist's political glossary.

Meanwhile, all this time, the ultra-left sectarians stayed away in droves. The flickering beacon of *Socialist Challenge* failed to cast its redeeming light into the benighted gloom of Bermondsey. It is rumoured now that the Fourth International has sent out for an A to Z of London (we are on page 63d, comrades).

BEHIND–THE–SCENES

There remain in the end a number of worrying aspects of the Tatchell affair. Even the most ardent disbelievers in conspiracy theory now wonder what behind-the-scenes machinations led to Michael Foot's extraordinary Commons performance. Was it unscripted? Did its amateurish, knockabout execution conceal a predetermined plan of action? What deals were struck? Why did Michael Foot hold an audience a few days beforehand with Bermondsey MP, Bob Mellish, and Southwark Council leader, John O'Grady? Had not Bob Mellish boasted in the pages of the *Daily Mail* immediately following Peter Tatchell's initial selection that he had "a few surprises in store for the Left"? Was there any substance in the report in the *Financial Times* that Mellish had had secret talks with Shirley Williams and the SDP about the timing of a bye-election? Was it true that Peter Tatchell had been sacrificed by Michael Foot to appease a posse of right wing Labour MPs threatening to join the SDP unless he engaged in some ritual slaughter? All these questions need to be answered and when they are it is unlikely that much credit will be reflected on certain people outside the Bermondsey Party.

The Bermondsey Constituency Labour Party appears to have been tried by a hanging judge without a jury for doing what all Labour Parties *ought* to be doing – fighting vigorously for Labour Party policies and for the working people in their area. We would expect Michael Foot to rebuke us for *not* doing what we have done.

Attack the Tories, not Bermondsey

by Peter Tatchell

The Tories and SDP-Liberal Alliance must be gloating over the events of the past month leading up to my non-endorsement by the NEC as Labour's candidate for Bermondsey. They have had the joy of witnessing a Labour Party member being publicly disowned and banned as a parliamentary candidate for advocating "too strong" a fight against them. To the detriment of the Party, weeks of newspaper headlines have been dominated by right-wing attacks on my selection. The attention and energies of Party members have been diverted away from an effective fightback against the Tories.

The Party leadership could not have timed events better for the benefit of the government. Michael Foot's denunciation in parliament achieved what all the Tories wanted, but could never have hoped to pull off themselves; it completely overshadowed Labour's attack on Howe's mini-budget and Tebbitt's new youth training scheme – not to mention our much-needed solidarity with the Polish workers' movement in its struggle for political liberty and trade union freedom.

COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNS

Locally, members of the Bermondsey Party have been forced, against our wishes, to preoccupy ourselves with a defence campaign. This has drawn us away from much-preferred community campaigns against the new Tory London Dockland Development Corporation, which in conjunction with big business interests, is planning a speculative carve-up of the Bermondsey riverside. Already the Corporation, whose Vice-Chair is Bob Mellish, has approved plans for massive speculative office developments on Hay's Wharf and luxury private flats on Corbett's Wharf.

Through local campaigns to ensure that the riverside is used for the benefit of Bermondsey people, we had built up a strong base of popular support and felt confident of victory in any by-election. However, following Michael Foot's repudiation of myself in the House of Commons and the ensuing press coverage, there is no doubt that Labour's election prospects in Bermondsey have been damaged.

The main beneficiaries of this damage are the SDP and the Liberals. They must be chuckling with delight at this electoral gift-horse handed to them by Labour's right-wing.

MOST LOYAL SUPPORTERS

What makes this train of events all the more tragic, is that on the advice of life-long political opponents, Michael Foot has attacked Bermondsey comrades who have been his most loyal supporters for so many years. Surely, he must now recognise that he was misinformed about myself and the Bermondsey Party?

It does not become the Leader of the Labour Party to refuse to admit that he has made a mistake, and instead, to compound his error by making the issue into a test of personal loyalty and the future of his leadership.

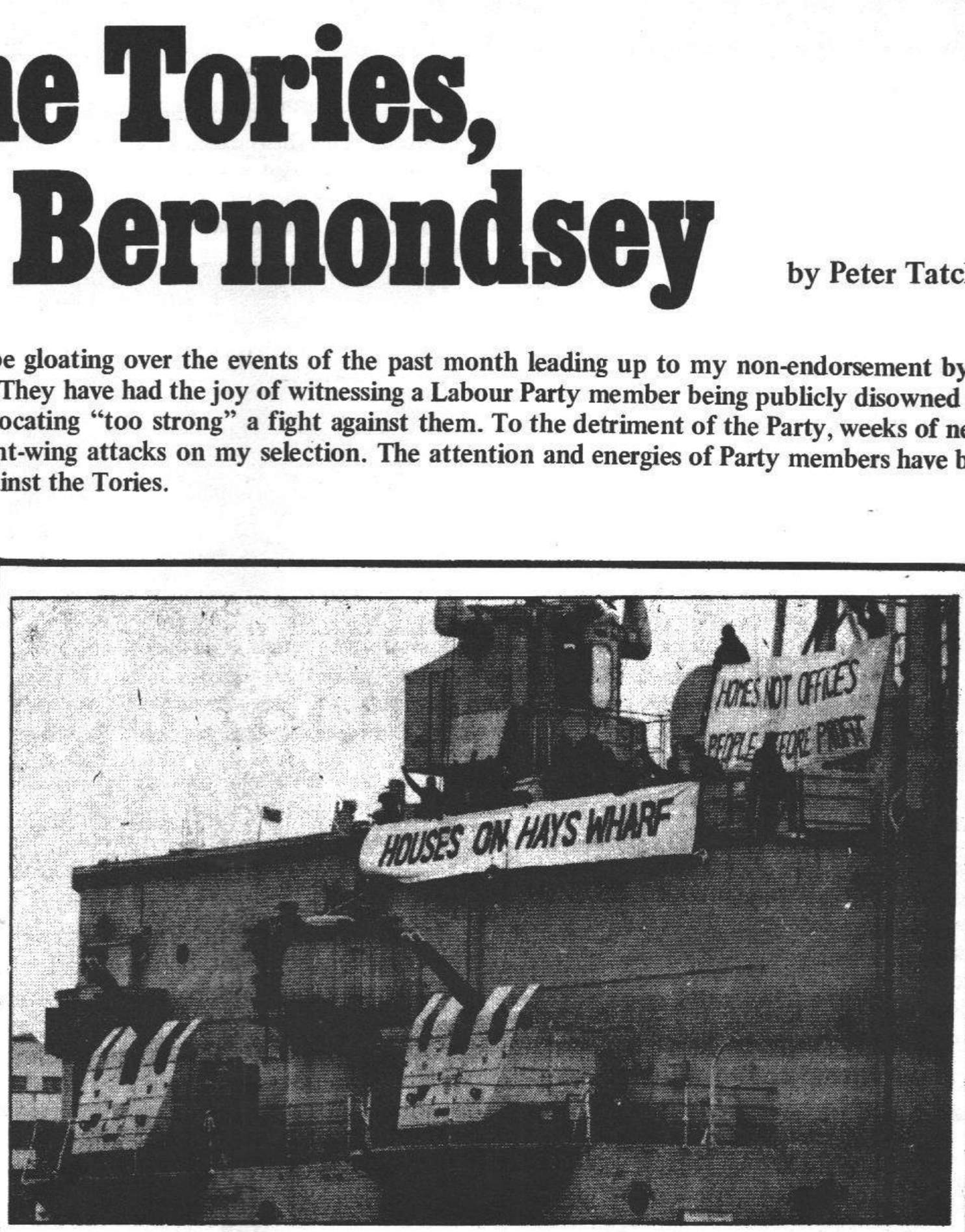
Nor is it consistent with Michael Foot's record as both a victim and opponent of witch-hunts and inquisitions for him to be associated with a process of injustice whereby I was judged in secret by the NEC without the right to put my case or even be officially told of the precise allegations against me.

By attacking my advocacy of extra-parliamentary action in *Briefing* with such vigour and apparently using it as the basis for denying my candidature, the leadership only serves to expose its own vulnerability and fear of alternative ideas. Instead of winning by reasoned argument and persuasion, the Right seemingly feels so threatened that it has to resort to (un)constitutional and administrative measures such as non-endorsement to defeat the Left.

DANGEROUS INTOLERANCE

The now famous *Briefing* article was written as a contribution to the debate concerning Labour's strategy for fighting the Tories. By blocking my candidature because of the ideas expressed in that article, the NEC is effectively denying the right of free and open debate within the Party. It indicates a dangerous intolerance. This is particularly surprising given that the Party leadership is prepared to accommodate within its ranks MPs who publicly oppose Conference policies. Why then, will they not also tolerate me?

But, of course, this whole episode is not just about myself or the Bermondsey Labour Party. We are just a symbol and my advocacy of extra-parliamentary action is merely a mirror of the beliefs of thousands of other grassroots Labour Party members throughout the country. The disqualification of my candidature will prove a temporary and pyrrhic victory for the Right. What they cannot annul is our ideas and determination to translate them into a massive popular movement working both inside and outside of parliament to create a new socialist society.



In April last year, thirteen members of our Bermondsey Labour Party occupied the HMS Belfast. We unfurled banners on the bridge to demand houses on Hay's Wharf. We were protesting against the proposals of property developers to build the equivalent of fourteen Centrepoint office blocks on the Bermondsey riverside.

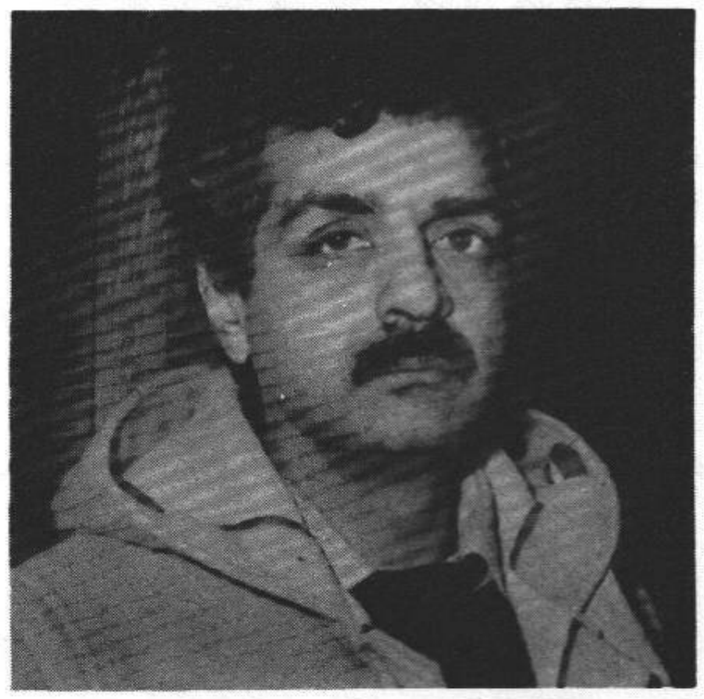
TARIQ ALI ~ THE FACTS

The new purge mentality of the National Executive Committee has not been restricted to the attacks on Peter Tatchell and Militant. The third case, while in my view possibly of less fandamental significance than the others, also raises some important points of principle. This is the intervention by the NEC in the application for membership of Hornsey CLP by Tariq Ali. The facts of this case to date are as follows.

Steve Hull
Chairman of Hornsey CLP, writing in a personal capacity.

Tariq Ali completed an application form to join Hornsey CLP in the normal way. In doing so he signed an undertaking to accept and conform to the constitution, principles, programme and policy of the Labour Party and the rules of Hornsey Party.

The application soon became public knowledge, and it subsequently appeared on the agenda of the Organisation Committee of the NEC. It is unusual, if not unprecedented, for the Organization Committee to discuss a membership application before it has even gone to a branch meeting. However, it was discussed, and the Organization Committee decided to recommend to the NEC that Tariq Ali should not be admitted to membership of theLabour Party.



Before the NEC met, Crouch End branch of Hornsey Party held its normal monthly meeting. It considered several membership applications, including the one from Tariq Ali. After a long debate the meeting voted by a large majority to reject the application from Tariq Ali. It is very unusual for a branch to debate to reject a membership application, but the branch was fully entitled to do so under the rules.

Model CLP rules give a right of personal appeal to the GMC to anyone whose membership application is rejected by a branch. Tariq Ali sent an appeal to the CLP, and this arrived in time for the December GMC meeting. However, before the GMC there was a meeting of the NEC which accepted the recommendation of the Organisation Committee. Notification of this decision arrived in Hornsey during the GMC meeting. This was the first official advice to the CLP that the matter was of national party interest.

The Hornsey GMC had to decide whether the NEC decision prevented it from carrying out its duty under CLP rules to hear the appeal. It decided to proceed, and after a long debate voted by a large majority to uphold the appeal.

Clearly the story does not end here, but this is how matters stood at the end of December.

Several of the principles involved are similar to those raised by other recent NEC decisions. However, one which is special to this case is the form of 'pre-emptive strike' by which the NEC apparently hoped to stop the local party from carrying out its normal functions. Resentment at this in Hornsey Party was widespread, and was certainly not restricted to those who supported the application. Few would argue that the NEC has considerable powers to act when it things that a CLP is in breach of the constitution or rules (though we might dispute the way they use those powers). However, I wonder whether they really have the power to act on a matter before the local party has had a chance to take any decisions.

What Should the Left Do?

The meeting of delegates representing different currents of the Labour Left on 23 January takes place at a time when the Labour Movement confronts its most serious crisis since 1931. The current breakdown of the traditional party equilibrium in Britain is a dramatic reflection of the social and economic crisis confronting the British state. This may seem a truism, but unless the point is fully grasped the Left inside the Labour Movement could find itself wrestling with a phantom. There is nothing to be gained in making political concessions to those who would like to transform Labour into an SDP Mark 2. The notion that if the Left makes concessions to the Right, the press will call off its campaign or that the SDP leaders will return to the fold (if it is purged of black sheep) is utterly ludicrous. The Right, backed by sections of the ruling class, has decided to split the Labour Party. They will try and build on their gains by extending the split to the Labour Movement as a whole in order to further demoralise the working class. There can be little doubt that if the plan to electorally and organisationally marginalise the Labour Party succeeds it will shift the relationship of social and class forces in favour of the bourgeoisie. A new coalition government will not redress mass grievances, but institute 'Thatcherism with a human face.'

NO SOFT OPTIONS

What then should the left do? Clearly it should oppose the witch-hunts and the purges being planned by the Labour Right. Offering soft options to the purgers (such as a compulsory registration of groups in the LP) is to take the battle on to right-wing territory. Nor is it correct to equate a re-run of the Deputy Leadership election with a meaningful fight-back. I think that tactical decisions must not be elevated into a strategic fetish. The Left needs a period of re-thinking and re-building: the real task is an outgoing campaign to take on the Tories and the SDP. The latter, in particular, poses political problems for the Right and can only be meaningfully accomplished by a coalition of the Left. We need to have a medium-term view of rebuilding the Labour Party as a mass, campaigning vehicle for socialist policies. Such a process could occupy us throughout the Eighties. There would be many short-term setbacks in the process, but the long-term gains could be incalculble. The gains so far have not been negligible, but reselection and the electoral college could be reversed unless the central obstacle is tackled: the block vote cannot be relied upon by the left as a long-term ally. Michael Meacher's proposal to break the block character of the vote is an important step forward, but sooner or later the Left will have to argue for its abolition and replacement by workplace branches or an active form of affiliation. Not to do so means to prolong a mythology which is now extremely damaging to the Labour Movement.

NATIONAL ORGANISATION

Some form of national organisation spanning the CLPs, trades-unions and affiliated societies is thus crucial if the Left is to advance beyond caucus politics and backroom manouvres to gain block votes. Such an organisation would be an umbrella and non-exclusive in character, but designed essentially to give more self-confidence to the constituency lefts, struggle for commonly agreed policies and begin the arduous task of democratising the unions. Such a process could also effectively challenge the witch-hunters and stem the tide of demoralisation which threatens to slow doewn the process of socialists joining the Labour Party.

Tariq Ali

SUPPORT

The attack by the National Executive Committee on Hornsey Labour Party's right to accept applicants into membership has implications for all Constituency Labour Parties.

It is particularly incongruous that the NEC should have made this apparently unprecedented intervention in a constituency such as Hornsey, which has a party with a large membership, a notable reputation for active campaigning and a record of wide-ranging membership recruitment.

As one of the three constituencies in the London borough of Haringey (a borough whose population includes the largest proportion of members of ethnic minority groups of any local authority in the country) Hornsey lays particular emphasis in its frequent publicity mater-

MOYLE WINS IN LEWISHAM

Dave Sullivan (Convenor, East Lewisham Labour Left)

Labour Party members in East Lewisham, especially those from the Right to the Tribune Left, must now anxiously be watching their recently-reselected MP Roland Moyle.

That anxiety is not simply based in the sight of other Labour MP's in London scurrying into the waiting arms of the Social Democrats. Rather, it has a more direct cause. Only last month East Lewisham's GLC councillor Paul Rossi – often labelled a younger version of Moyle – defected after repeatedly protesting to constituency officers that he had no intention of leaving the Labour Party. There was no courtesy in the departure, either, with CLP discovering that Rossi was going through the press.

Will Moyle follow? Certainly, if the pattern of other MPs' defections is repeated, then he may well. For one thing, his reselection may have given him a feeling that he is above CLP accountability, as it has done with others. It may also encourage him to believe that the majority of local Labour Party members support him and not the need to defend Party policy.

The lessons of Moyle's reselection need to be learned by all CLP's in which the Left hope to oust the sitting MP. There is a complacency among many constituency Left groups that giving the MP a 'scare' is sufficient and that the reselection process alone provides that insurance.

This optimistic view is overwhelminglyself-defeating. In East Lewisham, known Moyle opponents gleefully rubbed their hands at the prospect of a contest and then dutifully voted for him during the ballot at the GMC meeting in November.

As it happened, a relatively small group formed only last summer as the East Lewisham Labour Left sustained the fight.

Moyle at the time faced the prospect of being reselected unopposed until, at the fag end of a GMC meeting, he launched into a twenty minute diatribe against Tony Benn for running for the Deputy Leadership. This had a galvanic effect for, despite Moyle's centre-right voting record, he had previously a reputation for avoiding nasty innuendo.

East Lewisham's Labour Left grew rapidly and, by the time the reselection process had begun in earnest, had sufficient number in the GMC to organise an overturning of the CLP's executive's decision to railroad the selection timetable. The ensuing rescheduling gave wards time to choose three opponents: Frances Morrell, ILEA Deputy Leader; Anne Weyman, an Amnesty International administrator; and Scrape Ntshona, a local teacher. Moyle himself was nominated by six wards and several affiliated union branches including NUPE, which sponsors him in Parliament.

In fact, Ntshona was the Left's choice from the outset, but they only succeeded in getting him nominated in one ward when two of the wards rejected both local candidates in preferring Morrell and Weyman.

Morrell was chosen as the better-known Left candidate, while Weyman pulled the biggest surprise when one ward's members criticised Ntshona's supporters for underlining his black race but saw no contradiction in backing Weyman because she was a woman.

Weyman later disgraced herself by not bothering to appear on the selection night itself.

Meanwhile some of the Left attempted to transfer support of the group to Morrell in the grounds that victory for such a well-known Bennite would trigger a shock wave throughout London Labour CLP's. However, when the majority opted to stay with Ntshona, the group's discipline prevailed and they all backed the local man.

Come the reselection conference and all optimism evaporated, with Moyle easily defeating Ntshona by 37 votes to 18. Forecasts of an exhaustive and eye-opening (for Moyle) series of ballots did not materialise.

In the end, only the core of the Left stayed together, and some ten known Moyle doubters gambled that their MP would remain loyal. But the greater gamble was that he would begin adhering to Party policy.

The future for the CLP was perhaps better foreshadowed by the horrified expressions on long-time East Lewisham activists of all persuasions after Rossi's betrayal, however, than by the reselection vote. So far no-one has followed the traitor.

The betting is that Moyle won't, either. For one thing, he already is an MP – whereas Rossi is not (and Rossi's political record made it increasingly unlikely that his ambitions would be realised). Another, simpler reason is that Moyle is less arrogant, less capable of believing that he is above Party policy. Or are we being overly optimistic again?

Wandsworth

As in other boroughs, the manifesto and selection process for the 1982 election has been grinding slowly along, permanently in danger of being swamped by an ever rising sea of paper.

From February to July last year, ten study groups were meeting – some better attended than others – to put together reports which formed a Draft Manifesto. This was issued by the Local Government Commitee, and widely circulated in the Borough, for discussion and amendment. The different sections of the draft varied considerably in quality, and while some went through almost unamended, others were the subject of considerable criticism and re-writing.

The Manifesto Conference was held at the end of November but, as a result of the widespread discussion, over 100 amendments had been sent in, and it had to be agreed before the conference that there was simply too much business for a one-day meeting. The 'subject' papers, therefore, were taken then, and the important questions of priorities, accountability of councillors, and the attitude towards Government (and especially the Heseltine Bill) deferred to a conference in mid-January. While this decision was taken for practical timetable reasons, rather than political ones, it does have the advantage that our policy will be able to take account of the most up to date position on the Heseltine Bill, especially his withdrawal of the referendum proposals. The results of this resumed conference will not be known until after this edition of London Labour Briefing goes to press.

As for selecting candidates, the Panel was set up during July and August, but policy on whether to interview people, and in what circumstances to turn them down, was not too clearly defined and varied between the three CLPs (there are four constituencies, but only three parties, as Battersea functions as a single party covering the two constituencies). But all those who were rejected and then appealed were re-instated by the GLRC, which made a good many people wonder if there was any point in the exercise anyway. Even with the re-instatements, there were barely enough people on the panel to cover all the seats. Wandsworth seems to have rather a large number of people who are good at telling us all what should be done, but not too good at taking the responsibility for doing it themselves.

Sue Ward

HORNSEY

ial on the needs of ethnic minorities. The party's regular door-to-door Hornsey Labour News was expanded; in its November edition, to a bumper six-sided issue in six languages (including an invitation, in six languages, to join the Party.)

The party's wide-ranging and continuous sweep for new members includes a regular Saturday street stall, which has been running for nearly two years.

In a constituency as culturally rich as Hornsey (62 languages are spoken in the borough) Labour's supporters come from a wide variety of political backgrounds. Recent and older members have been recruited not only among English-born ex-Liberals and ex-Communist Party members, but among members of ethnic minorities with experience of more radical political traditions. In all cases these new members have been welcomed without reservation into their new commitment to the Labour Party.

The electoral effectiveness of the Hornsey approach was proved in the GLC elections last year when Labour's candidate, Tony Hart (husband of Judith Hart, MP, this year's Chairman of the Labour Party) won Hornsey against the odds. It was the first time that Labour had ever won marginal Hornsey, and the typically vigorous campaign fought by the party brought it victory despite the fact that the swing required to win was larger than that in several other marginals which Labour failed to win.

Hornsey Labour Party now needs all the support it can get if it is to assert successfully its right to recruit members. Below is a suggested model resolution which could be sent to the NEC, the regional Executive of the Greater London Labour Party, and (as an emergency resolution) to London Labour Party's Annual Conference in March.

Narandra Makanji
Wood Green CLP and
Haringey Local Government Committee

This branch/EC/GMC condemns the decision of the National Executive Committee not to allow Hornsey Labour Party to recruit into membership an applicant who fulfils all the normal requirements for membership. By this action the NEC is denying a Constitutency Labour Party its right to recruit a member it has voted to accept, and is encouraging ideological inquisitions of intending new members.

We demand that the NEC reverses its decision, and we call on the Greater London Labour Party to do all in its power to support Hornsey Labour Party's rights in this issue.

ISLINGTON BRIEFING

Goodbye...

Steve Bundred
(GLC Member Islington North)

If to lose one M.P. can be counted as a misfortune, then to lose three very definitely looks like carelessness. But though Islington now finds itself for the first time in as long as anyone can remember without a Labour M.P., this is not the tragedy that some people in the Party would like to think it.

Following the departure of Michael O'Hallaron (North) to the S.D.P. in September and of John Grant (Central) not long afterwards, George Cunningham (South and Finsbury) has now left the Labour Party, but is saving his defection to the S.D.P. until such time as the Gang of Four calculate it will be of greatest propaganda value, probably just before the Borough elections next May.

The S.D.P. will however be as welcome to him when he joins them as they are to their other Islington recruits. For although the individuals differ in the character and the circumstances of their defection, what the three M.P.s have in common, along with Islington's Councillors, is a belief that they were specially ordained by the almighty to govern us in our interests (but to the exclusion of our opinions), until the earth swallows them up.



Islington's Three Wise Monkeys

RECORD IN OFFICE

What they also have in common is a record of which none of them can be proud.

In the case of O'Halloran of course, more has been written in the Press about him since his defection that he has ever found time to say on his own behalf in Parliament or on public platforms in his constituency. Winner of the Guardian "mould-breaker of the year" award for his 'trappist Parliamentary performances', he has a local reputation similar to that of Lord Lucan – people are sure he is alive but no-one has yet been able to find him, least of all the officers of his C.L.P. who tried unsuccessfully on many occasions to persuade him to attend G.C. meetings while he was still a Labour M.P. Even on the day of his defection he managed to avoid detection by failing to turn up for the S.D.P. Press Conference and escaping over a back garden fence to avoid reporters at his door.

'CREATIVE THINKER OF THE YEAR'

In previous years he might well have been in the running for the Guardians "Creative Thinker of the year" award with such feats as his signing of motions both for and against the E.E.C. in the same week, and his advocacy of a safety net under Archway Road bridge to deter potential suicides. However he is best known for two outstanding contributions to democratic politics. Firstly, as one of only two Eire born M.P.'s (the other is Sally Oppenheim and the least said about her the better), he has only once voted against renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, has been characteristically silent on the H-Blocks, and has never attended any of the marches or demonstrations on Norther Ireland which have been held over the last twelve years. In short he has a record on Ireland which makes Don Conannon look like a republican activist. He is also the architect of one of the most corrupt political machines even seen in the London Labour movement. It kept him and his friends in power, and Islington in decay, for decades. But once it became clear that this machine had finally been defeated by the left, O'Halloran was quick to take refuge in in the S.D.P. where the same tactics are now being used to outflank the middle-class political virgins who have been attracted to the new Party in Islington by the lure of credit-card politics.

Despite this impressive record, O'Halloran remains a modest man (with much to be modest about). The same cannot be said however of Cunningham. His arrogance is his most outstanding feature and one example was provided on the day of his departure from the Labour Party by his announcement that he would not be joining the S.D.P. just yet, because they had insisted he must join before Christmas to be adopted as the S.D.P. candidate for his constituency. Apparently he has no more intention of being dictated to by the S.D.P. than by the Labour Party-S.D.P. members please note.

CAVALIER

Other examples of Cunningham's self-admiration were his refusal to be bound by the manifestoes on which he fought the 1974 elections and his cavalier disregard for the views of his party when casting his vote in the leadership election that followed Jim Callaghan's resignation. After an elaborate televised consultation, which the Islington South and Finsbury C.L.P. had arranged for all local Party members, had come down overwhelmingly for Foot, Cunningham declared that he was grateful for this expression of members' views but he would be voting for Healey anyway. For this he was rewarded with a place in Foot's front-bench team only to contemptuously renounce it a few days after his re-appointment in November.

But members of Islington South C.L.P. are a long suffering lot. They were prepared to tolerate his talking down to Party members and refusal to meet socially with them for fear he might be tainted by the stench of the lower orders. They even managed to ignore his constant bombastic interruptions of delegates at G.C. meetings. But what even his former friends have not been able to forgive was the dishonesty with which he failed to declare his intentions of leaving the Labour Party when pressed to do so, both at private meetings and at his reselection conference.

ORGANISING THE RIGHT WING

John Grant has most of the same qualities that distinguish Cunningham and O'Halloran without having committed some of the most obvious mistakes.

Despite all this he was nevertheless reselected and then promptly resigned on the stated grounds that his majority had not been big enough for his satisfaction. A subsequent statement spoke heart-renderingly of the "unrecognised sacrifices" he had made in taking his £16,000 a year job, and the press predictably referred to his decision as another example of the 'individualistic style' which had made him the most

...And good riddance!

25 Islington councillors have now defected to the SDP, who have also won one seat in a bye-election. They now have control of the council, with the support of the two Tory votes and the mayoress' casting vote.

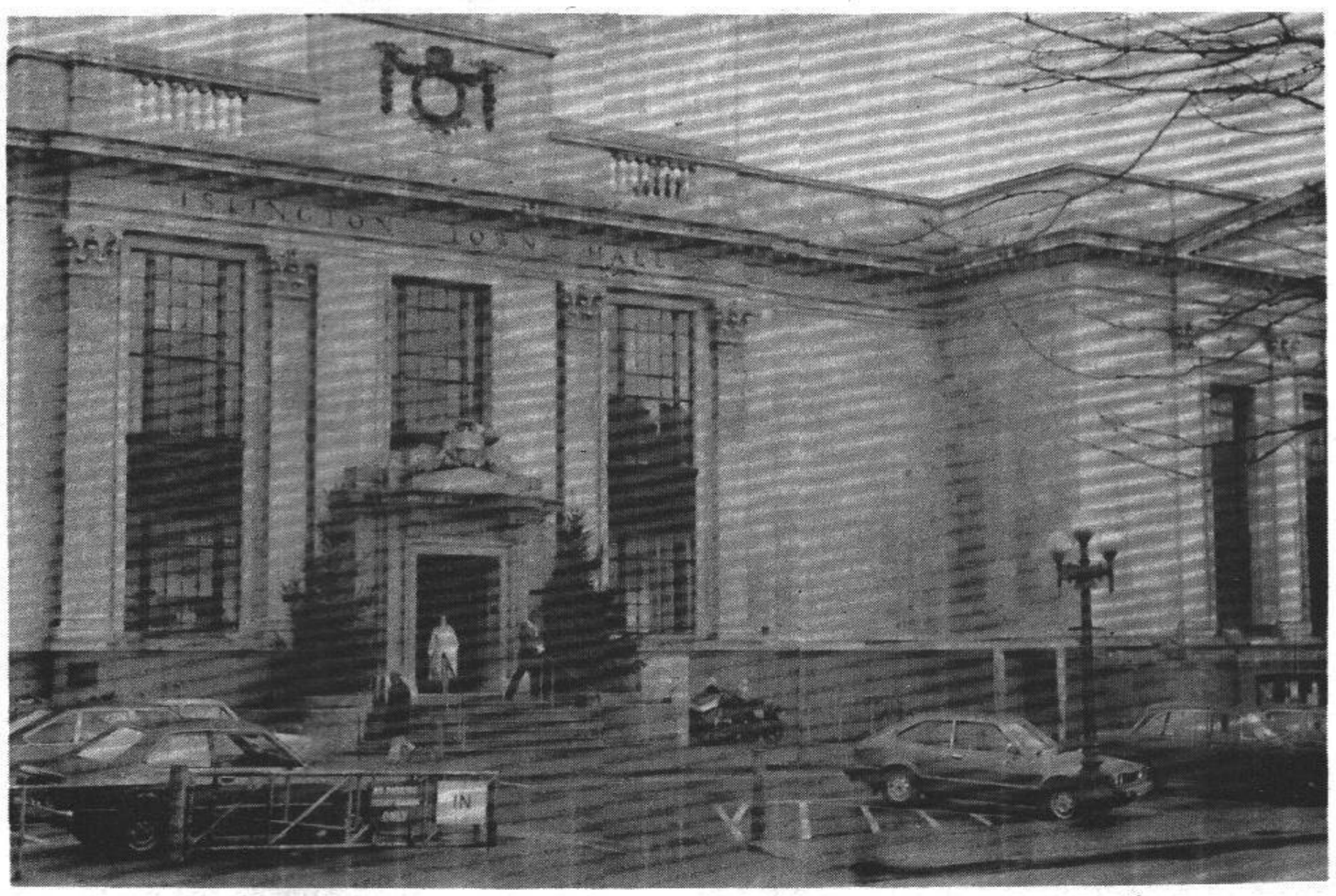
The Labour rump is obviously depressed and contains some who will be very inactive until May. (One will not attend Labour Group and another hopes to join the SDP, but not the Islington version.) But very few ordinary members have defected and local residents are sceptical of the defectors as they see them pursuing the same policies in the new SDP as they did as the 'old' Labour council.

One of the SDP group's first moves was to agree to a re-organisation of Social Services. This will involve centralising offices and stationing social workers in Libraries, day centres and other outposts. This re-organisation was overwhelmingly rejected after wide public consultation last year. This time the public were not offered the chance.

CUTTING

The new group is also set on cutting community organisations that eluded them as 'Labour' councillors. One new recruit to the SDP told the media he felt community groups were just fronts for political agitation. So much for SDP interest in decentralisation and community control of services.

The next few months in Islington should serve as an exemplary lesson to all those who have (mis-) placed their trust in this unholy alliance between failed Labour careerists and 'nice', liberal SDP recruits.



Islington Town Hall – SDP now in control

Hopefully Islington Labour Party can devote its time over the next few months to actively lobbying and campaigning to protect jobs and services in Islington and making links with the community and trade unions – capable of surviving this new crisis. The Party is meeting regularly with these groups and is organising a Rally on January 19th to open their campaign of action.

DISORIENTED

Unfortunately, however, although the grass-roots of the Party are clearly committed to Socialist policies, the stresses of the past months are making an impact. Mistrust and incipient anti-left sentiments are being actively stirred up by those disoriented by the pace of events. Socialists have been slow to realise that others in the Party were fully committed to a limited change in the balance of power only (ie from right to centre).

The 'left' is still being used to run the Party's administration but is not being politically supported. Locally, as well as nationally, there is a danger that the central issues will be fudged. Are we a Socialist Party? Are we going to seriously challenge the 'nice' SDP? 3 million are unemployed. Working class hopes of home, job and even day-to-day survival are being dashed. Women, youth and the Black community are experiencing particular pressure. What are we going to do?

OLDER, WHITE, MALE

Will we allow the same older, white and male comrades who have led the Party for decades to continue as before? Will we, like them, continue to cling to the example of a Labour Party that produced Jenkins, Williams and George Brown?

Or will we have the courage to take advantage of the Party's state of change and press forward remembering the radical tradition of Bevan and Lansbury, Poplar and Clay Cross? There is no doubt whose side they were on. And we would then be a party to vote for, not just the lesser of 2 or 3 evils on the ballot paper. Islington, I hope, will choose to stand up and be counted in this strand of the Labour Movement.

Nadine Finch
North Islington CLP

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wonderful M.P. ever to grace the Palace of Westminster. For 'individualistic' read 'ego-maniac, undemocratic and deceitful.' Not a machine politician in the O'Halloran sense, he is nevertheless an organiser and propagandist who spent much of his time in the Labour Party organising the right-wing fightback, in collaboration with his friend and sponsor Frank Chapple. Despite authorship of various Manifesto Group pamphlets, he would haave probably been re-selected by the Islington Central C.L.P. to fight again inhis constituency on existing boundaries. But Grant is a visionary and once that became clear to him that boundary changes would have spelt the end of his political career, his principled response was to push everyone else out of the queue in his clamour for the only available lifeboat.

Grant, Cunningham and O'Halloran have each found the heat in the kitchen too much for them and have retired to join their friends sipping claret in the drawing-room. The Labour Party in Islington is well rid of the three of them, but it would be foolish to think that the voters will necessarily take the same view. Our tasks in the coming months therefore must be to ensure that the real reasons for their departure are widely known; that their record and the policies they represent are fully understood; and that the alternative democratic socialism which the Labour Party once again stands for is effectively advocated in a sustained and public political campaign. With the cancer of the Social Democrats now excised, the Labour Party in Islington is better able than ever to fulfill these tasks.

LAMBETH SCHOOLS REORGANISATION

Cheung Siu Ming
(Norwood CLP)

ILEA's plans for re-organising secondary education in Lambeth is due to be finalised on January 20th, following consultation over its draft proposals. Lambeth has 10 state secondary schools (and 5 church-aided ones). The proposals reduce the state schools to 6, by one amalgamation involving 3 schools, and two amalgamations each involving two schools. Listing the schools from North to South, the proposals are:

1. **Vauxhall Manor (G) + Beaufoy (B) to form a mixed school on Beaufoy site.**
2. **Priory Park (G) + Kennington (B) + Stockwell Manor (M) on Stockwell Manor site.**
3. **Henry Thornton (B) + Tulse Hill (B) on Tulse Hill site.**
4. **Dick Sheppard (M) to change into a girl's school.**
5. **Dunraven (M), and**
6. **Norwood (G) to remain unchanged.**

These proposals show no marked change of approach when compared to plans already being implemented in North Westminster, Islington, Hackney, & Southwark, all under the old ILEA leadership. The reason is simple enough. The relevant ILEA subcommittee still has the same chairperson Margaret Morgan as before the GLC election, and the same team of school inspectors are carrying on their demolition work as before.

SAME BASIC PHILOSOPHY

The ILEA inspectors still have the same basic philosophy: survival by appeasement. This is their response to the cuts and the Tories' ideological offensive against the ILEA as a relatively progressive authority. Falling rolls are presented as a purely demographical problem, with the inevitable solution – reduce the number of schools to fit falling demand. While we are bombarded by statistics of population movements out of inner cities and plummeting birth rates (actually rising again for the past three years), hundreds of jobs are cut in the process. For most non-teaching part-time workers like cooks and cleaners, mainly women, there is simply no alternative local employment. Teaching staff face a different prospect.

Amalgamations are now preferred to outright closures, as they can be dressed up as attempts to improve on existing schools with poor buildings, bad exam results, weak links with the community . . . and countless other 'reasons'. Closures seem to provoke too much 'emotion', and leave inspectors the messy job of what to do with the students and staff. Amalgamations put the schools on the defensive, encourage divisive rivalry, and create a climate of uncertainty. Staff retiring or leaving are not replaced, and the fight to fill these vacant posts would be weakened by the fact that every teacher will have to apply and be interviewed for a job in the new school, in competition with others. This guarantees to bring out the worst back-stabbing careerism and bitterness, making it hard to retain any staffroom unity which has in the past neutralised dictatorial headteachers. Heads and inspectors have carte blanche to weed out active trade unionists.

POLITICAL PRESSURES

That political pressures rather than demographical problems weigh most heavily on the planners' minds can be seen by their inconsistencies. In Islington, for example, a reactionary campaign to retain Highbury Grove (of Rhodes Boyson fame) with its grammar school pretensions, streaming policies and other warts has succeeded to knock the plan there into a curious shape.

Such glaring incoherence can also be found in Lambeth. As pointed out by Lambeth NUT and others, the proposal to retain Norwood girls school in the south is backed up by the needs of the Asian communities as a reason. Yet this logic is not applicable to the north of the borough, where both girls schools, Vauxhall Manor and Priory Park are to disappear. Instead, Dick Sheppard school, converted some years ago from a girls school into a mixed one, is now to revert to a girls school to serve the north, even though Dick Sheppard is sited *SOUTH* of Brixton! Not surprisingly, this is strongly opposed by Dick Sheppard staff and parents. Furthermore, having explained ILEA's policy of preferring medium-sized mixed schools, the plan merges two boys schools into an even larger one. This is strongly opposed by Tulse Hill who wish to remain intact, and by Henry Thornton who are considering suggestions from local parents to go mixed. Similarly, there was no support before and after the proposals were put forward for consultation, to merge 3 schools together into the one site at Stockwell Manor. The decision to retain Norwood and Dunraven owes more to middle-class pressure from the relatively prosperous south bordering Croydon, while the blight of schools in the working class, multiethnic north seems just an administrative exercise. Discontent that some schools have not served the needs of Brixton's multiethnic community becomes a weapon to divide school-workers from the community, when what is needed is keeping the schools open, with improved resources and a positive lead in certain policy areas.

In short, students from the north face continued overcrowded conditions, with more travelling, more disruption and more alienation.

POLITICAL WILL

For these proposals to be substantially improved on requires a real act of political will from ILEA members to stand up to the cuts and the Tory ideological attacks. This means supporting alternative proposals which seek to keep the greatest number of schools open, with resources to make them viable, such as the submission made by Lambeth NUT. It means realising that plans imposed against the wishes of communities and workers amount to reneging on manifesto pledges, and guaranteed to create disasters, such as the North Westminster federal school. It means ILEA members realising that Tory attacks on the ILEA cannot be met by appeasement, but by rallying support for a fight.

SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH POLITICAL PRISONERS IN TURKEY

In Turkey today a hundred thousand political prisoners fill the jails. They are prisoners of conscience. Prison conditions are intolerable, cells are overcrowded. Most of them are in barracks, temporarily built to answer the growing demand. According to an Amnesty International report torture is "widespread and systematic" in the prisons. So far 18 prisoners have been found dead in prison cells. These are the official figures. No-one but the fascist junta can give the real number. Ten death sentences have already been carried out. Hundreds are awaiting death sentences and executions.

It appears that this will be the picture for a while, since the fascist junta does not show any signs of returning to democracy. The constituent assembly appointed did not win the confidence of any democrat. Any opposition is silenced. The *Financial Times* wrote "The junta does not tolerate any opposition . . . the judiciary is under control. . . . The press is silenced." Finance capital wants to go on oppressing and exploiting without any opposition. On the other hand they are very sensitive to opposition in Western circles. The Council of Europe is discussing Turkey. Some European Governments are already freezing aid to the junta. If Evren talks about democracy it is mainly because they need Western aid as much as the suppression of the working class movement. It is therefore the duty of democrats to expose the fascist junta to the fullest extent.

The three main Turkish organisations in Britain (Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain, Union of Turkish Workers, Turkish Students' Federation), all affiliates of the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey, are starting a campaign to draw the attention of British public opinion to the oppression in prisons. The campaign includes financial aid to the prisoners as well as acts of solidarity such as messages and eventually a delegation to Turkey to observe prison conditions.

We appeal to the British Labour Movement to support the campaign through donations, solidarity messages, and protest messages to General Evren, Head of State in Turkey.

Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain
Turkish Students' Federation in the UK
Union of Turkish Workers

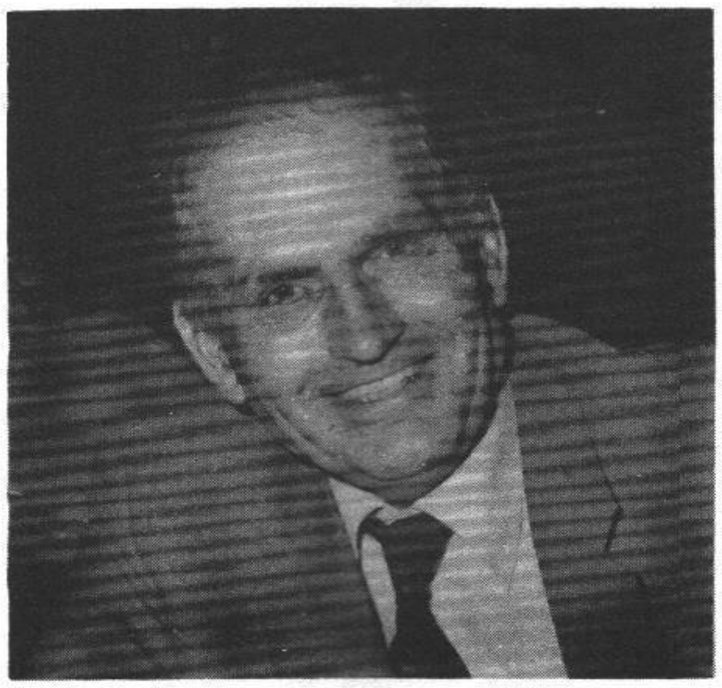
'INSULTING AND RACIST'

I was very distressed after reading the letter written by Syd Bidwell, MP in the issue of the "The Guardian" 27th November 1981. The whole community is concerned about these racist remarks. It is more worrying when it is from a Labour MP. He said very clearly, "Tariq go back to Pakistan". Before I write further about the concern of the community, I wish to recall Syd's past record on Immigration and immigrants in this country.

1 Mr. Bidwell was expelled from the International Socialists for his support of the racist Immigration Controls. (Paul Foot, Guardian 2.12.81).

2 He was a party to the most racist 'Select Committee Report on Race Relations and Immigration' 21st March 1978 when their terms of reference were Immigration. That report was condemned by many MPs including even Mr Merlyn Rees, and the then Labour Party Chairman, Joan Lester and many Labour Party members who signed the motion prepared by Mr Alex Lyon.

3 At that time he was asked by Indian Workers Association Southall to clarify his position to the community on his part in the report. The Indian Workers Association rejected his argument that it was not wise and was not in the interest of Race Relations to discuss this report in a mass meeting. Later he said in the Local Gazette, 7th April 1978 "I am not going into a Bear Garden on the stage of the Dominion Cinema".



Syd Bidwell
"Whatever he is, there is plenty of scope for his revolutionary talents in Pakistan"

INSULTING AND RACIST

These were the most insulting and racist remarks about a Black Organisation. I think he conveniently forgot that it was the same stage where he always went and asked for support.

Asians are traditionally Labour supporters. Ealing/Southall constituency consists of 35% immigrants registered in the electoral roll. The turnout is always very high and Labour victory always depends on ethnic minority votes and these remarks did not help the cause at all. I am sure Mr. Bidwell's attitudes and comments will be used by anti-Labour and extremist elements in the next Borough election campaign and General Election to exacerbate the reasonable fears of the coloured population.

There are several reasons why the ethnic minority votes are important. There are about 85 constituencies in the country where the ethnic minority vote could influence the outcome of elections. There is an increasing awareness amongst the ethnic minority voters. They will not support any political party without questioning attitudes and commitment to fair and harmonious race relations, and their stand on Immigration. It is therefore important that the Labour Party leadership closely examines the issue of racism within the party. The Labour Party Leadership should investigate the role of their MPs and other activists. If those who make racist remarks are not stopped, if their links with other racist organisations, and especially in Ealing/Southall their links with the racist Labour Club is not investigated, then in the next General Election there will be a great drop in Labour Party votes. The Ealing/Southall Labour Party and MP should have learned their lessons when some Labour Party members and supporters have already joined the SDP and Liberals. Indeed one Labour Councillor, the President of the Indian Workers Association Southall, has defected to the SDP.

Now, in view of this, I ask the Labour Party Leadership and the Labour Movement as a whole, and Trade union Movement, to combat the racism in the Labour Party and stop members of the Party making idiotic remarks. And they must prove to the ethnic community that they mean more than mere words.

Virendra Sharma
Ealing/Southall Labour Party

Hackney: SDP halted

Cllr Denise Robson,
West Downs Ward, Hackney

It's not an unstoppable tide that we face from the SDP. Every CLP ought now to consider this in the light of the comfortable Labour victory in the West Downs ward by-election in Hackney on December 3. This had always been a safe seat even when the Tories controlled the Council ten years ago. But it was without complacency that we decided to call this by-election at a time when it might have been thought permissible to leave the seat vacant until May.

Following the heavily publicised Labour surrenders to the Alliance over recent months, the campaign was an arduous one. Fears for ever-rising rates were voiced by voters continually and my opposition to this from the beginning was a massive electoral advantage. The *New Statesman*, however, felt that an important factor was that the SDP candidate is black, implying that our Labour Party condones racism among its supporters. This is a damaging charge to make against a party in an area where ethnic "minorities" make up about 35% of the population. An important issue at the time was the campaign of HEMCC, a local ethnic minority group campaigning to eliminate racism from Council services like the libraries. Their expressed anger antagonised many, including the SDP candidate who was subsequently booed out of a Hackney Black People's Association meeting for his attitude toward HEMCC. If blacks found him politically objectionable then, surely, others who opposed him are likely to have done so. It remains a constant priority to West Downs Labour Party to get more members, particularly blacks.

NO REMOTENESS

We were not deaf to people's enquiries as to what kind of Labour Party they might be voting for. My reply to this is that Labour's priorities and its policies must always be the solutions of the problems of ordinary people and therefore there should never be any remoteness between them and those elected to office. The urgent needs of people in a deprived inner-city area like West Downs must dictate Labour's policies. Only a radical change and positive socialist policies can save our area from sliding into a desert of empty houses where violence, perpetually sparked off by a lack of amenities suited to local need, keeps many in constant fear, locked up in their homes. Laissez-faire policies, whether from the cold fist of Toryism or with the caring smile of Labour's right wing – who still believe that present-day unemployment, for example, can be swept away without determined challenge to capitalism – are mere panaceas. Their "sell-by date" has already passed. If we can convey this effectively to the electorate, particularly now when the Alliance must start to concentrate on precise policies rather than credible-sounding slogans, then Labour may have a chance at the next General Election.

NEC CHALLENGE TO SOUTHWARK

Since the NEC intervened in the right of the Bermondsey Party to choose Peter Tatchell as their local candidate, a further, though less publicised, attack on Party democracy has also occurred in Southwark. The decades-old procedure for the nomination of candidates for the Borough Council has come under the spotlight, and has lessons for all.

Recent events in Southwark have a good reference point in 1968. The Wilson government, with Roy Jenkins as Chancellor, produced a budget that attacked many working-class people who then found themselves being asked to vote Labour in the London Borough elections a few weeks later. The result was that only four Boroughs in London were to remain Labour-controlled for the next three years; Southwark was one of them. The clearout that swept London and brought in new people three years later left Southwark untouched. Changes in the Party occurred in the late 70s fired by the now famous Town Hall saga and the build up for change is certainly long overdue.

At the nomination time, in September, some 12 sitting councillors were not endorsed by their General Committees. All the correct procedures were followed and indeed this has been acknowledged all round. The NEC however received some high-powered lobbying from the Right with threats of some 20 councillors defecting to the SDP. Finally, only 11 defected and their loss is our gain. The biggest bombshell however was when it was revealed that John O'Grady, Leader of Council since 1968, revealed in the London Programme, that he had met Michael Foot, the *day before* he attacked Peter Tatchell in Parliament. How many other Party members are in the habit of dropping into Westminster for a quick private chat with the Leader of the Labour Party? Peter only managed to see Foot the day the Organisation Sub-committee met, and that after much lobbying.

However, it was the resolution of the NEC, which is best reproduced in full, and the subsequent interpretation by the National Agent that must be recorded. In a letter dated 16th December 1981 the National Agent wrote:

That the NEC intervene in Southwark under Clause IX Section (4) of the Party Constitution to determine the question of who should be admitted to the Local Government Panel and that no local government shortlists or selections be permitted to take place until the present disputes have been resolved.

I shall be making early arrangements for members of the NEC to meet with the officers of your Party and nominees to the Panel to discuss the implementation of this decision.

On speaking to and finally meeting the National Agent, I was informed that the resolution was really a decision by the NEC to reinstate the un-endorsed councillors, in the interests of all! There would of course be no reason to meet elected members of the NEC since the officers of the NEC could act with delegated authority. The Parties in Southwark dispute this interpretation and have written to request a meeting with members of the NEC. The implication was made clear to us: any Party may follow the rules to the letter, but if you come up with a *political* decision they don't favour, then the NEC will intervene. At the time of writing we have not yet met the NEC.

The future? Well, there are a few elections that will be taking place in May and it would probably be no bad thing if Labour could field candidates prepared to fight for Party policies and take on the SDP in a direct fight. The SDP are not going to go away, and we are deceiving ourselves if we say that they have no policies and will not get any votes.

Out of all these events, there must always be something to laugh about. In 1978 Labour fielded its 64 candidates and 56 were elected. However, the manifesto was finally issued *after* the elections when no doubt there was more time to think about these matters. Perhaps in 1982 we will have a comprehensive manifesto (for the first time) but no candidates. That's life, I suppose, and at least we will have plenty of time to select our candidates for 1986.

The best points on which to close are that we have heard that the Liberals, who do have one or two progressive policies, but lack a political perspective, have let it be known that they will not enter into an alliance when their partners are to be the right-wing machine politicians they claim to have been fighting for years. Or to paraphrase the Tory opposition leader in a letter in the *South London Press* on 8th January 'with an opposition like this who needs the Tory Party'!

Will peace also break out in the Alliance Party in Southwark? Order your copy of *Briefing* now for next month and watch this space.

David Fryer
Peckham CLP
(Secretary of Borough Local Government Committee)
(in a personal capacity)

The Circulation Revolution

The circulation of *London Labour Briefing* has trebled in the last year to almost 3,000, 95% of these being sold in the London area. In the process, a network of activists has been built. *Briefing* is now sold by over 100 supporters at their Labour Party and Trade Union meetings. Our political impact is beginning to be felt. But our task in 1982 will be enormous, so *your* help is needed. Please:–

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(4) If you are a labour movement, co-op, socialist, feminist, community or ethnic organisation, put an advert in *Briefing*. Our rates are £100 for a full page, £55 for a half page and £30 for a quarter page.

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TARGET '82

Monday February 1st at 7.30pm
At County Hall

Our last Target '82 Meeting voted that from the start of 1982 all subscribers to the Target '82 mailing list should be asked for £5 to cover postage and duplicating lists. Those who already make out a monthly standing order will be covered. £5 might seem excessive for what has been 12 mailings per year. But our aim is for the Target '82 mailing list to provide an information exchange for the London activists, to cover emergency issues in between editions of *Briefing*. If you wish to go on the list, please send £5 for Jon Pickering, Flat 10 Scoresdale, 13 Beulah Hill, London SE19.

cheques/POs to "London Labour Briefing"

THE S.D.P. IN WALTHAM FOREST

There is now no doubt that the Tory Government is a real pestilence upon working people and their families in London and the whole country. Mass unemployment, wage cuts in real terms, attacks on trade union rights, cuts in vitally-needed public services, extensive and growing poverty and inequality are all cruelly calculated parts of the Tories' programme. Their policy has been to deliberately allow mass unemployment for the purpose of restructuring capitalism. Mass unemployment is used to force real wages down and give employers a more coercive hand in pushing for greater exploitation of those still in work. Thus they hope to achieve higher productivity for less pay. At the same time, small businesses are sent to the wall by, amongst other weapons, high interest rates. These businesses are liquidated and their assets stripped for the benefit of finance capital, the big monopolies and the multinational corporations. The Tories' objective in all this is for these major corporations to eventually make greater profits.

MOUNTING RESISTANCE

But it is an unacceptable policy to the vast majority of people. Hence, the mounting resistance from trade unionists and Labour local councils. And the victims of institutionalised and informally encouraged racism and sexism are also investigating ways of resistance. With the Tories overwhelmingly discredited, a heavy-handed police force to keep dissidents under control looked like becoming the only option left for capitalists wanting to preserve their power and wealth.

But this is not the case yet. With massive media manipulation, the British capitalist establishment has not surrendered in the political arena. The rise of the SDP is an attempt to enable Tory policies to remain in operation whilst providing a different face for public relations purposes. Big business is desperate to keep a left Labour Party out of government, particularly one likely to implement policies (in the words of Stuart Holland in the *New Socialist*) of "disarmament, development and democracy" rather than "militarism, monetarism and the multinationals".

The SDP's leaders both nationally and locally are Labour Party rejects. Failures, careerists and reformists in former Labour administrations whose reforms (where they have reached the statute-book) have been turned around within a very short time when challenged by capitalist interests. They are outdated reformists at a time when recession and capitalist crisis can allow no significant reforms. They are without a trade union and labour base or any socialist principle.

Their lack of policies is a smoke-screen. It is clear that they are pro-NATO and nuclear weapons, pro-EEC, would almost certainly introduce an incomes policy and Roy Jenkins has said that cutting benefits to strikers would be on the agenda. They are financed by capitalist interests with Jenkins himself having a highly paid "part-time"job with a merchant bank. The denial of class in British society would make no difference to its fact, and the war to restructure capitalism at the expense of working people, including the use of mass unemployment, would continue.

LOCAL LEVEL

At local level, there is no doubt that they would cut services if given the chance. Many of the defectors on local councils have attacked Labour as being "expansionist" when, in fact, the best of those Labour councils have been doing no more than maintain services, in real terms, in the face of the Government onslaught.

The stance of the SDP/Liberal alliance on Waltham Forest Council is to claim that at the same time they would improve the services and reduce the rates. They offer no explanation as to how they would achieve this miracle in the face of the Government's rate support grant cuts.

Anyone with slight political awareness knows that the SDP/Liberals are cutters. They are Mark II Tories nationally and locally.

Of the two defectors on Waltham Forest Council, both have records in recent years which are far from enthralling for the people of the borough. One was obsessed with keeping corporal punishment in the schools and also regularly spoke and voted for rent increases. The other, as a Labour appointee to the local Area Health Authority, failed to support the local Labour Party-led campaign against maternity cuts and abstained in a crucial vote to get a twenty-bed unit for maternity purposes into the Health Authority's capital programme. (That attempt failed by one vote.) Both have neglected (for Labour) the wards in which they have been representatives and both, when on the Labour Group, were right-wing opponents to various proposals for service improvements. They nominally left the Labour Group because they opposed the allowing of CND literature and posters in the borough's senior high schools.

The SDP/Liberals are making capital out of issues like bad pavements, the siting of zebra crossings, etc. (matters which Labour councillors take up in the normal course of their duty as the problems arise), while deliberately not facing up to the effects of millions of pounds being cut from council budgets. It is essential that Labour moves onto the offensive against the SDP/Liberal deceivers and makes every effort to stem their current electoral tide in the May '82 borough elections. A Labour defeat would be a setback to London's working class in the fight to defend their interests against Tory policy.

Where the SDP/Liberals have made electoral gains from Labour it has been because of the media push on their behalf; deliberate trivialisation of the arguments within the Labour Party, presenting them at the level of personalities; and the steady drip of elected Labour representatives to the SDP. Many of these, particularly the MPs, clearly stood in the previous election on a manifesto and Party programme that they did not believe in. They have no faith in internal Labour Party democracy and resent the reselection process, considering themselves greater than the Party and entitled to be MPs for life.

NO APPEASEMENT

No amount of appeasement by the Labour Party leadership can satisfy these right-wingers who are overwhelmingly in sympathy with the SDP in any case. If the SDP is more in tune with their philosophy, let them go. Hopefully they will go as quickly as possible, so as to enable Labour to unite and campaign on a socialist programme, but this seems unlikely. They are more likely to go in ones and twos at various intervals to try to cause the maximum damage to Labour. This being the case, there should be no concessions to them at all, either in terms of Party policy or the reselection process.

The SDPers will fail wherever they form an administration, and eventually electorally. They are supported at present by big business and the media, who are traditionally the backers of High Tory interests, in the wake of the widespread dislike of Mrs. Thatcher's Government, for the purpose of keeping Labour out. But big business and the media will switch back to the Tories when that Party can present a more "acceptable" face.

The individual defectors to the SDP themselves are not High Tories; more like low Tories (liberals and wets) advocating reformism within a mixed economy dominated by private capital. They want to turn the clock back to the boom period of the 1950s when reforms could be argued for within capitalism. But there is no going back and capitalism in the economic crisis of the 1980s cannot provide such reforms.

The SDP, by misleading working people in this context, are little more than a Mark II Tory pestilence.

Harry Cohen,
Waltham Forest Councillor

BREAKING THE RULES OF THE CLUB

Hounslow Labour Group is a law unto themselves. When two members of the Group (Heather Wetzel and I) voted against the annual budget last year, we were accused of going against the Labour Party constitution or "breaking the rules of the club" as one group officer put it. Consequently we were expelled for sticking to local and national party policy and our manifesto commitments.

Our subsequent appeal to the NEC was upheld. Now the group have decided to ignore the constitution and take upon themselves the right to decide who should or should not be a members of the "club". Not satisfied with the privileges currently enjoyed by Labour groups in the constitution, Hounslow Group leadership are just confirming their complete autonomy from either the local or national party.

Of course, the Group would be horrified at any suggestion that they are not accountable. In practice, their interpretation of accountability means telling the party what they are about to do or, more often, what they have already done. Any consultation with the local party is purely advisory, with the group making no commitment to follow the advice.

Unfortunately, there are those on the left who have also condemned our stand. Their argument is that our breaking group discipline weakens our case against the right-wing when they decide to vote against group decisions. But, as we have argued to the Group, 'group discipline' is there to ensure party unity in implementing party policy decisions.

That is why when we are asked to re-affirm our commitment to group decisions, we reply that we will do so when the Group re-affirms its commitment to the socialist policies on which we were elected. And they should start by not implementing the cuts!

Enda Donnelly

"This is NOTTINGHAM Labour Briefing speaking"

Dear Briefing,

So impressed have some of us been with your publication that we have started our own equivalent in Nottingham. We hope that you won't mind that we have freely 'borrowed' some of your articles and artwork as well as retaining the format of your front page logo. Nottingham Labour Briefing has had to start some way back down the campaigning trail from your own position. In many of the branches throughout Nottingham CLP's the level of political debate has long been non existent. Often the bulk of members have been studiously kept away from campaigning issues, and those individuals who have attempted to challenge this have frequently been kept in frustrated isolation. Two of the main tasks of the Nottingham 'Briefing' have been to develop a forum for discussing campaigning issues and strategies within the party, and to do so in a way which is accessible to ordinary members at a branch level.

The platform of our Briefing is unequivocably supportive of Labour Party policies established in recent conference decisions. The issues (which we seem to share with you) are of how to prepare the ground for implementing these both locally and nationally. Not the least of our problems is in transforming the inert lump of local party bureaucracy into a campaigning body, eager to build alliances with ethnic minority, tenants, and womens organisations.

However it is this, along with the demand for greater working accountability, that we have begun to move towards. The first visible achievement so far has been the recent (un-heralded) by-election victory of a left wing candidate on the Nottingham City Council. After a vigorous, openly left-wing campaign we returned a Labour Candidate with an increased Labour share of the vote. *Small beer compared with Arthur Scargill's success, but definitely sign posts that such policies can, and do, attract public support.*

All power to your (and our) elbows.

Alan Simpson, (Nottingham Labour Briefing Group), 222 Bluebell Hill Road, St Anns, Nottingham.

P.S. If any one would like to take out an annual subscription to our publication please send a minimum of £2 to the above address (made out to 'Nottingham Labour Briefing Group'). Alternatively send us 35p (inc p&p) for a single issue.

NOTTINGHAM LABOUR LEFT

Nottingham's first City Council by-election since the forging of the SDP/ Liberal alliance provided a major victory for the Labour Party and, more specifically, for the broad left group in Nottingham represented by the new 'Nottingham Labour Briefing' bimonthly magazine.

One of Briefing's editorial group, Eddie Ashbee was selected by Lenton Labour Party to succeed the late City Council Leader, John Carroll. His selection, on a large final ballot majority, was a surprise both to him and to the 'old guard' of the Nottingham Party who had thought the vote was tied up for a candidate who they considered safely 'moderate'. Since Eddie has been a long standing campaigner for Left policies on East Nottingham Constituency's Executive Committee, it is fair to say that many people on the right would not have been unhappy should he be the first candidate in Nottingham to lose a seat to the SDP.

The campaign was an uphill one from the start. This was to be the third local election in Lenton in seven months. In the May County Council elections Lenton fought a vigorous campaign to elect branch chairman Mohammad Aslam as the County Councillor. In July, following the death of a City Councillor, Jill Haymes was elected on a low key campaign with 53% of the vote, with the Liberal moving up to second. A fortnight later, in a by-election elsewhere in the City, an SDP candidate cut a large Labour majority down to 200.

It was against this background of political change that Alan Simpson, from *Briefing*, myself, Simon Ennals and branch secretary Ali Stopher, before the selection meeting got together and worked out our approach to the campaign. Whoever we selected, we intended to make this a test, not just for the Labour Party but for Left Wing Labour policies. Although most people in the Party thought we'd be lucky to hold the seat (given national trends) our aim had to be to *win* it, and win convincingly enough to be able to say that the left had been given a clear mandate by the people of Lenton.

So, it had to be a strong campaign on two counts – both in the traditional organisational manner and by a very strident publicity campaign, unlike any used before in Nottingham. On organisation we had the advantage that Simon Ennals, who became the agent, was able to put in a colossal amount of time as was the candidate himself.

On publicity we had the considerable help of having a local branch which regularly put out newsletters to all its residents, and was actively committed to taking issues out to local people.

The Liberals had called the election for December 10th, about the nearest to Christmas you can hope to get people out. (They had hoped to capitalise on some euphoric aftermath of Crosby.)

They chose to fight the election in a spurious but typical manner, picking up local issues and trying to obtain credit for anything which moved. The only other planks of their campaign appeared to be a 'Red means Stop' slogan, depicting Labour as a Party of loony extremists and the usual guff about the joys of laissez faire liberalism and the marriage (made in heaven) of the Liberals and the SDP.

Our Campaign continued with weekly leaflets and door to door campaigning. Each of these leaflets attempted to set out left Labour policies. The first reprinted the Tories 'Labour isn't working' 1979 poster on one side and then set out alternative local employment initiatives. Next came the standard election address, but which concentrated more on positive left policies than on simple anti-Toryism. The issue of nuclear disarmament was strongly taken up in the next leaflet 'Peace and the Parties', which had a graphic anti-nuclear collage on one side and a clear distinction between Labour, Tory and Liberal/SDP policies set out on the other. It also argued forcefully some of the contributions which local authorities could make to the disarmament campaign. We took this and the final

Stalemate in Brent South

Mark Feeny, Secretary,
Brent Local Government Committee

St Raphael's is a safe three member ward in Brent. It first began its selection process in March 1981 and at the time of writing this has not been completed. In March the first short listing was held and one sitting right-wing councillor was not short-listed. At the time of this meeting no objections were made to the conduct of the meeting. Subsequently, however, a person or persons unknown complained to the National Agent that (i) voting was by simple majority rather than secret eliminating ballot, (ii) a member was present who voted for himself (this was in fact the sitting councillor who was not short-listed). On these grounds short-listing was overturned.

A second short-listing meeting was convened. At this two sitting councillors (one of whom was the then leader of Brent Council) were not short-listed. A flurry of complaints and allegations arrived at Regional Office. Some were entirely spurious but the main substance was about membership and the conduct of LGC observers present at the meeting. These complaints were all investigated by the LGCEC who found them groundless. The short-listing was endorsed. However, G. Page wrote to the Chairman of the branch informing him that if the allegations were correct then the short-listing was void and the selection meeting should not go ahead (the LGC received a copy of this letter two hours before the selection meeting). At the selection meeting the Chairman read out this letter and then "closed" the meeting. He and a number of Branch members then left the meeting. Those left who were still quorate held a selection meeting at which three left candidates (including one sitting councillor) were selected. This meeting was endorsed by the LGC.

Another flurry of complaints arrived at Regional Office. The response from Regional Office was to offer an "informal" inquiry. This offer was turned down by the LGC. Instead the LGC held its inquiry (conducted by LGC members who were not members of the EC and so far as possible not connected with previous complaints/inquiries into St. Raphael's) which lasted three sessions and took evidence from all sources. The result of the inquiry was to uphold the short-listing and selection meetings. This was endorsed by the full LGC by 33 votes to 2.

Next, it was announced that a National Agent's inquiry would be held into Brent South CLP. Its terms of reference would include the selection procedure at St. Raphael's. The inquiry was boycotted by the LGC. It was felt that full-time officials were making up the rules as they went along.

However, the result of this inquiry was to overturn the previous selection meetings. The LGC was informed that it was not the practice of the NEC to give the grounds on which such decisions are made. The Regional Office then organised another short-listing. I was present as an observer and listed nine irregularities in the conduct of the meeting. On these grounds the LGCEC refused to endorse the meeting and wrote to both Regional and National Officers explaining why. The National Agent then overturned this short-listing.

By this time St. Raphael's had not had a proper Branch meeting for three months and there was a backlog of membership applications. So – when the Regional Office pushed for a new date to be set for short-listing Brent South CLP refused to agree until membership had been sorted out properly. The National Agent then said that if they wouldn't agree he would reinstate the short-list he had just overturned. They didn't – he did.

COMPROMISE

It seemed like stalemate and various threats about closing down the LGC and the three CLPs were made. In the meantime we had been lobbying some members of the NEC. As a result of this Eric Heffer arranged a meeting between all interested parties. At this meeting a compromise was agreed. This was that another short-listing and selection would be held based on the membership at the time of the original short-listing in March 1981. This is by no means satisfactory but we were told that unless we agreed the NEC would take the "necessary" action to ensure that candidates were selected.

However, a number of important points do emerge from this saga:

i) We should try and ensure that the NEC changes its policy on not revealing the reasons for the results of any inquiry;

ii) It is important when involved in disputes to get in touch immediately with NEC members rather than dealing only with full-time officials.

iii) A corollary of this is that we should campaign for all full-time officials to be subject to re-election periodically.

iv) Although the right are engaged in a witch-hunt they are not totally confident of their power. They didn't get their candidate for General Secretary. This means that determined opposition which has strong support amongst the membership can be successful.

CANDIDATE ROMPS HOME

employment leaflet out and distributed them in shopping areas on Saturday mornings, as well as canvassing them door to door, while a car went round with Eddie or Alan putting the issues out over a megaphone. Although we have got some stick from both Liberals and Labour for putting this out, we felt the need to show that nuclear disarmament was not an electoral albatross but one which people were identifying with in increasing numbers.

With canvassing wellnigh impossible on dark cold evenings (no-one answers the door, especially in the flats complexes which constitute a large part of the ward) we concentrated on Sunday mornings, getting out up to 40 people each week. The other main weekly work which again depended on considerable enthusiastic support was to organise a comprehensive leaflet distribution which even went on to include a final eve of poll leaflet.

Election day was freezing although the snow waited a day for us, but it revealed how good the agent's organisation was and how enthusiastic and outgoing some of the new members are – some poor sods were exuberantly knocked up three times. As publicity agent, I was considered the optimist of the campaign; certain that we could win and hopeful that we could achieve a result that was respectable.

Despite the weather and the abundance of previous elections, the turnout was almost exactly that of 5 months earlier. The Liberal vote moved up from 24% to 31%, but this was entirely at the expense of the Tory vote. The Labour vote astonishingly was an increase of 2% of 55% of the poll on the previous by-election. We were ecstatic that the Labour platform had not only held, but also attracted votes.

The Right in the party didn't exactly share our ecstacy, nor our conviction out-going campaigning *with* local groups on clear socialist policies had to be the basis of reviving the Party throughout the City. For many on the Right this will be a bitter pill to swallow.

However, the elation on the Left over the Lenton victory was carried even further the following Saturday by Alan Simpson's selection as Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for the seat in Beeston (currently held by the Conservatives). This is the first left candidate to get through the net locally and (barring intervention by Michael Foot or the NEC) the scene looks set for a vigorous campaigning programme of action in 1982.

Dave Belbin

(Reproduced from Nottingham Labour Briefing.)

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THE TRAGEDY OF THE

The sweeping terror unleashed by General Jaruzelski against Poland's workers on December 13th seems to have succeeded in driving the Polish labour movement underground. The security police and army have also managed, at least for the moment, in throwing the workers back from open mass opposition to passive resistance. But in key centres such as Warsaw, the Baltic ports and Poland's industrial heartland of Upper Silesia, the workers appear to have been able to preserve their organisation, Solidarnosc, intact as a clandestine movement.

With the largest membership of any independent labour movement in the world – 9½ million members out of a total workforce in the non-peasant sector of 12½ million – Solidarnosc cannot be obliterated by Poland's military-bureaucratic authorities. For the foreseeable future, the Polish workers will cling to and preserve their labour movement's traditions. For the first time in Eastern Europe's post-war history, a working class – in by far the biggest country in Eastern Europe – possesses a political tradition of its own entirely independent of the Communist Party. 16 months of open activity have thrown up and selected hundreds of thousands of new working class activists with the trust and confidence of their workmates. However ferocious the repression, these bonds cannot be entirely crushed. So for many years to come, those on the Western left who believe in international working class solidarity, and consider that it should extend to Eastern Europe's largest working class, must rally in unconditional and militant defence of Solidarnosc.



Lech Walensa in Krakow

BEHEADING SOLIDARNOSC

In its first hours, the military coup succeeded in almost entirely beheading Solidarnosc. In the single province of Katowice some 2,000 leaders were arrested, in Warsaw, the names of 1,000 arrested leaders have been counted. This pattern was repeated in all Poland's 49 provinces and it means that the total numbers arrested and presently in detention stands at between 40,000 and 50,000. The regime has cynically made an open distinction between manual workers and intellectuals, giving the latter reasonable camp conditions while the detained workers are suffering appalling hardships.

Some of Solidarnosc's leaders have already faced summary military tribunals and have been sentenced in secret to jail terms of between three and seven years. Two of the organisation's main leaders in Poland's second biggest city Lodz, Andrzej Slowik and Jerzy Kropiwnicki, have been jailed for 4½ years because they urged resistance to the military dictatorship.

This very successful dragnet in the first hours of the coup managed to knock Solidarnosc off balance. Jaruzelski was further helped by the intervention of Poland's Primate, Archbishop Glemp. To the surprise of those on the Western left who saw Solidarnosc as a pawn of a supposedly pro-capitalist Catholic Church, Glemp threw his weight firmly against any resistance movement in a speech just after the coup that was repeatedly broadcast over the official radio and TV. On the following Tuesday, December 15th, under intense pressure from the mass resistance, a conference of bishops called for a swift end to martial law and for the release of detainees, but Glemp later forbade the bishops' message from being read out at Sunday services unless it was accompanied by a more moderate statement of his own.

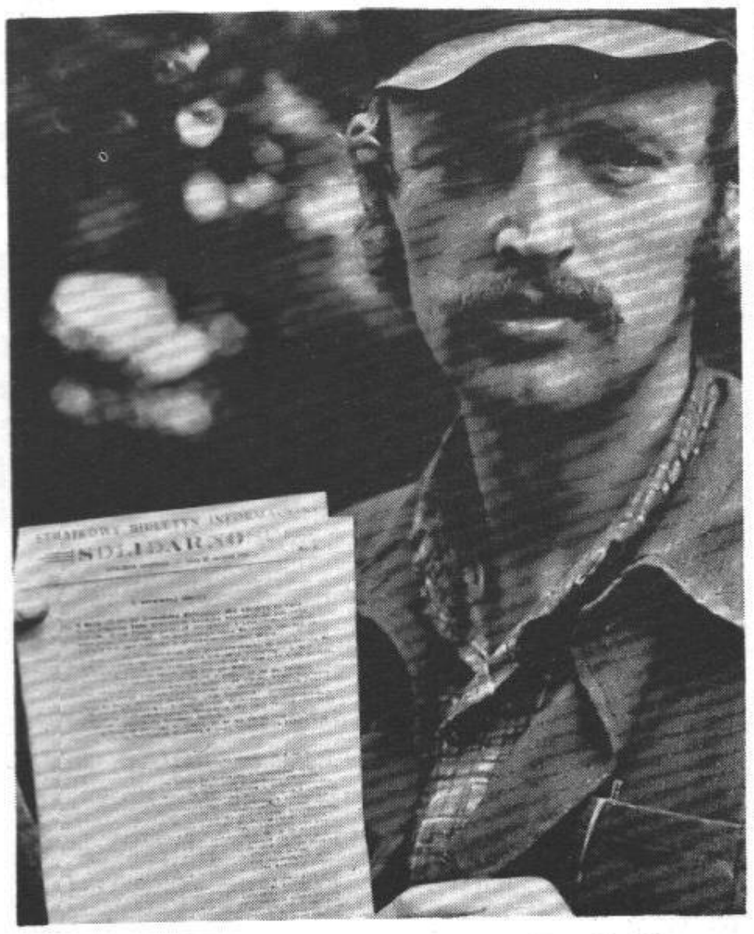
DESPERATE STRUGGLE

Yet despite the threat of execution for resisting the military authorities, Poland's industrial workers hurled themselves into a desperate struggle to defend their rights during the two weeks before Christmas. Not since July 18th 1936 in Spain has Europe seen its industrial workers doing battle against a military coup on such a scale. Every large industrial plant in the country was gripped by occupation strikes in the classic tradition of the Polish workers which goes back to the so-called "Polish strikes" of the early thirties which influenced the great industrial struggles that built the CIO in the USA.

In places like the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk with 18,000 workers, the 16,000 strong Ursus tractor plant in Warsaw, the Warski shipyard with its 12,000 workers in Szczecin, the Pafaweg locomotive plant with 10,000 workers in Wroclaw, the huge Cegielski engineering plant in Poznan, the 38,000 workers in Huta Katowice – Europe's largest steel complex – and the mines of upper and lower Silesia with their 340,000 workers, men and women braved tanks, machine guns and tear-gas to defend their union. In many cases, the workers re-occupied their plants repeatedly after each military assault and after each round-up of each new rank of leaders.

BRUTAL TERROR

Against these occupation strikes, the generals unleashed a brutal terror. The bloodiest en-

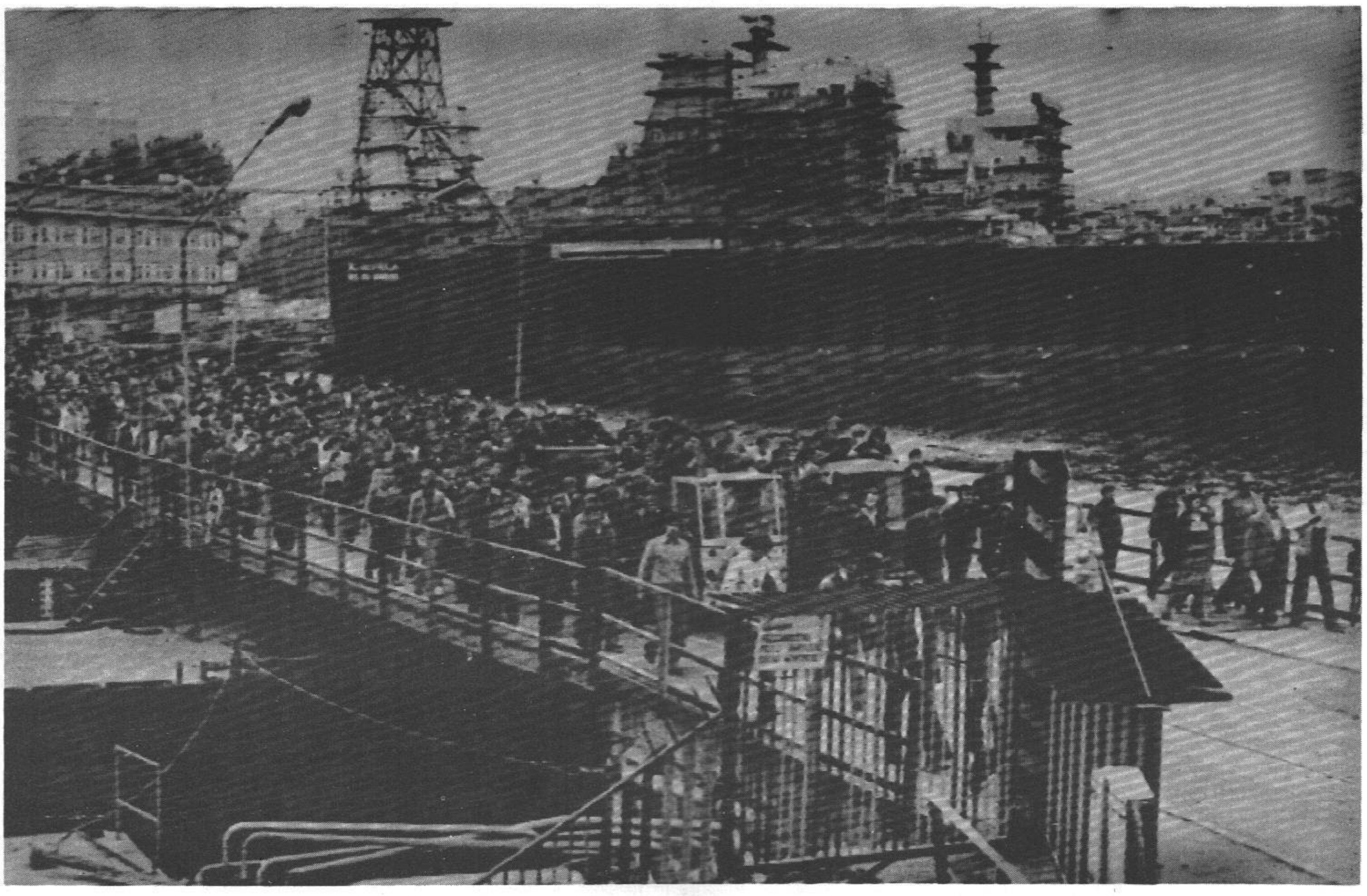


August 1980. Lenin Shipyard worker holds up strike bulletin, whose name was chosen for the union, 'Solidarity'.

POLISH REVOLUTION

"If a few people are shot in the cause of getting the economy moving again, then it would be a small price to pay."
(A Western banker at a meeting on Polish debts. *Sunday Times* 20.12.81, page 12)

By OLIVER MacDONALD



Lenin Shipyard workers on strike. Gdanks, August 1980.

counter was at the Wujek mine in Silesia where the miners resisted the riot police and where the official death toll of seven dead is contradicted by Western, Solidarnosc and Church sources, all of whom put the figure of those killed at over 60. Other reports say that miners were drowned at a colliery further south in Jastrzebie Zdroj when security forces flooded the mine. Deaths have also occurred in Gdansk, Wroclaw, Warsaw, Plock and Bydgoszcz. Reports speak of terrible repression and of an army mutiny in Radom which was entirely sealed off for weeks by the military.

The repression is far worse than anything in post-war Poland's history and immeasurably greater than what occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Workers who refuse to collaborate with the military regime and swear loyalty to the military commissioners in the factories, are threatened with the sack and the removal of ration cards – in other words, destitution.

The counter-revolution unleashed against the Polish workers over the last month is a terrible blow to the working class of all Europe, and a tremendous encouragement to reactionary forces, East and West. The United States was officially informed of the coup two days in advance and of course kept silent. While mass working class resistance was still threatening the existence of the Polish military machine, Washington, like the rest of the West, remained studiously "moderate". But once it was clear that the Polish workers had been thrown back and would not be able to shake the "stability" of central Europe, Washington began what is sure to be a long-term political offensive to reap the maximum gains from the counter-revolution. Any escalation in repression against the labour movements of the West and of the third world can now be compared favourably with what happened in Poland. Marxists can be presented as people who terrorise and oppress the workers. Moscow can be presented as an aggressive barbarous force against which the West must rearm to the maximum. Already, the Polish crisis has been used as a cover for the Israeli annexation of Golan. And America can hope to enormously expand its base of political support in Eastern Europe for any future war with Russia.

TRAP FOR THE LEFT

The trap which the Left can fall into is that of *muddling together* unconditional defence of the Polish people, the Polish workers and Solidarnosc with the Reagan-Thatcher Cold War drive. Socialists can fall into this trap from two directions: from the left by saying that militant, vigorous support for the Poles "objectively" helps the cold warriors; from the right by saying we should link up with the Tories and the NATO lobbies in *their* campaign against Moscow.

The British labour movement has a responsibility to give official, practical and political support to the resistance movement of the workers in Poland. This is necessary in order to preserve the strength and authority of the British labour movement in the eyes of tens of millions of working people here who are horrified at what has occurred in Poland. If we do not do it, the right will relentlessly use the bloody repression in Poland against the left. So internationalism over Poland is more than a moral duty. It is a practical necessity.

By doing what they have done, the Soviet leadership and their lieutenants in Warsaw have enormously weakened their own defences against a rearming capitalist world. We must not allow them to weaken the British labour movement's defences as well.

Tatchellite traditions

Chris Knight,
Prospective Council Candidate,
St. Margaret's Ward,
Lewisham East CLP

Michael Foot is right. The question of our attitude to Parliament is not some peripheral issue of method or principle. It is the central issue of socialist politics – the issue around which all others in the final analysis turn.

In the course of a century, between 1832 and 1928, five Reform Acts completely transformed the basis of political representation in Britain. *Our* movement – the labour movement in its various forms – succeeded in wresting from an entrenched ruling class recognition of at least the *principle* of "one person, one vote". Up to 1832, the vote had been allowed in the arbitrarily-determined assortment of ratepayers and self-appointed members of municipal corporations, many of which "represented" non-existent "rotten boroughs" bought and sold to the highest bidder wanting a seat in Parliament. After 1928 – when women at last obtained the vote after the fiercest of struggles – virtually all of us, regardless of property, were considered eligible to vote. In theory at least, ordinary people at last wielded full political power and could form a government of their own.

"PEACEABLY IF WE MAY – FORCIBLY IF WE MUST!"

Our predecessors in this struggle for power were the *Chartists*. There is no space here to describe the insurrectionary beginnings of *Chartism*, the Newport Rising, the slogans of the *Chartists* and the immensity of the revolutionary threat which compelled the ruling classes to make concessions in 1832 and in the years following.[1] The Padiham *Chartists* had a banner with the motto "Sell thy garment and buy a sword" (*Northern Star*, October 27, 1838), while one of the most popular of all slogans was "Peaceably if we may – forcibly if we must!" Suffice it to say that to the extent that "Parliament" was self-evidently a sham and a fraud – a fig-leaf to grant "respectability" to the dictatorship of the rich – the *Chartist* activists by no means regarded it as the most holy of holies. It was the substance of democracy, not the external forms, that they were determined to win, and if the forms and institutions of the day needed turning upside down, then overturned they would have to be. It was when the newly-elected, post-1832 Reform Act Parliament began smashing up the fledgling trade union movement with lock-outs and the endorsement of savage sentences (e.g. the deportation of the Tolpuddle Martyrs) for "administering unlawful oaths" (i.e. enrolling members into unions) that *Chartism* as a working-class revolutionary movement – the first in the world – took shape. As G.D.H. Cole comments in his book, "British Working Class Politics 1832-1914", (p.11), "Wherever the workers are voteless, or the right of political agitation is not granted to them, working-class political movements are bound, if they exist at all, to take a revolutionary form."

THE LABOUR PARTY

Gaining the right to vote was not enough. What use is "the right to vote" if the only candidates you are allowed to vote for are capitalist ones? The next step was to organize so that the electorate could be provided with a *real choice* in deciding upon whom to vote for. This issue – which is at the heart of our battle for democracy today (see articles on Foot versus Tatchell in this issue of *Briefing*) – was the one which the Labour Party eventually emerged. The idea behind the setting up of the Labour Party was not that we should *impose* working-class power or socialism upon the electorate. It was that we should provide the electorate with at least one non-capitalist voting choice, so that people could make up their own minds instead of having their options efectively closed for them. This, at least, was the idea of many of the Labour Party's founders, but of course there were others with other ideas. In the early years, plenty of Liberals came over to us when it became clear that it was the best way for careerists to win seats.

From its inception, however, the Labour Party has been intrinsically "extra-parliamentary" in a thoroughly healthy sense. Unlike the Socialist or Social-Democratic parties of the Continent, which *began* as parliamentary parties and *then* moved outwards to set up the trade unions and their "extra-parliamentary" machines, in Britain things worked the other way around. From its inception, the Labour Party was an "intrusion" of pre-existent extra-parliamentary forces into the cosy Parliamentary club of the propertied classes. Knocking at Parliament's door was a mighty trade union movement, with its own funds, its own loyalties and with traditions of democracy of its own. No wonder Winston Churchill and the Tory Press in the nineteen twenties frequently compared the Labour Party with the "Soviets" set up by all shades of Labour movement opinion in Russia in 1905 and 1917! At times, the Labour Party has acted almost as if it were a Soviet – i.e. a "parliament" of the labour movement itself, with its own internal democracy and its own capacity to wield a measure of coercive power in opposition to the official forces of the state. The nearest to a case of this seen recently on the international arena has been the example set by *Solidarity* in Poland – where a kind of "trade union" in fact, and despite itself, became a social and political force, an alternative "parliament" and an alternative focus of state power to the sham institutions of "democracy" controlled by the state. It is ironical that the nearest Britain has come to being "coerced" by such a "Soviet" was in August 1920, when Winston Churchill, who was then Secretary of State for War, was prevented from waging war in support of Poland – then engaged in hostilities against the young Soviet republic – by the direct extra-parliamentary action of the Labour Party as a whole.

" . . . EVEN AGAINST ALL CONSTITUTIONS."

The incident of the "Council of Action" in 1920 deserves mention in *Briefing* because it says more about the Labour Party's birth in "extra-Parliamentary" forms of action than could any number of resolutions or speeches taken on their own. On August 4th, 1920, the Secretary of the Labour Party (Arthur Henderson) sent out telegrams to all affiliated local Labour Parties and Trades Councils warning of the "extremely menacing possibility" of an extension of the Polish-Russian war and strongly urging local parties to organize demonstrations against Britain's war-preparations. This appeal, according to the Executive Committee Report to the 1921 Party Conference, "met with an unparalleled response", with demonstrations organized up and down the country on Sunday August 8th.

On the following day, a joint meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C., the Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the membership of the Parliamentary Party was held at the House of Commons and agreed (with "surprising unanimity", as the Report put it), to a resolution expressing the conviction that "war is being engineered between the Allied Powers and Soviet Russia on the issue of Poland." "Such a war", the resolution went on, "would be an intolerable crime against humanity"; the Government was therefore warned "that the whole industrial power of the organized workers will be used to defeat this war"; it was further proposed "that the Executive Committees of affiliated organizations throughout the country be summoned to hold themselves ready to proceed immediately to London for a National Conference; that they be advised to instruct their members to 'down tools' on instruction from that National Conference; and that a Council of Action be immediately constituted to take such steps as may be necessary to carry the above decision into effect." It was at this meeting that the Council of Action, representing all shades of Labour opinion, was formed, while local Councils of Action also mushroomed all over the country. The mere threat was enough to halt the Government in its tracks. Lloyd George promised that British troops would in no circumstances intervene, and war preparations were stopped. On August 13th, A.G. Cameron, the Chairman of the Labour Party, told more than a thousand delegates assembled for the emergency National Conference of their victory, remarking that "constitutionalism can only exist as long as it does not outrage the conscience of the community . . . If the day comes when we do take this action, and if the power that be endeavour to interfere too much, we may be compelled to do things that will cause them to abdicate, and to tell them that if they cannot run the country in a peaceful and humane manner . . . we will be compelled, even against all constitutions, to chance whether we cannot do something to take the country into our own hands for our own people."[2] It is language a good deal stronger than anything used by Peter Tatchell in his *Briefing* article two issues ago. But it is a threat still to be put into force.[3]

Notes

1. At the end of October, 1831, the *Poor Man's Guardian* published instructions on making barricades and on street-fighting against soldiers.
2. Quoted in Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, Unwin 1961, p.80.
3. It is perhaps worth emphasising – in view of the possibility of misinterpretation – that support for the Council of Action in no way implies support for the policies of the Bolshevik Government in its early relations with Poland. It is also perhaps worth mentioning – in view of the accusations of "Trotskyism" being bandied about – that Leon Trotsky vigorously opposed the idea that revolution could be "exported" into Poland by sending in the Red Army. Unfortunately, Trotsky's views were overruled.

DIVIDING THE BADLY HOUSED

Homelessness in this country is caused by a very serious shortage of houses. The housing shortage, and therefore homelessness, is going to get much worse very quickly. Effectively the Government has stopped council house building when 250,000 households in London are waiting for a council house. The existing stock will get smaller as the best is sold off, and the rest will deteriorate as the money to modernise it has been cut. People will no longer get rehoused from waiting and transfer lists.

These measures are increasing the number of homeless families. Councils are put in an impossible position while they have legal obligations to the homeless and legal constraints preventing them from providing the housing to stop homelessness.



HARSHLY AS POSSIBLE

One council response to this is to interpret the law as harshly as possible, thereby reducing the number of homeless families accepted – and this frequently verges on denying people the housing they are legally entitled to. Another response by many councils has been to launch a political campaign, not for more housing resources, but for the government to release them from their legal obligations to the homeless. But in order for this campaign to succeed in taking *public* sympathy away from the plight of the homeless, they have to suggest that the homeless are responsible for their homelessness *and* that they are taking housing away from more deserving people. This second tactic is particularly important in dividing the badly housed, whose interests are really the same, into two groups each able to blame the other for their suffering. Presenting the homeless in this light not only creates a climate in which the Act can be repealed but is also a self-justification for local authorities to treat the homeless harshly.

Opposition to the authorities' housing strategy in Tower Hamlets is small scale and isolated; the last mass protests were ten years ago over proposed GLC rent rises. Housing politics in the Borough are characterised by serious divisions: between the homeless and waiting/transfer list applicants; between black and white residents; between tenants and council direct labour workers; between trade unionists working for the council and for community organisations and last but not least, between the Labour Party and large sections of the community. Against this background eight advice agencies launched a campaign last summer with the aim of healing some of these divisions and compelling the Borough Council to improve its service to the homeless.

THE CAMPAIGN

Initially, a report containing 16 proposals to change the existing service was produced. The report received only local publicity (through excellent coverage in the *East End News*) despite a press release, press conference and personal contacts with sympathetic journalists. The advice agencies recognised this would do no more than shock the Council – only action by homeless families themselves, supported by a broad campaign, would stand a chance of changing policies; the campaign had to break out of its limited "professional" base. Efforts over the last six months have resulted in one or two of our recommendations being implemented, but there have also been four new initiatives:

(1) Representatives of homeless families staying in Bed and Breakfast hotels in Finsbury Park have organised a meeting and are preparing to put their demands to the Council.

(2) Bengali organisations are organising a public meeting in the next few weeks, preparing action to support homeless families.

(3) Tower Hamlets Empty Property Group are going to publish research demonstrating how the use of 950 LBTH empty flats could house homeless families and bring in an estimated £1.2m in lost rent and rates.

(4) The Trades Council has launched an inquiry into homelessness and housing policy in the Borough, aimed at producing a new housing strategy with a broad degree of support.

In addition Tower Hamlets Labour Party officially supports the campaign, although in practice only a few individual members will support it with action.

NEW ALLIANCES

These four developments, although tentative, mark something not seen in the housing politics of Tower Hamlets in recent years – a potential alliance between a wide range of organisations and individuals from community groups, women's organisations, Bengali organisations, trade unionists and Labour Party members, all supporting homeless people.

In the context of Heseltine's attempted takeover of local government, campaigns to improve specific council services appear insignificant. However, in Tower Hamlets they are a precondition for mounting any challenge against central government during the next two years. This campaign, the recently successful Save Tower Hamlets Nurseries and Community Organisations campaigns, added to the struggle against the Docklands Development Corporation, are all vital attempts to positively campaign for socialism *and* mobilise support against Heseltine in Tower Hamlets.

Mark Adams
Tower Hamlets CLP

LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND
Secretary: Don Flynn, c/o B.M. Box 5355,
London WC1N 3XX

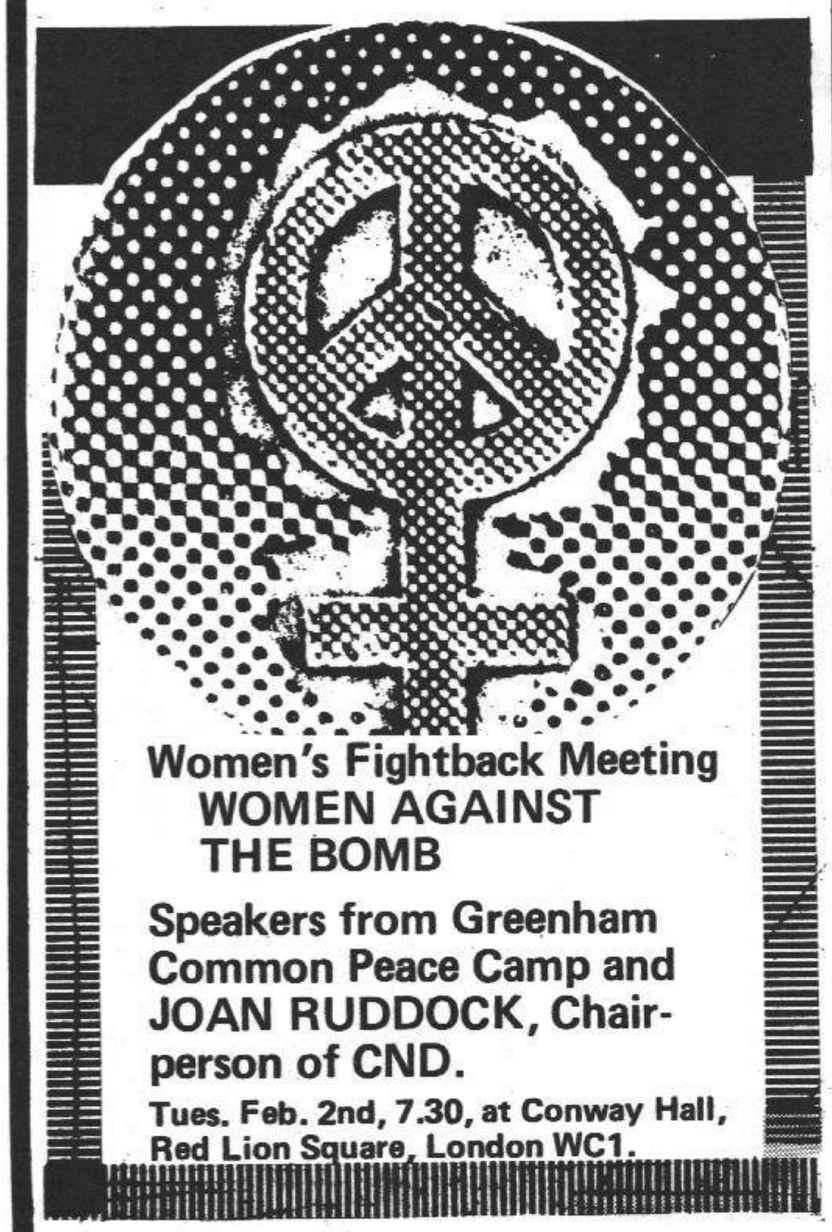
NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LABOUR COMMITTEE ON IRELAND

The AGM of the LCI will be held on: SATURDAY 6th FEBRUARY 1982, starting at 10.30am. at: DIGBETH CIVIC HALL, DIGBETH, BIRMINGHAM 5.

All supporters who are paid up for 1981 are invited to attend as full voting members. The registration fee for paid-up supporters will be £1.50. Supporters' cards must be produced.

Labour Party members who are not yet supporters of the LCI are invited to attend as observers, with speaking rights at the discretion of the Chair. The registration fee for non-LCI supporters will be £2. Labour Party membership cards (1981 or 1982) must be produced.

Non-members of the Labour Party might be admitted to the AGM as observers with no speaking rights, at the discretion of the officers of the LCI. The registration for these people will be £3.50.



Women's Fightback Meeting
WOMEN AGAINST THE BOMB

Speakers from Greenham Common Peace Camp and JOAN RUDDOCK, Chairperson of CND.

Tues. Feb. 2nd, 7.30, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

WOMEN'S BREAKTHROUGH IN UNIONS

TWO years after our first conference brought women together for a fight against the Tories and an assault on the male domination of the labour movement, Women's Fightback is planning a major new breakthrough in the trade unions.

While there's been a lot written and said recently about the position of women in the unions, this will be the first attempt to put the experiences together and make plans for a regular liaison between women on a national scale in a number of unions.

The conference, on March 27th, will divide between morning workshops on a very wide variety of issues (some 20 different workshops have been suggested so far), and afternoon workshops where women can get together with others from their own union and plan how to continue to campaign.

Special efforts will be made to ensure that the conference isn't exclusively white-collar, though inevitably there will be many women there from Nalgo, CPSA, NUT and ASTMS.

An added bonus will be a showing of 'The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter' followed by a discussion with women working in manual trades.

There's to be an all-day creche going into the evening, with special events for older children.

Write to TU Conference, 41 Ellington Street, London N7 for registration forms and leaflets. But this should not just be a 'consumer's conference': its effectiveness will depend on how much women are prepared to take on the job of organising themselves, and that will in turn depend on YOU organising for the conference beforehand. So don't just register on your own: send off for leaflets, send them to other branches of your union that you're in contact with and women you've met at schools and conferences, and decide to come together and bring your own suggestions for how to organise after the conference.

A woman's right to freedom

Women in London are experiencing a form of terrorism that many people (men in particular) find hard to believe. Last year in London 12,000 women were assaulted. This is the official figure. Some sources say that only one in three attacks is reported. It is generally accepted that the true figure is at least 36,000. It must be stressed that this is a minimum figure. Women are, iustifiably in the circumstances, afraid to go out on their own, particularly after dark and particularly in certain areas of London. Apart from the other inconvenience this causes, it also means that women are living in fear.

At the very moment when women are eager to become politically involved and active, they find that they are virtually prisoners in their own homes. The Women's Movement are very aware, as women, of the fears and dangers associated with any attempt at freedom and, yes liberation, for women. It seems to some women, that, having been defeated (at least in part) rather than allowing full emancipation, some men have taken to guerilla warfare in the streets of our cities. I feel that the labour movement must actively support women on this issue, or women may become disillusioned with us and see us as male orientated. There will never be equal representation of women in the labour movement if women cannot get to meetings. When a meeting is arranged and advertised it should be made clear that any woman who requests it will be called for by a woman comrade, preferably in a car. Obviously a car would be better, but some women have less fear and more confidence than others. Our Women's Section do this and I am sure it could happen elsewhere.

I think that the Labour Party should be aware of the problem for Women in London through requests by women's organisations that a mini bus or system of buses for women be set up. There is also a demand for a 'women only' compartment on tube trains. Both of these could help and the GLC could be instrumental in assisting the implementation of these plans. That would only scratch at the surface of the problem, but it would be a start and it would show the women of London that Labour cares.

Josette Morgan

NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

In the next 6 weeks, women's sections will be discussing motions for the National Women's Conference.

When framing motions, it's best to remember that the Women's conference has no policy-making powers whatever.. While it may be useful to raise certain political questions for discussion, that's as far as it will get.

This year's experience has shown that the Women's Conference doesn't even have the power to decide on action for the women's sections and then expect such action to be carried out. Last June the Women's Conference passed a motion for a demonstration for a woman's right to work — but the furthest we've got in that direction is an 'event': a rally in a park with speeches and sideshows. Not exactly what the conference decided but then, nobody listens to the women anyway.

There's absolutely no point in sending in resolutions that will go through on the nod and proceed to drop into a black hole.

Women's Fightback is recommending four issues this year, all of them concerned with this very question of the power and status of women in the party.

Three of them concern the women's conference: its right to send motions to Annual Conference as if it were an affiliated organisation; its right to elect the women's section of the NEC; and its right to elect the National Committee of Labour Women. The fourth asks the Chief Women's Officer and NCLW to run a campaign to get more women to Annual Conference, both as CLP and Trade Union delegates.

The January issue of Women's Fightback carries model resolutions on these four areas.. Send s.a.e. and 10p to 41 Ellington Street. N7 for a copy.

St Mary's— HELP US TO WIN!

On December 17 the Defence Committee of St. Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road, held a press conference at which Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone declared their full support for the struggle of the staff to defend their hospital against the loss of 100 beds and eventual closure.

St. Mary's, Harrow Road, has been under threat for the last four years and in the past only the vigorous opposition of the staff has prevented its total closure. The hospital serves the Paddington and Kilburn area and local residents have seen the decision to close "their" hospital and move surviving services to the prestigious St. Mary's Teaching Hospital in Praed St.

The press conference heard Terry Pettifor, NW Convenor of the London Ambulance Service Shop Stewards, describe the effects of the run down of the Casualty at Harrow Road (which is the major accident unit in the District) and pointed out that the remaining casualty facilities in the District are inadequate to cope with the number of casualties which could easily arise in an accident at the nearby Paddington Station or in a major fire.

Terry pointed out that a relatively small fire in Bayswater the week before had stretched the District's capacity to the full.

The fight in the hospital has been particularly sharp since the declaration of a work-in on June 26. In the course of this fight staff have twice occupied areas of the hospital—the first time the administration offices were occupied for 13 days and the second time a ward was occupied for five days to prevent closure. On both occasions court orders were used to evict staff.

Police and security guards have been brought into the hospital no less than four times to support management's plans. A TGWU shop steward was sacked, and a nurse was suspended for a week, for attempting to prevent the forcible removal of patients from a ward.

Throughout this struggle no more than token support has been gained from the unions involved—TGWU, NUPE, COHSE and the failure of the labour movement to evolve its own strategy on health care has been partially responsible for this state of affairs.

The leadership of the TGWU—which has been most centrally involved in the struggle—has effectively washed its hands of any responsibility. Despite policy won at the 1981 BDC it has consistently refused to mobilise its great industrial strength behind this key battle.

With a few honourable exceptions there has also been little support from CLPs outside Paddington. It is essential that the labour movement begins to evolve its own strategy to defend and extend the principle of free and adequate health care for all which was enshrined in the formation of the NHS by the 1945-51 Labour government.

It is impossible to see the defence of the NHS without the political mobilisation of the labour movement as a whole to defend our health service—any narrow economism of "leave it to hospital trade unionists" merely puts the onus on the weaker sections of our movement.

The Labour Party must see the fight for health as being one of the key questions that faces it. It is not enough to ritually denounce private practice if we lack the political answers and will to mobilise the community around this key question.



Rita Maxim

There is undoubtedly a move towards smashing the growth of trades unionism within the NHS. Julian Nettel who is now at St. Mary's was involved in the closure of St. Benedict's. In the last two years over 20 militants have been victimised out of the NHS. In St. Mary's, Rita Maxim, a TGWU shop steward who has stood up to management all the way, faces the sack for refusing to do two jobs. Management obviously intend to continue this strategy in St. Mary's now they have succeeded in closing the first three wards in the hospital. They have also sacked a telephonist for leaving work at the end of his shift without waiting for a relief.

Trades unionists in the hospital realise they have lost the first battle but the war is far from lost. Help us fight to win.

Send donations and messages of support to Mick Woods, c/o TGWU Office, St. Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road, London W9.

Mick Woods, Brent E. CLP
and former TGWU shop steward
St. Mary's Hospital.

BRIEFING PRODUCES PAMPHLET ON THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

Briefing is producing a stinging full-length attack on the Social Democratic Party to be published in six weeks' time — just before the May elections. It will take the form of a pamphlet containing sections on various aspects, personalities and local examples of the S.D.P. in practice. We want to name names and print full details of Social Democrat records and policies in London and beyond. With your support, BRIEFING is in a position — though this and other material — to make a substantial contribution to a Labour electoral victory in May. We need an entertaining, readable and informative guide to the reality behind the media-image of these No. 1 enemies of all that the Labour Party stands for. Help in editing and/or designing the pamphlet would be very welcome, and we will be relying entirely on your contributions for the content. Please submit material to the Editor now.

LET'S MAKE IT £100 A MONTH

Briefing is still in desperate financial straits. Our requests for comrades to complete the standing orders mandate (see this page) has met with a good response. We now receive a subsidy from our sellers and readers of *£60 per month*. But this is nowhere near enough. Please help us get this up to at least £100 per month. We appeal to our 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.

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THE 'DERBYSHIRE OPTION'

Fighting Heseltine in the Light of Clay Cross

Harry Barnes
(Vice Chairman,
North East Derbyshire CLP,
in a personal capacity)

How should Labour Councils fight the cuts? Can any lessons be drawn from the last serious confrontation which took place between Labour Councils and a Tory Government: namely, the fight against the Housing Finance Act? In particular, are there any insights for the left which can be gained from the Clay Cross case?

It needs to be noted from the start that we are *not* involved in a re-run of yesterday's struggle. For one thing, there was a clear starting date for the operation of the Housing Finance Act (HFA). The socialist reaction, encouraged by resolutions from Labour Party Conference, seemed fairly self-evident. 44 Labour Councils initially resolved not to implement the measure, and numerous tenant associations organised either rent strikes or the withholding of the rent increases required under the Act.

Furthermore, the policy of non-implementation originally appeared to be a legitimate move, because the HFA gave the Government the authority to send in a Housing Commissioner to ensure implementation.



Delegates at the 1977 Labour Party Conference reject an NEC recommendation and give overwhelming support to a resolution from N.E. Derbyshire CLP deploring "the continuing disqualification from public office of 21 Clay Cross Labour Party members." At the moment the Attorney General is taking action to remove five of the ex-Councillors from their posts as newly-appointed school governors.

NO CLEAR BATTLE LINE

But with today's cuts, the Government hasn't provided Councils with a clear battle line. The last Labour Government had already taken Labour Councils down the road of the cuts; and the precise position, and the best method, for a challenge to Heseltine's programme has been by no means evident. A prerequisite, on this occasion, would seem to be *an agreement on just where the battle line is to stand*. A challenge can then be thrown out to the Government not to seek to breach that line.

A criticism to be made of the NEC, which until recently had a left-inclined majority, is that it has not seriously applied itself to the task of drafting and recommending such a line.

Clay Cross, and many groups of tenants, were quite justified in standing out against the HFA until the bitter end. Their actions could be defended in old-fashioned parliamentary socialist terms, for they sought to change the law via parliament, through an ultimate willingness to suffer the legal consequences of their acts of resistance. Clay Cross helped to change the law by paying the price of surcharge, bankruptcy and debarment; whilst many tenants went through the processes of attachment of earnings and visits from their friendly neighbourhood bailiffs.

The justification of the few carrying the struggle further than many other perfectly honourable individuals found themselves able to go, was that they thereby helped to keep the issue alive in a way which added to pressures upon a subsequent Labour Government to live up to its promise to repeal the seriously offensive (and hence, unparliamentary) legislation.

VERY DIFFERENT SITUATION

The cuts present a very different situation, however. The repeal of the HFA meant that tenants had suffered a serious but, relatively, short-term injustice. But the effect of the cuts will live on into the long term. The cuts take demand out of the local economy, reducing living standards and employment still further, in the harshest of circumstances. Even if the cuts were eventually "repealed" the consequences of their destroying local economies will persist well into the future. A current strategy which is essentially, or eventually, aimed at the repeal of the cuts is insufficient. *We must seriously attempt to stop the cuts, and change the present policy of the Government.*

Although Clay Cross were ultimately prepared to suffer the legal consequences of their stand, it doesn't mean that they wouldn't have welcomed retrospective legislation to remove their backruptcies and debarment. Not only would this have allowed them to overcome personal problems and re-enter the political arena in full, but it would also have shown that we had a parliamentary wing of the movement which was willing to take on board the struggle that they were involved in.

In fact, the Labour Conferences in 1973 and 1977 overwhelmingly carried resolutions calling for the lifting of penalties from the Clay Cross Councillors. Both calls bit the dust. And even if Labour's electoral chances weren't so dismal at this moment, it is just unrealistic for us to place any faith in the hope of retrospective legislation to aid any Councillors who act on a par with Clay Cross and are surcharged for "courageously refusing to implement" the cuts. *More immediate and assured forms of assistance are required should the question of surcharge re-emerge.*

CLOSE LINKS

A great deal of the strength of Clay Cross came from the close links which existed between their Labour Council, who occupied all eleven seats on the District Authority, and their local Labour Party. Furthermore, both the Council and the Party were closely integrated into their local community. The Councillors concerned were very much part of that community; in contact with people in the pubs, clubs, voluntary associations, shops, bus queues, and on the Council estates where most of them lived. I suspect that Clay Cross was far from typical when it embarked upon its fight in 1972, but the boundary changes of 1974 finally ensured that such close links could never again exist between an entire community and the sum total of its District Councillors. *We now need to look for substitute means by which Councillors can be sustained when taking strong action against the cuts.*

Where the social bond around community and councillors was stretched much wider than was the case in Clay Cross, proposals to confront the HFA

often led to splits and divisions. In nearby Sheffield the majority of the controlling Labour Group voted for non-implementation, but was unable to carry the proposal in a Labour controlled Council. And within the North East Derbyshire Constituency, which covers Clay Cross itself, there were disputes between the Constituency Labour Party and the Labour rural authority surrounding Clay Cross which led to the rejection of panels of candidates, threatened expulsions, three NEC enquiries and vetoes, and the regular surveillance from Reg (now Lord) Underhill and the Regional Organiser, Jim (now SDP) Cattermole.

MAXIMUM UNITY

In today's circumstances, and in fighting complex and many-sided cuts instead of a specific piece of housing legislation, *a position needs to be worked for which seeks maximum Labour unity around a vigorous stand against the cuts.*

There are at least two further items to consider. The powers of the District Auditor, and the impact of surcharge on the individuals concerned.

Until the Clay Cross case had been before Lord Denning, no-one was sure (with the exception of the media) of the legal standing of their actions. Denning upheld the actions of the District Auditor and overruled the argument that the Government should have used its Housing Act to send in a commissioner instead of allowing the Auditor to go ahead with his proceedings.

Clay Cross was subsequently surcharged for paying wardens £25 a week for looking after old age pensioners, rather than the £10 favoured by the District Auditor. They were also judged to have employed more workers than was required, and to have paid negotiated bonus and stand-by payments which were a way round Heath's pay policy.

The surcharge on such items was particularly worrying because it seemed to confirm that the District Auditor had powers to make political judgements and wasn't confined to challenging the legality of payments. In fighting the cuts, whilst there is a need to keep the District Auditor at arm's length, *we need to appreciate that the surcharge threat could crop up when it was not even part of our intention to directly confront the law.*

IMPACT OF SURCHARGE

The impact of surcharge can be serious for the Councillors concerned. I give only one example from Clay Cross, although this could easily be multiplied. One of the Councillors was a school caretaker moving into retirement, who had paid into a superannuation scheme. As soon as he was entitled to draw from the scheme, the District Auditor prevented any such payments. The ex-Councillor also lost a refund on holiday payments for his wife and himself, on a holiday that had fallen through. On top of this, and other losses, he suffered pressures and manipulations from solicitors, courts, and bankruptcy. In many other settings, his equivalent would probably have given way (quite understandably) under the weight of events.

The Clay Cross case seems to lead to a number of lessons for us, even though we are in different circumstances today. This time we need to build an agreed battle line. We must aim for effective, and hence plausible action, to stop the cuts. Councillors require immediate and assured forms of assistance if they are expected to take a vigorous stand against the cuts; not least because they will need sustaining in their actions, and because they could be subjected to pressures from the District Auditors even when they sought to keep their struggle strictly within the law. A position of maximum unity needs to be worked towards in preparing for an effective struggle. And the rest of the Party and the movement will need to take on board Councillors' personal problems in facing a tough battle against the cuts.

It will only be possible to unite Labour Councils behind such a stand if it can be shown to Labour Councillors that they would not thereby be faced with a situation where they would be asked to suffer the full consequences of surcharge, bankruptcy and debarment.

Labour administrations concerned would, therefore, need to announce that should their stand lead them to a situation where they were on the verge of moving into a surchargeable budgetary deficit, they would then be forced to precipitate a legitimate (non-surchargeable, and Footproof) constitutional crisis within their local authorities.

MAJORITY OPPOSITION

They would need to declare that should the crunch come they would resign from running their administrations and go into "majority opposition" upon their Councils. If the Government attempted to overcome this constitutional conundrum by persuading minority Groups to take over administration, then Labour could abstain to allow this to occur; but then use its majority to block all anti-social measures which the new minority administration brought before the Councils – even though this could make the Labour Councillors liable to surcharge. If minority Groups refused to accept office, then either local government would be thrown into chaos or the Government would attempt to take over its running.

Given any of the above possibilities, a campaign would need to be organised to provide financial, organisational and legal backing and services to those in the front line of the struggle, offering tangible financial and other assistance to Councillors who, on a par with Clay Cross, "courageously refuse to implement" the cuts. Financial, organisational, and legal backing and services can sustain a Councillor's resolve much more than the distant hope that some future Labour Government might, or might not, introduce retrospective legislation to put things right. And Council workers, in particular, would need support in case the Government attempted to push the consequences of the crisis onto their shoulders via sackings and the like.

There are other important advantages in attempting to build maximum unity around a tough stance. In announcing the stand, a commitment is called for from Labour Councillors (of being prepared, if necessary, to go into "majority opposition") which they don't immediately have to cash in. As with a strike threat, many will hope that the day will never be reached when they have to act, and that the threat will do the trick. And they could well be correct. When faced with a tough front, Thatcher has already backed down on the issue of pit closures (which didn't mean that she has dropped her pursuit, but she has been forced to look for more problematic ways of achieving the same end and now finds herself confronted by a Scargill NUM).

If the crunch comes, the initial defence line becomes the battle line, and Councillors will be expected to act upon their earlier commitment. *The stronger the movement's backing for the Councillor's stand, the stronger that stand is likely to be.* And the smaller are the number of Councillors who will then (quite understandably) feel obliged to dive for cover to allow Tory cuts to pass.

NO GUARANTEE

With "majority opposition" there is no guarantee of success. The strategy offers blood, sweat and tears for all, and not just for isolated Councillors. But if we are looking to *win* this fight, and to build a campaigning unity which seeks to transcend some of the current divisions within the Party, then the strategy provides us with some real reasons for hope. The greatest strength of the case for "majority opposition" is to be seen in the sheer defeatism (whether it be reformist defeatism or revolutionary defeatism) of the alternative strategies which are being offered. "Majority opposition" offers a means of winning through.

The paradox of the situation is that "majority opposition" wasn't a possible option in the case of Clay Cross itself, for they had no others who were on their Council to oppose! Nor am I claiming that this was a possible tactic for fighting the HFA. But there would be no finer recognition of their place in the Labour tradition, than for us to learn sufficient from their heroic stand to be able to fashion a winning strategy to stop Heseltine's cuts.

C.L.P.D. Conference Report

At its AGM the Campaign For Labour Party Democracy was faced with the need for a fundamental re-think. CLPD's overall perspect ive enshrined in its Constitution – "that the policy decisions reached by Annual Conference should be binding on the Parliamentary Labour Party" – remains unchanged, of course. But a combination of success on a number of issues, and the lid put upon others by the re-introduction of the three year rule, meant that CLPD had to re-define its short-term campaigning objectives and take some fundamental strategic decisions about the way forward.

The strategy outlined in the Secretary's statement, and favoured by many on CLPD's executive, seemed to suggest that the left lies low or 'treads water' for a year or two, until after the next election. But the Bermondsey affair and the right-wing witch-hunt launched only a few days before the AGM probably tilted the scales and resulted in CLPD being committed to a much more up-front, vigorous campaigning style than might otherwise have been the case.

LOW-KEY APPROACH

The siren voices calling for a low-key approach, with many appeals for 'unity' and 'conciliation', were not without considerable attraction; understandably so because we all want unity and for the Labour Party to win the next general election. Indeed, most of us in CLPD were prepared to make considerable compromises to bring that about *provided the Right were prepared to support conference policy in a true spirit of unity, compromise and tolerance themselves.*

Now many of us had grave doubts about their ability or desire to do this. These doubts were merely confirmed by the willingness of the NEC to veto candidates and even prospective members in an astonishing disregard of the rights of local parties.

Indeed, the right have shown that they are prepared, as Tony Benn has said, to smash up the Party to pave the way for a coalition between a right-wing Labour rump and the SDP after the next election.

This meant that the line taken by CLPD secretary, Vladimir Derer, and much touted as evidence of left disunity and retreat in the pages of the Guardian and the New Statesman, began to sound increasingly hollow to many members. This was, in many ways, sad because Vladimir has long been one of the most respected tacticians on the left, and many of those who found themselves opposing him were doing so, reluctantly, for almost the very first time.

The AGM could not endorse phrases calling on CLPD "to initiate moves that would make unity possible" and for the left to adopt a "low profile". The secretary's statement told us this may be "particularly difficult given the latest attacks". But as one delegate exasperatedly pointed out, *It is now downright impossible.*

Instead, the view which CLPD will expound over the next year is that "there can be no unity as long as Labour's parliamentary representatives insist on their right to sabotage Party policy, and no peace as long as the right wing organise to reverse the democratic reforms". It seemed somewhat desperate when one speaker in opposing this claimed that CLPD was not an organisation of the left, but also enjoyed the support of the centre and the democratic right, which must not be alienated! Only two weeks earlier, Roy Hattersley had called for the expulsion of CLPD from the Party!

The executive was also defeated in its attitude to the establishing of a new left umbrella organisation. CLPD's delegates to the forthcoming meeting to launch the new organisation will now argue for a full, "open conference of the Labour left". The secretary described this as a "tactic of confrontation", but the trouble is that when open warfare has been declared upon the left, for us not to confront the right must, by definition, be deemed a retreat.

A further radical change in CLPD's campaigning style is that it will now support and campaign for specific candidates. In the past CLPD has merely published the names of all paid-up members who are seeking election to Party office. As those include Neil Kinnock, this has caused considerable confusion among some of our supporters! But CLPD is now committed to campaign for a left slate of candidates for the NEC, and on the initiative of Wood Green CLP will make an appeal to Tony Benn to challenge Denis Healey for the deputy-leadership again this year.

Overall it would be fair to say, I think, that the AGM committeed CLPD to a vigourous, forward looking campaigning style on a variety of issues over the next year. The 'softly softly' brigade were consistently defeated, probably due to the right's declaration of civil war only a few days earlier, which made many believe this approach to be ostrich-like.

It was encouraging to see CLPD committed so firmly to continuing and extending the fight for democratic reform of the Party, particularly in view of the dismal reports of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee's AGM, which apparently could not even see the essential link between the struggle for left policies and democratic reform, and successfully managed to fudge the whole issue of left unity and left organisation.

Only the fighting strategy adopted by CLPD is capable of combating and defeating the right-wing onslaught on all the socialist advances of the past two years.

Nigel Williamson
–CLPD Executive Committee
(in personal capacity)

CLPD'S PRIORITIES

High among CLPD's priorities over the next year must now be the fight against witch-hunts and purges, but CLPD will also be campaigning on a number of other issues:–

1. *Public Ownership* **– CLPD will be urging the inclusion in the next manifesto of the commitment to take into common ownership 25 or the top 100 largest privately-owned manufacturing companies, along the lines suggested in the Party's 1973 programme. The AES seems remarkably weak on the subject of public ownership, and CLPD believes it is necessary to give some numerical significance to the phrase 'the commanding heights of the economy'.**

2. *Shortlist of One* **– CLPD will be campaigning for the Paddington constitutional amendment due to come before the 1982 Conference which would outlaw 'shortlists of one' where more than one candidate has been validly nominated.**

3. *Local Government Democracy* **– CLPD will continue to campaign for the standing orders of Labour Groups to be bound by the manifesto of the local party, and for the local party to be involved in the election of Group leaders and officers, and to have sole responsibility for withdrawal of the Group whip.**

4. *P.L.P. Democracy* **– As well as campaigning for the limited reforms to democratise the PLP remitted by the 1981 Conference, CLPD is now committed to a constitutional amendment requiring the PLP to advocate Conference policies. Although NEC control of the manifesto connot be raised for another three years, CLPD will now promote a separate amendment to Clause V of the Party Constitution to the effect that major Conference policies MUST be included in the election manifesto.**

5 *Positive Discrimination* **– CLPD, through its Womens Action Committee, will campaign for every Parliamentary shortlist to include at least one woman and for a re-definition of the role of the Labour Women's Conference, which will give it specific rights in relations to the Party's annual Conference.**

6. *Recorded voting* **– One of CLPD's priorities over the next year will be the extension of recorded voting to include NEC elections and card votes at Annual Conference.**

Rasta Solidarity

Jeremy Corbyn and others interviewed Gladstone Warburton of Rastafari Universal Zion.

The Labour Party is very slowly becoming aware that it has neglected the needs of a substantial proportion of the inner city population, namely those from ethnic minority groups. For too long, the Party has been content to offer 'blanket coverage' of the needs of the working class. But with the present crisis, attacking as it does the black community, youth and women in particular, the Party must develop an understanding of all the different groups it has to represent.

To do this, we must recognise the complexity and autonomy of these groups and learn to react to their priorities.

RASTAFARIAN GROUP

Briefing recently talked with Gladstone 'Jah Bones' Warburton, one of the leading figures in a Rastafarian group based in Tottenham, but having national links and a widely distributed newspaper. Jah Bones and the Rastafari Universal Zion group have been following the progress of the Labour Party for some years, and have also read and absorbed the lessons of Macdonald and Bevan.

Many black groups although willing to vote Labour in elections, have felt unable to join the Party. Jah Bones felt it was because 'the Party leadership have not grasped the needs of black people', and that local activities often reflected this. 'Labour Party propaganda should demonstrate that the Party is opposed to harassment, sus laws, racism and unacceptable police activities.'

LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

At a Local Government level also, the Labour Councils must show more active support for the needs of black groups. 'Practices are brought into being without black people being considered or consulted', for example meals-on-wheels do not cater for non-British diets, nor do housing departments acknowledge extended families.

Jah Bones also commented on the Party's need to recognise the full extent of discrimination, and of its need to be seen reaching out to the Black Community. 'The Labour Party gets support from 70% to 80% of black people but does not campaign amongst black people or seek to bring them into the struggles of the Party.'

'WORKING PEOPLE'S PARTY'

But despite these criticisms, RUZ and many other Black groups have been approaching local London Labour Parties over the past few months. Because as Jah Bones saw it, the Labour Party is still 'the working people's Party and can provide representation for working people at the highest level'.

They are very disturbed by the rise of the SDP. As Jah Bones sees the situation, 'Many of the leading people in the Labour Party had no interest in Labour, but were Tories in disguise and used Labour as a vehicle. They have now materialised in the SDP'. The Black Community is seriously threatened by the present Tory Government's Nationality Act and the increasing deportation and harassment of black people. One of their fears is that the SDP is being used by business interests to continue Tory policies after the next election, but with a liberal veneer of 'concern'.

They are turning to the Labour Party in need. They are encouraged by the conference decisions to repeal the Nationality Act and open mutually beneficial relations with the socialist Third World (Jah Bones mentioned his disappointment that the previous Labour Government had not repealed the Sus laws or offered support to Manley's Jamaica).

They are also offering their solidarity with groups in the Labour Party fighting for socialist policies and a leadership that will carry them out.

BRENT TEACHERS IN STRUGGLE

The past year has seen a struggle in the National Union of Teachers over the strategy needed to fight the cuts. The struggle has centred on London and has resulted in disciplinary action being taken by the Union against over 70 people. The officers of the Lambeth and Southwark Associations (branches) of the NUT have been suspended for supporting unofficial action, such as the Lambeth strike, and in the biggest case, 60 teachers at Alperton High School in Brent were suspended for holding a one-hour token picket. As NUT rep., I was closely involved, and the story illustrates the lengths to which some people in the Union will go to preserve their positions and snuff out local initiatives.

In May 1981, staff at Alperton were told that six teachers on short-term contracts were not to be employed beyond August, as their jobs were needed for teachers being redeployed from elsewhere. And this was from an Authority pledged to no redundancies. As well as using official Union channels, we decided to hold a picket from 8am to 10am outside the school one morning to gain publicity. The initial response from the Union locally was lukewarm. The Headteacher agreed to close the school until 10am, thus making it a "token picket".

RULEBOOK

However, on the day before the action, one of the NUT Executive members for the area, Malcolm Horne, came to speak to a school Union meeting. Instead of listening to our case and promising support, he saw little hope of success and instructed us not to take the action. He quoted Rule 8 of the Union Rulebook which forbids action being taken without the prior approval of the National Executive. But far from intimidating us, his insulting manner ensured that 60 members came out the next morning.

The publicity from the action, plus support from the Brent Labour Party, ensured that no short-term contract teachers lost their jobs in Brent. In the meantime, however, we were all suspended from the NUT pending a hearing. Due to the summer break that hearing didn't take place until September 12th, and we were all reinstated to full membership. Two members, Frank Hansen and John Broadbent, were given a warning because of an article they wrote in the journal *Rank and File Teacher*.

SEQUEL

There is a sequel to this story.

On November 3rd, the Brent Association met to decide its nominations for the National Executive elections this March. I was asked to stand against the aforementioned Malcolm Horne. At a large meeting, I won the nomination by 105 votes to 93, thanks to a large turnout from Alperton High School.

Ten days later, I received a letter from the Union solicitor to say that he considered me to be ineligible because I had been suspended during the summer. There followed four weeks of wrangling over the Rules, till in the end it was decided that those suspended for less than six months be eligible for nomination.

I will therefore be contesting the election in March, and I hope to boost the Left's representation on the National Executive. I am prepared to speak at Association meetings to explain my policies and hope that NUT members in the Outer London area will support me.

Colin Adams
(NUT rep. Alperton High School,
Outer London Candidate for NUT NEC,
Chairman Brent East Labour Party)

FASCISTS IN LONDON

Anna Sullivan
and Pete Gilman
Islington
Anti-Nazi League

Since the electoral defeat of the National Front in 1979 and the destructive faction fighting that followed, the extreme right wing groups such as the National Front and the British Movement, have ceased to foster illusions of political respectability. The National Front was the strongest organized Nazi group and the split between Webster and Tyndall brought in its wake newly formed groups such as the Constitutional Movement, the New National Front and the British Democratic Party. Webster was left with the remnants of the original National Front condemned by Tyndall as criminals and dregs of society who were a disgrace to any true 'Nationalist Movement'. However Webster quickly re-grouped and pulled behind him large numbers of disenchanted youth who had been thrown onto the slag heap of unemployment. Though it seemed at one time that the openly Nazi British Movement were winning in the Youth recruitment field.

Since the massive increase in unemployment and the onslaught on the living standards of the working class by the Tories, the National Front have used the situation to the full. Fascist propaganda condemns unemployment, condemns the Tory Government, and uses to the full the 'Red scare' tactics of the national press. They are trying to cash in on the disillusionment in both Tory and Labour and use this to present themselves as the true voice of the working class. This has brought about a massive increase in racist violence throughout London. After all a society in economic decline has to have a scapegoat. The echoes of Nazi Germany are becoming all too loud and clear.

In London the Fascists operate differently in geographical areas, according to the composition of the local population and obviously the local strength of their own organisation. For instance one of their most consistent street activities, i.e. paper sales, is in Islington at Chapel St. Market, which is in the South of the Borough where the population is mainly white. In other parts of the borough especially the North there is a large black and Asian community and the National Front do not appear openly on the streets in these areas.

JEWISH AREA

They tend to organise their paper sales around street markets such as Chapel St and also East St Market in South London and Brick Lane, East London. It is significant that they do *not* sell papers at Ridley Road market in Dalston, Hackney. In the 30's, Ridley Road was a strong Jewish area and the scene of many battles with Mosley's Blackshirts who were opposed by the C.P. and the local Jewish community. Now a large black community are dominant enough to kick the fascists out if they tried to sell this infamous literature. There is of course still a strong grass roots opposition to fascism in Hackney except in the very south of the borough which borders on Bethnal Green and Shoreditch. Even though the area certainly has its fascists, many families from Mosley's time have passed on the 'faith' to their younger generations, and the fascists don't really appear on the streets except at Brick Lane, and they go to other areas to operate. Football grounds are another area where they openly organise, such as at Chelsea, West Ham and Spurs. They also have made inroads into the music circuit and schools where their biggest propaganda item is 'Bulldog' the NF youth paper.

TERROR TACTICS

In many areas of London the Nazis have resorted to terror tactics. Many Asians in particular have had their homes firebombed and many live in fear of the self-appointed 'stormtroopers' of the Fascist groups. This is particularly relevant in the Brick Lane area. Racist attacks and murders are becoming all too commonplace, and Fascist groups are literally getting away with murder, aided and abetted by the blindfolded complacency of the police, despite utterances to the contrary. Responsibility for this state of affairs must also fall on the left and the organised Labour movement which seems unable to form any active campaign to stop the growth of fascism or the horror of Nazi violence.

MANY CASUALTIES

There would be no point in writing an article on Fascism without putting forward a policy to counteract its growth and activity. In Islington the Anti-Nazi League, which has the support of the Trades Council and many individual Trade Union branches and ethnic minority groups, has suffered many casualties. For the Fascists have sworn to eliminate any organised opposition to them. However, in spite of many violent physical attacks on our members we fight on and have built up a consistent political campaign against them, for we believe that fascism cannot be ignored or just written about. It has to be fought in any way possible. This means consistent opposition to fascist presence wherever they organise, be it on the streets, in the workplace, schools or football grounds. We are now receiving the active support of the Labour Movement both politically and financially for without money you cannot continue any campaign.

Unfortunately the fascists are organising and growing in other areas of London but no real organised opposition has yet taken place. That is except in areas like Southall and Walthamstow where the black and Asian communities are organising a fight back to protect themselves.

Local Trade Unionists in all these areas must be involved, for fascism does not just attack minorities, but is really about destroying the organised working class. We must be aware that it is the failure of the Labour Movement to actively defend the interests of the working class, in the face of the Tory onslaught that can lead to the massive disillusionment which sows the seeds for an extreme Right Wing backlash. We must not let this happen.

BLACK TRADE UNIONIST DECLARATION

We, the undersigned Black Trade Unionists are concerned at the extent of racism in British Society and in particular the Trades Union and Labour Movement.

The recent disturbances in Brixton, Southall and other parts of London show that Black People are no longer prepared to accept unemployment, bad housing, police provocation and the institutional and invidual Racism inherent in British Society.

We are strongly opposed to continuing political trends in the area of race relations e.g. the Nationality Bill, the Circular issued by the Department of Health & Social Security (DHSS) on overseas patients, the refusal of the DHSS to pay benefits to people who do not speak English, passport checks and immigration 'fishing raids', the calls for the repatriation of Blacks etc. We believe that these measures are an exacerbation of racist policies and practices.

As Trade Unionists, the day to day Racism at the workplace must be of primary concern to us and we are aware that Unemployment, Short Time Working, redundancy and other forms of direct and indirect discrimination affect Black People more than any other section within British Society.

We have a duty to organise ourselves within the Trades Union and Labour Movement to combat racism and we are resolved to organise ourselves in such a way that we can promote and protect the interests of Black People in the Trades Union and Labour Movement.

We therefore pledge ourselves to:

1. Organise a London based Conference of Black Trades Unionists to discuss a programme of action.
2. Make links with other Black Workers Organisations with a view to launching a National Black Trades Unionists Movement.
3. Work to improve the increasing participation of Black People at all levels within the Trades Union and Labour Movement.
4. Work for changes within the Trades Union and Labour movement to restore the confidence of Black People.

The above declaration forms the basis of the Black Trade Unionists Solidarity Campaign which will hold a launching conference in Autumn '82.

CONTINUING THE ANTI-RACIST FIGHT:

HAS THE TIDE TURNED?

'the street-fighting was excellent, but could have been—and hopefully in future will be—better organized' BRIEFING last May

Do you remember those massive ANL carnivals in Victoria Park and Brockwell Park? Did you belong to one of the dozens of anti-fascist committees that flourished over three years ago? Isn't the outlook pretty grim for anti-racists nowadays?

No! — It's never been better!

Why is it better? Because black people are resisting racism more than before. Thousands must have responded to that controversial editorial in Briefing last May which, to paraphrase, thought the Brixton riot was the best we'd ever seen in this country, but that next time riots should be organised better. Next time they were.

"Fire water cannon and plastic bullets!" was the predictable cry from the police and government. Yet since the uprisings, the strongest public sentiment has been to curb rather than encourage police aggression and to make them more accountable.

Why is it better? Because while deportations have increased (from 270 in 1976 to 590 in 1979 to 910 in 1980) more deportees are fighting – successfully. Asian women are told by the Home Office that they were allowed in not as independent individuals but as appendages of their husbands. Nasira Begum of Manchester, Nasreen Akhtar or Rochdale and Jaswinder Kaur of Leeds were told, "Your husband is no longer with you – now go back to India or Pakistan!" They won. Momtaz Kiani of Bradford, Shirley Graham of Newham, Chun Hee Leong of Leeds and Aziz Malik of Dewsbury – attacked under different immigration rules – are amongst those still fighting.

They all had "friends" – small groups of well-wishers from the local black community supported by white anti-racists plus a few from the Law Centre. Their efforts forced the Home Office to budge. These campaigns are mushrooming and are beginning to meet to coordinate their work.

SERIOUS CONSPIRACY CHARGES

Now all this interfering in the machinations of the Home Office is dangerous. Twelve young Asian men from Bradford face serious conspiracy charges for their endeavours to bring Anwar Ditta's children to Rochdale, to stop Jaswinder Kaur and her son being deported to India, and to prove that West Yorkshire police had framed Gary Pemberton. Groups to support the Bradford 12 in this most serious ever conspiracy trial involving black people are working in many cities. Just to underline that this is a political trial, the defendants' condition for bail was that they kept clear of any meetings organised to help them.

OK, OK, what's all this got to do with the Labour Party? Haven't we got enough to do defending Peter Tatchell and the Militant and discussing whether local councils should go bankrupt? Didn't we unanimously call for repeal of the 1981 Nationality Act and he 1971 Immigration Act in Brighton last October? What more do you want?

* Tell everyone inside and outside the Labour Party about this Conference decision and why it was taken. Discuss in your Party what the alternatives should look like.
* Support those fighting police intimidation and racist deportations. Invite them to your meetings and find out how you can help them – perhaps by organising a benefit.
* The Bradford 12 will be tried next April. Mobilise for the demo or other public event that is bound to precede the trial.
* Support or help form police monitoring groups in your borough. Phone Paul Boateng who chairs the GLC Police Committee for details. Publicise your response to the Scarman Report.
* Do black people in your borough get the worst jobs and council flats – if they get any at all? What is your council doing about this direct and indirect discrimination? Find out what Lambeth Council have done and what the GLC plan to do to eliminate (or at least show the extent of) this institutionalised racism, and what proposals they have for positive action in favour of black people. At least try to raise consciousness in your CLP about this less dramatic aspect of racism.
* Get involved in the London Labour Party Standing Conference to Combat Racial Disadvantage. Every two months thirty to forty delegates from London CLPs and other bodies (about half of them black) meet to discuss topics like "Labour and the Black Electorate", "Racialism and Education", "Immigration and Nationality", "The Police", "the disturbances in Toxteth and Southall" etc. While the discussions are reasonably good, not many have heard of this body. Does your CLP send a delegate? Yet the Standing Conference could be London Labour's anti-racist voice.

CHALLENGE RACISM

These are some ways in which your Labour Party can get more involved in the anti-racist movement. A few years ago this movement was dominated by white lefties organised through anti-fascist committees. These days small local groups which concentrate on one particular aspect of racism are more common and these are dominated by black people. Our job is to assist them – to use the resources of the Labour Party to challenge racism amongst white people.

To do this job properly you need leaflets and posters by the hundreds of thousands. A small group of us who produce a paper called 'Here to Stay' for the Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL is now reviving) want to produce this material. We need help with writing and with design. We need to know that Labour Parties (or trade unions or anyone else) would buy these leaflets and distribute them. With enough talent and money films can be produced. If enough of you get involved then the excellent work done by these anti-deportation groups, and everyone else fighting state racism, can reach millions of people.

Here's a few useful addresses and phone numbers:

* *Here to Stay and CARL, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5; or phone Bernard for 'Here to Stay' – 720 2328, or Dave Cook for CARL – 251 4406.*
* *London Support Committee for Bradford 12, 54 High St, Southall, 571 4920.*
* *Friends of Shirley Graham, 285 Romford Road, E7, 555 3331.*
* *GLLP Standing Conference, Stephen Morgan (Regional Organiser), Herbert Morrison House, Walworth Road, SE17, 703 6511.*

Bernard Misrahi
Lambeth Vauxhall CLP

POLICING THE POLICE

Democratic accountability of the police is certain to remain a burning issue in British politics. The police have lost the first round and are busy retrenching for the next. As they set about this, they are already laying down a heavy barrage of propaganda intended to confuse the issues and load the dice in their favour, and since they are a crafty bunch, highly political, exceedingly well organised and quite unscrupulous to boot, they need close watching. With the exceptions of the writings of E. P. Thompson and *State Research*, the labour movement has pretty much neglected the study of the police and so it is of great importance for socialists to be aware of what is going on and arm themselves with both facts and arguments to cut through the forthcoming blizzard of disinformation. It is a gut issue: the basic human and political rights that the working class have won (largely through extra-parliamentary action, I might say) are worth nothing if the police will not enforce our rights, if they trample on our freedoms and repeatedly break the law themselves with impunity. That the daily violation of our democratic rights in all three of these categories is the commonplace experience of working people need not be detailed here.

So, what is happening? Firstly, the principle of self-regulation has been publicly abandoned by the police in speeches by McNee, Anderton and the Police Federation. They now call for *some* degree of public scrutiny and participation in the complaints procedure. The police having staunchly refused this for 70 years or so, the new move needs some explaining. It is as though Keith Joseph had announced he was in favour of Clause Four or Carrington attacked US policy in Latin America. The truth is that the police have perceived the threat that the next Labour Government will commence wholesale reform of the police, *not just* in the area of complaints machinery, but in the wider (and more threatening) areas of training, higher-level promotions and appointments, equipment, ethnic composition and deployment.

STRUTTING ROUND BRIXTON

It is a disgrace that here in London we have a police force that allocates hundreds or thousands of its officers to such duties as strutting round Brixton harassing young blacks, lurking around public toilets to arrest gay men, protecting fascist demonstrators from the justified wrath of the local inhabitants whom they abuse and clearing squats of homeless people for the benefit of property speculators. London ratepayers are milked of £240 million every year for the support of the Metropolitan Police and have no say whatsoever in the use of this money: clearly taxation without representation. The priorities are wrong. The Fraud Squad is tiny and lacks the necessary experts to deal with the criminal conspiracies to defraud you and me which are carried on in the boardrooms of the City of London every day. Meanwhile the Special Patrol Group prowl about in their armoured vehicles chanting "Nigger, nigger, nigger, Oi, Oi, Oi." The Special Branch employs thousands and spends millions snooping on honest trade unionists, political activists, women's liberationists etc. Meanwhile, really vicious criminals are selling heroin to our kids apparently licensed by the local CID.

So the police response to popular demand for democratic accountability is fairly predictable. Already, though conceding a partial public access to the complaints procedure, they limit that access by insisting that "real" crimes can only be investigated by the police and that civilian investigation will only apply to minor matters such as breaches of police regulations, rudeness, incompetence etc. They claim that serious crimes – and we are talking here about corruption, aiding and abetting armed robberies, assaulting and even murdering prisoners in custody, perjury and evidence-tampering – are too complicated for anyone else but a police officer to investigate. This is rubbish. There are all too many units of trained investigators outside of the police and some of them investigate most serious and complicated crimes, e.g. the Treasury on tax evasion, the Customs on drug smuggling or the Department of Trade doing fiddles of VAT. Six months' training in the rules of evidence and the taking of statements is all that is required (which is what most coppers get) and in any case, solicitors and barristers can make the fine legal decisions just as they do for law-enforcement agencies now. When the Police Federation says that police-crime is too *difficult* to investigate other than by trained police officers, what they mean is that they fear that an independent and impartial investigatory agency will expose far more brutality, corruption and general forensic fakery than they care to admit, and, worse, the results being beyond their control, they cannot hide them, forewarn the officers concerned or evade the disciplinary measures that ensue, or should ensue.

DEEPLY SUSPECT

The next ploy to be anticipated is that effective civilian oversight "ties the hands of the police" when fighting crime. There are two things to say about this. Firstly, whatever the Met is good at (and there must be something) fighting crime isn't one of them. The clear-up rate for burglaries, robberies and other assorted thefts is somewhere about 20% – even according to their own figures which, as I say below, are *deeply suspect*. The rate they achieve now is only made possible by dubious or illegal methods such as the use of super-grasses, planting evidence, "verballing" suspects and perjury in court. Secondly, the actual figures that Scotland Yard issue are capable of a variety of manipulations, partly because there is no outside check on how crimes are classified at the outset. The CID commonly "write up" or "write down" a crime, not according to the actual facts of the case, but in accordance with the likelihood of solving it.

Now, the same techniques can be reversed for political purposes. When the CID want to "prove" that they are being prevented from solving crimes by woolly minded liberals, do-gooders duped by communist agitators etc., every minor crime is "written up" and they then observe a sort of work-to-rule and make no effort to solve anything, scrupulously observe the Judges' Rules, allow defendants to abscond by never objecting to bail, i.e. reverse their present daily procedures. The result is that the crime rate soars and the clear-up rate drops to near zero. Result: this "proves" that their hands have been tied by the "outside interference". The senior officers connive in the process. It is quite predictable that selected police forces will start experimental schemes of one kind or another well before any legislation is enacted with the specific purpose of providing spurious evidence that such schemes do not work. Socialists should be aware of this. Until the police allow the existence of powerful independent supervisory bodies accountable to the electorate (and staffed by a large and well-equipped investigatory staff) random access to police stations, records, files and both witnesses and complainants, then *any* figures they issue should be treated as untrustworthy. No public company is allowed to audit its own books, yet we allow the police this liberty with hardly a demur.

URGENT SOCIALIST PRIORITY

Things are arranged differently in many other countries with little adverse effect and the cost of the whole shooting match could be paid for by one Trident missile. Labour Party activists should be making the question of police accountability an urgent socialist priority *right now* and press candidates for nominations to *all* electoral levels to commit themselves fully to the project. If we fail to get support for this policy, the next Labour Government will be free to appoint yet another weak Home Secretary shackled to the Association of Chief Police Officers and the permanent officials in the police section of the Home Office and nothing will change. The matter is too serious to be left to either the police themselves or half-hearted politicians.

Walter Easey,
Southwark-Bermondsey CLP

(Note: The writer is an ex-police inspector with four years' experience in the CID.)

After Scarman...

The bland, liberally-couched findings of the Scarman report have received mixed responses from the people and organisations of Brixton and Lambeth.

Several black groups welcomed the fact that the report at least put some responsibility for the events of last April, and the underlying causes, at the door of the police. But the recommendations for "improved" police training and police techniques fall short even of the suggestions put forward by some police spokespersons, and the idea for developing community involvement are well behind those promoted by the Greater London Council.

"BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT"

The labour movement's response to Scarman was mixed. Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight — despite giving evidence to Scarman in the face of some criticism from the left — described the report as "bitter disappointment". He felt the report relatively worthless because it made no reference to the borough's need for greater government cash, and saw the concept of inner-city degeneration as only part of the underlying cause for the rioting.

Some left-wingers criticised Scarman's belief that, despite being in a racist society, the police somehow escaped being institutionally racist. That finding, complete with the recommendation for water cannons, CS gas and plastic bullets to be made available to the police, proved to be the left's most solid criticism of Scarman.

Those individuals and CLPs which agreed not to lend credibility to Scarman by submitting evidence were proven correct by the report's findings, but some in the Labour Party agreed with the local SDP sentiment in welcoming Scarman's report.

Labour councillors Peter Mandelson, Paul Ormerod and Andy Thompson are quoted in the local press as criticising the Council leader's critical response. Some right-wingers in the Party also criticised Lambeth Council's working party report — published early in 1981 — which condemned many of the tactics used by the local police in the months which, after the report's publication, led to the April riots.

FEW POSITIVE THINGS

Most sides agreed that of the few positive things in Scarman, the most promising is the general view that improvements in policing and improvements in the social condition of Lambeth are both general prerequisites for an end to civil disturbances — although the arguments go on as to how those improvements should be made.

Meanwhile the physical condition of the area's housing remains poor. A paltry £100,000 has been laid aside to improve the general environment of Brixton. Ted Knight has admitted that such a sum can do little more than "tart-up" parts of the area. The Council can do no more, because of the Government's callous disregard of the inner-city problems, and its general economic policy.

A bleak future presents itself to Brixton this new year — and Scarman offers little or no scope for improvement.

Graham Norwood



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

ARTS BRIEFING

Too Little on the Arts

Tony Banks
Tooting CLP
Chair. GLC Arts and Recreation Committee

Whilst there is no desire on the part of anyone in the Labour Group at County Hall to inject uncertainty into arts funding in London, there seems to be general agreement for the argument that decisions affecting the arts cannot somehow be divorced from wider political considerations.

The predictable cry from the Tories to keep politics out of the arts is sheer hypocrisy. Sir Horace Cutler's GLC cut the grant to the National Theatre because the bigots were offended by Howard Brenton's play *The Romans*. The Arts Minister took the decision recently not to re-appoint the vice-chairman of the Arts Council because he was a known Labour Party supporter. The appointment of new members to the Arts Council in the coming months will surely reflect the Thatcherite toryism of the minister and again expose the spurious 'non-political' aspect of national arts funding.

Apart from these crude forms of political interference the links between politics and the arts are obvious and it is either naive or cynical to suggest that the arts are above politics. The two are inextricably linked in a number of ways.

First, arts funding in the global sense comprises a series of political decisions at both national and local level. How much will be spent can only be a political decision.

Secondly, what is to be funded inevitably reflects the political and social outlook of those making the actual decisions, themselves politicians or their appointees.

Thirdly, art forms usually reflect either the 'status quo' or the anti-viewpoint and are thus political.

The Labour Party is being honest in stating a reality, although one would never guess so judging by the mealy-mouthed comments of Tory politicians and establishment-minded arts administrators. Writers, artists and musicians often embody enormously powerful political messages within their work, which is why so many down the years have been banned, imprisoned or even put to death.

Art forms that are wholly safe are usually undistinguished – nothing more than chocolate box paintings or wall-paper music.

MORE GLC CASH

Neither 'art for art's sake', nor 'few but roses' are acceptable concepts to a local authority such as the GLC confronting, as we do, massive social problems engendered by dole queues, public expenditure cuts and housing wating lists. The GLC arts policy for London must relate to such problems in much the same way as our policies for housing, transport, planning and employment. In other words, the arts must exist to serve the community.



At the moment the Labour Group is attempting to fix a budget for the next financial year – a task made almost impossible by the overtly political interference in our affairs by the Law Lords. Despite this situation I still believe it right that the GLC arts budget should be fixed at a level in excess of the present high inflation rate. There are over 300,000 Londoners today forced to accept 'compulsory leisure' through unemployment and for this reason alone there are strong grounds for increased spending on arts and recreation and making tham more freely available. The solution to unemployment, of course, rests with central government, but simply because the GLC cannot solve the problem is not a valid reason for doing nothing to ameliorate it. In addition we are constantly being told that the microchip will revolutionise working patterns, but there is as yet no indication that the result will be anything other than longer dole queues. A socialist run society would be anticipating a much shorter working week and thus more leisure time for workers, and making plans accordingly. Again, although we live today in an economically wasteful capitalist society, the Labour GLC must think of the future and shape its policies with an eye to inevitable political change.

TOO LITTLE ON THE ARTS

Naturally, it is not an economically propitious moment to be bidding for more arts money in view of the uncertain financial position of local government inherent in the Heseltine proposals. But frankly I do not see an economically convenient time coming under capitalism and to adapt a well known political phrase; the present economic crisis is a justification in itself for increased arts expenditure rather than an excuse for cutting it. In London, as nationally, we spend a pathetically small amount on the arts. The average both for London and the Country as a whole is around £1.40 per head per annum of population. As with other forms of public subsidy to socially desirable objectives this is amongst the lowest in Europe.

The Arts Council announced last month a budget increase of around 8%, which being below the current rate of inflation, amounted to a cut. Far from stating so it was generally hailed as a great victory and once again the Arts Council, instead of acting as a lobby for the arts, fulfilled the shameful role of government foot-stool. Recipients of grants accepted what was handed out and expressed gratitude at not being chopped and those losing out suppressed anger for fear of jeopardising their chances of climbing aboard the thin gravy train in the future.

The whole process reflects neither credit on the Arts Council, nor on the arts bodies themselves. Instead of mounting a political campaign to secure a far greater level of arts funding there was the usual fight between those involved in the arts world to maintain their own constant piece of a declining cake. Unless the debilitating nature of this squabbling is recognised and is replaced by an effective political lobby, the arts will continue to be treated as the soft underbelly of national and local expenditure.

HOW THE MONEY IS SPENT

Although it is right to argue for a larger global amount for the arts there is also a need to examine the existing pattern of expenditure. Of the Arts Council's current £85 million budget, nearly 30% is

(continued on next page)

Banks Boosts Ethnic Arts

Vidya Anand
(Ilford South Labour Party)

The promotion of ethnic arts — as well as community arts — has received a powerful boost from Tony Banks's specially convened conference on "London and the Arts" at the end of last year, held at the National Film Theatre. A few hundred delegates from a wide range of grant-aided bodies, as well as interested organisations, were given an opportunity to voice their often strongly-held views about the direction and funding of the arts in London.

Presided over by Lord Hugh Jenkins — who seemed to have some difficulty in keeping control over the proceedings — a groundswell of support for full recognition of community and ethnic arts in arts funding became apparent.

Among many original and creative papers and contributions, Ian Hall of the Bloomsbury Society eloquently advocated "the need for a full-scale Londoners' Festival, including rich participation by the ethnic minorities". So often, it was argued, Ethnic Arts groups feel excluded from the mainstream of cultural enterprise, and that such a festival could provide a firm incentive; later, urgent moves must be made to liaise with ILEA for the formation of a more efficient instrument in the development of the cultural potential of this multi-ethnic metropolis.

URGENT REAPPRAISAL

Elsewhere, the message was the same. **The time had come for an urgent reappraisal of priorities** — a point made by Sebastian Clarke of the Caribbean Cultural International (What Fate Black Arts in Britain?). "It is necessary that an independent Black Organisation should be created and funded separately. With eighty million pounds being spent by the Arts Council, less than a quarter of a million is spent in black projects. Yet black people constitute over two and a half million of the population." Dudley Heslop of the Afro-Caribbean Arts, Crafts and Cultural Council (Working Class Artist); Gabriel Ibarra (for a multi-racial Cultural Centre); David Aukin from the Hampstead Theatre (the GLC should insist on, and can campaign for, proper representation of the black people in all the organisations it supports); Kevin O'Connor of the Brixton Festival 1982 and the India Welfare Society (The Ethnic Arts — Cosmetic or Reality), put forward some practical suggestions which **were well received, including:**

i. That ethnic minorities should be directly represented on the Arts Council, grant-aiding bodies, the Greater London Council's Arts and Recreation Committee and the London boroughs' grant-aiding bodies.

ii. That tokenism be abandoned in favour of democratic representations at all levels in the arts world (we might add here too, for good measure, the sports world!).

iii. That a Working Party should be set up from the Conference to re-evaluate the role of the ethnic minorities in London's cultural scene, and the present funding arrangements be made to reflect the real needs and aspirations of London's spiritually and culturally rich communitiies.

Tony banks has encouraged us all. After the rhetoric, we expect action from his Committee — and quickly! A recall Conference this spring — to report back to the delegates on how the Labour GLC is going to respond to these powerful pressures for change — can be the real evidence that this Labour GLC, at least, cares and means business. The GLC must **now deliver!**



Photograph : John Brennan

December 12th. Ken Livingstone addresses the special London Region Conference called to discuss strategy for fighting Heseltine.

(continued from previous page)

dedicated to the four national companies; the Royal Opera and Ballet, the English National Opera, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. This is not to argue that such bodies are individually over-funded, but rather the amount they receive of the total is disproportionate and the GLC's present funding pattern only compounds this situation.

There are many other art forms in addition to opera and ballet and they are too often pushed aside in favour of "high culture" which has been highjacked by the middle classes and shaped in their own image.

I believe the GLC as a local authority should concern itself far more with community based arts activities which, whilst contributing so much to the overall arts scene in London, simply do not have the status to attract the necessary financial support which is more readily available to the great centres. In demonstrating this point, I admit my abiding disappointment at not being able to convince all of my colleagues that there was no need for us to continue making payments to the Royal Opera House Building Fund Appeal. I trust those who did not support me at the time noticed the publicity given by the popular press to the masked members of the Establishment who readily paid £100 a head at the ball held in the Dorchester last November in aid of the development appeal. What chance do local arts activities have of securing that kind of financial support

However there remains strong support within the Labour Group for greater priority to be given to arts policies which recognise the four factors set out in my discussion paper issued in June of last year.

1. The need for community involvement.
2. The unemployment crisis in London.
3. The need for closer links with Borough Councils and especially the ILEA and LEAs.
4. The multi-ethnic nature of London's culture.

In a later "Briefing" article I will set out the policy proposals to be put to the Labour Group.

GLC employment programme

Michael Ward
(Chairperson, G.L.C. Industry and Employment Committee)

There are now as many unemployed people in Greater London – 350,000 as there were in the whole country in 1966. Yet many of the Labour Party's ideas on economic planning have hardly moved on since the 1960s. The London Labour Party's employment programme for the GLC – now being put into action – is designed to bring about a more community and trade union based, and more democratic, form to industrial policy.

It's not just the recession that has destroyed London jobs: London has been losing jobs in manufacturing industry for twenty years. First it was inner London, but not the best of industry around London – firms in engineering and electronics, that provided the skilled work that was the foundation of London's prosperity – is fast disappearing.

The risk we now face is that London will become a city of well-paid office jobs for the few – and low paid, casual, menial jobs for the many. Such, after all, was the pattern of the nineteenth century London economy.

The Tory answer is "enterprise zones": they believe that job loss has been caused by legislation to protect workers rights, by planning controls, by collective bargaining and by the rates. But the London of the past was, after all, one vast enterprise zone. The slums, the insanitary workshops, were the product of the spirit of free enterprise.

In contrast, a series of reports – in Newham, in Islington, in Wandsworth, in Haringey – has shown that, although jobs have gone as a result of the closure of small firms, the majority have gone as a result of the closure of relatively large factories by national or multi-national companies that were not in particular financial difficulty.

So the GLC policy is based on a commitment to public stimulation of and expenditure on new investment – because private capital by itself has not succeeded in the creation of new jobs in London – and on the extension of democratic control over economic decisions.

But it is not just a matter of *what* the policy is: it is also a question of *how* its aims are to be achieved. Four Trades Councils (Liverpool, Newcastle, North Tyneside and Coventry) commissioned an enquiry into the working of the industrial policy of the last Labour Government. They found that the National Enterprise Board became remote, unaccountable and unresponsive to workers' interests and needs.

The Labour GLC's aim is to plan for new jobs using the strengths of local workers and communities, substituting local organisations for national. The aim is to work with combine committees, shop stewards, trades councils, community organisations, tenants organisations, local councils and commercial organisations in order to identify the goods and services local people want, and then to see how to use the skills of unemployed and employed workers, the land, resources and purchasing power of the local authority, to make new jobs happen.

In order to carry out the programme, new kinds of organisations are required. First of all, there is to be no new local authority department. Instead, within the GLC, an Economic Policy Group has been established at a senior level, to undertake local economic planning, to advise the Committee, and to map out the overall strategy.

Second, plans are now far advanced to establish the Greater London Enterprise Board – working at arms length to the GLC, but closely accountable to it. Starting with a budget of £40 million a year, GLEB will be there to implement the strategy. It has three investment functions – investment to promote structural or strategic change (new forms of industrial ownership, such as co-operatives); general investment (loans or grants, to public or private enterprises, according to a set of criteria) and development investment (building new factories and workshops, and converting old ones). The enterprise board will be fully operational in the Spring, but already a Chairperson/Chief Executive has been appointed (from the Scottish Development Agency), a number of individual co-operatives and other enterprises have been assisted, and an extensive programme of factory building commissioned.

Third, the Greater London Manpower Board is intended to co-ordinate training in London, to find new training schemes, and to work with unemployed people. It has been set up initially as a Council Committee, with representation of ILEA, the Manpower Services Commission, trades unionists and employers, and women and ethnic minorities. Already the GLC has funded a number of training schemes – in Brent, Hackney, Camden and Tower Hamlets – and unemployed centres in Islington and Lambeth.



THE People's March for Jobs

Marchers from Liverpool, Yorkshire and South Wales meet up

Nick Oakes (IFL)

Industrial policy is a new and controversial area for local authorities. But the strongest argument the present government has for its policies is that 'there is no alternative'. If the GLC policies – which have from the start been worked out in close co-operation with trades unionists – can show, even on a modest scale, that the planned use of resources under democratic control is a more effective way of creating new jobs than the anarchy of market forces – then it will help to demonstrate that there *is* an alternative.

First at Staffa Products, now at other work places, the Labour GLC is prepared to co-operate with workers struggling against closure and redundancy to save jobs and create new ones.

And if the policy succeeds, it will have lessons for the way in which a future Labour Government works.

LETTERS

Dear Sir,

Our organisation together with the other two main Turkish organisations in the UK (Union of Turkish Workers and Turkish Students' Federation – all affiliates of Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey) have started a solidarity campaign with the political prisoners in Turkey.

We would be grateful if you could give your valuable support to this campaign and subscribe to a periodical *Turkey Today*, the only English language, progressive magazine on Turkey.

Yours fraternally L. Dalyan Secretary
Ingiltere Turkiyeli Ilericiler Birligi
(Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain)
29 Parkfield St., London N1 01-226 3401

Dear Colleague,

I would refer to your edition of November 1981 and in particular to the item on Newham. I should be grateful if I could exercise my right of reply as follows.

I am surprised that the Officers of Newham North East Party should be complaining about the conduct of the appeal of Bill Brown against the refusal to place him on the Panel, as this was one of the less contentious appeals from the Borough of Newham that we have had to deal with. Furthermore, no such complaints were made at the appeal itself, which was conducted in an extremely friendly atmosphere. To debar from Appeals Panels anyone who is politically active in the London Area would by definition lead to extremely depleted gatherings. However, this level of personal attack from Conor McAuley is not surprising in view of the way in which he has conducted the cases of the Newham North West Party and the Local Government Committee which I would feel have not been conducive to their cause.

Yours fraternally,
John F. Spellar

Letters continued

Dear *Briefing*,

I enclose my subscription to *Briefing* which I found lively, interesting and constructuve. If this kind of debate could be carried on throughout the Labour movement without the issue being confused by the hostile media there would yet be hope for a socialist future.

The real tragedy is that so much energy, enthusiasm and talent is having to be diverted into a holding operation to protect our basic democratic rights to make even the mildest of socialist reforms under a Tory government. My particular fear is that the bitterness and frustration engendered in the struggle could eventually obscure the vision of the freer and fairer world we are trying to achieve. If the law is going to be used to obstruct progress, then the law must be resisted, but we must never forget that unethical (as opposed to illegal) methods cannot in the long term produce good results.

I was particularly pleased to read Peter Tatchell's view of his role as a future MP – this is the kind of candidate I should like to be able to vote for at the next election.

Yours sisterly,
Janet Wallcraft

Dear comrades

We are writing to you and as many Labour Left groups we are in contact with in London to invite you to an all-London meeting on *Wed Jan 20th 7.30pm at County Hall, SE1.*

This is the second of such meetings, and this second meeting is supported by comrades from Labour Left groups at the first meeting last month, from Deptford, Lewisham, and Southwark. This second meeting is also supported by London Labour Briefing, and was announced at Briefing's lunchtime meeting on December 12th at the GLLP conference.

The purpose of the meeting is for the Left to be prepared and co-ordinated as we approach nearer and nearer to a crunch situation where the GLC as well as London Boroughs are bearing the full frontal attack from the Tory Government and the whole capitalist class and their agents in the House of Lords and the media. We need to discuss together and assess the implications of the GLLP conference. This will be the time when Labour Groups will be discussing their budgets for April, and when many LGCs will be starting their election campaign work for the May elections. This is also the time when the Labour Lefts should be reaching out to the trade union movement. A lot of work remains to be done – we have seen how the trade union block vote was used at the GLLP conference to frustrate not only the motion supporting Peter Tatchell but other motions seeking to build an all-London united stand against the Heseltine's attack.

It will be very useful to save time at the meeting if local Labour Lefts can come with a written report on what is going on in their area. Lambeth Labour Left is in fact planning to bring out a pamphlet on the struggle in Lambeth and the lessons to be drawn for all Labour Lefts.

Please make every effort to send representatives to the meeting.

Socialist greetings,
Siu Ming Cheung
(LLL convenor)

[redacted]

OPEN LETTER TO LORD WILBERFORCE

Dear Lord Wilberforce

I am sending you this open letter because I want you to know that I consider your recent lack of judgement in deciding the Fares policy of London Transport to have been blatant manipulation of the law in order to meet your own personal political prejudices.

The Labour GLC was elected in May 1981 with a clear mandate to reduce fares on public transport and to improve services. The logic behind the policy is not socialist dogma but an honest attempt to improve transport conditions in our city. It is a policy widely adopted by major cities in other countries including many in Western Europe and the USA. In fact the average level of subsidy overseas is more than 50% of costs and our cheap fares policy only covers 46% of costs. So that even with our policies London is still giving less support to fares than other cities in the Western World.

But of course, the proof of any pudding is in the eating. In recent years London Transport has been losing passengers and in 1981 these losses were even greater than expected because of the economic recession and fewer tourists visiting London. However, our new cheaper fares have resulted in much greater use of public transport – 11% on buses and 7% on the underground. A real increase compared with the previous policy which meant continued decline in passengers. As the effects of our policies to improve services became more noticeable in 1982 then we would have expected even more people to be attracted to buses and trains.

Our objective is to reduce the number of cars on the roads in order to achieve:

1. *Fewer traffic jams and less congestion on the roads. This would result in a saving in time for all road users (including bus passengers, emergency vehicles and commercial lorries).*
2. *Reduced pollution from noise, exhaust fumes and vibration.*
3. *Reductions in public expenditure on traffic management schemes, road repairs, junction improvements and new roads.*
4. *Fewer accidents and the consequent savings for the emergency services, NHS, insurance companies, etc. as well as welcome reductions in personal injuries and bereavement.*
5. *Police time could be better spent in helping the community instead of on traffic control, enforcing parking regulations and prosecuting motorists.*
6. *Valuable city centre sites, currently used for car parking could be put to better use for industry, commerce or leisure activities.*

VANDALS IN ERMINE

In the face of these advantages it can hardly be surprising to you that I have described you and your colleagues to radio listeners as "Five Vandals in Ermine". The effects of your decision is not only to throw London's transport into confusion, but to do more damage to buses and trains than any other group of five vandals have ever achieved. Unless we ignore your judgement complete bus routes will be scrapped, other bus services decimated, orders for new trains will be cancelled, stations closed and even some branch lines will be under threat.

As fares rise and services are reduced even more people will be forced to use cars, motorbikes and cycles creating more congestion, more pollution and more accidents. Yes you will be able to rub your hands with glee as you see the deaths, injuries and destruction that will have resulted from your vandalism!

You have also decided that the GLC can not continue to provide London's pensioners with free travel. Unless the London Boroughs can pick up the bill your decision will imprison many pensioners in their own homes or restrict them to their own locality. Children will have to miss visits from their grandparents, old friends will be kept apart and for their essential journeys pensioners will have to fork out for your new high fares. We condemn muggers for stealing from helpless people and yet the effects of your decision will leave every pensioner in London with a smaller purse.

Some people may ask, "Given the facts, could their Lordships have come to any other conclusion?" The answer from our legal advisers, the High Court, all previous GLC administration and even Parliament that passed the 1969 Act was YES!

The 1969 Act gives the GLC the power to give grants to London Transport "for any purpose" (and you even acknowledged that this could be for capital or revenue support). No Parliament would have put such a clear and unambiguously sweeping statement into the Act unless they intended it to mean what it says. In fact in Parliament when introducing this Act, Richard Marsh, the then Transport Minister made it clear that he was giving the GLC full financial responsibility for London Transport and that the GLC would be able to determine London Transport's policies. Your recent decision has now reversed the will of Parliament.

It is now obvious to me that Conservative Bromley had won their case against the Labour GLC even before a word was spoken in the case before the House of Lords. You yourself were a Conservative candidate in the 1950 election and it is obvious that you have not changed your political allegiance since those days. To gain office we successfully convinced 939,451 voters to support our policies, to defeat us Bromley Conservatives only needed your 5 votes.

In fact, if we are guilty of anything, it is not that the Labour GLC levied an illegal rate, it is that we under-rated you – The Establishment.

Yours for socialism
Dave Wetzel

Report of the GLC Labour Group Meeting

In a crowded three hours on Monday January 11th, the left wing leadership of the London Labour Movement demonstrated it won't take Tory judges' law lying down.

The Party Executive had earlier voted by a huge majority (25 to 7) to endorse the position already adopted by its Local Government sub committee and call on the GLC Councillors to vote in Council *against*: increased fares on London Transport; any reduction in LT services; withdrawal of concessionary fares for pensioners. This earlier vote had been taken to ensure that the GLC Labour Group laid the basis for any campaign against the Lords by themselves refusing to raise the fares.

The only opposition to this line had come from the ultra-right led by John Speller, and the compromisers of the GLC Labour Group: Tony Hart and Michael Ward.

On the Monday the GLC Labour Group spent the whole evening debating whether to comply with the Law Lords or not. It had before it an amendment moved by Michael Ward which, whilst dressing the issue in an obscurity of wordage, accepted the Lords decision but said that 'a campaign' should be mounted. Exactly on what basis a campaign could be mounted when the Labour Group had already voted to raise the fares is not very clear – or why Labour voters should follow the lead of those who had just voted to abandon the manifesto.

Michael Ward's new found 'realism' was based on a belief that it was important to concede on fares to protect the rest of the programme of the Council (the same argument had been used to oppose a fight on school meals, housing sales and transfer of estates). His line received the enthusiastic backing of Andrew McIntosh, who spent the evening looking like a whale beached on a spring tide but thinking salvation was at hand. The usual rag-bag of right wingers who have spent the last few years opposing the Party's view also backed this 'realism'; notably Norman Howard, Ashley Bramall, John Branagan, Margaret Morgan and Mair Garside (who kept up a curious running commentary modelled on an Australian football coach). Tony Hart, who had no mandate from his Party, persisted in his support for Michael Ward's line.

In reporting the Regional Executive recommendation, Ted Knight informed the Group that there was a crucial moment in history when they had to stand and fight – in the same way that the Trade Union movement had fought against the Industrial Relations Act.

Frances Morrell compared the Lords action on fares to the recent judgement on rape to argue that judges take decisions in a political light; only mass pressure will change them.

Telling the Group of his massive postbag in support of the fares policy, Dave Wetzel told the Group that there were 900,000 votes in favour of the manifesto and five judges against; the only way to defend the policy and protect jobs and services was to vote to defy the Lords.

"If we go down on this we go down on everything" Steve Bundred bluntly told the group in answer to the "buying time" option being pursued by Michael Ward and other compromisers.

One of the most powerful analyses of the present situation came from John McDonnel who told the meeting the plain facts of the situation. If the establishment cannot defeat something by parliamentary and electoral means they move to another arm of the state, in El Salvador it is the army, in Britain it is a bit more subtle – the use of the judges. The issue before the Party was whether we were in office to manage capitalism, or change society.

Ken Livingstone warned the meeting that "they would squander the enthusiasm of the people of London for the fares policy unless they opposed the lords decision." Someone accused Ken of maintaining his purity in the full knowledge that the Tories would carry the fares increase for him. "No", replied Ken, "I desperately want this resolution on opposition carried, and if I could, I would clone myself 47 times over to ensure it." Clearly alarmed at this prospect, the Group voted 23 to 22 to back the fight.

Jeremy Corbyn,
Hornsey CLP and
Regional Executive.

Oh, so Militant!

The Militant tendency's position of calling for a 24-hour General Strike as part of a campaign to bring down the Tory Government on the fares issue has been gathering enthusiastic support from the Right, as a "compromise" between the Livingstone "defy the law" policy and the right-wing position of simply complying with the fare-increases. This "compromise" includes proceeding in the meantime with theLaw Lords' decision.

Andrew McIntosh spoke in support of this "Militant" position at a special open meeting on 10 January of Hornsey CLP's executive Committee, to which GMC delegates were invited. Tony Hart, Chairman of the GLC's Finance Committee and Hornsey's GLC member, spoke passionately at the Hornsey meeting in favour of acting within the terms of the law as laid down by the Law Lords and of supporting the "Militant' proposal. He said that he had been 'phoning around getting support for his views.

The new "Militant compromise' team ("Andrew and I", as Hart expressed it several times) succeeded in persuading the low-attendance Hornsey meeting to vote not to vote on how Hart should vote at the Labour Group meeting.

Pauline Ashbridge,
Hornsey C..L.P..

THE TRUTH ABOUT BRIEFING

London Labour Briefing is an open forum for Labour Party members in London to exchange views and infromation.

Seventeen issues of Briefing have now seen 140 different contributors, and in addition, letters from those hostile to Briefing, like Andrew MacIntosh, are always published. No contribution has ever been excluded on political grounds.

Occasionally, the editorial collective feels that an issue is of such importance that an editorial is warranted. But the editorial meetings are publicised and open to all, and the direction of Briefing is decided literally by whoever turns up. Certainly a funny way to run a conspiracy.

Breifing has also been associated with a series of monthly meetings called 'Target 82', which have a similar function – essentially a forum for debate, with the fundamental aim of defeating the Tories and the SDP at the May borough elections, and securing the election of committed socialists with the stomach to fight this Tory Government. Speakers at these meetings have included Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn and Reg Race. Again, they are publicised and are open to all.

"FIGHTBACK WITH LABOUR"

Speakers: Tony Benn, Bernie Grant, Steve Bundred..

Tuesday January 19th, 8 p.m..

Town Hall, Upper St., Islington.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT BRIEFING

"Marxist conspiracy".
Horace Cutler, Labour Shadow Cabinet et al.

"The best service London Labour Briefing could do the Party would be to announce that it was ceasing publication immediately".
Alan Williams, GLC councillor –
Radio London Nov 22

"I've been a left-winger since before Briefing was even thought of".
Stanley Clinton–Davis M.P.

"Ban it".
Roy Hattersley, Labour spokesperson on home affairs (including civil liberties!)

"A skilful and relentless campaign".
The Standard 9 February 1981

"Unlike much left-wing incunabula, it is literate and use of slogans is kept to a minimum".
The Times 7 December 1981

"It's circulation list provides a neat guide to which Party members ought to be purged or blocked from securing nominations to council or parliamentary elections"
attributed to a London Labour M.P. in
The Times 7 Dec 1981

"Hard-line left wingers plotting a take-over of London's Labour councils".
Tony Craig, The Observer 8 February 1981

Next Editorial Meeting
6.30pm Monday January 25th
At County Hall, Room 175
Deadline for Articles February 6th

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