LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
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PASSENGERS AND TRANSPORT WORKERS UNITE IN MASS ACTION

CAN'T PAY— WON'T PAY!

Piers Corbyn
Peckham CLP
(& High Court test case in 1976/7 Fare Fight campaign).

The battle over public transport is the crucial test for Labour in London. There is massive popular support for London's first ever sane transport policy. As the rest of Labour's GLC manifesto – on school meals, Council house sales and so on – lies in tatters it is clear THIS fight is an idea whose time has very definitely come. Labour activists must now seize the time to organise the groundswell of opinion into direct action and bring millions into the fight for democracy against the Law Lords and Tories.

JESTING JUDGES

As a bus passenger commented when reading a Fare Fight leaflet "Vote Tory and you get Tory policy. Vote Labour and the judges move in." What follows is clear. There is no point in voting Labour to get Judges' policies; Labour must lead an effective fightback or lose credibility. The alternative is transport chaos for all London and disaster for Labour at the polls in the May Council elections.

The Target '82 meeting in County Hall of Feb 8 responded enthusiastically to the call for active participation in the GLC-led campaign and the setting up of Fare Fight groups all over London. The dumbfounded defensive responses to the rulings by Denning and then the Law Lords are now being overtaken by an offensive campaign. We are waiting no longer for intervention by Lords temporal or spiritual. First the Lord's line that it is unfair for Bromley ratepayers to subsidise London Transport when they don't use it must be nailed. These same ratepayers benefit from the 40% subsidy to the Southern Region of British Rail paid by London taxpayers – who dont use it. Is this fair, my Lords? Should we take British Rail to Court and get it cut? Maybe schools should be closed because neither ratepayers nor taxpayers actually use them! The judges must be jesting. They are snooping behind their wigs in order to bypass democracy and impose massive spending cuts at a stroke.

LAUGHING EUROPE

The fact is all cities need a subsidised transport system and the English Law Lords are now the laughing stock of Europe. London even now has the lowest transport subsidy of any European capital. The Judges edict spells disaster for London quite apart from belying the quaint belief that Britain is the mother of democracy.

CAMPAIGN AT ALL LEVELS!

The Fares campaign is operating on all levels. In Parliament Douglas Jay has started a Bill to reverse the Law Lords ruling. Left Councillors are preparing legal challenges to London Transport's increased fares structure (which has not been approved in *detail* by the GLC and is therefore illegal). Such parliamentary and politicalegal moves are no alternative to mass action. They will only succeed if the alternative is worse for the Government. Mass popular action is the true arbiter of justice.

Grass roots work is speeding ahead through local Fare Fight groups of passengers and Transport workers. Their task is to mobilise opinion, publicise actions and demonstrations and build a Cant-Pay-Wont-Pay movement which will ensure the increases due on March 21 – D Day – are neither payed nor collected.

In Camden for example Labour activists use a street stall every Saturday to distribute campaign leaflets, posters and badges and collect signatures on a petition. Public meetings with GLC Councillors, Fare Fight and Trade Union speakers, each drawing hundreds, have been held in Hackney, Camden, Islington, Lambeth and many other places. Dozens more and being prepared along with

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

CAN'T PAY, WON'T PAY

(Continued from previous page)

benefits, tube theatre, bike-ins, various civil disobedience schemes, a Lobby of the mother of Parliaments on Mar 11 and a Demonstration-Festival on Mar 13.

Forty Fare Fight Groups are now underway. Many were started through local Labour Party initiatives and many more are needed. Local campaign offices need to be set up in Law Centres, Advice Centres, shops and cafes. The Fare Fight groups are the crucial link between the GLC and the millions of passengers and transport workers. They are distributing literature and campaign packs available from the GLC's County Hall walk-in campaign office; and pumping out their own locally and centrally produced Fare Fight material.

TRANSPORT UNIONS

Transport workers are angry at the Governments intransigence and apprehensive about the effects of the Judges ruling. Many want action. For example Chalk Farm bus garage voted to only collect 10p fares from D Day onwards. At the same time LT Executive is doing its damnedest to dupe the workforce into believing that the Government's new £120 million LOAN will mean there need be no enforced redundancies. Even if that were true the 25% cut in Transport jobs (through 'natural wastage' claim LTExec) means a 5,000 increase in London's dole queues. One job lost is one more worker on the dole!

The transport Unions shop stewards are meeting together to plán joint action. Whatever they do must get massive public support, and improve their own standing in future conflicts with their employers. The more organised prolonged chaos – strikes or whatever – generated the better for the campaign.

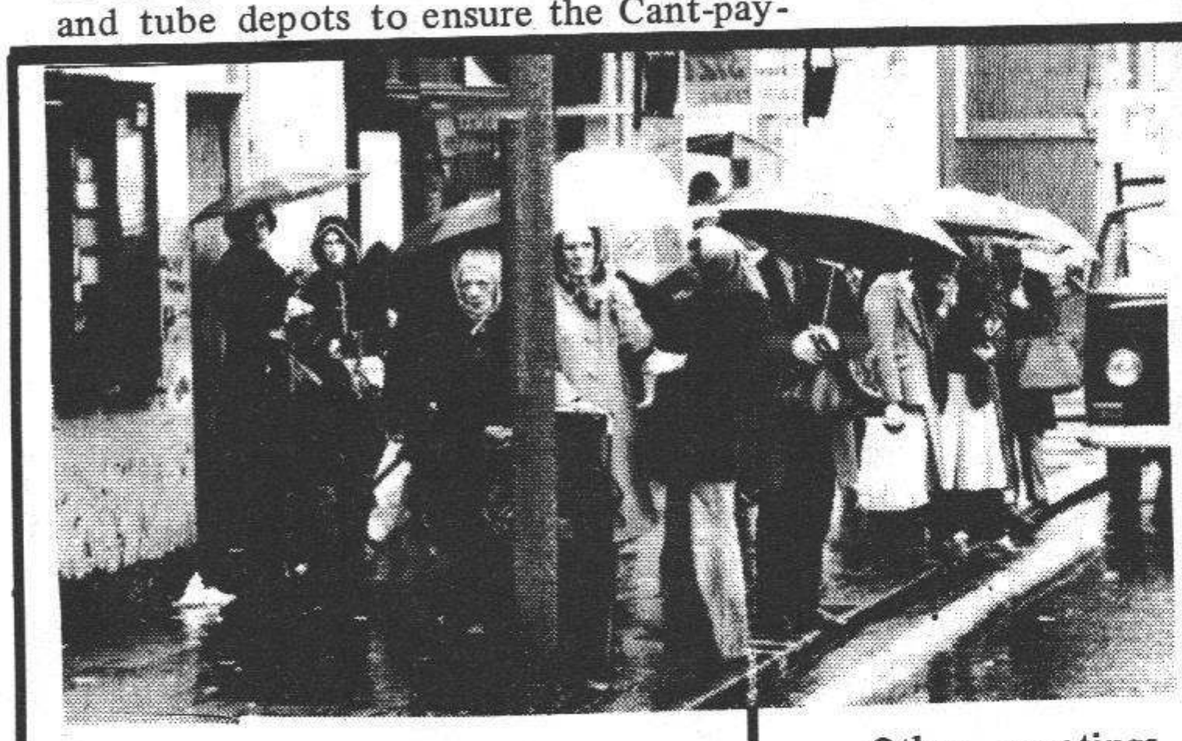
It is worth noting for the benefit of members of the Social Deceit Party who find themselves in favour of democracy that anything the Unions plan on this campaign would probably be illegal under the Tebbitt, SDP backed, anti-TU bill.

CANT PAY WONT PAY

The campaign must ensure that on and after D day the mass of passengers operate the Cant-Pay-Wont-Pay scheme. This would mean passengers would pay the democratic (pre-increase) fares and hand in a slip of paper stating their name and address and reasons for non-payment. LT at present operates such forms for people who 'refuse or are unable to pay'. It is up to LT to follow up the forms. In the 1976 Fare Fight protest, where something a bit like this was done for smaller increases on a smaller scale, thousands of passengers took part and LT only followed up about ¼ of the forms.

However the transport union leaderships have so far given no guidance to their members on how to deal with cant-pay-wont-pay forms on a large scale. LT executive will presumably attempt to impose as many bureaucratic hurdles as they can think of to put an extra burden of form filling for example onto their workers and try to create antagonisms between LT workers and passengers. **It is vital now for GLC councillors to use their power and influence with LTexecutive and Union leaderships on this question.** It is vital for Fare Fight activists and GLC Councillors to leaflet and talk to transport workers and visit bus garages and tube depots to ensure the Cant-pay-wont-pay forms are accepted with minimum of fuss and the Unions and passengers smash any attempts to victimise any transport workers or passengers for defending the democratically agreed low-fares policy.

The disruption to LT finances caused by an effective Cant Pay Wont Pay campaign will force the Government to unblock the cash due for transport rather than preside over the closure of London.



Old Fare - Only Fair!

CAMPAIGN

Wed 17 Feb 5.30pm LOBBY Mass meeting of LT Union shop stewards. Congress House, Great Russell St. Tube Tottenham Court Road. No cuts in services! No job losses! No fare rises! Action!!

Frid 19 Feb 7.30 GCL Fares Forum County Hall meeting of TUs, MPs, GLC members, fare fighters, to work out details of Cant-Pay-Wont-Pay. *See page 4*

Monday March 1st. FARE FIGHT DAY OF ACTION. Block Fleet Street outside the Law Courts. Assemble 8.30 a.m. Royal Court of Justice, Strand (Temple Underground). Make a jam like London will get all the time without Fair Fares.

Thurs 11 March 2pm–10pm Mass Lobby of Parliament. Write to MPs & David Howell, Transport Minister, now! *(The 'siege of Parliament'!).*

Sat 13 March Demonstration, and Peoples Festival in Jubilee Gardens Waterloo.

Sun 21 March D-Day. Dont Pay!

MEETINGS/EVENTS

The following are planned (for details phone local groups or FF London office)

Thur 18 Feb Lewisham in Albany Theatre

Sat 20 Feb Hornsey

Mon 22 Feb Peckham

22-29 Feb Islington Week of Action

Wed 24 Feb GLC NALGO meeting County Hall 5pm. Archie Onslow, David Wetzel, & FF speakers

Thurs 4 March Westminster

Frid 12 March FF Womens Group meeting County Hall c/o Valerie Wise

Other meetings are planned in Wandsworth, Plaistow, Walworth, West London etc.

JOIN IN

Fare Fight activities scheduled to take place on the LT Unions Day of Action, and other times . . .
** Mass bike-in * Tube theatre * Fun & Games on the Circle Line * (live entertainment) * Stunts on Zebra Crossings * Picnic on Muswell Hill roundabout * Benefit show by Cant-Pay-Wont-Pay Theatre Show in aid of Cant-Pay-Wont-Pay campaign! Mon. March 1st, 7.30p.m.*

** loads more. If you want to help/have ideas contact FF Entertainments Committee c/o FF.*

GET IN TOUCH

GLC ACTION DESK Wallin County Hall, Main entrance, phone: Steve Bullock, Fares Fair Campaign HQ 633 5000.

FARE FIGHT London 629 5268 OFFICE 6 South Molton St, W1. Affiliate your union/organisation/ Labour Party £15 standard fee (more or less if you have more or less) cheques to Fare Fight Campaign.

Wembley—Alicia McEvoy 452 3571; Kilburn—Tal Machover 328 0744; New Barnet—Keith Richards 449 0861; Camden—Irene Breughel 267 6109; Islington—Stanley Mitchell 226 2494; Haringey—Janet Wallcraft 444 5896; Hackney—Dave Welsh 806 4365; Waltham Forest—Ros Kane 555 5248; Plaistow—Derek Clarke 471 6588; Dagenham—Glenn Paterson 592 9556; Lewisham—Frankie Rickford 692 5283; Bromley—Ellen Brush 658 5069; Croydon—Jerzy Wieczorek 659 6485; Southwark—Piers Corbyn 701 5691 Brixton—Dave McKay 274 1353; Wandsworth—Ernest Rodker 672 9698; Westminster—Andy Gregg 262 7350; West London—Annie Lord 229 5469; Don't Get Taken For A Ride—Women's Fare Fight Group—Maria Black 274 2499

Editorial: TAKING TO THE STREETS

We have lost round one. We haven't "compromised" on the fares issue – that would imply that we had some choice. We've been *defeated*, that's all. Our encounter with the Law Lords and with sundry surcharge threats has felt like the collision between two moving objects, only one of which was a brick wall. We are being smashed.

The central pillar of our plan for London was the 'Fares Fair' scheme. We are not conceding final defeat yet – we may yet stop the fares actually rising on March 21st. But, for the sake of argument, let us assume the worst. The fares double, the "Can't Pay – Won't Pay" campaign fizzles out, and there is little or no industrial action in response. Would there be any point in our continuing in office as the 'lame duck' GLC administration which we might well then appear to be?

We could point to the financial grants being made available to various community organisations, to feminist, black and gay groups – as if these in themselves could provide justification for soldiering on. Perhaps we would be right – there is certainly strong pressure from Londoners for us to "stay and fight", particularly from the many groups and organisations which will be relying on our continuing support. But however deserving the causes, there remain nagging doubts. If what it means is that we are in *office* without *power*, are we not, perhaps, doing more harm than good? There are 330,000 people in London without a job. There are 300,000 on housing waiting lists. In the six months since Labour took over the GLC, unemployment rose 10,000 a month, while house-building has come to a complete stop (on September 18th, the Government flatly rejected our request for £200 million to enable the GLC to finance 1,500 new homes).

We were defeated on our school meals pledge in the summer, and despite our efforts we are far from confident that the 'Greater London Enterprise Board' is going to be *allowed* by the Tories to reduce unemployment in London instead of lettng it rise. For thousands of Londoners, in other words, our presence as a Labour GLC may not seem to have much positive relevance in their lives.

If, at the end of the day, we were to act in such a way as to let ordinary people blame *us* – the 'politicians' – for the general shambles, decay and misery all around them, then we really *would* be committing the political crime of all crimes. We would be allowing ourselves to take political responsibility, in the name of Labour and socialism, for policies which are not of our own making. We'd be allowing ourselves to be used as instruments of the Tories and the capitalist state – forced to do their dirty work for them, because our opponents would rather not face the anger of the people in their own name. *Is* this what is happening? To some extent, no doubt it is. And to the extent that this is so, we are actively *preventing* the working class of London from being able to see the class-enemy clearly exposed, stripped of the fig-leaves which well-meaning socialist moralists are so obligingly accustomed to provide. We are almost *forcing* the mass of Londoners to conclude that their real enemies are the forces which are *ostensibly* and *legally* in charge. 'Socialism', 'politicians' the electoral process, the Labour Party – *we* get all the flak, while the sinister, unelected and entrenched dictatorship of the ruling class gets off scot free.

With these thoughts in mind, at the Target '82 meeting last month, a vote was taken and carried asserting that IF we are faced with the choice between capitulation and disengagement from office, we should disengage. Better to "keep our hands clean" – so it was argued – than start down the road of so many reformist Labour administrations of the past. The resolution called on us – those who are on the GLC Labour Group – to go so far as to vote against the GLC budget rather than comply *in any respect* with the Lords' ruling on fares. This advice wasn't followed. When the budget voted was finally taken, the GLC group remained united as it has rarely been before. In effect, we voted to keep within the law.

There will be comrades who will feel deeply disturbed by this, and understandably. Are we not clinging to the trappings of office as all real power steadily drains from our hands? Is this not the pattern of all past Labour Governments, played out on a small scale within our own ranks – as if nothing had been learned at all? And if our experience as a left-wing GLC is to prefigure the future of the next Labour Government, shouldn't we be dòing better than this?

To such comrades, we would reply that they should not doubt us quite so much. We are not yielding ground to the Tories any more than we are being literally forced to. When you come up against a brick wall which blocks your path, there is no point in hitting your head against it. The task is to think carefully about the forces and equipment which will be needed to make a hole in it or bring it down. We are not accepting defeat. We are simply measuring the scale of the tasks which confront us.

By staying in office, we can increase, rather than decrease, the scope for building that mass movement of resistance which we will need to take us along the road towards real power. Support from the GLC 'legitimizes' our struggles in the eyes of Londoners, and makes possible initiatives which otherwise would lack credibility or force. The task is stay in office and *add* to our power by winning, first the Borough elections this May and, second, the general election in a year or two's time. In the meantime, before we come to the general election, we must have gathered into our hands a massive popular force and machinery covering London and the country: a women's movement/ethnic/community/trade union/labour movement umbrella so wide and so broad that virtually the whole country – with the exception of a few privileged sectors and vested interests – can feel at home in it and experience our strength as theirs.

This is why, in this issue of BRIEFING, we have emphasised a "turn" in a sense "away" from purely "parliamentary" forms of struggle. If we are to begin building that alternative state machinery which an elected Labour Government will ultimately need to take on the Establishment, the Courts, the Police and the House of Lords, we must begin taking real power at a number of different levels now. The final section of this issue of BRIEFING – the "street-life" supplement, which will be a regular feature – is designed to initiate a widening of our base in connection with some of these tasks.

It is not a question of turning to "insurrection" now that the parliamentary road in and of itself has been found wanting. If we are strong enough and popular enough, we can work through the electoral system, win mandates at local and national levels, and render our activities legal as we go along. What is in question is the state and its "legality" itself. *We* have been elected to run London, not the Tories, the Law Lords or the Police. If these people want to avoid trouble, they should let us get on with the job. Perhaps, too, they should remember: We may have lost round one. But there is another legal verdict higher even than that of the Lords. **It is the verdict of the people themselves.**

Editorial composed by Chris Knight and Valerie Wise, and agreed after full discussion throughout the Editorial Collective.

An Appeal from the Turkish Solidarity Campaign

ON 14 December 1981, over a year after their arrest, 54 leaders of DISK (Turkey's left trade union confederation) were taken from prison to stand trial for the 'crime. of organising trade unionists. If the prosecutor gets his way, many will be executed, others interned for decades.

The coup which seized power in Turkey on 12 September 1980 was led by Turkey's NATO generals.

The junta has outlawed all political parties, has banned DISK and jailed its leaders, introduced brutal censorship laws according to which an editor was recently sentenced to 23 years imprisonment for 'praising communism' and supporting the Kurdish people of eastern Turkey.

Not only are all the establishment political parties banned, but in some cases property has been confiscated and sold off, and these parties' leaders have been banned from even making political statements.

The Turkey Solidarity Campaign was set up before the coup by socialists who could see that the increasing repression would – if not defeated by the working class – lead either to the triumph of Turkish fascism or a right-wing coup d'etat.

Today the TSC unites many Turkish and British far left tendencies and other socialists. We fight for an end to military rule, for democratic institutions and for an end to repression against the Kurds.

In addition we have initiated and sponsored special campaigns, for instance, against tortures and executions in Turkey.

Most recently, as part of the TSC's drive to draw attention to the plight of trade unionists in Turkey, we have planned a speaking tour for DISK leaders and other leftist trade union leaders. This is to take place between March 24 and April 3 and will take in many cities.

If you want to help or get more information, write to TSC, BM Box 5965, London WC1. Write to us, invite speakers to your Labour Party/trade union branch, and affiliate to the Campaign.

CAN'T PAY—WON'T PAY!

Valerie Wise and John McDonnell

The fight is now on to prevent the massive fares increase which the Law Lords have ordered. The fares are to be increased on March 21st. The Labour GLC, the London Transport trade unions and numerous other organisations throughout London are campaigning now to prevent the fares going up. We are actively supporting this struggle and urge everybody else to do so.

If all else fails and the bus and tube fares are forced up, we are urging Londoners to refuse to pay the higher fares.

This is the only means left to us to bring the Government to its senses. The Goverment must act now to save our transport system. We need an immediate change in the law so that bus and tube fares can be kept at a reasonable level. Otherwise the fares will rocket and our public transport system will rapidly deteriorate.

If the fares go up we are asking passengers simply to pay the present fair fares level (or the minimum fare) and to give the conductor or ticket collector a slip of paper containing their name and address and explaining that their action is a protest against the enforced fares increase and that there is no intent whatsoever on their part to steal from London Transport. The slip will also make it clear that the passenger will pay the excess amount due on demand.

Although this act is illegal under the present law, it is in our view by no means immoral in the light of the restrictions placed upon a democratically elected GLC by the Law Lords.

Often the only way to defend the gains the Labour Movement have made is by breaking the law. Also sometimes the only way of getting new laws is by breaking the old ones. We would never have had votes for women if the brave suffragettes had not effectively broken the law. The same goes for trade unions, if working people had not broken the Combination Acts last century we would not have trade unions now. Even some of Horace Cutler's best friends have threatened to break the law by refusing to pay their rates.

It is now illegal to have more than 6 people on a picket line and yet we all know that to be effective more pickets than this number are often required. The Labour Movement in the past has advocated the use of the rent strike as a weapon and again this is illegal. If the Government gets its Trade Union Bill through Parliament then even more trade union actions will become illegal.

The idea of not paying the full new fares is not a new one. This tactic was successfully carried out in Paris about 6 years ago and has also been used in Italy. Paris's transport system is the envy of Londoners and yet that was only achieved through struggle.

The Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign will only work if there is mass participation by passengers and also if there is co-operation from the trade union movement. The action has to be as organised as possible and to this end 'alternative tickets' will be provided. We intend to establish a London wide co-ordinating body with local contact points issuing the 'alternative tickets'.



For further information about the Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign contact either Valerie Wise (Tel: 633 6287) or John McDonnell (Tel: 633 7417).

DONATIONS AND STANDING ORDERS DESPERATELY REQUIRED

The last two issues of **Briefing** have cost £1,500 each to produce. We're selling more than ever now. Our print run is 3,500. But the more we grow, the greater are the costs. We're desperate for your financial assistance. We receive a subsidy from our readers that has now grown to £85 per month. But we need much, much more. If you want to see **Briefing** continue to expand its influence in the London Labour Movement, please:

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2. Complete the Standing Orders Form.

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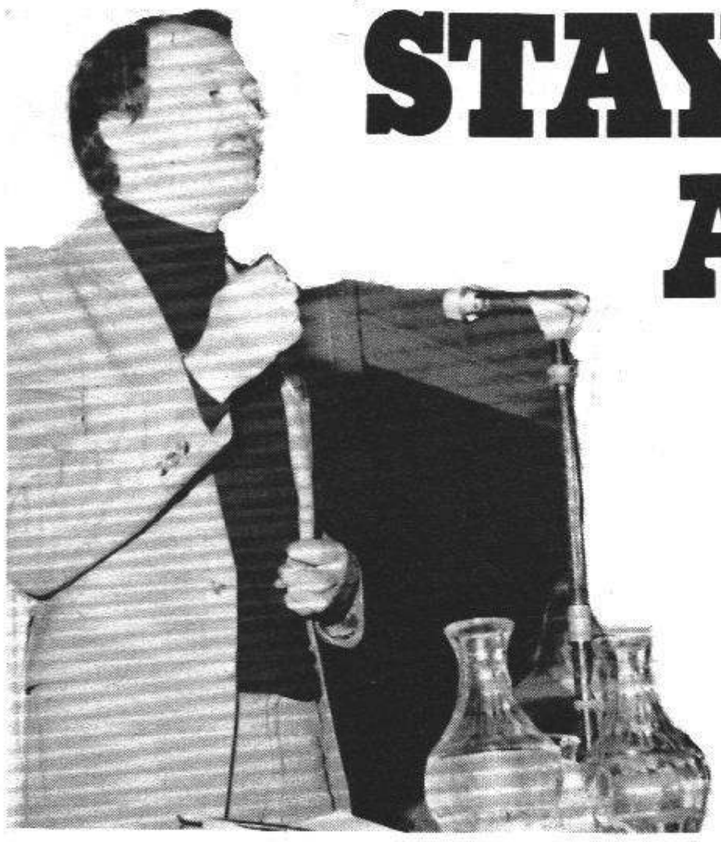
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Following the Law Lords' decision to overturn our cheap fares policy some comrades are asking if it is worth Labour staying in office or should we defeat the GLC budget and go into opposition.

These comrades could not be confused with those on the right in other councils who are arguing for majority opposition as a way of getting off the hook of choosing between rate increases or cuts.



STAY AND FIGHT!

KEN LIVINGSTONE
GLC Leader

First we need to consider the position of the Labour Party at County Hall. The policy of the Labour Group is to oppose compliance with the Law Lords' decision and the majority of the group supported this line in full Council and came within 3 votes of winning.

However, now that the Council has agreed the fares increase we need to consider how best to mobilise support for the campaign to prevent the fare increase taking place on March 21st. The only way of overturning the Law Lords and the Council's own decision is to force a vote in Parliament to change the law back to what it was before Denning decided to overturn the result of an election which had gone against the Tories.

Comrades should not reject the campaign we have launched to achieve this simply because there is a Tory majority in Parliament. Douglas Jay's 10-minute rule bill (which seeks to save the cheap fares scheme) was given a first reading by 205 votes to 177.

Many London Tory MPs missed the vote because they have been getting massive numbers of letters urging them to keep Fares Fair. Already in the last year our campaign against both of Heseltine's attempts to smash Labour councils have won because of pressure on Tory backbenchers.

All over London Keep Fares Fair meetings are attracting audiences of 200 to 400 and a whole range of campaigning groups are springing up in the local communities. The GLC is able to lead and help these campaigns with its own £200,000 fund.

The London Assembly which was called to co-ordinate the demands of community groups in London for adequate government resources will now have a major role to play in the campaign. Already 500 organisations have nominated delegates and more are coming in each day.

The GLC Labour Group has received well over a thousand letters of support from both party members and members of the public. The overwhelming theme of these letters is support for a Labour Council which has fought to implement its manifesto and support for that continued fight. Not one single letter, CLP, ward or trades union branch has suggested that we should withdraw from office. Whilst Labour remains the administration at County Hall we will continue to implement each policy in our manifesto until the Government or the Courts defeat us.

Labour voters do not expect us to cling to office if we cannot implement our programme. But while we can continue to use our positions to expand and defend services and protect jobs we would never be forgiven or understood if we ran away from the tasks before us.

We convened a meeting with representatives of all the GLC and LT trades unions and put the options to them. The response was one of disbelief that we should even be asking the question. Partly perhaps because the Labour Group had just voted for a GLC budget with 10% real growth in spending over the next year they expected us to stay in office and ensure that the money is spent and employment expanded.

Large areas of our manifesto relating to Industry and Employment, Arts and Recreation, voluntary group funding, the battle against discrimination against gays, women and blacks are at crucial stages. Defeat on the issue of fares does not make the unemployed, women, blacks, gays or our own workers feel that the issues that affect them can be forgotten.

Again and again we find the same theme in letters of support. People who for years have given up on the Labour Party now look to the GLC as an indication that Labour can become a genuinely radical socialist party.

If we were to say that the setback on fares is an excuse to quit then what chance for a Labour government committed to the policies of conference? Does anyone believe that such a government would not face total opposition from capital and would not be beaten on some issues?

I would be the first to say we should not become a mask on the face of a Council which we no longer controlled. But that is not the position and we must not allow ourselves to be talked into surrender by those whose thinking has become fixated on the concept that Labour will always betray or be defeated.

ARE WE ON TARGET?

Target '82 was founded over a year ago as a means of activists throughout London getting together to promote aggressive policies with which to fight the Tories and SDP.

During that time the political bankruptcy of most of Londons local Government "leaders" has been shown; the majority of Labour Boroughs have been content to toady to Heseltine's scowls and pass on the cuts demanded by him.

Since the formation of Target '82 the selection procedures within the Party have shown that in a large number of Boroughs left wingers who are determined that their Councils should be the basis for opposition to the Tory Government and aggressively following demands for greater resources for inner city areas.

This raises the distinct possibility that after May '82 there will be a group of left Labour Councils who will work together and be determined to fight the Tories.

This possibility raises the whole question of how the Councils can co-operate and what machinery can be developed to destroy the remote and elitist methods now used.

All the local authority associations to which Labour affiliates have only Councillors on them and their policy making methods are obscure.

In London the London Boroughs Association Labour Group has a direct seat on the regional EC and a powerful voice — yet there is no direct Party representation, and no reporting, except a few lines that appear in the London Labour Party report, of what it actually does.

There is a crying need to establish a regular consultative group that represents the Councillors and the Party in each Borough which can meet regularly to coordinate strategy. Had this sort of body been in operation since summer 1979 would Cutler have destroyed London's housing so easily? Would there have been a proper strategy of operation to defeat the cuts instead of the hedging, fudging and cutting that has so demoralised the Party and the public sector Union members?

Target '82 is concerned about this and the next meeting will feature a discussion on this and on the contents of the Borough manifestoes.

NEXT MEETING; MONDAY MARCH 1st 7.30 County Hall SE1

CROSSED LINES ON THE RAILWAYS

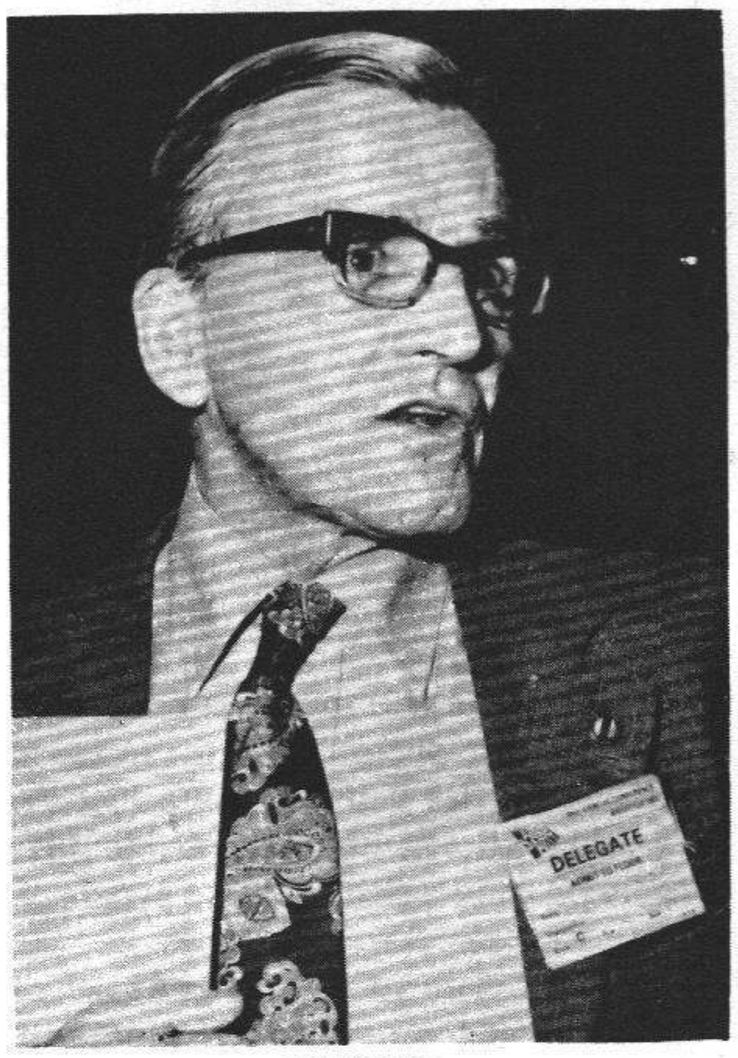
Is ASLEF right? Does Weighell speak for the NUR? Who will give in? Despite the developing mythology of the rail dispute, there are few unsullied heroes in it – except the ordinary long-suffering railwaymen. But if heroes are thin on the ground, villians abound, the chief of course being British Rail Management and whoever their 'provocateurs' in the government are. Starved of investment to the point of 'nursing care only' by successive governments, the railways have always been tantalised with promises of investment in return for productivity increases, for which in turn eloquent promises of higher wages have been made to the successively smaller number of railway workers left after each deal. Needless to say, neither investment nor higher wages have been forthcoming. While, for example, 12,000 jobs went last year, the railways refused to increase their wage offer of 7% without even more productivity. Since the rate of inflation was 12% this meant that they would actually suffer a wage drop in real terms unless they were willing to subsidise their pay with even more job losses.

The claim was referred to arbitration, which produced a typical judgement of Solomon. Like the baby, the award was to be cut in half, 8% in April, with a further 3% in August. BR shocked everyone by rejecting the arbitrators' decision, and insisting on productivity strings which would involve, once again, massive reductions in the workforce. NUR and ASLEF called an allout stoppage from September 1st, which was only averted by a loosely worded pair of 'understandings' from ACAS in one of which the BR agreed to pay the award, but because of 'cashflow problems', to pay the 3% in January, backdated to August. The other 'understanding' gave a list of productivity items and a timetable for negotiations but with no commitment to agree to the items, and with both the NUR and ASLEF continually emphasising the separate and distinct nature of the productivity talks from the pay aspect. Incidentally one of the features which led the unions to accept, was the somewhat less than fervent enthusiasm shown by their members for the strike call.

The talks started in an ambivalent way, ASLEF were agreeable to doing away with guards on trains and platform staff on stations – both groups all NUR members; they agreed to discuss promotion from guards to driver, if they joined the ASLEF; but were far less willing to discuss single-manning on the footplate. On the
currently contentious issue of variable rostering (see inset), ASLEF were willing to discuss variable *working* but not any change in the method of payment.

The NUR position was even more ambivalent, although it is widely believed that the officers were willing to go further than the lay executive, especially on such matters as one man freight trains. Because of the peculiar structure of the NUR the General Secretary has control over his Executive's agenda, and it is not without significance that none of the more contentious of the productivity items were placed before it lest the GS's hands be tied in a fashion not of his choosing.

In Christmas week ASLEF heard some strange rumours from the board about goings on between the NUR and the Board. And, strangely enough, that very week, the NUR EC was called back, ostensibly to discuss conditions for staff at NUR HQ. As it happened, the main item was an alleged breakthrough in the



WEIGHELL

variable rostering. The BR were prepared to allow the 'status quo' clause in local negotiations to stand for an experimental period of six months, and, after contentious debate, the deal was accepted, without, according to NEC members who were present, any mention of the 3% or investment. Nonetheless, by one of those miraculous coincidences which reinforce our belief in the supernatural, within hours of the decision being taken, the Government was announcing that there were funds available for electrification in East Anglia because of the NUR's acceptance of variable rostering, while the BRB was announcing that since ASLEF couldn't accept it, they wouldn't get the three per cent.

If one was not convinced that the Top Officers of the NUR were staunch class fighters it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that there had been a degree of collusion between them and the board in order to force ASLEF into a more amenable negotiating position. Even allowing for such an unlikely story, if that *were* the intention it did not work, and the result is as we know now – a railway in chaos.

NUR POSITION

One would never guess from Weighell's public pronouncements that his NEC twice in January reaffirmed that the NUR were completely wrong in refusing to pay the 3%, and some members of it have allegedly threatened him with 'going public' about it if he persists in peddling the BR line.

The NUR leadership is in serious trouble with the Variable Rostering agreement. Despite public statements of overwhelming support, the vast majority of guards have firmly rejected the proposals, and any attempt by management to implement will almost certainly be met with unofficial action at the same time that the NUR's conference will be considering whether to throw out the deal.

UNITY

Every Socialist should wish to encouage unity of Railway workers, and ASLEF's record on this is far from perfect. Even their commitment to the recently constituted federation is in doubt since the provisions in it for eventual unity were being repudiated before the signatures were dry. There is no way that Weighell's public pronouncements have assisted unification however. And there is no way that any Socialist can accept the Board's seeming determination to coerce ASLEF into dissolution. If it can be done to one union then it can be done to others. The last place that such pressures, with seeming collusion from the NUR will drive ASLEF is into unity with the NUR.

That is why ASLEF should be supported in this dispute. If they ar picked off by brute force, then all the elaborate machinery of negotiation that the NUR has sworn by for over half a century goes out of the window, and with it the jobs and conditions of its members.

ASLEF should, perhaps, agree to go to the ACAS enquiry – and highlight the trail of broken promises on investment and pay by successive governments and the BRB.

And then they should go back to continue the strike with as much cooperation with the NUR as he can. For one very conclusive lesson from the last year is the fruitlessness of arbitration when not backed by industrial might.

In view of the dim view taken by certain union leaders of independent thinking and the writer's desire not to be added to the list of NUR alleged rule breakers, this is by:

ANONYMOUS
(In a personal capacity)

Still in the dark about FLEXIBLE ROSTERING?

The British Railways Boards have seriously misled the general public and itself if they really believe that to make ASLEF accept variable rostering will solve not only their cash problems but also the long term viability of the Railways. The fundamental problem of the Railway system is its years of neglect in terms of Capital Investment and the consequent effect that railway workers face. This situation has continued under both Tory and Labour administrations, economic crises being the excuse usually trotted out for the shortsighted slashing of investment programmes. However under this myopic Tory administration, the stated position seems to be as with British Leyland and British Steel, that any future investment has virtually to be paid for by threats of the dole queues, inane productivity proposals, and substantially reduced living standards.

The British Railways Board is not only deluding itself in its brinkmanship, but it is also being totally dishonest in its industrial relations practices. To pay the 3% to the footplatemen would cost them £6m, the cost to the Railways so far has been over £70m in lost revenue etc. with more to come if and when my Union steps up its industrial action and calls on the wider Trade Union Movement for active support.

The issue between us is a simple one, despite the complexity of the variable rostering proposals of 6-10 hour days, now reduced to 7-9 hour days which in our opinion are practicably unworkable, as the NUR Guards are discovering. To avert a National Strike last August, following an award of an 11% pay increase from the Independent Tribunal (Railway Staff National Tribunal) headed by Lord McArthy, 2 ACAS understandings were signed. The Unions agreed to help BRB's cash flow problem by accepting 8% immediately to be followed by 3% this January (backdated to August). The Unions also agreed to negotiate about 6 productivity proposals. The understandings were separate. Even if we concede for the moment that in theory they were linked, there is no evidence to support the BRB contention that they were dependent upon each other. In fact, the BRB have still to get agreement with other Unions on some of the remaining 5 proposals, but they have still paid the 3% to them, despite the fact that the so called "savings" on some of these other productivity items individually amount to more than the BRB would "save" on variable rostering. But the BRB's refusal to pay the 3% to the footplatemen becase of a supposed failure to concede variable rostering, belies the fact that they have themselves unilaterally broken off negotiations and refused to use the properly constituted machinery which is available to them to solve these problems. All this has serious repercussions for industrial relations in the industry. ASLEF are willing and able to at any time continue the negotiations providing the 3% is paid in full as we know our case is second to none, but the BRB's duplicity goes deeper than this. When the August ACAS understandings were ratified in the machinery of negotiation, ASLEF made it very clear to the Board as was minuted that "the principle of retaining the 8 hour guaranteed day was a fundamental one so far as their Society was concerned". The BRB's sudden insistence that the 2 understandings were linked only surfaced in late December when the NUR agreed to the individual proposal on variable rostering. We can only speculate at the moment on conspiracies, but it would appear that the Board saw its opportunity to take on the ASLEF over this issue and for a pittance to squash any militant opposition to radically rewriting conditions of service on the Railways, holding the blackmail over the heads of railwayworkers that they will in effect close down the entire system if they do not get their way. In this they were badly advised. ASLEF's industrial action has shown that the BRB have picked the wrong issue and the wrong group of workers. The provocations towards us have been enormous – the publicity stunts, the lies about "fiddling" and the abuse of our General Secretary will not change the essential correctness of our case.

For our part on London Transport, having recently received similar proposals on variable rostering, the 4 day week, and reduction in staffing levels, plus facing in both the short and long term massive cutbacks in the Services we provide resultant from the Law Lords' decision, we are waiting to hear when our Executive Committee are going to be calling on us to join the struggle.

Jon Godfrey Secretary Neasden ASLEF



RAY BUCKTON

VARIABLE ROSTERING

Variable (or flexible) rostering was one of the board's productivity desiderata. At present, traincrews are guaranteed 8 hours pay per day, even if, for timetabling reasons, their train working is finished in 7 hours. They can be rostered to work up to 9 hours in which case they are paid overtime. Under the new system they will only be paid for time worked, with a minimum of 7 hours, and can be rostered to work up to 9 hours with no extra pay as the shorter turns will balance out the longer ones.

Apart from that immediate effect upon earnings, for both drivers and guards there will be opportunities for management to intensify work content and thus reduce jobs, while on the drivers' side agreement implies doing away with the secondman who must be provided for turns in excess of 8 hours (this position was supposed to be protected as a result of the last big productivity deal). The job losses according to management will be around 20% of train crews.

The benefits publicised by the NUR and BRB do not in fact result from variable rostering but from the belated introduction of the 39 hour week which was part of the *1980* pay deal. There has been not one hint from the board of what they are prepared to put on the table in return.

LEAD FREE LONDON

RESOLUTION CARRIED BY HIGHGATE WARD, HORNSEY LABOUR PARTY

This Ward calls on all Labour-controlled authorities (The Greater London Council, The Inner London Education Authority and the London Boroughs) to take the initiative in leading a campaign which aims at a Lead Free London, to include such steps as:

(1) Publishing a map for all Londoners indicating the levels of lead concentration in all parts of the metropolis.
(2) Introducing experimental lead-free zones in areas of high pollution.
(3) Using lead-free petrol for vehicles which are in their ownership as a token of their support for the campaign.
(4) Taking action as licencing authorities to ensure that a choice of lead-free petrol is available at garages throughout Greater London. and
(5) Working together with all environmentalists, conservation and Cheap Fare groups to achieve the above ends.

Moved by Ellis Hillman, seconded by Peggy Wynn and carried unanimously.

We hope that all constituency Parties, Trade Union and Co-operative Branches as well as Women's sections and Young Socialists will support this resolution.

For a Fighting Regional Executive

Jeremy Corbyn, Hornsey CLP and Regional Executive.

The crying weakness of the London Labour Movement over the past year, indeed the last few years, has been its inability to generate a successful strategy of opposition to the Tory Government. The composition of the Regional Executive amply demonstrates the inertia that leads the movement.

Forty eight members are made up of Trade Union members (16), Constituency members (16); the remainder come from the Womens Council, Young Socialists, GLC, LBA, and ILEA Labour Groups and London Labour M.P.'s. This composition should provide the basis for a united attack on the Government over Local Government Cuts. Whilst in most votes the EC has stuck to the GLC manifesto and decisively voted to urge GLC members to stick to the free fares policy, it has failed to develop any real strategy for the London Boroughs.

Two meetings of Labour Groups and Borough Local Government Committees discussed the appalling intentions of Heseltine to smash local services and the dangers to the movement of being complicit in this. In an effort to stage real opposition to the Heseltine Bill the left on the EC called for the December special conference as a means of the London Movement giving its authority to a real fight that could harness the energies of the Party.

In the event an alliance of the lunatic right of the Party (led by John Speller), the Parliamentary spokesman on local government (Ted Graham) and the T&GWU block vote narrowly carried a motion which declared that Labour Councils "should stay within the law" in their opposition to the Tories. Heseltine himself would have hardly asked for more.

The statement produced afterwards did, however, call on Labour Councils to refuse to make budgets on Heseltine's terms, and it did recognise "that the fight against Heseltine cannot be won inside Council chambers nor by simply passing resolutions at Labour Party meetings. It must involve the local community itself in the defence of its services, jobs and living standards."

The greatest barrier to improving the position of the London Labour Party EC's standing within the movement is its remoteness and obsession with sub committees, most of which have hardly any money and very poor attendance by members. This self perpetuating bureaucracy has usually lessened the impact of the Greater London Party rather than increased it.

The new EC will have a proposal to replace all the existing sub committees by four new ones (Finance, Campaigns & Organisation, Publicity and Political Education and Policy) and that working groups be set up to monitor the GLC policy areas.

Much more important is for regular reports of EC meetings to be sent to all affiliates and facilities provided for EC members to be in touch with the areas that they represent.

Above all, the EC should stop acting as though its affairs are its own and carefully go through how it will implement the decisions of the Annual Meeting. A grave omission from the Annual Report is a detailed statement on the fate of each motion and the success or otherwise of the Conference policy.

We need a fighting Executive and in its present isolated state this will not be achieved.

Briefing's slate for the London Region Executive:

Area 1	*Area 2*
J. Corbyn	V. Anand
M. Feeny	N. Finch
P. Franklin	B. Labi
M. Gordon	C. McCauley
Area 3	*Area 4*
T. Banks	C. Knight
N. Coleman	T. Knight
D. Nicholas	D. White
M. Ward	N. Williamson

Standing Orders Committee

Bastin
McGarry
Sutton
Taylor
Marks

LONDON BRIEFING/ C.L.P.D. FRINGE MEETING

Saturday March 6th at 12.30pm
Camden Council Chambers
Speakers: Ken Livingstone
Audrey Wise, Andy Harris
Chair: Jeremy Corbyn

ARE YOU A TARGET '82 SUBSCRIBER?

The Target '82 mailing is being developed as a regular service for activists on the left.

To cover costs the subscription is £5 per year (£1.00 if not working) and this should be sent to:

Jeremy Corbyn
28 Lausanne Road
N8 0HN

LONDON PARLIAMENTARY SELECTIONS

The following prospective parliamentary candidates had been selected and notified to 'Briefing' as of 8th February. The list shows clear gains for the left, and with another sixty-odd constituencies still to select, we look forward to further gains. The most disturbing factor remains the small number of women being selected (see article by Ann Pettifor).

CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATE	COMMENT
BARKING	JO RICHARDSON	left
BERMONDSEY	PETER TATCHELL	left
	IAN MIKARDO	left
BETHNAL GREEN AND BOW	JOANNA BAKER	left
CARSHALTON	JOHN SILKIN	right
DEPTFORD	KATE HOEY	left
DULWICH	BRIAN GRAYSTONE	not known
ENFIELD NORTH	MALCOLM SMART	Bennite vicar!
ERITH & CRAYFORD	RUSS KERR	centre
FELTHAM & HESTON	TONY POWELL	right
FULHAM	GUY BARNETT	centre/right
GREENWICH	STANLEY CLINTON-DAVIS	hard right (but self-styled left!)
HACKNEY CENTRAL	PETER FAGAN	left
HAYES & HARLINGTON	FRANK DOBSON	centre
HOLBORN & ST PANCRAS	JOHN HOGBEN	left
ILFORD SOUTH	DAVID HILL	Roy Hattersley's PA
ISLINGTON CENTRAL	JOHN TILLEY	left
LAMBETH CENTRAL	ROLAND MOYLE	hard right
LEWISHAM EAST	CHRIS PRICE	right (?)
LEWISHAM WEST	RON LEIGHTON	centre/left
NEWHAM NORTH-EAST	NIGEL SPEARING	centre
NEWHAM SOUTH	HARRIET HARMAN	broad left
PECKHAM	PETER HAIN	left
PUTNEY	JOCK STALLARD	centre
ST PANCRAS NORTH	PETER SHORE	hard right
STEPNEY & POPLAR	TOM COX	hard right
TOOTING	NORMAN ATKINSON	left
TOTTENHAM	STUART HOLLAND	left
VAUXHALL	ERIC DEAKINS	right
WALTHAMSTOW	REG RACE	left
WOOD GREEN	AUDREY WISE	left
WOOLWICH EAST	COLIN MOORE	left
WOOLWICH WEST		
To this list can be added:–		
ISLINGTON SOUTH & FINSBURY	GEORGE CUNNINGHAM	SDP
MITCHAM & MORDEN	BRUCE DOUGLAS-MANN	SDP

To these constituencies we can only say, must do better next time!

Information compiled for 'Briefing' by Nigel Williams

LABOUR WOMEN FIGHT

Ann Bliss,
Delegate, Lewisham East CLP

It was very encouraging to be amongst delegates to this year's Greater London Women's Annual meeting. It was well attended and the influence of the women's movement has certainly increased as evidenced by some of the resolutions that were on the agenda. However, one of the anachronisms of this meeting was Stephen Morgan, the Assistant Regional Organiser. Our women's conference must be the only one left to allow men – even if it was only one – to be in attendance! Hopefully, the resolution we passed (by Brent East) demanding a full-time women's organiser will be put into effect for next year's conference. While a man is allowed to have a hand in organising this conference, sexist and male structures will pervade our meetings.

The male structure of the conference allowed Grace Loake who was chairing to act in an authoritarian, bureaucratic and unsisterly way. She tried to overrule us on many occasions. At the beginning of the conference, Chris Sibley from Tower Hamlets very bravely got up to criticise the way the conference had been organised. We got the worst of both worlds. As there was no conference arrangements committee or standing orders, we had no mechanism for referring back or questioning procedure.

Anyhow, despite all this hassle, the resolutions were favourably received by conference. The first resolution we passed was one defending the existing 1967 Abortion Act and condemning the underhand way the government had brought in amendments to Statutory Instruments which change the Form of Nomination doctors have to complete when agreeing to perform an abortion. There will be no place to register an abortion done for social reasons as opposed to medical. Most of us who have had abortions have had them for 'social reasons' – 80 per cent in fact. Doctors like Peter Huntingford are being threatened with prosecution if they refuse to complete the amended form. Obviously, this will have the effect of intimidating doctors from performing abortions for social reasons.

Resolutions on organisations featured largely in the agenda. It is true that feminists are having an increasing effect in the Labour Party, yet we don't have the structures and organisation to ensure that we play an equal part within the Party. We know we have to fight and be a force to be reckoned with in order to get our demands met. We won't get anything on a plate. But that doesn't deter us – we're not going to go away. So the Labour Party had better start facing this fact. Some of these demands aren't new and need repeating (like automatically providing creche facilities). The Women's Section of the NEC should be elected by delegates to the National Conference of Labour Women and be accountable to that body. Alongside this, we want to ensure more accountability from our representatives. We want to strengthen our links with the Labour Party and labour movement generally through strong women's sections. To help us do this we need the expansion of the women's organisations so that there is a full-time women's officer with appropriate staff. We need more accessibility between secretaries of women's sections *who should* not be cloaked in secrecy. We also wanted minutes of the regional women's committee to be circulated to women's sections.

Islington Central proposed a resolution on women's right to work, with the demand for a national demonstration. We instructed the retional women's committee to distribute leaflets publishing the work of the action committee. At the moment, for every five men, nine women are made redundant.

There were two very good resolutions on violence against women, concerning practical steps which could be taken to reduce women's fears about travelling and being on the street. The proposers from Dulwich spoke of women being forced to organise their lives around the threat of male violence and women being psychologically demoralised. These fears were then trivialised by society generally. The motions urged the GLC to ensure effective lighting of roads and around premises it is responsible for, and to make representations to local borough councils to do the same. The GLC's new police committee should collect evidence and produce a report about the extent of violence against women. It should examine police attitudes, especially where women have been sexually attacked. The Home Office should be approached so that police attitudes towards women alleging rape can be improved. We also urged the ILEA to expand Adult Education Institute classes in self-defence. Grace Loake, chairing, almost refused to allow us to delete references to 'women-only' carriages on public transport. Under pressure, she allowed the amended version.

My main hope is that some of the issues now being raised by feminists in the Labour Party will encourage more to join. The stronger we are, the more impact we are likely to have in challenging and changing the sexist assumptions which underlie the whole basis, structure and organisation of the Labour Party. We are determined to be taken seriously.

SOCIALIST SOCIETY LAUNCHED

Robin Blackburn

On January 23rd and 24th over a thousand socialists met at the Institute of Education in London to found a new Socialist Society. The aim of the new society is to engage in research, to promote socialist education, and to defend and advance socialist ideas. Those attending the Conference included socialists both inside and outside the Labour Party; it was agreed that the Society should not seek to become a political faction, still less party, and that it should be careful not to duplicate the work of existing radical and socialist research organisations.

The Conference agreed a *Constitution* and membership charter, both of which will be subject to review at a national Conference after they have been tested over the coming year.

The case for the new Society was put by Stuart Hall, Michele Barrett, Hilary Wainwright and Raymond Williams in plenary sessions. The conference also broke into workshops devised on a regional and local basis. For London there were separate workshops for those living or working in Camden, Islington, Hackney, East London, Westminster, West London and South London. Those involved in these workshops discussed the possibility of establishing local groups, and also the scope for activity by an all-London Socialist Society.

It was widely agreed that the first activity to which the new Socialist groups should devote themselves was the 'Cant Pay, Wont Pay' and 'Fare Fight' campaigns. On the Saturday afternoon there was a very well attended workshop entitled 'Can we Save London' led by Ken Livingstone and with the participation of socialist lawyers from the Haldane Society, of transport economists from SERA and of those active in 'Fare Fight'. At the final plenary session both Valerie Wise and Hannah Mitchell spoke on the fares campaign and what they had to say was very warmly received. Since the Conference a number of the local London groups have met – a planning meeting of the Islington group attracted 40 people without any public advertising. In addition to discussing ways of strengthening particular campaigns these groups have discussed the possibility of drawing up a programme of public meetings, film shows, socialist-feminist 'picnics' and festivals and other events designed to bring radical and socialist ideas to a wide public.

In other parts of the country – and on an autonomous basis in Scotland and Wales – other local groups have been meeting and there seems a good chance that the beginnings of a national network will begin to emerge. However the pattern of existing left activity differs from region to region; new Socialist Society initiatives will be closely related to local experience, already functioning socialist centres and the like. At national level a number of radical research groups have already approached the Socialist Society for affiliation or co-operation. The hope is that, in time, the Socialist Society and the groups with which it is in touch can serve as a resource for the wider labour and progressive movement. It should also function as a forum in which we can address collectively problems of socialist strategy and programme.

Most of those who attended the Conference came away hopeful about the new Society, though I think we all recognised that we were engaged in an experiment and that we had a lot to learn about the best ways of proceeding. Those who would like to know more about the Society should write to Socialist Society, 7 Carlisle St. London W1 (tel: 734 8501).

London Labour Briefing, page ten.

NEWHAM

C. McAuley, Secretary
Newham N.W. CLP
– in a personal capacity

Plashet membership dispute

When the Newham Local Government Committee refused to endorse 8 sitting councillors for the panel of candidates, five of them Cllrs Billups (the Housing Chairman), Jenkinson (the Highways & Works Chairman), Watts (the Deputy Leader), Williams (the Education Chairman), and Baukham, successfully appealed to the Regional Party. Of the other 3, one defected to the SDP, one applied to join the SDP but changed his mind and the other just gave up.

As in Southwark, the L.G.C. broke no rules in rejecting these candidates but the Region decided, in the words of Diane Hayter who chaired the appeal hearing, that "it's up to the branch members to decide".

So far most of the branches have decided and Cllrs Jenkinson and Baukham have been re-selected from shortlists which only included the sitting members. Cllr Williams failed even to make the shortlist in his own branch and his only chance remains in Plashet branch where Cllrs Watts and Billups are fighting a rear-guard action to preserve their own seats.

In Plashet, which is a 3 seat ward, the members initially refused to short list Cllrs Watts, Billups and Williams but the selection meeting on 4th February voted not to proceed to ballot. This meeting has now been challenged because the chairman (Cllr Watts) ruled that two new members could not take part or vote. One of these new members was a Labour Councillor, who had moved into the branch and tried to transfer his membership. This and other procedural irregularities were considered by the L.G.C. Executive Committee on February 8th but a decision was deferred until the Newham North West Constituency Party could sort out the problems surrounding the membership of the branch.

UNDER SCRUTINY

Since last year the Plashet Branch membership has been under scrutiny when it was discovered by Party Officers that the declared 1980 membership figures were extremely doubtful. When asked, some of the claimed 110 members denied ever being Party members, some other names appeared to be fictitious.

The 1981 membership dropped to 40 – probably a truer reflection of the branch's genuine membership. There is now a queue of 16 new applicants waiting to join. The branch however has not had an ordinary meeting since December 1981 to approve these new applications. Indeed the branch has refused to call any ordinary meetings in February or March. This is seen as a device to obstruct new members.

I would be interested to hear what Ms Hayter thinks about this.

The Newham N.W. Party Executive Committee may be forced to take over the running of the branch to ensure that the branch administration and selection procedures are carried out in a competent and correct manner.

Parliamentary reselection~the story so far

When the N.E.C. refused to endorse Peter Tatchell as the P.P.C. for Bermondsey in December last year, most people overlooked a further piece of political chicanery which came up at the same meeting. The N.E.C. resolved to consider the position of Members of the European Assembly contesting re-selections against sitting Labour MPs at its January meeting. This it did and a resolution urging M.E.P.s not to contest re-selections against sitting MPs was carried without dissent 'in the interests of party unity'.

In Newham N.W. this was regarded as something of a sick joke. Our re-selection was suspended by the National Agent in December pending the outcome of the N.E.C.'s deliberations. Now we know the result, we are no further forward. Alf Lomas MEP had received 9 nominations from branches and affiliated organisations while Arthur Lewis MP the sitting member had received 1. Indeed Alf Lomas had received more nominations than the other 4 candidates (myself included) put together. Many comrades locally regarded Alf Lomas as the unity candidate.

SCURRILOUS CAMPAIGN

For many months now Arthur has carried out a scurrilous campaign in the national and local press against his local party members and the G.M.C. On September 1st he explained in a ½ page article in the Daily Mail that his party had been taken



Arthur Lewis

over by Militant Trotskyites and students – this came as a surprise to everybody – particularly the local supporters of the Militant Tendency who hold only two out of the 69 seats on the G.M.C. More recently in the Sunday Times, Arthur Lewis stated that his G.M.C. was '100% Militant Trotskyites, Communists and IRA supporters'. This annoyed just about everybody including our Freemason Tendency. It is clear that Arthur Lewis' commitment to party unity is certainly less strong than Michael Foot's, so it was all the more surprising when a letter of support from Michael Foot for Arthur Lewis was mysteriously circulated to a number of his supposed supporters.

In the meantime Alf Lomas and indeed the other challengers, Russell Proffit, Mandy Moore and myself, are caught in the middle. The Newham N.W. G.M.C. has urged Alf Lomas to remain as a candidate but the crucial voice may now be that of his sponsoring union, the T&GWU who are now to consider whether or not to support him.

One significant point which appears to have been overlooked in all this is Arthur Lewis' promise – given in 1979 – not to seek reselection once he reached the age of 65, which is on February 21st.

With all this arm twisting and lobbying it makes you wonder whether anyone on the N.E.C. is committed to the mandatory reselection of MPs at all. I only hope that the Newham N.W. Party is permitted to continue and to select the candidate (whoever it may be) that the party members want.

BEST SELLER

February's Order of Lenin for Kevin Veness, of Ealing North C.L.P., who sold 103 copies of last month's *Briefing*. CAN YOU DO BETTER?

London Labour Briefing, page eleven.

PREPARATIONS FOR MAY

Graham Norwood
Lambeth Central CLP personal capacity

Lambeth Labour Party's first draft of the May'82 election manifesto papers show a mixed bag – good policies on housing, community affairs and planning are countered by a poor programme of social services policies. The January 24 manifesto conference, open to all Lambeth Labour Party members took no firm decisions. The final manifesto content will be decided by the borough's Local Government Committee in early March, before which branches are affiliated organisations can make amendments to the draft manifesto papers.

But those papers – the subjects of the January 24 discussion – are likely to be the basis of the eventual manifesto on which Lambeth voters elect a new council.

PROGRESSIVE

The housing provisions are amongst the most progressive proposals:

- *refusal to participate in the forced sale of Lambeth's council houses –*
- *refusal to implement increases in council house rents above the level of the Tory Govement's pay policy –*
- *a plan to fight the Government to give Lambeth the right and cash to build 1600 new homes on land owned by the council –*
- *a pledge to provide good quality family housing in the north of Lambeth to regenerate the area, instead of letting speculative development carve its way through –*
- *decentralised housing management and repairs, with estate officers computer back-up facilities, and estate repair teams –*

The proposals for Lambeth's community affairs build on the work of the 1978-1982 council to bring this issue on to the political agenda in a major inner-London area like Lambeth;

- *continuing to encourage independent community organisations, including legal and advice services, playgrounds, welfare schemes, housing co-operatives and others –*
- *ensuring workers employed by independent organisations relying on Council funding have comparable pay and conditions with those in direct Council employment –*
- *continuing a ban on the use of Lambeth Council properties by all racist and fascist organisations –*
- *extending Lambeth's pioneering race relations policy to ensure equal opportunities for women as well as members of the ethnic communities in the provision of council services and in the opportunities for council employment –*
- *radically changing community/police relations throughout Lambeth, with a call for new training, complaints procedures, systems of accountability, and a greater awareness of the rights of people arrested by the police –*

PLANNING

Planning is also likely to include new and progressive proposals, especially if some of the amendments discussed at the January 24 conference are taken on board. At present, the proposals include:

- *a principle to put residents and housing needs before the demands of speculative landowners and property developers –*
- *a campaign to prevent the Westminster Government eroding the rights of local authorities to plan their areas, and a campaign to make Westminster pay for planning enquiries resulting from ministerial interference, as has happened in Waterloo and the Coin Street area of the South Bank –*
- *improved priority for buses, bicycles and pedestrians in the borough'straffic plans –*
- *Two areas were fudged by the Planning working party – how better public consultation on planning should be implemented, and how Brixton town centre should be redeveloped. Proposals to make Brixton a collection of major roads, supermarkets and multi-storey car parks (originating from Lambeth council officers and actually supported by some Labour councillors) are likely to be in direct contradiction with other sections of the Planning manifesto's commitments on traffic and the priority of local residents' desires. Both these issues will be hardened before the manifesto finally appears.*

MAIN CONTROVERSY

The main controversy at the January 24 conference centred on a particularly anodyne working party report on social services – Lambeth's biggest spending directorate and of the utmost importance in view of the inner-city deprivation, multiple disadvantages and continual reductions in government spending in the borough, especially Brixton.

The social services proposals – drawn up by a working party led by comrades George Palma and Peter O'Connell – included a number of factual inaccuracies on Lambeth's existing services and costs of services, and included plans to:

- *reduce the number of children in care in Lambeth by putting many children at risk, children with mental and physical handicap, into playgroups (mostly independently-run)!*
- *virtually abolishing the provision of playgroups for working mothers*
- *continuing charges and means-testing for people needing home helps, and who presently pay £1 a time for the service*
- *no mention of the cuts in Lambeth social services which are already endangering the existence of one day centre for the elderly which is joint-funded with Southwark*
- *a total annual increase in social services spending by Lambeth of only £500,000. . . despite inflation and pay increases for staff, and despite the 10 per cent in Lambeth's spending imposed over a year ago. This effectively makes the proposals by the social services manifesto working party a cutting programme, with overtones in its policy to working mothers more in keeping with opposition parties rather than Lambeth's ruling Labour Party.*

AMENDMENTS

Wards and affiliated organisations are being urged to send amendments to all the papers – including others on employment, leisure and recreation, and finance and administration, for consideration by the Local Government Committee which will eventually decide the manifesto contents.

Improving Labour prospects nationally, and the likelihood of no further cuts and no rate increase necessary this year in Lambeth, will give Labour a good chance of making a bid for continued control in the borough.

The essential task is that the manifesto – potentially a good one – is fully ratified with the removal of the social services provisions and their replacement by ones expanding services and exercising positive discrimination in favour of those who need help.

Waltham Forest

Neil Gerrard
Deputy Leader
Waltham Forest Labour Group

As the May election approaches, much of the attention of Labour activists in London is, perhaps understandably, focussed on the Inner London Boroughs. Yet there are important fights to be won in Outer Boroughs, such as Waltham Forest, held by Labour since 1971, without ever being regarded as totally safe electorally.

The Labour Group has steadily shifted to the Left over recent years, and is now completely unified in its commitment to the maintenance of services. Heseltine's demands for a £14 million cut in next year's budget have been totally rejected. Far from cutting, the budget unanimously agreed, includes proposals for some growth in vital areas. Rents, which are currently among the lowest in London, will be increased but only by an average of £1.30 per week, rather than the £2.50 demanded by the Government, despite veiled warnings from the District Auditor.

The cost of these policies over a number of years is the now familiar succession of large rate increases. It is a measure of how far this process has gone that a projected increase of about 20% has been greeted by many councillors almost with relief! The election will be fought on the argument that over the past four years rate rises were essential to avoid cuts.

In many ways the election campaign has begun. Repeated attacks on the Council, together with an assiduous build up of the SDP are a feature of the local press, and this does have an effect which is not easily counteracted. Like it or not, it is difficult to persuade an electorate **whose services** *have* been protected, of the devastation which could be caused. The glib dishonesty of the SDP in suggesting that £6 million could be 'saved' without cutting services has an appeal to those having difficulty in paying rates.

There are opportunities, though, across London, if we take them. Public support for the GLC fares policies is clear at the moment. The campaigns beginning around this issue can be used, not only to mount resistance to the Tories and expose the fraudulence of the SDP, but to develop a positive realisation of what committed Labour Councils could do. This single issue has clarified public awareness of Labour attitudes in a short time. If the message can be driven home we can still win in May.

Lewisham's 'Windfall'

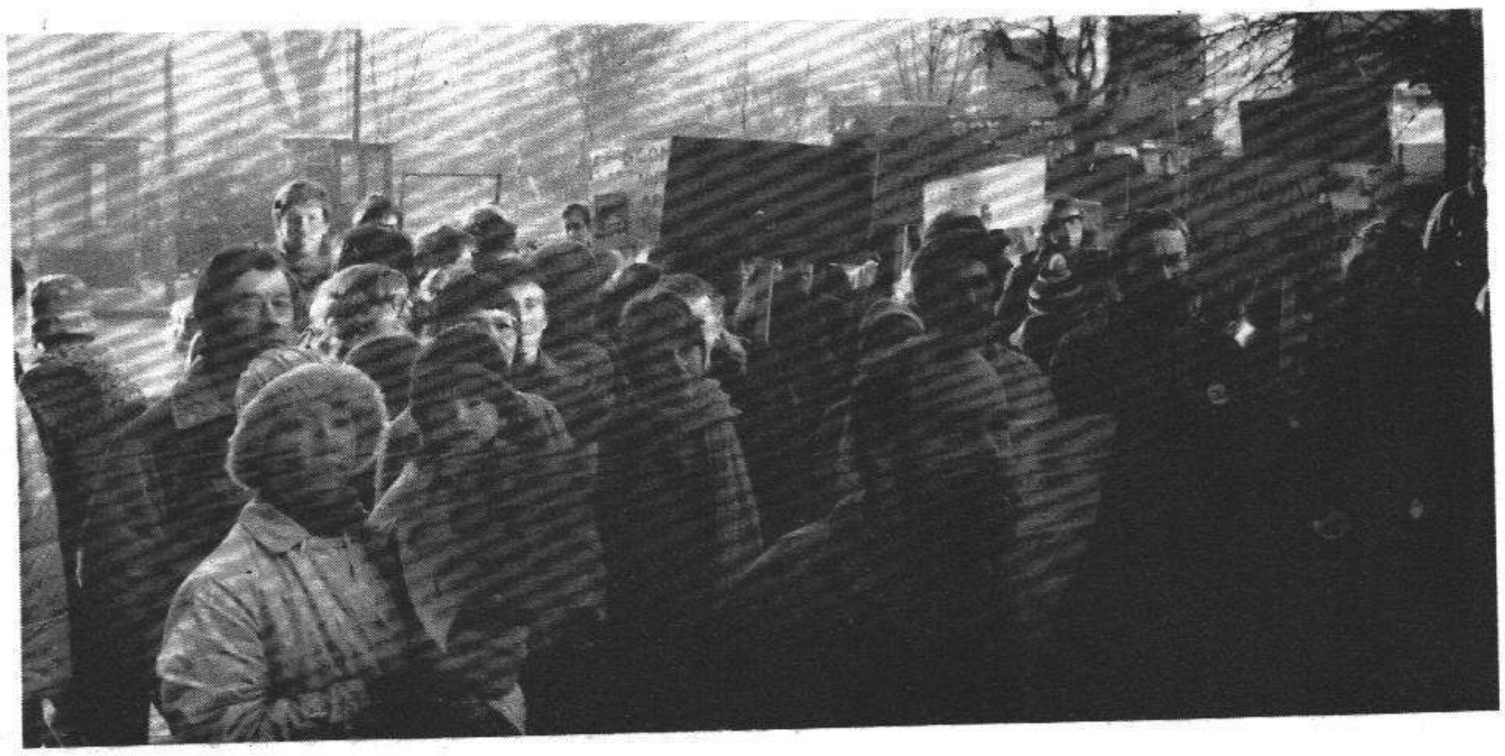


Photo: Chris Long.

In a magnificent demonstration of opposition to Michael Heseltine, (see above) well over three hundred residents, Trade Unionists, and representatives of hard-pressed local voluntary organisations turned up outside Lewisham Town Hall at 9am on Sunday 24th January to lobby members of the Lewisham Labour group, who were about to meet inside to discuss Lewisham's rates for 1982. This unprecedented local turn-out was symbolic of the broad-based local determination to fight to defend the services provided by Lewisham Council. It had seemed that cuts of the order of £13 million (ie. 25%) might have had to be made, or massive rate increases considered, as a result of Heseltine's cut to Lewisham Grant Related Expenditure.

At the Group meeting, however, many of us were astounded to hear that a good proportion of the £13 million gap could now be met by utilising a sizeable portion of the extraordinarily large balances we are now likely to have at the end of this financial year. Apparently, this situation was unforeseen. Some balances – approximately £5 million – were expected. But some of the schemes we as Councillors programmed to happen this year will not now take place. Hence at the end of this financial year sizeable unforeseen savings, leading to a total balance in the order of £11.5 million, will become available.

The immediate, and no doubt welcome effect of this, is that, even though crucial decisions still remain to be taken (on rents for example) clearly Lewisham's rates will not now be rising by the astronomical leaps once thought necessary simply to maintain existing services. But before we become too pleased, or before we become caught up in the predictable bayings of those claiming to see evidence here of inefficiency and waste, (no doubt led by ex-Labour members who have now defected to the SDP and by the politically bankrupt local Tories, now looking for votes) it is essential that we take stock of the real implications.

Clearly, unrealistic assessments – no doubt due to our rather antiquated accounting procedures – will be found. This, as careful scrutiny of the Housing budget for example, has shown, may well go some way to explain the position. However, by itself, in no way can it explain the very wide variations which have now apparently arisen. It seems to me that of far greater significance is the fact that Heseltine's policies seem to have invoked such panic in the hearts of most at our Town Hall that many of our Chief Officers have been spellbound. Heseltine's dictats – appear to have left many of our Officers frozen to their desks.

To be fair, Lewisham does not appear to be the only Council which will end this year with sizeable balances. Several other Councils will also find themselves in the same situation. The real problem all this poses, of course, is that of convincing them of our cause if, as it appears, we as Labour Councillors have either been 'conning' them with talk of massive cuts, or worse, simply not in control of what actually happens in the Town Hall?

The real question in all this is what ought we as a Labour movement to do now to prevent a repetition of this situation? It seems to me that there is a strong argument first, for creating more full-time and, hopefully, more politically-aware, Councillors, and, secondly, for taking steps towards making local Councils and local Councillors far more democratically-accountable than presently is the case.

This situation of gross underspending, crazy though it is, is made so much worse in Lewisham in that cuts were made last year to many highly desirable projects, such as facilities for the young and old, libraries and other leisure services provisions, and grants to various voluntary groups (admittedly after what was a painstakingly cautious exercise) in order that some leeway might be created for other highly desirable expenditure such as money for creating employment opportunities. Now we are told, at this late stage in the day, that Officers have simply not spent, or been able to spend, Lewisham's money in the way we, as Councillors, initially recommended. Amazingly, it seems that fear and (perversely enough) incoherent Government policies, have meant that Heseltine can now have the gloating satisfaction of knowing that he has been able to achieve by bureaucratic means what we as Councillors might have prevented him from achieving by political means.

The real tragedy in this, of course, is that it is the people of Lewisham who will suffer. Unemployment is increasing, homelessness is increasing, vandalism is increasing and the Police are on our streets in greater numbers, whilst in some cases, our neighbourhoods are becoming shabbier and generally more depressing places in which to live. **Should such a situation be allowed to continue, the people of Lewisham will not thank us and nor would we deserve their support.**

Russell Profitt,
Lewisham Council

LEWISHAM COUNCIL CONNED

A collective sigh of relief must have been heard from Labour councillors in Lewisham at the Group meeting of January 24 when it was revealed that the Labour-controlled council had 'underspent' by £5 million during the 1981-2 financial year, leaving a balance of £11 million in total. They had been let off the hook. Or so they must have thought.

An £11 million balance meant they felt able to take the following decisions:
1) maintain a no compulsory redundancies policy;
2) defer acting on a recommendation to increase council rents by £2.50 a week and any possible rate increases;
3) committee chairman to look for ways of achieving more savings in the spending departments.

Why hadn't councillors known earlier that there had been such a massive underspending?

If Councillors did know what was happening, (as seems unlikely) and were working the system by, say, deliberately overbudgeting, they will be seen as devious. It will also provide ammunition in support of the Heseltine contention that local authority spending can and ought to be cut back.

Either way, the decisions the Borough Labour Group then took will seriously cripple the chances of a successful challenge to the Heseltine cuts based on a no cuts to local services campaign.

Indeed, the Council was already cutting services, as a closer look at the Lewisham figures reveals. A 10 per cent freeze on posts made vacant through natural wastage during 1981/82 involved job losses and a resulting cut in services. Housing programmes could now face problems, for example, as there simply are not enough architects around following an unusually high rate of retirement. Social services expenditure did not match expentations when an old people's centre wasn't opened, and so on. . .

Many of Lewisham's Labour councillors feel that they have been conned. If they were intent on avoiding rate and rent increases while at the same time saving services through a policy of no job losses, then the course of action should have been to challenge the revised figures with a view to ensuring greater accountability to councillors among senior borough officials. In turn, this would have increased the councillors' own public accountability and just possibly have gained them sufficient respect from the electorate in time to help win the May 1982 elections.

What they should have done immediately, and what Lewisham Left has called on them to do now, was to lift the 10% jobs freeze and commit the new £6 million in savings to defending the services involved.

As it is, as this article went to press, the Labour Group was due to meet without guaranteeing a no jobs/no services lost policy and likely to impose a £2.50 per week rent increase while attributing any rate increase to those traditional scapegoats, the GLC/ILEA and police precepts. As for the looking for further savings decision, this was in direct contradiction to the avowed intentions not to cut services.

Relief all around, and maybe the election lost. Certainly, at the end of a process involving more information and more public debate, no new era of open government and public accountability.

Scrape Ntshona,
Lewisham East C.L.P.

London Labour Briefing, page thirteen.

Camden~ Labour Group and CLPs in conflict

Marion Chester
Camden Ward
St. Pancras North CLP

The ruling Labour Group on Camden Council has taken many many decisions over the last eighteen months, which have been in conflict with local party policy and without any prior consultation with the 3 CLPs in the borough. These decisions have resulted in redundancies amongst the council manual workforce, with more proposed. Tenants have suffered from the depletion of the Estates Modernisation Programme and the running down of the repairs service. More recently the group decided upon a 2½% cut in council expenditure, which has included some cuts in services and jobs. Land and property sales have been in progress for nearly nine months. All these actions have been opposed by the parties and consultations with the parties has only taken place after the decisions to implement have been made and then only when demanded by the CLPs.

The two most recent controversial issues, where there have been differences between the Group and the Parties, are: a proposed average council rent increase of £4.97 over this coming year and a proposal to sell council housing land to private developers for low cost private dwellings. Both proposals are in direct conflict with policy as laid out in the Draft Manifesto and with the local party's stated stance.

THREAT OF SURCHARGE

Firstly, the rents decision. This took place in the context of the legal threat of surcharge and bankruptcy for the Labour councillors. This threat has occurred because the District Auditor has questioned whether the two year rent freeze in Camden in the years 1978 and 79 was a reasonable policy; and whether the resulting differential between rents and rates revenue, currently existing, is acceptable.

The Group meeting on the 11th January, which was agendaed to *discuss* rent levels for the forthcoming year, was sprung with a surprise document by the group leadership. This document was, in essence, a legal opinion that any rent increase under a total average of £3.97 for this year, would drastically increase the threat of surcharge on the present group. During the meeting the discussion scarcely deviated from legal opinions and the surcharge threat, and barely encompassed the effect of such rent increases on the living standards of tenants in the borough.

The outcome of this one-sided discussion was that the group decided (with a very close vote) to impose a £2.97 average increase in April, to be followed by a further £2 average increase in October, to be implemented by the incoming Council.

ABSOLUTE MINIMUM

The reaction of the three CLPs to this appalling vote has been swift and straightforward. They have called upon the group to reconsider the issue in consultation with the parties and to keep the increases to an absolute minimum.

The Local Government Committee, whilst discussing the draft manifesto, agreed to an incoming Labour Group freezing rents pending a comprehensive rent review.

Local tenants' groups have noted that disillusionment with the present Labour Group's policies is extensive and that many tenants are unlikely to vote in May elections if these increases are passed on.

In the light of such widespread anger, the group is due to review this decision at their next meeting on the 15th February, although the 3 parties find it inconceivable that the group leadership were not aware of the likely reaction in the first place.

SELLING COUNCIL LAND

The second bone of contention existing between the group and the CLPs is a proposal to sell council land to private developers. Last year a similar proposal was made, in order to finance the Estates Modernisation Scheme. At that time the 'Elm Village Site' was sold to the United Kingdom Housing Association. Subsequently many other sites and properties have been sold, in order to clear housing debts. Again this has taken place without general consultation with the parties.

On this occasion the situation has altered, in that the money which would be raised from such sales has not been assigned to the modernisation or repair programme. The scheme was germinated by the private developers, Barratts, who approached a Labour councillor with proposals for the sale of Council land to them at low cost for private developments. The relevant letter from Barratts subsequently appeared on the agenda for a group meeting, and the councillor concerned asked the group to accept in principle that Council land should be sold at less than market value for the development of low cost (sub-standard) housing. The argument put forward was that the government may in the future insist upon compulsory sales of Council land not being built on.

No decision was taken at this meeting, although the minutes of the meeting had to be subsequently challenged as they stated that the scheme had been approved.

ASSET STRIPPING

The CLPs are opposed to this scheme, which is being seen as asset stripping and tantamount to doing the Tories' dirty work for them, even before the threat of compulsory sales is made. Group members are all well aware of the feeling of the parties over land sales and the strength of opposition to this type of scheme in particular, but it remains to be seen if they will heed it, and abide by the proposals of the draft manifesto.

To sum up, it has become apparent that the leadership of the current Labour Group see their relationship to the CLPs as analogous to that of an employer facing the workforce and carried out negotiations accordingly. It appears that they think that if they start by taking an extreme decision and then negotiate with the parties they are more likely to end up with what was originally desired and can then modify the decision taken, accordingly.

This practice has worked for them in the past, but now the CLPs are becoming wise to the game and will be challenging the rules for the remainder of the term of office of the present group.

MAY 8TH DEMONSTRATION ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Dear Friend(s),

The May 8th Demonstration Organising Committee has initiated a call for a national demonstration and anti-imperialist festival, to take place on May 8th, in London.

The purpose of this demonstration will be to commemorate the deaths of the 10 Irish hunger strikers, and to call for 'BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND' and 'SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE'.

The hunger strikes of last year caused a crisis in Britain's rule of the six north eastern counties of Ireland. Once again, it was shown that there can be no peace in Ireland until Britain disengages, and that only a united Ireland can provide a long term solution to the present conflict.

The fight of the Irish people to determine their own future is shared by those struggling for liberation in Namibia, El Salvador, Eritrea, South Africa and other oppressed countries. We seek to make the links between these struggles and Ireland more obvious to the British people.

The demonstration is being organised by those who believe that Britain should withdraw from Ireland and allow the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future (including the Labour Committee on Ireland, The Indian Workers Association, the Troops Out Movement and Northern Ireland Veterans against the War).

We urge you to support this demonstration and to complete the sponsorship form below.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Jones (on behalf of the May 8th Organising Committee)

Box 353
London NW5 4NH c/o Robert Jones
Tel: 01 267 2004 (24hrs)

NAME/ORGANISATION . . . . . .
ADDRESS . . . . . .
. . . . . .
I/We wish to sponsor the demonstration and will be sending a banner
I/We enclose a donation of £. . . . . .
I/We would like to be kept informed of progress of the campaign
SIGNATURE . . . . . .

London Labour Briefing, page fourteen.

NEC Challenge to Southwark—part 2

Events over the past two months have moved at a breathtaking speed in the London Borough of Southwark. With the NEC refusing to endorse Peter Tatchell as the prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Bermondsey and their intervention to stop all the selections for local council candidates, the Party in Southwark has found itself in the spotlight in the battleground between Left and Right. *Briefing 17* carried a report by me with the Party about to meet the NEC.

On 21 January 1982, the Executive of the Local Government Committee and Officers of the three Southwark Parties were summoned to the Commons to meet Eric Heffer, chair of the Organisation Sub-Committee, David Hughes, the National Agent along with the eight unendorsed councillors, but only seven turned up! Having made a fight to get to see members of the NEC, could we now expect a fair hearing? Heffer told us immediately that there was no question of the Southwark Parties breaking any rules and that the main issue at stake was that we just could not go around booting off right-wingers for the hell of it. These comrades have given fine service to the Party and deserve a right to be heard by Party Branches so that ordinary members could then decide on the candidates they wanted to select. That was the gist of his comments to the Party, Could he have been referring to the fine service that led to the Town Hall decision in 1979 that nearly lost Labour the Parliamentary seat in Dulwich, the almost-maniac desire to build roads to everywhere, the sabotaged UMA agreement, one of the worst industrial relations in the country, the selling of the riverside sites to the property speculators from the City of London, the acceptance of the Urban Development Corporation, the lack of protest to support the local parties over the closure of the old dockers hospital, St Olaves, the aparent willingness to implement Tory cuts without a protest and the list goes on and on.

Yes, this was the same Eric Heffer we have all come to know (and love?) at Tribune rallies and Party Conference. Did he appreciate what we had to put up with? If he did, then he didn't say that. All we were presented with was a barrage of comments about Party Unity in the face of one of the worst Tory Governments anyone has ever seen and the threats from the SDP. No sooner had the Party peace-makers poured the mould of unity at Bishop's Stortford, then Southwark kept dropping it – quite by accident of course! Our fight for Party Unity around socialist policies had started before anyone could even remember that Bishop's Stortford actually existed and this involved using the decade-old procedure to not endorse party members who were unfit to stand for the Council.

Heffer wanted the Party to forget the difference, accept the comrades back onto our panel and in return the NEC had ensured that the rebel councillors who had been booted out of the Labour Group in a kangaroo-style court by O'Grady and the leadership in ten minutes flat would have the whip restored. Their crime? They had spoken up for and voted for the policies of their local parties. No, we could not accept this gift-pack from anyone so the next salvo from the NEC was to send Judith Hart to Southwark to see us.



Universal Pictorial Press and Agency Ltd.
Labour Party Photograph Library.
Eric Heffer

Judith Hart, by contrast to Eric Heffer, had more patience and was prepared to listen, providing we were prepared to accept the eight councillors back onto the panel. We were not so her fall-back position was to inform us that the NEC had given the Organisation Committee reserve powers to act if she failed to persuade. We did learn however that the NEC had apparently been lobbied by aggrieved Party Branches and trade unions like the EEPTU for the undemocratic acts of the CLPs and the LGC. This was the first time we had been told of this action and we had not been given the chance to see the said correspondence and respond to it.

The latest action by the NEC was to instruct the Southwark LGC to take the eight or face the consequences. Refusal to comply would have been the first time we would have broken the rules and would see further interference in our affairs possibly leading up to having the parties disbanded. Reluctantly and under great pressure, we agreed to accept this instruction.

We did however learn that at the meeting of the Organisation Committee that gave the instruction that the same Eric Heffer moved from the chair that there would be no debate on this issue. A move to oust him by the Left on the NEC failed by seven votes to ten, and this was only to have a discussion!

The consequence of accepting the decision is that we can now start to select candidates in March for the elections in May, and the NEC members who supported this action to interfere in local democracy in Southwark must be prepared to accept the full political responsibility for forcing these party members onto us. In this, there is no way out comrades.

If the Right and their friends on the NEC had spent as much time fighting the Tories and the SDP as they did in bullying us, then may be the Party would have a better image with our working class voters

The pressure in the past month has bee immense and it is all due to the NEC, wh have now saddled Southwark with the pr blem of little time to fight back against th odds and with potential candidates with poor track record.

The lesson offered from our experienc must be to seek the necessary constitutio al changes to ensure that the mechanism interfere in the local democracy of Partie as they did with Peter Tatchell in Be mondsey, the local council selections Southwark and the many left-wing can dates chosen by other parties is complete dismantled once and for all. For this happen, support is needed to take this issu to conference in the autumn. Let the issu slip and it could be your turn next.

David Fry
Peckham CL
(Secretary of th
Local Government Committe
in a personal capaci

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN COUNCIL EMPLOYMENT

Seven months after the last May election the Greater London Council has adopted formal statement declaring the Council as a equal opportunities employer. The Council employees and management are yet to discov this fact and unravel its implications, sinc not a whiff of this has reached them so fa from the surrounds of the Council Chambe Perhaps a strategy is being planned.

What is more baffling is that the Inn London Education Authority, it appears, ha not as yet found time to wording suitable t adopt a similar policy statement.

The GLC/ILEA branch of NALGO is mo concerned at the lack of a sense of urgenc in this matter on the part of the Council an the Authority.

R. Krishna-Murty
GLC/ILEA NALGO Equal Rights
Working Party

WANTED

Please send copies of your Borough' manifesto or working party papers t Briefing so that the Target '82 meeting can be better informed and ideas trans lated from one Borough to another They should be sent to
DAVID FRYER
15 KINGS GROVE
SE 15

WELCOME BRIGHTON LABOUR BRIEFING
FIRST ISSUE NOW OUT
Write to 24 Shaftesbury Road, Brighton, Sussex
25p (including postage)

London Labour Briefing, page fifteen.

Peter Tatchell for the NEC?

Following the NEC's refusal to endorse Bermondsey's democratically-selected parliamentary candidate, a number of comrades have suggested that Peter Tatchell should be nominated for election to the constituency section of the NEC at Annual Conference in October.

They have argued that this would be a way in which CLP's could express their solidarity with Bermondsey and show their rejection of the NEC's arbitary and autocratic removal of the right of constituency parties to choose their own candidates.

It would also ensure that the interests of CLP's were represented on the NEC by a grassroots Party member.

Comrades have pointed out that if Peter Tatchell were to be elected to the NEC, or merely receive a substantial number of votes, it would give an added impetus to any appeal by Bermondsey for Annual Conference to overturn the



Peter Tatchell

NEC's decision. In such circumstances, the Conference could hardly refuse to endorse his candidature.

Though many of us in Bermondsey think the nomination of Peter Tatchell to the NEC is a good idea, we share some reservations in view of the effect it might have on the chances of other deserving and more long-standing candidates.

A decision of this nature must be made on the basis of the widest possible consultation and agreement. Thus, before Bermondsey decides whether or not to stand Peter Tatchell for the NEC, we wish to take soundings from other constituency parties. On the basis of the feedback we receive, we will make our decision.

We would therefore greatly appreciate the help of comrades throughout the country to sound out their local parties and communicate the responses to Bermondsey Labour Party, 133 Lower Road, London SE16.

Bette Crickmar
Vice-Chair
Bermondsey CLP

T.O.M. presents

- the Ad Hoc Womens Band playing Irish traditional and ceilidh music.
- Brid Keenan and friends with songs of Irish Resistance.
- 'Controlled Attack' perform their anti-militarist cabaret.

DATE: Friday 26th February. Starts 8pm.
VENUE: Hargrave Hall, Hargrave Road, London N19. Nearest tube: Archway.
ADMISSION: £1.50 waged; £1.00 unwaged.
Food and drink available.

Equal Representation for Women

In London so far, 27 Parliamentary Candidates out of a possible 92 have been endorsed by the NEC. 12 have been selected in constituencies north of the Thames and 15 in South London.

Of the 12 selected in North London, only one is a woman – Jo Richardson in Barking, defending a majority of 7,000. Of the 15 in South London, 4 are women. They are: Audrey Wise in Woolwich opposed by John Cartwright who in 1979 polled for Labour a majority of 19,000 for Labour; Kate Hoey, defending a wafer thin majority of 122 in Dulwich; Joanna Baker in Carshalton, facing a Tory majority of 10,000; and Harriet Harman in Peckham, defending a Labour majority of 10,800.

Jo Richardson's and Harriet Harman's seats are the only two that can be described as remotely 'safe'. These figures once again call into question the Party's commitment to equal representation for women in Parliament, and in particular reveal that London Parties are no more progressive than parties elsewhere in promoting the rights of women.

Women's Action Committee CLPD

Next winter needn't be like this . . .



Defeating Thatcherism and the new right represented by the Social Democrats means more than winning the union battles and gaining votes. To be confident of these victories, we have to come out on top in the battle of ideas.

That is the aim of NEW SOCIALIST, the Labour Party's first-ever discussion magazine. The Guardian described our launch in autumn '81, with a sale of over 35,000, as 'spectacular'.

The bi-monthly magazine is being read by people who are considering socialist ideas for the first time, as well as those who look to it as the left's major forum for mapping the way forward to socialism, independent of the official Labour Party line.

With contributors like E P Thompson, Tony Benn, Denis Healey, Mary Kaldor, Michele Barrett, Raymond Williams, Bernard Dix, Sid Weighell, Peter Townsend, Lewis Minkin, Noam Chomsky, and Eric Heffer it's not surprising that NEW SOCIALIST is the most talked-about magazine on the left.

And of course it's not just talk . . . We're helping to underpin the action that can shake down the Tories and the SDP, so that next winter might look different.

New Socialist

60p from your newsagent or radical bookshop. Subscription for six issues £3.75 from: New Socialist, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17. Supporting subscribers pay £8, providing valuable working capital to the magazine. You can also order copies to sell.

MEAN TIME IN GREENWICH

Julian Wells

WOOLWICH Labour Party has two claims to national fame. One is that it has the honour of being the largest Labour Party in the country (though it does cover two Parliamentary constituencies). The second, more invidious, distinction is that the last two candidates whose election it has secured in its East constituency have both subsequently defected from the Labour Party.

First Christopher Mayhew became a Liberal, and then last year his successor as MP, John Cartwright, was one of the first to join the Gang of Four in the SDP.

In the field of local government the two-constituency basis of the Woolwich party has given it an inbuilt majority over the generally left-wing Greenwich Constituency Party in the Greenwich borough local government committee.

Though the borough has been spared the scandals seen in some areas north of the Thames, decades of right-wing control have nonetheless had a damaging effect.

One symptom is that – for instance – Greenwich makes the lowest provision for social services, relative to population, of any inner London borough.

Another is that the Labour Group – and especially the right-wing majority – is heavily influenced by a faction whose most notable political attribute is that they are all members of the same family.

The Jeffrey chain consists of mother, father, son and daughter-in-law. This last, councillor Aleyne Friesner, chairs the housing committee, whose department is rapidly becoming the borough's biggest political embarrassment to Labour.

Lately, however, the committee has not been content with merely threatening to evict tenants who don't abide by the "no pets" rule.

Instead it has taken to threatening pensioners with High Court actions over their pets, with the possibility of the old folk being jailed for contempt if they insist on keeping the offending animals.

The latest episode in this saga – a pensioner couple refused a transfer from a damp GLC flat unless they got rid of their pet dog – has been topped by the tragic death of the husband in the middle of the press controversy.

This news broke on the same day as a leaked report from the housing department officers admitting that the borough has 1,500 unoccupied homes, 700 transfer applications unprocessed, and that the department is clogged with 1,000 unanswered letters from tenants.

The only thing that prevents the Party's administration looking ridiculous is that it is instead widely regarded as both heartless and incompetent.

The right's association with Mayhew and Cartwright has undoubtedly damaged any reputation for political acumen they may once have enjoyed.

A pointer to the possible consequences of this came last year when Audrey Wise was selected as the new prospective candidate for Woolwich East.

And this year the manifesto for the borough elections has for the first time been the subject of a special borough-wide conference of branches and affiliated organisations.

The draft produced by the local government committee's working party was satisfactory to no-one – different sections differed not only in literary style, but also according to the political predilections of the individual responsible.

Even so, no-one expected that branches would submit no less than 104 separate amendments, producing a 32-page agenda for the one-day manifesto conference.

Among them were a comprehensive set of amendments drawn up by Plumstead Common branch (Woolwich East) after a study of draft manifestos from other London boroughs.

The right seized the opportunity to try and put a spoke in the conference's wheel by using its majority on the local government committee EC to refuse to organise a compositing session (they turned down offers to run a creche, too!).

Clearly they hoped that an unsatisfactory meeting, and confused and contradictory decisions, would help them scotch any future experiments in this direction.

In the event the vast majority of amendments were either withdrawn, remitted to the working party, or put formally and carried on the nod.

Many were drafting improvements rather than policy changes, but amendments embodying mainstream *Labour Briefing* ideas on industry and employment, workers' co-ops, and policing went through with little dissent.

Even on housing the right felt up to nothing more than a half-hearted appeal to remit Plumstead's amendment.

It was an appeal the meeting felt able to resist, and Labour is now committed to tenant majorities on management sub-committees, with their own budgets; the right to get repairs done and send the bill to the Council in cases of undue delay; and an appeals sub-committee with tenant representatives to hear disputes.

What all this means for the future is not yet clear.

At a special joint meeting of the Labour Group and the local government committee two days after the manifesto conference it was agreed to look into the possibility of a joint campaign against the cuts.

But at the ordinary group meeting a week later the right were already starting to find 101 good reasons why the campaign couldn't – or shouldn't – succeed.

The local government committee has the final say, and at the time of writing the right are said to be thinking of trying to overturn the housing section, if no other.

Should they succeed a first-class row can be expected to break out. Its final resolution will depend on the exact make-up of the group, and the council, after May 6 – and that's another story.

Wandsworth ~ majority opposition?

The Labour Party in Wandsworth has continued grinding on with the slow process of sorting out its manifesto and election strategy. The manifesto was finally agreed at a resumed conference in the middle of January – resumed because there had been too much business to get through in the one day planned for the previous one.

The Conference agreed on policies which, as a package, are reasonably Left and radical. There are some unfortunate weakenings of nerve, though – a commitment to a rent freeze, for instance, is watered down with a phrase saying that it will be introduced "provided that government penalties do not mean that this action sabotaged the rest of the programme, and caused unacceptably high rate increases" which makes the commitment in fact meaningless.

GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to obtain accountability from the future Labour Group, the Conference agreed that as soon as possible after coming to power, the incoming Group will be asked to change their Standing Orders to allow for joint selection of the Leader by an "electoral college" of the Labour Group and LGC, and that there will be a joint review of progress on the manifesto every year, between the Group and the LGC, at the time of the annual meeting of the Council, i.e. before the leadership is elected for the coming year. Details of how this will come about are still being worked out – for instance, the question of *who* actually calls the Labour Group together and puts the resolution for them to change their Standing Orders.

The Conference took a line of strong opposition to Heseltine's Bill, as one might expect, but voted heavily against the bankruptcy strategy put forward in a number of resolutions (without exception proposed by people who had not themselves shown any willingness to go on the Panel of candidates). The resolution that was passed committed the LGC to fighting the cuts in all ways possible, and if necessary resigning chairs and going into majority opposition – though any such course of action will only be carried through *after* a special conference of the LGC, at which representatives of community groups and tenants' associations will be able to speak although not vote.

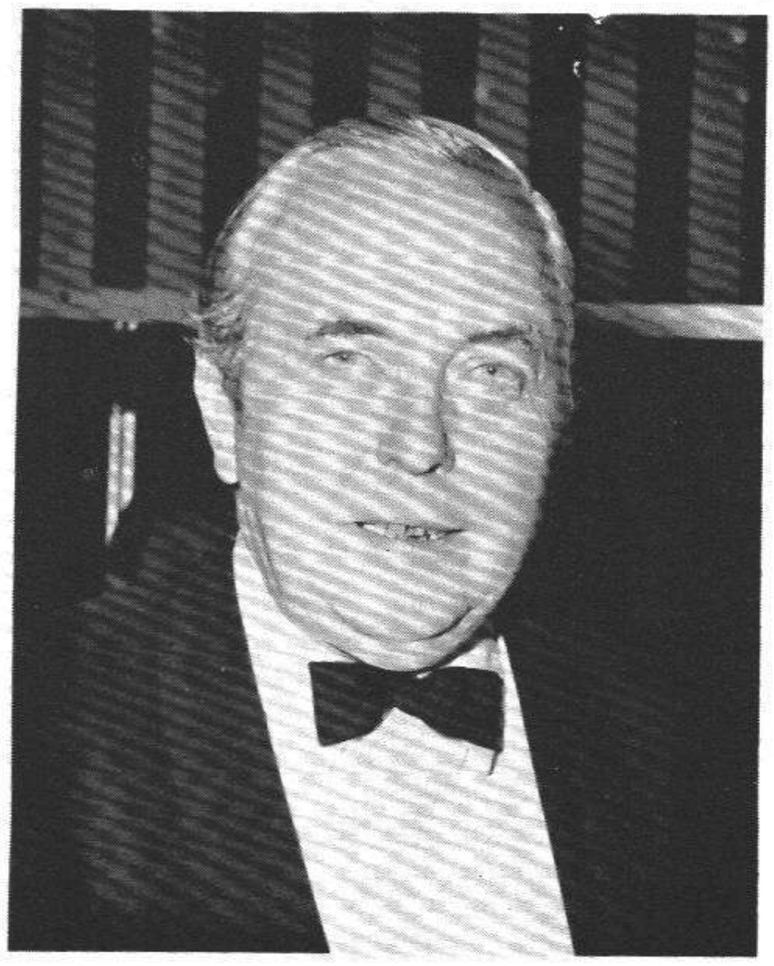
A Battersea Labour Briefing Group has now started, and had one meeting.

Sue War

London Labour Briefing, page seventeen.

God Save Labour PMs ~ ~ ~

On 6 and 7 February, 1982, two former Labour Prime Ministers submitted their entries for the 'Sycophant of the Year' competition organised by the multi-national press baron, Rupert Murdoch, who is currently engaged in a plan to sack several hundred of his employees. The theme of the essay which had to be submitted was to commemmorate three decades of the present monarch's reign. Wilson's article appeared in *The Times* and was entitled, 'The girl I saw become a Queen'. Callaghan was published the very next day in the *Sunday Times*. His eulogy was printed under the following headlines: 'Many Duties are humdrum, but she never shirks.'



SERVILE TOADIES

The striking feature of both articles was not the toadying servility for which Labour leaders are notorious, but the political content. At a time when their successor is attempting desperately to popularise the notion that the British parliamentary system is a model of democracy, Wilson and Callaghan gave the game away, exposing parliamentary sovereignty to be a myth. Wilson stated that there were some learned people who suggested that **'the Queen's role in constitutional and political matters is purely mechanical, simply acquiescing in documents from Downing Street and the automatic confirmation of the 'Royal Assent' to legislation passed by the two Houses of Parliament. Such judgements are rooted in ignorance.'**

LABOUR CONSERVATISM

Callaghan was more mundane, but made the same point. 'Of all the systems,' wrote Jim, 'ours is the best . . . If Parliament is the flywheel of the Constitution, ever in motion, the Crown is the fixed centre.' To say that this has nothing in common with *any* variety of socialism is to state the obvious. What is more revealing is that is represents an essentially conservative political position. There is nothing radical or democratic to be found in the two articles. In reality they represent a pathetic belief in the permanence of existing institutions.

Callaghan can actually write that the monarch is above politics and social classes: 'She (the Queen) has strengthened the position of the Crown in its relation with Parliament by giving no sign of favouritism to any one person or party.'

Now we have it in a nutshell. The Queen would presumably be neutral if Labour attempted to abolish the House of Lords. No wonder that Murdoch hired two Labour Privy Councillors to write on this subject. Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home and even Heath would have found it difficult to convey the same sickly message.

THEIR EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY!

Peter Tatchell cannot stand for Bermondsey, says the NEC. Will it even discuss what Wilson and Callaghan have written? These seemingly banal texts represent a far greater threat to democracy than anything Tatchell has said or done. They are designed to miseducate and disarm Labour supporters. Far from the Monarchy being above parties, it remains the most powerful *extra-parliamentary* weapon of the ruling classes.

Labour supporters need to understand that the Tories and their new-found allies in the SDP are currently competing for the favours of Big Capital. The next General Election will probably produce a hung parliament and the Monarchy, as Wilson correctly reminds us, will not be inactive in helping to decide the complexion of a future coalition government. In other words right-wing parties will use all their extra-parliamentary muscle (Monarchy, Judges, Lords, Press barons, Civil Service) to push through a programme which attacks the Labour Movement. Instead of building the crucial extra-parliamentary support needed to back-up any parliamentary offensive by Labour, Michael Foot seems intent on waging a campaign which plays straight into the hands of Labour's traditional enemies.

Toads in Hackney Marshes

WHEN THE New Statesman recently documented the state of the Left in the London Labour Parties, it recorded that Hackney LGC was then alone in adopting the 'Three Noes' policy – no cuts, no rent rises and no rate rises – as a basis for its May 1982 local government election manifesto.

The NS added confidently, however, that Hackney council leader John Kotz had assured them that a forthcoming LGC would reverse this line. And so it was. But how?

After the initial decision by the LGC to support the 'Three Noes' policy, a number of councillors and would-be councillors took fright. They signed a request for a recall LGC to reverse the decision. Among the signatories were people who, as delegates to the LGC from Hackney North, had voted for the 'Three Noes'.

Being as democratic as Brutus was honest, these comrades, in their capacity as Hackney North officers, called an emergency GC to have the 'Three Noes' line reversed. A strange emergency this! An emergency brought about by the fact that we had won our position on the LGC!

Stranger still when the motion to reverse the decision was proposed by Tony Millwood from Northfield ward, a ward which had mandated its GC delegates to support the 'Three Noes'.

The GC didn't budge. It confirmed its previous position mandating its GC delegates to the LGC to support the 'Three Noes' policy at its recall meeting. So what did our democrats do? Some rejected their mandates while others, the Party chair and secretary, simply didn't turn up at the LGC.

Result: the LCG passed a thoroughly right-wing motion which could on finance equally have come from Hackney's one-man Tory opposition.

The comrades who helped the right to this victory are not right-wingers. So much the worse. Better the enemy you know! These comrades, part of the 'broad left', effectively did the right-wing's dirty work for them – and dirty work it was!

ANDREW HORNUNG

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INNER LONDON

BRYN DAVIES DEFENDS ILEA BUDGET

Bryn Davies,
Leader of ILEA

The ILEA has agreed a budget for 1982/83 which maintains present standards and enables improvements to be made in priority areas. At a time when the Authority has been under intensive pressure from the Government, some London Boroughs and the law this must be a real victory. In the rest of Britain there have been cut-backs in education, in many cases with devastating effects on standards.

At the same time the budget represents a defeat for democratic local government. The wish of the Labour Group was to move more speedily to implement the education policies in the 1980 manifesto. But as on fares and on rents the Labour Party has retreated in the face of specific threats of legal action, this time on the basis that the ILEA's level of expenditure could be unreasonable. In other words the wish of democratically-elected local councillors was thwarted by the actual or anticipated actions of unelected and unaccountable judges.

Regretably this retreat led to division amongst the left in the ILEA Group. A minority considered that it had gone too far. The view of the majority, however, was that while it was intensely regretable the budget finally agreed still gave the opportunity to carry out Labour policies. This view was endorsed by the teacher members of the Education Committee.

The position of Labour on the ILEA was therefore secured. But big questions remain as to how much longer judicial constraints on democratically-endorsed policies can be accepted, and the extent to which working people have the opportunity to secure real improvements in public services through local government.

The new Labour ILEA was elected last May on a basis of defending and extending the education service of inner London. The Government, on the other hand, have continued their attacks on the Authority. While they dropped their threats to break-up the Authority they succeeded in taking away the entire grant of £125m with the burden falling on ratepayers. It was crucial therefore to prepare a budget that achieved wide public support.

The first difficulty was the short period of time in which to prepare the budget. It was not until late December that the Government dropped their plans to change the basis of local Government finance. Despite this, consultations were undertaken with the trade unions, the Greater London Labour Party, ILEA Liaison Committee, and the Borough Council leaders. The first two made clear their support for a limited level of growth – minimising the effect on the rates but achieving a real improvement in standards. The Borough leaders, on the other hand, with varying degrees of emphasis up to the SDP and the Tories, called for the Authority to make an effort to cut back its expenditure in real terms in line with what had been achieved in the Boroughs.

Following these consultations and detailed considerations of the budget the Labour Group decided on a policy of limited growth. This would have meant an increase in the rate precept from 66.2p (including the supplementary rate) to 72p and a total expenditure of £806m. This included net growth of 13½m aimed at improvements in key areas such as nursery education; schemes for the young unemployed; implementation of the Warnock report; multi-ethnic education; the youth service and adult education in areas of need; and additional resources for special language needs in schools.

After the Group had taken its decision the question of legal action against the Authority was raised. Advice was sought from two QC's who indicated, with varying degrees of emphasis, that there was a risk of successful challenge against the ILEA. To be reasonably sure of defending such a challenge the budget, and in particular the rejection of cuts and the endorsement of growth, had to be based on clear educational needs.

These problems culminated late on the day prior to the meeting of the Authority, with last minute advice from Counsel that the proposed budget would be likely to be found unlawful and that members who voted for such a budget put themselves at risk of surcharge.

In these circumstances, whatever the rights or wrongs of the matter there was no way that Labour's budget would be passed. Once again members of the Labour Group retreated in the face of likely action by the judges. The question for those on the left was whether and how far such a retreat could be justified in terms of Labour policy.

The choice before left members of the Labour Group was either to maintain the line on the budget and in effect to go into 'majority opposition', or to retreat to a lower but not unacceptable level of expenditure. The decision depended crucially on what that lower level of expenditure was.

In the event, advice was given that £795m, ie. a reduction of £11m, was likely to be lawful. This still provided for at least £5½m growth in crucial areas. The difference is made up by a commitment to cut out waste and unnecessary expenditure of £7m and in a budget this size it almost certainly can be achieved without reducing educational standards or job opportunities.

At the meeting of the Education Committee on February 9 the Labour Group therefore proposed a budget of £795m, with a rate precept of 71p. The great majority of the Group felt this to be very much second best and four members pushed their opposition to the extent of voting for an amendment to go for £806m. But in the end, the entire Labour Group voted for the £795m budget on the basis that in face of all the assaults on the Authority it was the best which could be achieved. Even at the lower level it defended standards, provided for developments in key areas in line with the Manifesto and secured a strong basis upon which to defend the Authority against legal attack.



In the last 9 months of the new ILEA Administration, we have deliberately set out to raise high expectations amongst our supporters and within the communities, of what we could achieve. We have given the impression that this time, it would be different and that the plans and aspirations would be fulfilled. The budget that has been agreed is not Labour's budget. It is the budget of three lawyers and as such I believe it will be near impossible for the Administration to satisfy the rightful expectations that we have aroused. The Left Administration in ILEA will now have to make some painful decisions regarding cuts in order to pay for new developments. I do not want us to get onto the slippery slope that leads to disillusionment and bitterness.

Andy Harris,
GLC Member, Putney

ILEA STAFFING DISPUTE ~ NO

With the Government in full cry against socialism, the Labour controlled Inner London Education Authority discovers dirty standards in its schools and colleges Until April 1st 1982 the Authority has decreed cleaning and staffing standards must drop.

This startling verdict was conveyed to the joint Unions representing the manual workers who clean the ILEA's toilets, classrooms, workshops and laboratories as an intercalate measure to cover its £3,000,000 budget deficit.

The Trade Union Joint Negotiating Committee deputation led by its Secretary, Jeremy Corbyn, a NUPE Area Officer, were informed on Wednesday 10th February that vacancies for cleaning staff, school keepers, technicians and other 'building related' personnel would not be filled before the beginning of the new financial year.

Labour and the ubiquitous SDP Councillors sought advice from the Authority's administrative officers in January 1982, who proferred this money saving gem, surely without precedent in its originality especially when a strategem is disseminated by edict to all its 1300 establishments before any consultations with the Trade Unions had taken place; plucking a page out of British Leyland's book no doubt.

It, therefore, came as a nasty shock when acriminious voices arose from the workers, who, all unsuspecting, received the said circular from the Education Officer re-arranging their terms and conditions of employment. Trade Unions were overwhelmed with distress calls from members asking if they had agreed to this freeze? It was a cunning decision by the Authority not to send a copy setting out this new order to the Unions.

Naturally it wasn't long before they discovered the source of their discomforture lay at County Hall where they met the full flavour of this Kafkaesque font arranged before them. The Industrial Relations adviser flanked by his supervisors seeped in 'work study' techniques and protestant work ethic smiling benignly at these ignorant representatives of the working class unable to grasp the sublety of this ingenious concept borne in the bureaucratic mind.

"What", they asked, "withdraw the circular, impossible, this was a decision taken at the highest level." "Consult with the Unions, of course, but everyone must realise that time to

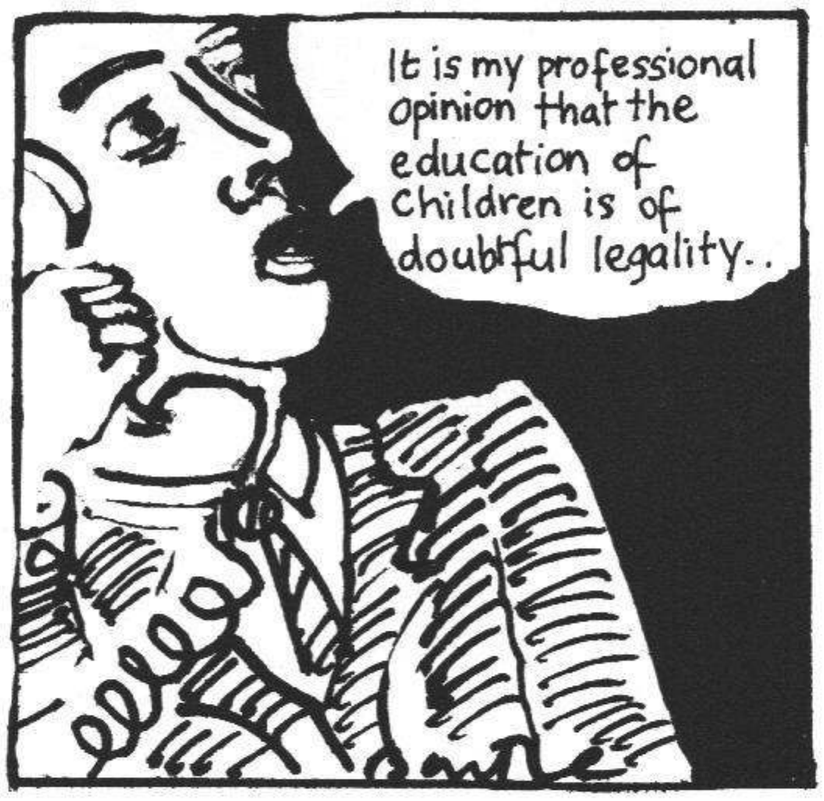
EDUCATION IN CRISIS

ILEA BOWS TO THE LAWYERS

By Keith Veness
(Co-opted ILEA member)

The Inner London Education Authority has joined the list of local authorities who have cut their programme under the threats of the lawyers. After a lengthy exercise of drawing up this year's budget and evaluating all the services it runs, the mere threat of possible legal action was enough to lead to important reductions in its planned expenditure. The saga is a dreadful warning to any new Labour council in May.

Two people (Tony Powell and Charlie Rossi) voted against and a number of us abstained because we had no time to digest it and felt we were being rushed into agreeing to £11,000,000 worth of abatements to our programme.



LAST DITCH EFFORT

Even worse, though, was the fact that we had done this in response to a possible legal threat that a barrister told us we might lose. A last-ditch effort was mounted by a few of us at the Education Committee to go back to the £806. million figure. This was moved by Andy Harris and got four votes (Andy Harris, Steve Bundred, Charlie Rossi and myself). a number of other people abstained but the vast majority of the Labour Group voted, along with Tories and the SDP, to remove this option and the final package agreed was the Irvine suggestion.

What this means must be spelt out:
(a) ILEA must make £7 million pounds of cuts this year to meet its budget.
(b) The finances will require a low pay settlement for the authority's workers.
(c) No groups or unions will have very much chance of improving their situation this year as the money now is simply not there.

STILL UNDER THREAT

The ultimate irony in all this however is that ILEA will still be under threat, with both Wandsworth and the City still threatening legal action. What does not seem to have sunk in to the Labour Group is that a successful defence of our programme can only be waged by an open campaign directed against the Government and in support of our very reasonable educational objectives. By complying with the rather dubious advice of the lawyers, this has ensured that many of our supporters will be disillusioned and the basis for a fightback is severely undermined. That is why I voted for the original package and why I am resigning as Vice-Chair of ILEA's Staff and General Committee. Andy Harris has resigned from his Vice-Chair of the Schools Sub-Committee and Chair of the Head Teachers Appointment Panel in protest at the decision.

The curent ILEA precept is 66p. The effect of carrying out the programme, which included vital areas like nursery and 16 to 19 year old youth education, would have been to levy a rate of 72p. The reduction to the new figure of 71p may not sound a lot but amounts to a cut in the budget of some £11,000,000 in real income.

BIZARRE

The truth of this however borders on the bizarre. When the "budget-making" process began, legal advice was sought from Frank Layfield, who advised that any growth budget may be challenged in the Courts and that the effect of the Denning judgement in the GLC fares case was to throw into doubt the legality of any Council which increased spending against the Government's advice. The result of this was the first panic. A vigorous monitoring exercise was implemented and attempts at justifying all our plans were couched in terms of the recommendations in such things as the Rampton and Scarman reports. Even worse, Layfield suggested that one could be deemed irresponsible by a Court of Law if one justified spending by appealing to the manifesto we won the GLC elections with. Many comrades in the ILEA Labour Group suggested that the manifesto should not be mentioned even if that is what we were actually implementing!

To offset Layfield, another legal opinion was sought and Irvine Q.C. was engaged. Though his views were somewhat better, many of us felt that we were in a bad situation if we had to rely on lawyers to draft our spending plans. Nevertheless, the precept-fixing continued and the end product was the suggested figure of £806,000,000. This was essentially a protection of existing services and a *very* limited growth of certain areas. This was put and agreed at a special Labour Group meeting on Sunday 31/1/82. So far a reasonable situation still pertained, despite rumblings that the City of London was contemplating legal action against ILEA.

The Budget meeting of ILEA was fixed for February 9th and the Labour programme was expected to be agreed. The night before however, legal advice was telexed from New Orleans (USA) by Irvine, saying that £790,000,000 was the maximum defensible budget and we must adjust accordingly. This was put to the Labour Group at 9.30 am on the day of the meeting, in which we had half hour to read and take in te impact of this.

If ILEA is to survive it must cease this slavish dependence on the legal advice of "eminent" barristers and start pushing through its objectives regardless of the threats from the Tories. It has taken a major step backwards, one that will be hard to recover in the coming months.

COVER FOR VACANT POSTS

fully consult must defer to exigies thrust upon them. Their primary responsibility was to maintain the service.

"No, we do not expect people to do extra work but we do require cover for vacant posts and absence due to sickness and holidays.

Yes, we have stopped overtime, which should be taken as time off in lieu, well, accrued holidays not taken by the end of March will be lost as per the staff code."

The Management continued "we are not in a position to say categorically when this situation will change but rest assured we will do everything in our power to see that no individual will suffer financially by these emergency measures. However, should the financial position continue to deteriorate, it may be necessary to extend the moratorium, in which case disciplinary measures may well have to proceed against recalcitrant individuals who refuse to co-operate with these exceptional measures.

We will, of course, consider any suggestions the Unions might have to cut costs, increase efficiency and reduce jobs." "However", continued management, "no decision could be taken without prior consultation with the relevant officer in the educational priority groups".

The Trade Unionists reeled from the meeting, their well ordered world turned topsy turvey. How were they to explain to their members that staffing standards so recently sacrosanct, were now to be considered in non applied schools and colleges as non existent, when it suited management? That, in Management's view consultation and negotiation were now subject to the caveat of expediency, fulfilling the rubic "Labour proposes the Tory disposes."

The TUJNC has determined unanimously to **refuse to cover vacant posts or co-operate in any form whatsoever until sanity returns to the socialist fold.**

Thus a state of official dispute now exists.

from a NUPE mole

Further information on the dispute from Hugh Tessier, Secretary, ILEA District Committee of NUPE – 221 6925.

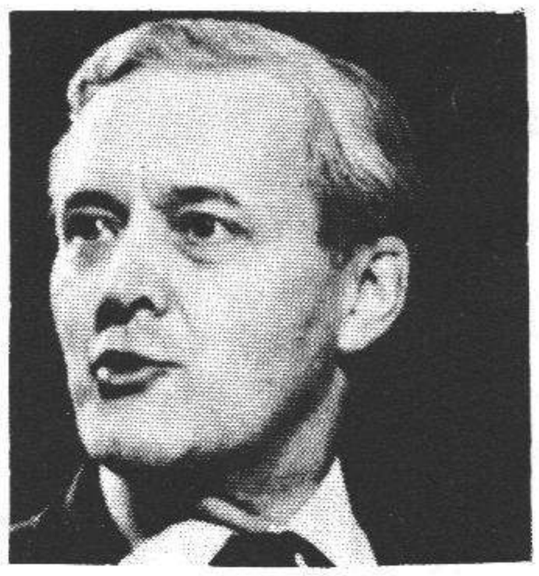
LABOUR LIAISON '82

Nigel Williamson
one of Briefing's representatives to Labour Liaison '82.

'Labour Liaison '82' – a grand title, to be sure. But what exactly it is, and just what it is going to do remains as unclear after its inaugural meeting as when the idea was first mooted.

The first problem concerned the very nature of the meeting itself. Some care had been taken by the Steering Committee to ensure that the meeting was *representative*. On the day, however, it was clear that they had not been totally successful in this aim, and the attendance was a strange mixture of representatives, observers, the self-appointed and the good and the great whom one expects to bump into at any left gathering.

Perhaps that was inevitable, and 'Labour Liaison' should not be criticised upon that basis. Instead, then, let us base our assessment of its value on what it achieved, and what it could achieve in terms of forging some campaigning unity on the left.



BISHOPS STORTFORD

Such a meeting was certainly timely in view of the wide-spread confusion surrounding the events of Bishops Stortford. It was encouraging to hear that no deals had been struck there, although it was clear that a change of emphasis was in the air, with a general election looming ever nearer.

Tony Benn began with a speech that was a fine analysis of the current situation in many ways, but rather skated over the most fundamental problem of all. The left is now the majority, he claimed, and so it is essential not to 'minoritise' ourselves by being seen to be divisive.

But what did he mean by this? Clearly, in terms of the victories on policy and the constitutional issues of the last two years, he was correct. But *Briefing* was not slow to point out that if one examines the composition of the NEC, the PLP, the Shadow Cabinet and trade union leaderships, this 'majority' becomes, to say the least, highly elusive!

In the face of the massive pressure from the real sources of extra-parliamentary power which will confront the next Labour Government, this is critical. When the city, the multinationals, the IMF, the civil service and all the others are queueing up to blow Labour off course as they did in 1974-6, it will be essential that the leaders of the Party have an unshakable belief in the Party's policies in order to resist that pressure. The most ideologically sound and correct policies will not suffice if the personnel are not there with the determination to carry them out.

Briefing agrees with Audrey Wise when she insisted that the fight for socialism within the Party and the fight to win the next election are not in conflict – they are part of the same struggle, complementary to each other.

This point needed to be added to an otherwise excellent speech from Ted Knight, who suggested, quite correctly, that certain sections of the left were advocating a shift to policy issues because they were looking for a 'retreat' from the real struggle. But an emphasis on policy need not be a 'retreat' – correctly used, concentrating on the development of left policies not only unites the aims of establishing socialism within all sections of the Party and winning the next election, but is actually the sharpest weapon in the struggle against the right wing who seek to turn Labour into some kind of 'alternative SDP'. Denis Healey, for one, is anxious to steer clear of debates on policy. As he has already told us, he will not serve in a Labour Cabinet committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, and such talk embarrasses and exposes his position as Deputy Leader.

NOT ANSWERED

At the end of the day, however, the major question of Labour Liaison's role was not answered, and, although limited aims and objectives were adopted, practical suggestions were deferred until a further meeting in February.

It still remains to be seen whether Labour Liaison will be just a talking shop, or whether it will translate its fine words into action.

Briefing has made its own position very clear. On the question of the NEC, for example, if no lead is forthcoming, we shall be organising and campaigning ourselves to remove Neil Kinnock and Joan Lestor – not simply because of their abstention in the deputy leadership election, but because of their proven unreliability on many of the most important issues of the day. We simply do not believe that hundreds of constituencies elect them to the executive so that they can oppose NEC control of the manifesto and support witch-hunts and purges.

Secondly, we will support all practical campaigning steps to stop the witch-hunts. Comrades from Bermondsey, together with *Briefing* supporters and others, are producing a broadsheet against the witch-hunts, and we hope to see a full-page advert appearing in Labour Weekly, signed and paid for by MPs, prospective candidates and others, endorsing the views of Peter Tatchell, defending the rights of 'Militant' within the Party and embarrassing the Party leadership. They must be shown that they may chop off Peter Tatchell's head, but for every left-wing head that rolls, another ten, another hundred, another thousand, will spring up to challenge them. We are not going to win the issue by waiting for a concession from the right, we are only going to win by campaigning and fighting.

These are the kind of practical steps we believe Labour Liaison 82 should be taking. Yes, of course Labour must win the next election – as Tony Benn said, the left hasn't "bust a gut" winning the policies and the constitutional issues in order to lose! But the fight for socialism within the Party is consistent with our desire to win the next election, and there can be no let-up in pursuit of either of these complementary aims.

Reining in on Rents

Amanda Farmer
Wood Green CLP

£2.50 per week is the minimum increase facing council tenants in April 1982. This is the latest in a long line of attacks by this Government on public sector housing.

The net result of these policies is to make the working class pay through the nose for its frequently poor quality housing. Rent increases of £2.50 per week means a further 25% on top of last year's increase. That's more than twice the rate of inflation and over 2½ times the average rate of wage increases. Increased rents are a cut in workers' real wages.

Council tenants are preparing to make a stand against this government. Following on from the Liverpool Rents Conference, last September, which called for a nationwide rent freeze in April 1982, the National Campaign Against Rent Increases, has evolved. It comprises Tenants' Associations, Trade Unionists, Labour Party Supporters and Housing Activists and its aim is to campaign for 5¾ million council tenants to take rent freeze action in April 1982.

VALUABLE EXPERIENCES

The campaign has firm foundations. It has the valuable experiences gained from tenants who took rent freeze action in April 1982 in protest against 30% increases in rents that year. In Kirklees tenants went on full rent strike for three months and rent freeze action took place in Coventry and Scotland. The media ignored the actions of 21,000 Walsall tenants who have been on rent freeze since May 1981. The success of this action has largely been due to the support given to the tenants by the Labour majority Walsall council. The council have supported the protest by refusing to carry out evictions and by leading members of the council in their personal capacity giving active support to the campaign. CLP's should call on their councils to follow the example of Walsall and actively support council tenants in their fight against this Government and its monetarist policies. Contrary to popular belief, rent rises have nothing to do with the actual costs of

Continued next page

Bookspace

edited by Nick Murray

Each month Bookspace will be providing a listing of new books, pamphlets and periodicals of interest to Left activists. The aim will be to act as a notice board rather than to provide detailed reviews. We will be especially keen to note the more ephemeral or hard to obtain material, particularly that produced by local parties, unions, trades councils and women's, ethnic and community groups. If you produced any material of this kind please let us know by writing to the Editor, Bookspace, at the address below.

PAMPHLETS

DETERRENCE – WHY WE MUST THINK AGAIN
by Ken Coates
Published at £0.30 by Spokesman Books, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham, NG7 4ET
Why Dennis Healey needs to think again on deterrence

TOWARDS THE NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST
by Martin Ryle
Published at £0.75 by Menard Press, 23 Fitzwarren Gardens, N19
"The world is now threatened by the imminent annihilation of civilization. . ." begins the Prof. Scholarly but readable, and chilling.

JOB CREATION BY THE COUNCIL
by Michael Ward
Published at £0.40 by Institute for Workers' Control, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham.

MY KIND OF SOCIALISM
by Michael Foot
Published at £0.50 by The Observer c/o Computer Posting Ltd., 374 Wardsworth Road, SW8 4TE.

THE RIGHT OF REPLY
Published at £0.40 by Campaign for Press Freedom, 274-8 London Road, Hadleigh, Essex.
A guide for those misrepresented and misreported in the press and other media.

THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE NEW LEFT
by David Webster
Published at £0.90 by Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, SW1.
Read this and then astonish your friends at parties by distinguishing between "social democracy", "ultra democracy" and "modern British Trotskyism".

BEYOND THE COLD WAR
by EP Thompson
Pubished at £0.60 by Merlin Press, 3 Manchester Road E14 and CND
The Dimbleby Lecture the BBC wouldn't let us hear.

PERIODICALS

NEW LEFT REVIEW – No. 130
Published at £1.50, annual sub £9.00 by NLR, 7 Carlisle Street, W1
Latest issue has Tom Nairn arguing that "the Left must harden its resolve to ensure that the present struggles yield a real political recomposition of class forces in Britain, and not merely a parliamentary return to the discredited scenarios of the Wilson-Callaghan epoch" (they weren't scenarios, they actually took place!)

NEW SOCIALIST – No. 3
Published at £0.60, annual sub £3.75 by New Socialist, 150 Walworth Road, SE17
Latest issue includes an interview with Michael Foot by EP Thompson, Ken Livingstone on defending London, and Chris Mullin on Bermondsey's radical tradition. Plus lots more. Take out a sub.

FREE PRESS – No. 11
Published at £0.10, annual CPF membership £3.00, by Campaign for Press Freedom 274-88, London Road, Hadleigh, Essex.
Contains articles on the new contempt law, Murdoch, left alternative press, trade union journals, black journalists.

"MY SEX-LIFE" by Chris Knight;
"OUR SEX-LIVES–OUR STRENGTH", by Ann Bliss.

"Thoroughly recommended as a good read".
Simon Hoggart in *Punch* magazine.

"Romantic writing like this puts Barbara Cartland in her place."
Editorial comment, *South London Press.*

"They have gone public and made a brave attempt to dig out the political content of their intimate relations and the connection between their marriage and their public politics."
Marshall Colman, *London Labour Briefing.*

Available from left bookshops in London or send £1 for both pamphlets to the Women and Labour collective, c/o Jane Stockton, 8a Lady Margaret Road, NW5

BOOKS

THE FORWARD MARCH OF LABOUR HALTED? by Eric Hobsbawm and others
Published at £2.95 by Verso Editions, 15 Greek St, W1
Hobsbawm's pessimistic 1978 Marx Memorial Lecture ("after a century of steady progress, the labour movement is now in crisis") together with reflections on it from trade union rank and file activists as well as the predictable gurus. Includes interview by Hobsbawm with Tony Benn.

THE BATTLE FOR THE LABOUR PARTY
by Maurice and David Kogan
Published at £1.50 by Fontana
Don't be put off by the blurb – it's not as bad as it looks. But bad enough. Detailed account of the Left's recent internal party organisational struggles produced by the tiny-band-of-extremists school of political analysis. No-one should miss the anecdote involving three members of the CLPD, Dennis Skinner and the lavatory of the Imperial Hotel, Blackpool.

PLEASE LET US KNOW WHAT WE HAVE MISSED BY WRITING TO NICK MURRAY EDITOR BOOKSPACE, LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING, c/o 156b UNION ST, SE1

(Continued from previous page)

providing and maintaining homes. Its policy is both to push people into buying their home and to make council housing appear less and less attractive. It is now legal for councils to make a profit on their housing accounts. This means that through paying their rents council tenants are subsidising other ratepayers and local businesses.

LIVE ISSUE

Rents are a politically live issue that can no longer be ignored by the Labour Party.

So far 145 MPs have signed a Commons Motion calling for a Rent Freeze – find out whether your MP has signed it, if he hasn't request that he does. Motions supporting Rent Freeze action and calling on the NEC to give public support to the campaign should be raised at all CLPs.

In the week beginning February 14th a number of rallying meetings were arranged throughout London. Mat Larkin, Chair of the Irish National Association of Tenants spoke on the successful rent freeze action taken by council tenants in Southern Ireland last year.

On March 22nd a locally co-ordinated day of action is taking place throughout the country.

A national march in support of rent freeze will take place in Walsall on March 27th.

If you want further news/information on the campaign and/or want to be put in contact with tenants active in the campaign in your area contact the National Campaign Against Rent Increases c/o L. T.O. 17 Victoria Park Square, Bethnal Green, London E.2.

Support NALGO's affiliation

Martin Cook

Much of the massive growth in trade union membership in the last 20 years has occurred in the traditionally conservative white-collar unions without a tradition of political affiliation. This is epitomized by Britain's 4th largest union – the National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO), now over 800,000 strong and still burgeoning amidst the cuts by over 20,000 a year. To understand the changes we have gone through in the past decade you have to bear in mind that it took from our foundation in 1905 until 1964, and four ballots, before our members' anti-trade union traditions could be overcome enough for us to join even the TUC! Our first official strike was in 1970, and since then we have been acclimatized to shop steward systems and closed shop agreements (Joanna Harris and all that). Till recently our 'non-party' status was proudly boasted on recruitment material. So the decision of the June '81 Conference to hold a ballot on the establishment of a Political Fund and affiliation to the Labour Party marks a real 'coming of age' as well as being the first such move since the POEU joined up 20 years back.

Despite the rapid adoption of mainstream trade union practices and the influx of less hidebound (younger, working class, black, women . . .) recruits, Left-wing sentiments are much more prevalent among activists than the lay, inactive rank and file. A recent poll put the proportion of Labour support among NALGO members at around 25% – almost the lowest of all major unions. To the traditional ethos of self-satisfied middle-class professionalism must now be added the new appeal of the 'sensible', 'classless', 'pragmatic' SDP which relates directly to many of the administrative and professional employees whom we organize. Unfortunately, in comparison with the tireless organizing of the CP and SWP, any effective Labour Party presence has been negligible despite the large numbers in the union who are also Party activists at constituency level. Since the ballot decision the Campaign for NALGO Affiliation to the Labour Party (CNALP) has rapidly expanded in many regions to become the nucleus of a genuinely broad-based formation that one hopes can lead (however the vote goes) towards either an effective Broad Left grouping or a more coherent Labour supporters' organisation (or both). So far, however, we are still fairly weak and short on active participation outside the big city and local government branches (nearly 40% of NALGO members work in gas, health, water, electricity etc).

DANGEROUSLY NEGATIVE

I think it is worth killing off for good the canard that affiliation would be a bad think since NALGO is so conservative. Apart from the fact that our policy on major current issues (eg pro-CND) is now 'Broad Left' in any case, even were this so it would be a dangerously negative approach. What we are talking about is attempting to bring a whole new layer of working people within the political Labour Movement, to establish the basis of radical and socialist Labour traditions among nearly a million people whose formal links with the overall goals of the movement have been tenuous or non-existent. We will NEED their support in the future for any effective change in this society. Affiliation would make it far easier for the Left to raise overtly political issues in the union, as well as giving Labour a major source of finance and organisational back-up. It would also give us much more 'clout' in negotiations with Labour councils (governments if we're lucky) where we often (even under the 'Marxist' GLC) have to grovel and hassle for facilities taken for granted by affiliated blue-collar unions.

With ballot papers going out at the end of March, time is precious. Comrades are urged to get involved or at least help finance our activity by contacting the addresses below. Also watch out for our grand National Rally and social in London planned for March 27.

LONDON CNALP: –

General information, campaign leaflets from BOB PATTEN (Convenor) at 79 Court Way, W.3 (633-7905w). Donations to MARTIN COOK (Treasurer), 5 Ardbeg Road, SE24 (633-6364w). Membership applications to KEVIN VENESS, 2 Churchill Ct., Newmarket Ave., Northholt, Mx.

Take it to to to the Limits

They said it would never work, that there wasn't a market, that the whole project was destined never to get off the ground. But four months after its launch *City Limits* – London's only radical listings magazine – seems to have carved itself a secure niche in a highly competitive market.

The new magazine started in October last year. Funded by £50,000 of their own cash, £50,000 from sympathetic private investors and £100,000 commercial loan by the GLC, *City Limits* was an attempt by more than 40 former staff of *Time Out* to prove the viability of a parity wage structure.

The staff-journalists, administrators and typesetters – had been forced into starting the new venture following a bitter five month industrial dispute.

On *Time Out* they had all been paid equal wages but owner Tony Elliot, a recent convert to the SDP, opposed this as the major plank of an attack on the three unions involved in the magazine.

LOCKED OUT

SOGAT, NGA and NUJ members were locked out over the summer as they fought to defend a joint 'house agreement' that gave them a hard-won level of wages and conditions said to be among the best of any British magazine.

But it was the question of parity of wages that become the insoluble of the dispute and eventually led to the birth of *City Limits*. 'You couldn't compromise on parity', one of the staff said last week. 'You can't have one person paid just a little bit more than someone else.

'We had all worked with the same wages for so long. It had led to a particular spirit among members of the staff and to have conceded it would have been a concession of ideology.'

City Limits grew out of *Not* – a magazine broadsheet put out during the dispute as a strike paper. With the expertise of total management production behind them, staff set about financing their own venture.

GLC LOAN

A major breakbhrough was the agreement of the GLC to loan the collective £100,000. Though the money was made available not as a gift, but a short term commercial loan at commercial rates of interest, the decision caused a furore in the press.

Accusations were made that the Labour group were buying themselves press support. And the radical tone of City Limits journalism was dismissed as 'Trotskyist politicking.'

But despite early setbacks the magazine has prospered with advertising and circulation revenue only marginally less than projected.

The magazine is run by a company, London Voice Ltd, the majority shareholders of which are another company City Limits (Publications) Ltd. This company is owned by the workers and run co-operatively, a management committee of workers directly responsible to regular group meetins. All staff are paid the same wage which rose in January to £6,000 a year.

The birth of *City Limits* represents a unique tie up of two radical magazines, for distributing the new publication is the *New Statesman* which is also providing expert accountancy and management consultancy services.

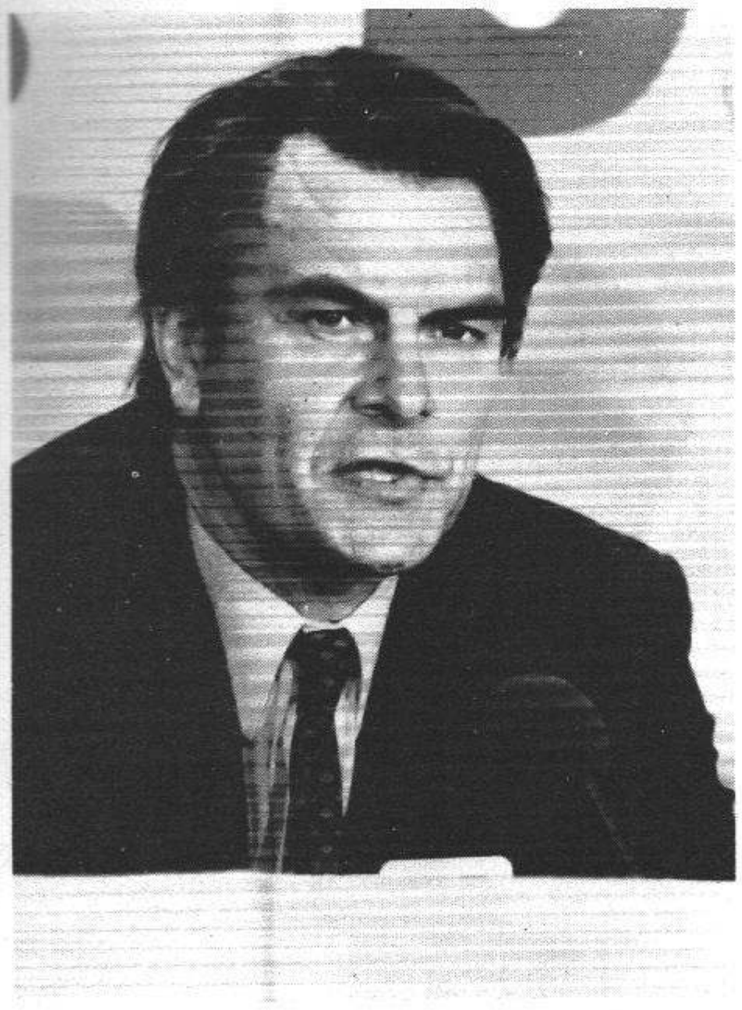
'It has been a hard start, but so many people said we would never get the magazine off the ground so why should we believe them when they tell us it won't survive?' said Sandy Craig, theatre and food reviewer and director of the magazine. 'No-one in their right mind would have chosen to start a magazine at the time we did. But we've got this far and we'll go further yet.'

Tri-lateral Commission: its role in the Labour split

American interference in Labour Party affairs, going back to the late 1940s and the establishment of Common Cause, is by now a well established fact. Old Gaitskellites recall with nostalgia the days when Norman Thomas, the American socialist, became labour attache at the London USA Embassy, with a CIA mission to split British socialists, including Aneurin Bevan, from unilateralism. Now Jenkins, Rodgers and Owen of the SDP speak admiringly of the strategy that was first conceived in an obscure organisation called the Tri-lateral Commission, and which has culminated in the present success of the SDP.

This body's real work has been carefully concealed from public scrutiny by a veil of almost complete silence in the national press. This is not surprising as certain journalists, such as the editor of the *Financial Times*, are actual members. It is time, therefore, that Labour Party members were acquainted with the aims of this organisation and were prepared to ask the right questions of some of our leaders.

The Tri-lateral Commission was established in 1973 "at the initiative" of Mr. David Rockefeller. It has over 200 members in Western Europe, the USA and Japan. British members include Edward Heath and David Owen, Roy Jenkins and Evan Luard (ex-MP) of the



Universal Pictorial Press and Agency Ltd.
Labour Party Photograph Library.

SDP. Shirley Williams is thought "unsound". Labour members are Denis Healey and James Callaghan. The Commission's close identification with Jimmy Carter's Democratic Party in the USA resulted in a deep rift with Reaganite republicans. Twelve members of Carter's administration were associated with the Commission, most prominently Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was the Commission's director. Following the assassination attempt on Reagan, official investigations even extended to the Commission's activities.

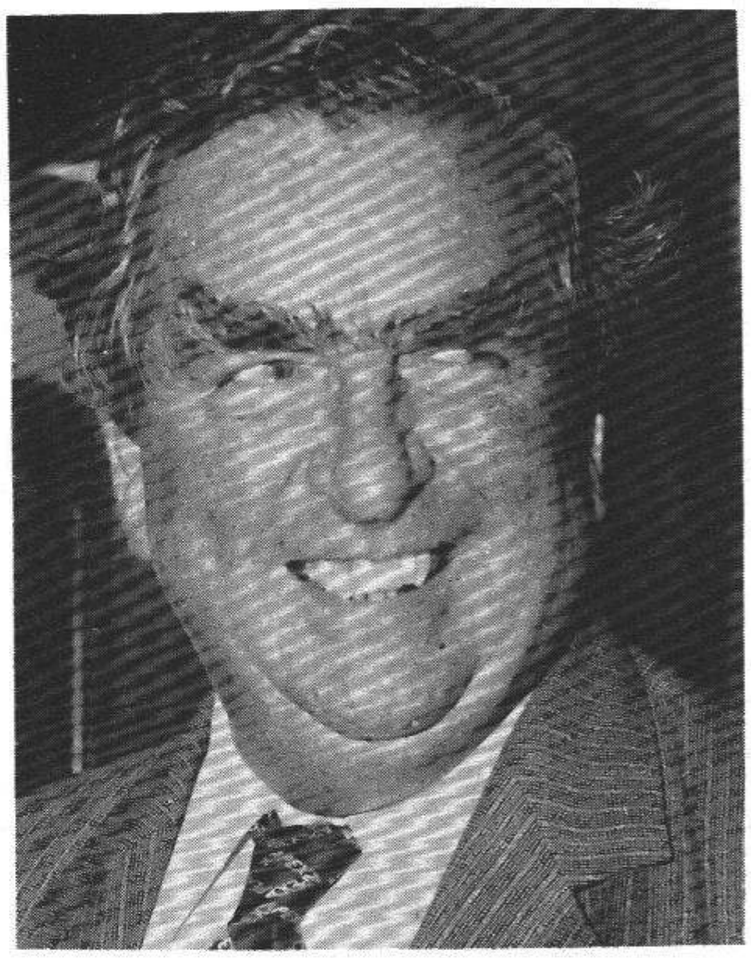
What is the Tri-lateral Commission about? Arrigo Levi, director of *La Stampa*, denied in March 1980 that it was a "secret world government" by businessmen, politicians and academics. However, the Commission secretly discussed the Afghanistan situation that month, George Ball being the main speaker. An admitted aim was to increase the proportion of Western resources devoted to armaments in response to the "perceived" Soviet threat.

The less obvious aspects of the Commission's philosophy are well worth examining, for they give us insight into the SDP phenomenon and its media approach. The Commission's first major document, *The Governability of Democracies*, complained that "democratic openness now means overload and inadequate regulation" in Western European democracies. The Commission's overt intention to manipulate the press is revealed in an Appendix entitled "Restoring a Balance between Government and Media". This says that "Freedom of the press is absolutely essential to the effective working of democratic government. Like any freedom, however, it can be abused. . . ."

Tri-lateral Commission attention has been focussed on Britain especially in the last two years, which is now regarded as the Western European country with the most leftward bias in view of recent Labour Party developments. The day before the SDP was "officially" founded, the *London Standard* reported that David Owen flew to a Tri-lateral Commission meeting in New York. At that meeting, he reported back on SDP developments and discussed funding. The first advertisements were underwritten by the Commission's agents, although individual donations have subsequently made this unnecessary.

The campaign to de-stabilise the Labour Party has been brilliantly effective. Few realise that Jim Wellbeloved, whose Commons question on behalf of the SDP triggered off the Tatchell crisis and Foot's collapse into neo-McCarthyism, is well known to leading pressmen in the defence field as having had extensive contacts with the "intelligence" world, both British and American. Jim Daly, a principal SDP organiser, was deeply involved, in fact, with the activities of the CIA-financed BBDO advertising agency in the affairs of the London Co-op in the early 1960s. The former MP, Alan Lee Williams, who defected to the SDP remarkably late, has also a distinguished record in running "front" organisations of the classic trans-atlantic type. Mike Thomas MP and Ian Wrigglesworth MP, former chairman of the Manifesto Group, have a record in the NUS distinguished only by their denials of CIA funding of the international students' organisation, a fact which is now freely admitted by the USA State Department.

Thinking among potential coalitionists Callaghan and Healey must be much



Photograph: David Fowler
Labour Party Photograph Library.

troubled by the possibility that a Labour Party completely deserted by the social democratic wing might, at the next election but one, prove a greater threat to the "mixed economy" and NATO. For this reason they are reluctant to join the SDP. Their tactics are to stay and cynically weaken the Labour electoral impact, in order to shore up the SDP. However, their credibility is daily waning. Denis Healey's reputation is not expected to survive the publication of the *Kissinger Diaries*, wherein Kissinger describes Healey's interesting ideas on nuclear weapons and the "solution" to the Vietnam War. Surely Labour must now be prepared to "cut its losses" and encourage such suspect elements to make their way to their natural home! The first step in this process is to challenge them on the point that membership of the Tri-lateral Commission is incompatible with Labour Party membership.

Ron Heisler

West Midlands –

Retreat on Transport

David Spilsbury
Secretary, West Midlands
County Labour Party

BRIEFING is pleased to print the following article from the Secretary of the West Midlands County Labour Party, although we do not necessarily share all the views expressed within it.

On 18th January, the West Midlands County Council Labour Group voted overwhelmingly to withdraw the transport policy on which the 1981 election had been won with a landslide. This followed a meeting the day before at which the County Labour Party had voted similarly. Why?

First of all, it has to be said that everyone was unhappy about the decision. Several councillors were in tears or shouting with frustrated anger. In the event, two who had been mandated by their CLP voted against the decision in full council, against a three-line whip. I doubt if the Group will have the stomach for any disciplinary action against them, however, since most of those present were sympathetic.

What really decided the issue was the realisation that the Law had tied us in knots.

THE STORY SO FAR. . .

Last July, legal advice was taken and the major elements of the transport policy passed through Council. These cut fares by 23% on average and instituted a 2p flat fare for children from September, a month before the 'Fares Fair' policy began in London.

At the same time, reinstatement of the service cuts made by the Tories in 1980 began on a rolling programme involving a review of all routes. The target was a 25% increase overall, with due regard to demand in different areas.

The 1981 manifesto included a commitment to free fares for the unemployed. During the autumn, an agreement was reached with the Post Office for the issue of Travelcards (£10/4 weeks, £27/13 weeks 'Go Anywhere' cards covering bus and rail transport) and this included special free cards for the young unemployed.

By Christmas, then, transport policy manifesto commitments could be ticked off:

i) 23% fares cut in September,
ii) 2p flat children's fare in September,
iii) Reinstatement of 25% service cut under way,
iv) Free travel for young unemployed due from 1st January,
v) Free travel for general unemployed under negotiation.

But then came our Christmas present.

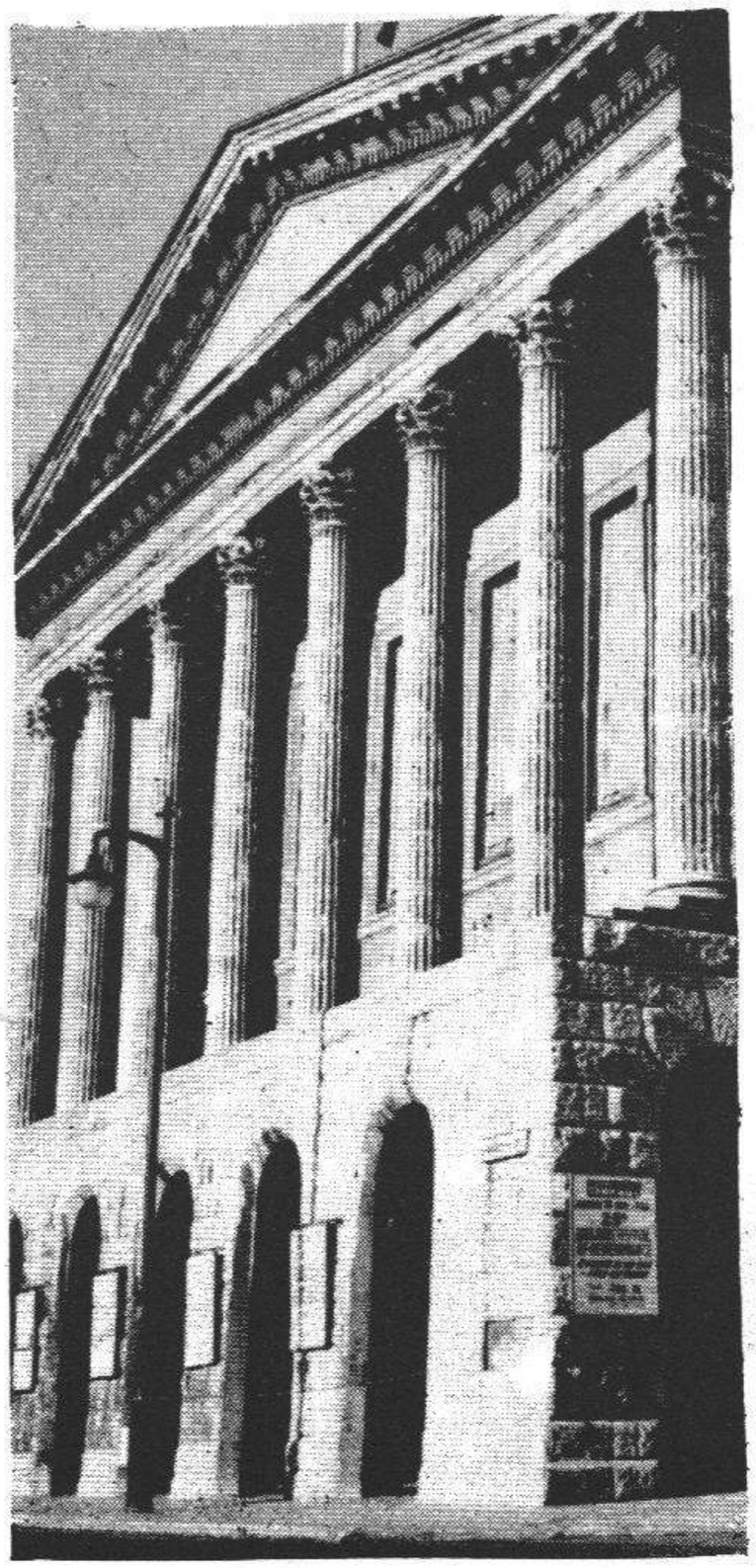
HERE COMES THE JUDGE!

On December 17th, the Law Lords handed down their written judgement in the Bromley v. GLC case. We had all been outraged by Denning's remark in the Appeal Court about manifestos not being something to take seriously (such a contrast with his view over Tameside in 1977 – sorry! I forgot that that was a *Tory* council taking on a *Labour* government). The Law Lords' ruling threw everything into confusion. Where did we stand?

Since last May, there has been regular co-operation between the Labour Metropolitan Councils, including the GLC. After Bromley, they all consulted QCs and when they compared notes in January, they had all been advised the same: any change in policy which increased subsidy without exercising the magical 'fiduciary responsibility' was *ultra vires* and councillors risked surcharge and disqualification.

What is more, if the QCs' 'advice' was ignored, liability to surcharge operated from date of receipt of the advice and was also unlimited. This could amount to between *a half* and *one million pounds* per councillor in a full year, for the West Midlands.

Faced with the unanimous advice that any fight through the courts was bound to be lost, all the Passenger Transport Authority chairpeople outside London acknowledged defeat.



We shall soon be seeing fare rises in *all* the metropolitan areas.

THE FIGHT-BACK BEGINS

One factor affecting the metropolitan counties' response was advice about the Passenger Transport Act, 1968 (the law governing public transport outside London). Operational subsidies are perfectly legitimate, providing they are justified on general economic and transport planning criteria.

This means that after preparation of a new TPP and appropriate amendments to the Structure Plan, fare cuts and service extensions can be reintroduced. To satisfy the ludicrous terms of 'fiduciary responsibility', decisions cannot be delegated to the Transport Committee. A full costing exercise has to be undertaken on the floor of Council, so that individual councillors accept or reject financial responsibility for the decision.

But, at least it would mean rescuing some of the policy for much of the life of the Council.

SPITTING OUT THE SOCIAL GROUNDS

What angered us most was the Law Lords' ruling against *social* grounds for a transport policy. This means that the 2p children's fare cannot be reintroduced until the law is changed. That will cost the average two-child family over £2 per week alone. Similarly, the free fares for the unemployed are *ultra vires* on social grounds. Both were prominent parts of last year's manifesto.

We thought the *point* of being in politics was to change things on social grounds.

DEFENDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A factor which influenced the West Midlands decision was an imminent case being promoted by GKN, those big contributors to Tory Party funds. As WMCC ratepayers, they had been put up to get an injunction banning *all* policy initiatives which would, by definition, be a charge on the ratepayers.

Apart from public transport, there are four areas in which we intend to make major changes:

i) *Economic Development*: WMCC has established an Enterprise Board budgetted to spend £8 million every year on efforts to regenerate the local economy by speculative direct investment, tied loans, sponsorship of co-operative enterprises, and extending services to the trade union movement and the unemployed. Every involvement with local industry and commerce will be subject to planning agreements affecting trade union recognition, apprenticeship levels, working conditions, etc.

In addition, the Enterprise Board will act as an investment agency on behalf of the West Midlands Pension Fund. This stands at over £400 million and initially some 10% will be available for local investment. Work has already begun to draw in other local authority and some trade union pension funds, so that eventually there will exist a department having a growing influence over the local economy and largely outside Treasury control.

Continued next page

London Briefing spoke to David Spencer and Christine Thorneycroft, who were the only two of the 74 Labour members of the West Midlands Council to vote against the 70% increase in fares and the cutting of the Supplementary Rate. They wished to convey the following message to Briefing:

"We both represent Coventry South East CLP and have the backing of our C.L.P. and of the Coventry Trades Council for our stand.

We stand by the manifesto commitment to reduce fares by 25% initially, to reduce children's fares to 2p and to move towards free travel for the unemployed.

We think the Labour Group caved in without a fight, before the case even came to Court.

Only 7 Labour members voted against the fare increase in Group, and only the two of us voted against in Council. And now we face possible disciplinary action for so doing.

The Labour Movement must be mobilised against the political decisions of the Law Lords. If we let them get away with it, there's no point in remaining on the Council."

Sending Southwark to Coventry

As Southwark LP comes under intense pressure from the national party hierarchy to put back onto the Municipal Panel a number of sitting councillors, it is interesting to compare events there with those in Coventry last year.

In March 81 twelve of us were expelled from the Labour Group (and treated like lepers) for voting against cuts in Council. After months of deliberate time wasting our appeal finally came before a Regional Enquiry. Three *of* us made very detailed submissions to the enquiry. For our labours the Regional officials recommended that nine be re-instated and the three of us to be kept off the Group. The NEC rejected that, agreed that we should all be re-instated but then came under pressure from TGWU NEC members who had been lobbied by right-wing full-time T&G officials from Coventry. The lobbyists said that automatic reinstatement would provoke mass defections from the Labour Group and instead decided to send Eric Heffer and National Agent, David Hughs to Coventry in early November (nearly 8 months after our expulsion).

The meeting took place at Coventry's TGWU headquarters on Sunday 2 November. The morning sermon was mainly spent on recriminations, we broke for lunch and returned to hear Eric Heffer unfold a ten point plan. The Deputy Group Leader and Group Secretary exploded with anger on hearing the plan so Eric Heffer, for good measure, added an eleventh point: that all councillors accept standing orders and Party policy. We asked for copies of the plan but the photocopier wasn't working! The copy I received a few days later wasn't the same as the plan I'd agreed so I wrote to David Hughes who sent me a copy which was different again!

One point that was agreed was that all existing councillors should be restored to the Municipal Panel for 1982. At this point the comparision with Southwark becomes crucial. We were to be excluded because we refused to give an unqualified assurance to accept the Standing Orders for Labour Groups. It was argued by Heffer and Hughes that Branches not District LPs should decide who would be selected as a council candidate. At the time I accepted the argument as valid now I reject it. If there is a dispute about the political suitability of an individual then the NEC should be prepared to make a judgement. In our case in Coventry we were to be expelled for upholding Party policy, in Southwark sitting councillors are being rejected for ignoring and thwarting Party policy. The other important point about Southwark is that the councillors concerned have an appalling record of indifference to case work. Why should Southwark LP be forced to have them back if they've ignored people's needs for years? This was not an issue in Coventry.

Whilst the immediate dispute has been solved the fundamental conflict between trying to implement the Party's 'no cuts' policy and the councils retreat before Heseltine is wholly unresolved.

Equally unsatisfactory is the continuing abuse of TUs by the right wing. A sizeable number of the Labour Group have become delegates to the District Labour Party by joining Trade Unions which they have no interest in. For example, on TGWU holding branch sends four councillors to the DLP whilst another T&G branch is represented by a councillor who is a retired teacher. Other councillors who have retired have become delegates through ASTMS. As a result the monthly Management Committee meetings no longer represent the Labour Party but have now become a voting machine as the mafia wheel in 'delegates' who are never seen at a branch or constituency meeting. I've told David Hughes about it twice now but he says it's OK within Labour Party rules and is a matter for the Unions to sort out themselves. Stick it out Southwark and don't be bought off!

Richard Morris
Coventry City Councillor

FUNNY TALES

Haringey Labour Group voted by 18 to 8 to hold a public participation exercise on an "offer" by Sainsbury's to buy a school to demolish it and build a 45,000 sq ft supermarket on Tottenham High Road. The school, a thriving primary, would have to close and the kids and evening activities transfer elsewhere. It is rumoured that some Councillors were afraid that if they did not vote to consider the "offer" Sainsbury's would shut their existing store and move elsewhere.

The majority of Labour Councillors are certain that they are in charge and that the supermarket chains do not run the Borough.

● ● ● ●

The ILEA sent out a circular in January on the need to save money, £3,000,000 to be exact, by the end of March. This circular has brought a swift reaction from the Authority's cleaners who were told that they would have to cover for absent colleagues for no extra pay, and that vacancies would not be filled; they have decided to refuse to co-operate with the request and demand that the proper staffing levels be adhered to. Unless the ILEA leadership backs down sections of schools will soon be closed as being too dirty and children sent home.

GETTING DOWN TO TARGET

A recent meeing of Prospective Candidates, Branch Organisers and Party Officers in Hornsey found just how determined members are to win in May.

All nine of the Hornsey Wards were represented and together they estimated that 200 people are prepared to canvass for Labour to win Haringey Borough.

The Haringey manifesto is not yet complete but a well attended policy conference showed determination to produce a fighting and political programme whose basis is the fight against the Tory Government as the only means of protecting Haringey services.

RETREAT ON TRANSPORT (cont.)

ii) *Waste Disposal*: The Tories closed most of the incinerators between 1977 and 1981 and ran down the remainder. Their policy was to buy or lease holes in the ground all over the Midlands and then fill them with untreated domestic rubbish. In addition, large amounts of highly toxic industrial wastes from the West Midlands metal industries are dumped down mine shafts or over domestic waste. Apart from the significant lack of holes near the outrageous ratepayers of Solihull or Sutton Coldfield, this policy seems to have benefitted mostly local rats, flies, seagulls and foxes, and a few highly profitable toxic waste disposal firms.

Labour policy is to develop recycling, community health and environmentally sound processes, with landfill only of sterile incinerated residues and leach-free materials. That, of course, will cost money and is based on *social* criteria.

iii) *Consumer Services*: The first decision the Tories took in 1977 was to close the 'Shoppers' Shops'. They hated them because they advised our people about avoiding excessive exploitation by *their* people. Reinstating proper consumer services will cost money and, again, is based on *social* criteria.

iv) *Fire Services*: The Tories ran down the fire service to such an extent that where there was a big fire in Birmingham last summer, appliances had to come from Shrewsbury and Worcester to cover Wolverhampton and from Northampton and Leicester to cover Coventry.

Rebuilding the Fire Service will cost money, but it is very *socially* desirable.

Phil Bateman, Vice-Chairperson of Passenger Transport called for support for the decision in Labour Group on the basis of 'fight on grounds of your own choosing'. We could not win on bus fares; we *dared not* lose on defence of the right to implement other social policies. The Group agreed to fight the GKN case even up to the European Court, if necessary. If it were lost, then resignation would have to come onto the agenda.

LABOUR SELL-OUTS AT WESTMINSTER

Those who criticise councillors who took this decision have to ask themselves about the track record of the Labour Party in Parliament in supporting those it sends over the top. The Clay Cross councillors were not reimbursed their surcharge. Nor would the Wilson government cancel their disqualification.

Mealy-mouthed Labour lawyers cautioned against making retrospective legislation, yet look at Tebbit. He is quite happy to legislate to allow Tory legal action against agreements that were perfectly legal between 1974 and 1980.

Councillors should be answerable to the Party, but they should also be able to count on the Party's support. The West Midlands County Party discussed the issue at length and agreed that it could not call on its councillors to break the law and suffer the predictable consequences with little chance of restitution. For similar reasons, a 'Can't Pay – Won't Pay' campaign cannot be led by councillors either.

Nor is the time appropriate to call for resignation. That time may come later this year.

Meanwhile, public transport fares will rise in *all* the metropolitan counties, nor just the WMCC and GLC. We have to channel public indignation against the Government's cash limits and the Law Lords' invention of new legal restraints on local democracy. Local Government is in a mess – can we rely on the Labour Party to rescue it?

Otherwise, we might as well cancel elections and hand over to the judges.

Fighting GLC Redundancies

Following Labour's victory in last May's Greater London Council-elections, the operatives working for Construction Branch felt they had cause for a little celebration. We had survived four years of Tory rule at County Hall. Our numbers had been reduced by voluntary redundancies and some sackings, but at least we still had a Branch. The other reason for celebration was that the Labour Party had included in their Manifesto a very firm commitment to the continuation of direct labour in the form of London Community Builders.

However, it was not long before the honeymoon period was over. The officers of the Council, the people who administrate the Council on a day to day basis, reported that in the next month there would be 'surpluses' on the Branch. The remedy for this, as set out by the officers in a report to the Council, was secondment of operatives to other branches of the G.L.C. or the old Tory answer of voluntary redundancy. This second point the Labour Council turned down. The officers report to Council also raised the prospect of surcharging if the forthcoming 'surpluses' were not gainfully employed.

Two national newspapers and the Standard seized this item to print a story of men being paid to sit around in canteens. Nothing was further from the truth. But the threat of surcharge in the officers report prompted the Labour Council to instruct management to draw up an agreement for secondment. They also followed the advice of the officers to put forward a new bonus incentive scheme for the remaining operatives left to complete the outstanding contracts

Secondment

The secondment agreement gave our operatives guaranteed 46% bonus. This amount was higher, on average, than the operatives were getting in the maintenance and ILEA branches where 'C' Branch operatives were being seconded to. However, the stewards from all three branches and the Trade Union officials, insisted that 'C' Branch operatives should work separately in their own gangs on work which would either have gone out to contractors or was totally new work brought forward for seconded operatives. This was done because both 'M' Branch and ILEA do experience over some periods a shortage of work and we did not want to exacerbate that position. Eventually separate work was found but strike action had to be taken on the Bayonne Road site to force management to set up a procedure agreement to identify future 'surpluses'. Cllr. Ward, Chairman of the Employment and Industry Committee also instructed management to stop the five hours overtime worked each week so as to prevent more 'surpluses' at a time when these same officers were not bringing forward the right sort of work for them. Seconded members would remain 'C' Branch operatives.

Bonus

Management gave notice of the termination of the March 81 agreement and so the final negotiations for a new bonus incentive scheme took place. If such an agreement had not been reached pay packets would have been hit harder. In order to complete the sites by the end of March the new bonus incentive scheme is linked with a planned series of handovers of complete dwellings. However, the irony of these Plans for the four remaining sites was that they needed overtime working and extra labour in order to ahieve the completions before the end of March. This fact was pointed out to management by shop stewards back in July and it was suggested that 'C' Branch employ, on a temporary basis, operatives threatened with redundancy on the Hammersmith and Fulham direct labour scheme.

However, it was not until September that management woke up to the fact that extra labour would be needed to finish off the sites. Their answer to the problem was, as always, sub-contractors. The stewards opposed this and insisted that local authorities be asked to release on a voluntary basis, operatives who were threatened with the sack: this proved a success with Hammersmith and Fulham. I believe that was because of our own efforts. This was because of the ties of solidarity between the members on Bayonne Road site which is in the Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and the fact that the same U.C.A.T.T. organizer covers the area. It was this liaison which forced a reluctant 'C' Branch management to get round the table with their counterparts in Hammersmith and so give work to trade union members over the difficult Winter period. Following this, transfers were agreed for Direct Labour from Bexley Council to join 'C' Branch.

L C B

Officers have told the Labour Group that because of these factors the scale of L.C.B. would be modest. In plain terms for our 430 'C' Branch operatives, it means there are not enough jobs to go round. We are also informed that under the transfer of G.L.C. estates to the Boroughs there are 'mismatches' of operatives. 1900 operatives are involved in these transfers. The receiving Boroughs are saying that they can't take them all. But within the transfer arrangements, the money for 2400 operatives is being given by the G.L.C. to the Boroughs for the maintenance of these properties. That is for the 500 jobs the G.L.C. have kept vacant. The so-called mismatches will be an added burden on LCB to find jobs for. What all this means is redundancies. The Labour Group have already accepted the officers advice and offers of voluntary severance will be going out in the near future. The Labour Group have also agreed that we will be offered jobs like Park Keepers, Doghandlers, and work on refuse disposal.

It is not hard to imagine our disappointment and even anger at the change of events we now have to face. Back in March 1981 we faced the possible closure by the Tories who over a four year period had not started a new contract and who came close to making us all redundant. Who would have thought that within nine months we would face a similar threat, but now from Labour? Throughout this period, we, the stewards and the trade union officials, have often been critical of the Labour Group. All along we have said that they have taken too much notice of the officers of the Council, the same officers who carried out Tory policy. We expected from Labour a far more radical approach to our problems and far more consultation with us before decisions were made. Instead, we got caution and a tame acceptance of officers proposals

A Director for L.C.B. has been appointed, but his appointment is only temporary. His job is to secure as much work as possible for L.C.B. We are the first to admit that circumstances have changed since last May's G.L.C. elections, but at the same time, the Labour Group knew what they were up against. The Labour Group did try and prevent the G.L.C. Maintenance Branch from being transferred to the Boroughs, but lost, as expected, in the Courts. The Secretary of State, Mr Heseltine, refused to grant the G.L.C. its proposed HIP allocation. That was also expected. ILEA maintenance branch will only join L.C.B. if its position is safeguarded by becoming a separate component. The opposition to joining has come from both the ILEA management and sadly their Labour Councillors. As 75% of ILEA at present goes out to private contractors this will close up an area of work for surplus 'C' Branch operatives

Fight

A more radical approach could have been taken to provide 'C' Branch operatives with work and also provide much needed homes. This could have been done on Foxley Road, Lambeth, as has been pointed out to the Labour Group, because money was available to start up that site again after a previous 'C' Branch Director Densmore Dover, now a Tory MP, had given the contract to Mowlem's after we had won it in open tender. Since that time, that site has been 'blacked' officially by U.C.A.T.T. and T.&G.W.U. However, we could have started it by forming a trading group with Lambeth Borough and continuing it jointly with their direct labour organisation in the new financial year under L.C.B.

The stewards and the full time officials of both U.C.A.T.T. and the T.&G.W.U. have also demanded that we continue to build on a site in Old Ford Road. Three private contractors, no less, have worked on this site, but recently the Labour Group accepted the advice of the officers and the architect and gave the contract to yet another contractor. That way we could have safeguarded our jobs for the future.

At the end of March it looks as though a large number of 'C' and some 'M' Branch operatives will be searching in vain for alternative work within the G.L.C. Certainly on 'C' Brnach our future indeed looks bleak. The promises made on our sites by Labour Councillors before the election no new starts have been dropped and forgotten because of central government policy and a failure to break out from under the dictates of the officers of the Council. The radical approach that was needed which would have gained the support not only of 'C' Branch operatives but of families in need of homes, was not taken. We now face a bleak future. We have no other option but to continue to fight for our jobs.

Pete Turner
U.C.A.T.T.
Convenor G.L.C. 'C' Branch Stewards

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

The Personal IS Political!

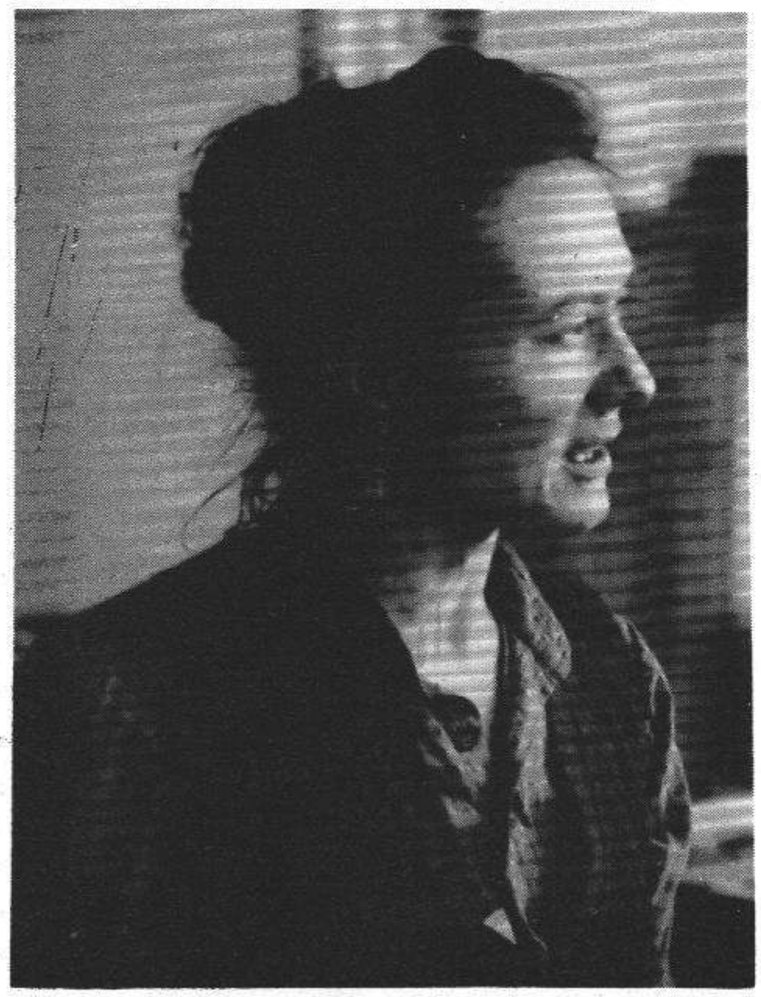
Ann Bliss,
Lewisham East CLP

Intimate family and personal relationships aren't easy to write about in *Briefing*. Most people don't think they've anything to do with politics, but in this issue of *Briefing* we are publishing some articles which attempt to assert the right for all of us to express whatever forms of oppression we feel and to use the resources of the Labour movement to help our own liberation.

These articles, amongst others, are very personal, but I think it important that some part of the Labour movement should be open for the expression of feelings such as these articles describe. It's all too easy for us to feel that our personal problems are ours to face alone. The women's movement has shown me that we can find solutions to such problems through collective action and emotional support once we have learned to express openly what our real needs are.

A real anti-sexist labour movement paper would be one which made clear that this level of struggle was every bit as legitimate as the more conventional level of class politics. So hopefullyin this issue of *Briefing* we can start to rectify what has been a serious imbalance in *Briefing*'s content – an imbalance which reflects the sexism built into the very structure of the Labour Party itself. I do hope that women will recognise that lots of us are determined to break this pattern, but we need other sisters' support in the form of articles to do this. So please flood us with articles which will show that *Briefing* is a women's paper too!

The discussions which led to our submitting these articles took place recently within a consciousness raising group consisting mainly of women. We established ourselves about three years ago and in the period since, all of us have found that the effects of our discussions have been to really change our lives. Actually, the Group started when I drew on the support of other women in my fight to break out of the sexual oppression I experienced in my relationship with Chris Knight (some of you may have read Marshall Coleman's *Briefing* review of the pamplets Chris and I wrote about this). It's no easier to write about our sex lives now than it was then, but I do feel that it's sexist and a part of patriarchy that people – particularly men – should be allowed to divide their political and personal lives in a way which allows private forms of oppression to



continue unchallenged. Some of us women involved with some of the men connected to *Briefing* haven't been allowing this to happen. Our consciousness raising group (the Women and Labour Collective) has not been content to simply discuss male oppression and then let men carry on as before. We have felt the most important thing was for women to give each other support in their sexual and family relations with men. We have included men in our activity, not at all as a concession to men, but to ensure that men are exposed to the strength of women's solidarity in all areas of their lives. Discussions with men will force men to change the way they behave only if women's solidarity is put first and if men come to realise that they have no choice but to change. Perhaps I should add here two very important points. Firstly, I'm not assuming a norm of heterosexuality in our relationships – to the extent we are liberated many women can feel easier about intimate relationships with each other. Secondly, I hope that it can be seen that women's liberation can offer something to everyone, men and children included. I think the men in our collective who have been changed by feminism will agree that their personal and emotional relationships with people generally are far more satisfying than they were before.

However, I don't want to underestimate the real struggle that women have to face in their battles with men and the system of patriarchy. We, as class fighters, accept that struggling for power against the ruling class is a necessary and painful fact of life. The fight against patriarchy by women against men will be no less painful. However the glimpses of success are worth the battles. To some extent I feel we are building up a support structure which is far more meaningful and supportive to us than our nuclear family relations ever were. Hopefully, the support we get will strengthen us in our economic and class struggles too.

WOMEN—TAKE THE POWER!

RAPE ~ A personal experience

I am afraid that due to attitudes which still prevail – and, of course, my own fear – this must be an anonymous article. Three years ago I was raped. I had been remarkably free before that. I had done outrageous things such as going out late at night alone. Feeling free, walking on my own down dark silent streets without fear. A feeling I doubt I will ever know again.

I had thought about the possibility of being raped and had planned how to fight back, run, etc. but I hadn't reckoned on there being more than one attacker or that I would be threatened with a knife.

My attackers were black. I remember afterwards telling friends: 'I'm joining the National Front on Monday'. I was joking, or was I? In a way I was glad that they were black. It was easier to keep away from, and distrust, black men than to feel that way about all men. I am still very wary of black men in the way that a woman who had been raped in a car may have an irrational fear of that form of travel.

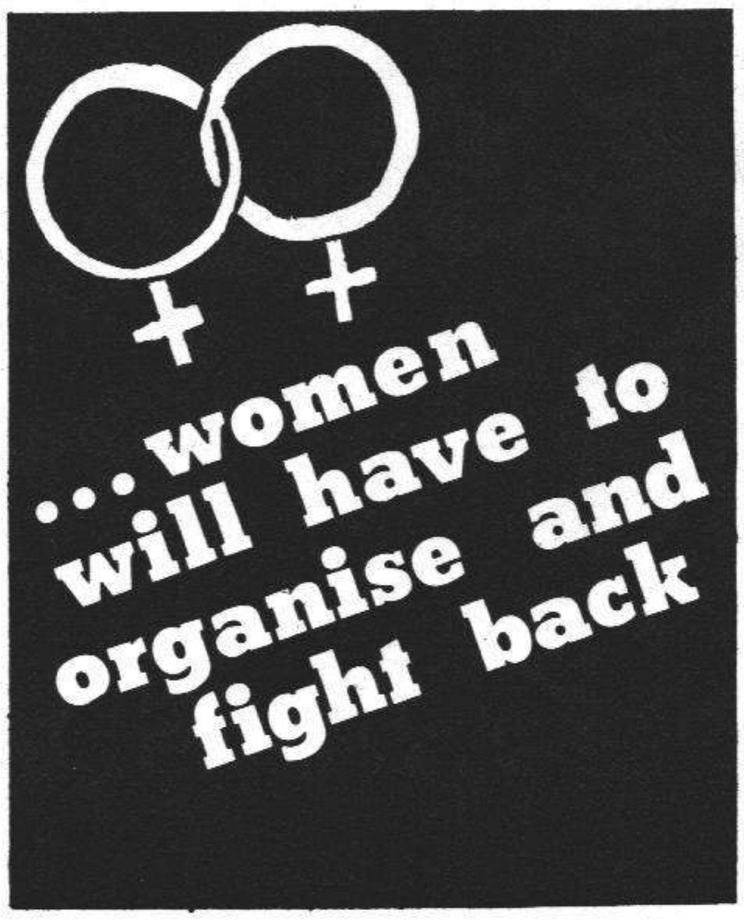
I want to stress here that I am not, and never have been a racist. This fact, and talking about the attack to a black male friend, helped me to see the attack as sexual rather than racial.

I knew enough about the police's attitude to, and treatment of, rape victims to keep well away from them. Some people urged me to report it. I felt very strongly that some friends wouldn't believe I had really been raped if I didn't report it. A woman actually said that she thought I had made it all up to gain attention. That was the most terrible thing anyone said to me at that time. I felt that I was paying for the freedom I had previously enjoyed. I thought that women couldn't expect to have the freedom men have and get away with it. I was just relieved that I hadn't been killed.

A week or so later I went to the local VD clinic to check that my attackers hadn't infected me. Foolishly I told the doctor there what had happened. He didn't seem to believe me. He said some very strange things including "I suggest you keep away from these people". "What people?" said I, "The people who harmed you" said he. This was most peculiar. Did he think that rapists wore a placard or tattoo notifying the public of their intention? Or did he mean I should avoid black men? Equally strange, as the doctor was himself Asian. I began to think I was going mad.

TERRIBLE NIGHTMARES

Then I went to my (male) GP. I was becoming a wreck, I had terrible nightmares and found it difficult to keep things together. I was bringing up my child on my own and good sleep was essential. I thought some valium might help. I took my child with me to the surgery. The doctor refused to prescribe a tranquiliser without knowing what my 'nasty experience' was, so I told him I had been raped. His eyes lit up. He literally licked his lips. "What happened, tell me what happened" he said. I explained that I couldn't discuss it in front of my child, and anyway I didn't want to talk about it. He reluctantly prescribed some valium. As I was leaving he begged "Please tell me what happened, did they rip your clothes off or what?" I was disgusted and



hysterical. I then contacted Rape Crisis. They complained about the doctor at the VD clinic for me and he was reprimanded for being so insensitive. However, it is very difficult to prove misconduct by a GP and I didn't want to go through any more, so I changed my GP to a very sympathetic woman doctor. I didn't go through the horrors of police interrogation and I am anyway a fairly strong person. I don't know how some women manage to keep sane.

REGRET

The only thing I regret now is that I accepted the attack at the time without fighting back, although to do so would have been very foolish as my attackers had a knife. I feel I gave them the impression that I didn't mind. I was so afraid of antagonising them. I feel that I made it so easy for them that they probably did it again to some other poor woman. What if she wasn't as cool as I was and she screamed and fought and they stabbed her? **I also regret that we don't have the sort of police force I could have gone to.** My attackers could easily have raped several women and none of the women reported it. If all victims could report their attacks, the police and society in general would realise quite what a problem rape has become.

For women to be treated as though they are the criminals when they have suffered so terribly already, is a crime in itself. The coming to light of their attitudes to rape victims has revealed the police as totally unfeeling. I don't think that using women police officers to interview rape victims is, in itself, any answer. The attitude of all members of the police force, male or female, has to change. By the time a woman has been in the force for any time the system has got to her just as much as the men. A woman police officer being hostile to a victim would in many ways be far worse than the same treatment from a man. I believe that when a woman goes to a police station to report a rape the police should phone Rape Crisis and an experienced counsellor should come to the station and remain with the victim, giving her emotional support and legal advice throughout the questioning. After all, a criminal is supposed to be allowed the presence of a solicitor, surely a complainant should be encouraged to have support? I understand that up until recently the police refused to display the phone number of Rape Crisis in police stations or to give the phone number to victims.

HORNSEY JOURNAL

Here is an extract from the Hornsey Journal's report on the capture of the 'Tottenham rapist'. The words are those used by the policeman involved in his arrest. The suspect and, soon to be, victim have been spotted and followed by the police:

"Now the problem was whether to move in or not. If we moved in too soon we might spoil the whole operation, on the other hand, let's face it, we could finish up with a murder on our hands because this mean had recently started getting more vicious . . . After five or six mintues we realised they had completely disappeared, but we had to wait and sit, which we did for about ten minutes."

Another policeman says:

"I gave it a reasonable time but the suspect didn't appear and no-one else reported seeing him. It was obvious that unless he had gone to a house with the woman he must be somewhere in the open with her, as indeed it turned out to be so . . . . I drove slowly with my headlights on and the first thing I saw was the lower part of a woman protruding from the bushes and a man beside her just rising from the ground . . . He [another policeman[told me later that he'd found the young lady with her top clothes pulled up her body and her underwear pulled down. She was tied hand and foot."

It is obvious from this report that the police *deliberately* allowed the final victim to be raped while they sat by for at least sixteen minutes. This man had not only previously raped, but mutilated one of his victims and the police were aware that he was mentally unstable and could possibly kill. In order to obtain an easy arrest where the suspect was caught red-handed, they allowed a woman to be raped under their noses. I think this is outrageous. I think the victim should sue the police, as the Yorkshire Ripper's last victim's mother is now doing. I think this occurrence illustrates very well the police attitude to women.

BATTERED TO DEATH

Recently in Islington a woman was sexually assaulted and battered to death. She fought her attacker for 25 mintues during which time she screamed continuously. Many people heard her, many even admitted to hearing her. No one went to her aid or phoned the police. This reminded me of an article I sent to Woman's Own magazine some time ago for inclusion in a section of the magazine entitled 'The Way I See It'. Here it is:

"The reticence of people to become involved in what they consider to be none of their business was highlighted recently by a young man who saw, from his car, a young girl being

My Miscarriage

Ann Flowers (Brent South CLP)

Jenny, my daughter died on the 26th November 1981. At the time of my miscarriage I was twenty five weeks pregnant. It was only after it occurred, I realised it was to become a taboo subject. That is one reason why I am writing this article. It is so that people can learn how to react to a woman in similar circumstances.

To make it more tragic, we had to try for years and needed various medical treatments before I became pregnant. Up to the miscarriage it was a totally normal pregnancy. By twenty weeks I had decided the possibility of miscarriage was over. After then seeing my baby on the scanning machine at the Hospital and feeling her kick I relaxed and started to enjoy my relationship with her. I was so proud of my 'bump' I used to carry it as a badge of my happiness.

Then early that Thursday morning at home after gentle contractions, that I felt sure would stop, my waters broke. I went to the Middlesex Hospital (Mortimer Street, W.1). The female Doctor who examined me explained the baby was too young to survive. (Another week more the story may have had a happier ending.)

LOST MY FUTURE

While I was carrying her, I had planned my future with her in mind. All of a sudden it had changed. I felt as if I had lost my future. At first I felt nothing. My mind was totally blank. It was if I was walking into a totally black cave. No feelings. No emotions. Then it started. Feelings ranging from hatred of my own body, despair, to contemplating suicide.

As Jenny's body was sent to a laboratory I had severe guilt feelings about not burying her. I also felt (and still do) guilty for rejecting her by not seeing her after her birth. She was alive before the birth, a machine had echoed her heartbeat around the delivery room. Yet these very deep feelings were not shared with my close friends. When they came to visit I was always unemotional and even positive. I think it was because I could sense their embarrassment about the situation. I felt they were relieved to find me o.k. to handle. This is because we are not used to sharing deep sad, emotional times with our friends. It is easier to give support to people who are strong, than to comfort the weak. One thing we never really talked about was the death of my daughter. The nurses on the other hand saw me through all the bad times I felt very vulnerable not being in control of my feelings. The reason I could be open with them and not my friends is, firstly I couldn't be positive all the time – it was too false. Secondly, the nurses used to discuss the pregnancy death with me. They acknowledged that I had given birth to a daughter.

FEMINIST

I, as a feminist only expected to get support from women in the feminist movement. I was amazed by the extent of support I got from the nurses at the hospital. Their support seemed totally unconditional. One of the nurses defined herself as a feminist (even though she was not so by conventional definition) because she said she spent all day working with and for women.

Due to the strength of the support I received from the nurses it made leaving the hospital all the harder. I was discharged from hospital without any acknowledgement or suggestion that I may need some further emotional help. I had lost confidence in my body. What I needed was a complete medical checkup to convince me that my body was functioning o.k. Most of all I needed a support group that could have helped me over the worst of my depression.

I myself learnt a lot from the experience. I realised the extent of the relationship with my unborn child, I learnt how to trust and love complete strangers (the nurses) and perhaps most important – how easy it is to hide your deepest feelings from your close friends.

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dragged, screaming and terrified along the street by a man who afterwards raped and strangled her. The young man in the car said afterwards 'I thought it was just a lovers' tiff'. In this day and age is it still thought normal for men to drag their girlfriends around screaming, is a girlfriend her man's property to the extent that he can assault her in public with the consent of passers by? Is it only due to the fact that I have been raped myself that I run out into the street if I hear a woman screaming, to see if I can help? Some while ago I read of a case where a woman had escaped from a rapist who then pursued her into a betting shop where she had run for help, sobbing, screaming, with her clothes ripped, obviously distraught. Her assailant followed her and dragged her out, to the amused stares of the punters. They also presumed it was a lovers' tiff. I find it totally unacceptable that any human being should be allowed to treat another in this way, lover or not. Please, if you see or hear someone in obvious distress or struggling with an attacker don't placate your conscience by presuming it is a lovers' tiff. So what if it is? The woman needs help, please give it, you never know, you may save her life."

The Regular Features Editor of Woman's Own wrote back to me to say:

"Thank you so much for sending along a contribution for our 'the way I see it' series.

I have read this with great interest but I am afraid that it is not quite suitable *and I return it herewith."* [my emphasis]

It is about time people, and women in particular began to talk about this matter. It is a *most* suitable matter for discussion in a women's magazine.

REFUSE CURFEWS

Another point to note is that by staying in and not venturing out after dark, women are making it more dangerous for the few women who are out. The streets should have an equal number of men and women on them. We should refuse to observe a curfew imposed on us by the police and others who purport to have our interests at heart. This is easy to say, but not to do. You won't find me out alone at night.

This whole problem is one of attitudes. I believe that girls from the age of about 7 should be seriously taught judo as a self defence measure. By the time they reached puberty the judo responses would be automatic. I think they alone (not boys too) need this to compensate for the lack of muscle power of women, and also – possibly more importantly – to give girls more self-confidence. Women should be proud of their bodies and use what strength they have wisely and in a trained manner.

Boys must be brought up to respect girls and women. I really feel that some males don't think women are totally human. This kind of attitude is catching, and some extreme feminists don't seem to think men are human. I went on a 'reclaim the night' march a year or so ago. Nearly every woman on that march ended up screaming "Kill men" "Kill men" – not "Kill rapists" but kill *all* men. If the law, i.e. the police, courts and judges cannot deal sufficiently with the major problem that rape is becoming I think women may take matters into their own hands as happened some years ago in America. For example, the white man in the £2,000 fine rape case recently could have had his home and his business premises (he is a car salesman) spray-painted with slogans such as "DON'T BUY A CAR FROM A RAPIST". In the USA women tried these tactics instead of going through the police/courts, which is probably unwise unless you are absolutely positive you have the right man. In a case where the man is found guilty but no sentence passed, this kind of action could be taken. Of course you can go a lot further – gangs of women, probably rape victims themselves, physically attacking alleged rapists. I am sure that the action taken by women in the USA contributed to a change in attitude by the police and courts to rape victims.

A point to be made here is that I think a parallel can be drawn between sexual and racial attacks. If blacks were being attacked as brutally and as often as women (of all races) are, it would be reasonable to expect major retaliatory action to be taken by the black community themselves (as is happening on a minor scale now). I feel that if attitudes towards rape victims don't change women will have to organise and fight back on some way.

VERY COMPLEX

This is a very complex and, for me anyway, emotive subject. Rape is an evil crime. It makes you feel you have lost the essence of your self. You don't belong to you any more. You realise how vulnerable you are because you are a woman. If you are not very resiliant you either become a hermit afterwards or you find a man to protect you. It is ironic that a crime perpetrated by men can force a previously independent women to rely on a man. I don't know what the answers are, but I do feel that the police attitude to rape victims must change, the courts must toughen up on rapists and, above all, society must realise that second only to murder, rape is the most serious and horrifying crime a man can commit.

A Member of Hornsey CLP

THE FIGHT FOR WORKERS'

"Mr Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State the Home Department if he has any evidence of vigilante groups operating in east London and in other inner city areas; if he will seek to proscribe the East London Workers Against Racism vigilante group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Whitelaw: 'I am opposed to the formation of so-called *vigilante groups*; whether in London or elsewhere. If such groups act in breach of the criminal law, the police will take appropriate action. I have no power to proscribe such organisations.' "

Hansard, **Vol. 16, No. 46, col. 451. Friday January 29, 1982.**

As a prospective council candidate in Lewisham, I am concerned at the level of general hooliganism, vandalism and violence occurring on some of our streets and estates. In the street I live in, just before Christmas, a close friend of ours – Margaret Sandra (a Labour Councillor in Deptford) – was mugged on her way to a women's meeting at our house. In the same week, June Boon, the Secretary of Lewisham East CLP, was attacked in Catford by a kid whom she managed to chase off, while Scrape Ntshona – the left's choice to replace Roland Moyle in our parliamentary reselection – was quite seriously attacked by racist thugs with an iron bar just outside his home. Before that, some thieves climbed through our windows and stole things while we were asleep in the house! 18 months ago, a gang of teenagers from a nearby estate had to be chased away from our front door when they started shouting and making Nazi salutes to intimidate some young children who had been playing outside, and later on – in an unconnected incident – our next door neighbour's car, parked outside our house, was badly burned with some sort of petrol bomb in the middle of the night.

In none of these instances did any of us even consider for a moment calling the local police. The police – virtually everyone in the neighbourhood agrees – are at best irrelevant and incompetent and at worst simply part of the same problem of harrassment and criminality we are fighting against. Even neighbours with some residual expectations in the police tell again and again of the total lack of interest shown when these so-called 'guardians of the peace' have been actually called. What usually happens is that they ask a few stupid questions and then accuse you of wasting their time. It is not long before people realise – often reluctantly – that we are indeed wasting *our* time having anything to do with them at all. This tends to be the prevailing attitude among all sections of the working-class population, both black and white. The general feeling is that 'there's just nothing you can do.'

The question therefore arises: What *can* we do? It has long seemed to me self-evident that if we want things done, we'll have to do them ourselves. So to learn some lessons in how to set about things, I decided to ask the *BRIEFING* editorial board if I could represent this paper in negotiations with – and physical co-operation with – a self-defence group in East London which seems to have been having some success in *really* 'preserving the peace' in ways which are evidently beyond the scope of the police. This group is called ELWAR – 'East London Workers Against Racism'. I'm not sure what success, if any, it has had as yet in inhibiting mugging attacks on older white women perpetrated by younger black men – the only class of sexist violence which the press seems to worry much about – but I'll return to that issue later. In many parts of east London, by far the most vicious, blatant and sustained forms of hooliganism have been perpetrated regularly by Nazi-supported youths in their vendetta against Asian children, women and whole families. You have to make a start somewhere, and then branch out. It is in relation to this racist problem that the comrades in east London have begun to organise themselves. One evening last month I joined an ELWAR vigilante patrol.

You make contact by 'phoning a Brixton number which is manned 24 hours a day: 274-3951. This applies *either* if you need immediate defence from some attack *or* if you or your organisation can offer some physical presence yourselves. The people in Brixton then 'phone confidential numbers in east London nearest the locality concerned, so that within 10 minutes of a call for help a dozen or so people can usually be summonsed to a particular spot. Most attacks seem to happen in the evening, from about nightfall onwards: it was arranged that I and Ed Fredenburgh – another East Lewisham comrade – should meet our ELWAR contacts outside Mile End tube station at 6.30pm.

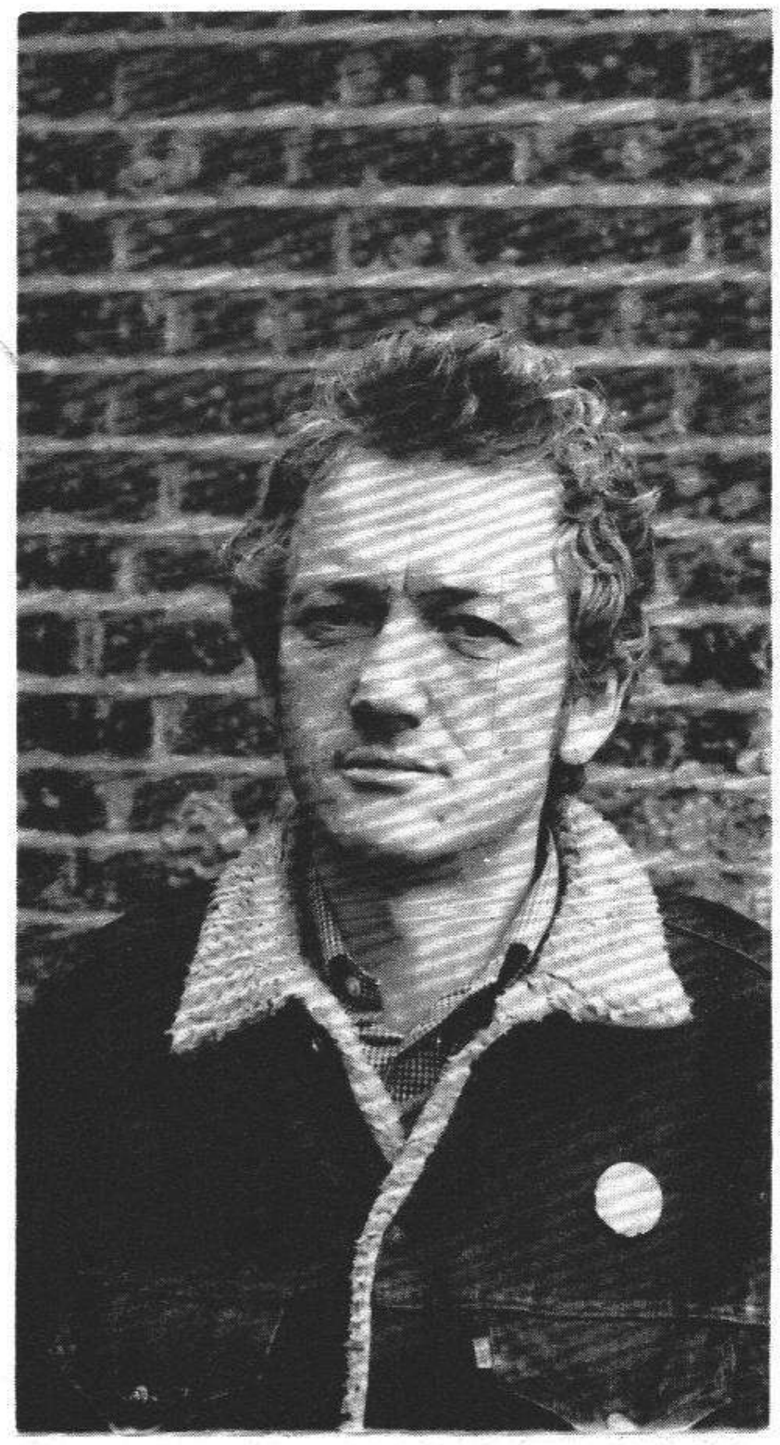


Photo: Steve Davies

Chris Knight.

Right next to the station is Eric Street. As we met Bob Radcliffe and Judy Harrison – our patrol-guides for the evening – we were led past the first house on the right. It was all boarded up. "The family live in there more or less under the table", commented Bob. On the first street corner we came to was a group of white teenagers idly kicking things and twisting a piece of iron railing and wire round and round. A few doors down, we knocked and were welcomed in by Mr Uddin and his family. I had seen the smashed and boarded window and door as we came in. "How many times have you been attacked?", I asked. "Oh, countless times. We replaced the door glass last week. The window was broken last Sunday. We rushed out – but no-one was there. We used to call the police when this began in 1976, but not now. They just come round an hour after the attacks have stopped and say 'What's the trouble?', or else don't come at all. It's a waste of time." I asked how he had come to discover ELWAR's 'phone number to seek help. "Someone at number XX told us. "Bob explained that this was a house that ELWAR had defended last year. In one encounter, a large van had been hired and had driven to a point in the street where a gang of racist youths had congregated. The van parked by the kerb. Eleven ELWAR members jumped out at once as the sliding door at the back was raised and scattered the lot of them. There had been almost no attacks in Eric street following that incident for several months, until they started up again recently. I asked Bob what kind of combat training and techniques they used. "A mixture of Karate and basic self-defence", he replied. As yet, they had always ensured that their members were sufficiently trained – in regular sessions under a professional instructor – to be able to look after themselves unarmed in most circumstances likely to arise.

The morale of Mr Uddin and his family seemed to be fairly high, thanks – apparently – almost entirely to ELWAR. There was no Asian community as such in this part of London – just a number of totally isolated families in streets and estates which the racists insist on asserting must stay 'white'. Judy blamed the 'apartheid housing policy' of Tower Hamlets Council, which had systematically allocated only the very worst housing to Asian families, ghettoising them in the Brick Lane area for example. Peter Shore had been approached; so had Ian Mikardo and many Labour councillors. They had been urged to work to change the housing allocations policy, and also to give support to ELWAR and to families asking for protection and support. But all that they had done – said Judy – was to 'take note' of the points raised. Absolutely no action had been taken. On the Bow Bridge Estate a man had been stabbed in the heart. On the same estate a Mr Ali had been robbed at knife-point. He had cried for help, whereupon 50 white kids had begun to set upon him and a woman from five floors up had thrown an iron bar down at him. He had picked up the bar and was immediately arrested by the police. There was then a court case, in which ELWAR had helped set up a defence committee with the result that Mr Ali was acquitted of the charges laid by the police. "We soon set up an alarm

London Labour Briefing, page thirty one.

LAW AND ORDER

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

system on the estate", said Bob. "Each family we could count on – fifteen in all – was provided with a personal alarm system with a siren. Whites, West Indians, Asians – they would respond to a siren, come out at once and put a stop to whatever was going on. We dragged Ian Mikardo down there to meet the families, but he just accused us of being 'communists' and in general made an idiot of himself. But there hasn't been an attack on Bow Bridge Estate now for many months." Despite successes such as this, Mikardo has persisted in denouncing self-defence as 'going outside the law'.

Bob explained that our next visit would be to Plaistow, where a family was under more or less constant seige. "An attack took place while I was there last night", said Bob, "so we could be in for trouble." I don't know if the idea was to make Ed's and my flesh tingle a little: if so, it succeeded. I resolved to improve my own self-defence training as soon as I possibly could! In the meantime, I joined the others in looking as tough as we could, and we set out ...

The house concerned is right next to a space-invaders machine arcade of a particularly tatty kind. The teenagers come in and kick the doors of Mohammed S –'s house as they leave, or else throw things through the windows. "We've only just moved in", said Mr. S –. "We used to live in Leyton, with white neighbours, with no trouble at all for 15 years. Then we thought we'd buy this house – it seemed a peaceful place. We moved in on January 16th. At first there was no trouble. Then, when the people found out that we were coloured, it all began. There's this mini-cab driver next door. 'Any time you need help', he said, 'just give us a call'. But he hasn't got a single coloured employee. Just further down there are these people who are up to something every evening: they 'start work' in that factory yard at 6pm. On Monday last, a big bag of excrement was dumped on our front door step. Some blokes came up in a car, left the engine on, dumped the stuff and then drove quickly off. The police station is 3 minutes away: it took 10 minutes for them to arrive. Then some youths began kicking at our door. The police asked these kids who'd been kicking: 'Not us', they said. As soon as the police had gone, stones were thrown at our window. Since then it's gone on like that all the time. One of us in the family has had to stay up every night so far to keep guard. Five minutes ago – just now before you came – the police told the bloke next door to close his space-invaders' shop down early each evening, but it will make no difference." A black kid who had gone into the arcade a few days ago had been thrown out by the owner. The S –s had obtained ELWAR's 'phone number from the 'Newham Rights' Law Centre. Did they feel they now had support? "Yes and no: when you people are here, we feel safe, but when you're all gone, it will all start again." Bob explained that in such situations, there were two things they might do: station someone with the S———'s day and night for a while, and come in full force one evening ....

Bob had been mapping out the house and the immediate neighbourhood while Ed and I had been conducting the interview. Judy had been talking to the family's ten year old daughter. The children had not dared go to school recently, and Judy was helping to write a note for the school teachers to explain the problem. "I feel a bit social workerish sometimes", she confessed with a smile. Quite often, her job is to escort a young Asian child back from school: a number of children have been badly hurt by racists on the way home.

"Plaistow's a bad spot", said Bob. "One of the worst in London. The technique of using an alarm system wouldn't work here: we're too thin on the ground. We've got to terrorise the fascists 'cos its the only way things are going to stop. We've got to stay around here for a while, watch their every movement, get to know who the ringleaders are and go for them first. In any emergency situation which arises, we can get a corps of good people up here in 12-15 minutes at the most. It's the only way." Bob told of how on the Shadwell Gardens estate last year, ELWAR's presence was so strong that many of the kids who had initially been involved in the attacks joined ELWAR. "One was Irish, one was half Bangladeshi himself, some just wanted to be on the winning side." There had been nightly patrols involving 100 local people and very little trouble had occurred there since. "We talk with the kids all the time", said Bob, "we don't often get into fighting really. It's just that until they know we mean business we can't get them to think about things at all." Bob and Judy spent the next twenty minutes – in between glances out of the curtained windows of the Saddique's house – outlining the political arguments they used to explain who the kids' real enemies were: the Government, the police, the rich and the powerful, not people who were workers or the unemployed like themselves.

ELWAR was set up initially by members of a small group called the Revolutionary Communist Tendency – now the Revolutionary Communist Party. They began to take action soon after what turned out to be the high-point of physical anti-Nazi action in London – the mauling and splitting of an NF march through Lewisham in August 13th, 1977. Following that crushing victory for the revolutionary movement, the SWP and other groups in Bob's and Judy's eyes had 'seriously let us down' by progressively abandoning the physical level of struggle in favour of pop-concerts, leafletting and so on. The Anti-Nazi League had had immense potential, but underpinning all the cultural and ideological work of the campaign there should have been a sustained emphasis on the physical self-defence which had won the victory in Lewisham and created the political conditions which the ANL was able to blossom in the first place. The Brockwell Park Carnival – when the National Front had marched towards Brick Lane while most of Britain's anti-fascists had been listening to pop-music in a South London park – had been a decisive turning point, for out of the resulting frustrations with the ANL's leadership had emerged the necessary support to turn ELWAR into a real force.

Labour Party members who want to fight fascism in east London have the opportunity, by contacting ELWAR, to join in strengthening the only force which harrassed Asians in the area have been able to rely upon for the *physical* protection which is above all – in the short term, anyway – what they need. If the *BRIEFING* network as a whole were to mobilise our full resources, we could immeasureably strengthen ELWAR while at the same time helping it to branch out into an all-London vigilante force which would be absolutely invincible. In proportion as we succeeded in this, we could use our political muscle to *force* the police and the state into ceding to the labour movement our legal right to live in peace and quiet in our own neighbourhoods, and our legal right to co-operate with our neighbours to see that *real* law and order – the law and the order of ordinary law-abiding people, white and black – prevails in the streets which are ours. If the police can't stop muggings, attacks on women, rape, assaults on children, skinhead hooliganism, the vandalisation of housing estates, petty burglaries and all the rest of it – not to speak of systematic Nazi hooliganism against ethnic minority groups – then perhaps it's because the police have almost *no* emotional, social or kinship roots in the communities for which they are supposed to be responsible. Sometimes, it seems quite sad: there certainly *are* well-meaning policemen around. But when all's said and done, a solution to our problems has to be found. It's far from being just a question of defending ethnic minorities: in certain areas, many white workers of course *are* genuinely fearful of that unrepresentative minority of black kids who take out their frustrations against a racist society by hand-bag snatching, burglary or even rape. All this is simply the other side of the coin. It's got to stop, and soon. But it really is inconceivable that the police themselves can get anywhere at all in all this, because it involves gaining the confidence and full co-operation of the minority communities themselves. A black and white vigilante force could stamp out such crimes with immeasurably more effect than the police have achieved or can ever hope to, because we would have the local information and support. And this is really the point: if the police are ultimately incompetent and impotent to perform any useful function whatsoever, they compel us – whether they like it or not – to take matters into our own hands. For the Labour Party, the implications of this are extremely serious. **It may be that we'll have to take over the policing of London ourselves, Mr. Nicholas Winterton or no.**

Note:

I am seeking agreement to insert the following commitment into Labour's manifesto for the coming borough elections in Lewisham:

"*We are well aware of the anger felt by many at the continuing high rate of vandalism, hooliganism, street-crime, burglaries, sexual harassment and racialist attacks on ethnic minority families in the borough – and we intend doing something about it. We want the police to cede to us the right to organise ourselves, in the places where we live, so that we can enjoy peace and quiet in our own streets and neighbourhoods. We feel that with the participation of* all *sections of the community – black and white, women and men – a patrolling and information network could be built up to enable those of us who have to live with the problems to set about solving them ourselves, peacefully and within the law, but with an effectiveness which seems to be beyond the scope of the police.*"

Note 2: The ELWAR comrades tell us that after this interview was conducted, there was a spot of trouble in the street in Plaistow , with the SPG involved, but that since then the harassment of the family has stopped. They want it to be known that they and the family wish to 'cool' the situation there and urge no provocations.

If any readers wish to assist ELWAR, or want more information about their activities, phone 274-3951 or write to ELWAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, E8. ELWAR speakers would appreciate invitations to address Labour Parties in London.

The Politics of Disablement

Linda Clarke
Wood Green CLP

The Multiple Sclerosis Society News often has on its front cover a well known Celebrity of the entertainment, business or aristocratic kind beaming patronisingly out on us. There are also articles by Tory Ministers on how kind and benevolent the Government really are being to the disabled. The MS News writers never disagree with them and I have never read a single angry word about how disabled people are suffering as a result of Tory policies. Instead they want us to be ever so grateful to our rich, kind benefactors on earth, whilst heavily hinting that we should also remember our kind benefactor in the sky. You're dead right if you think I may be angry. I am a disabled/socialist/atheist/working-class/single/woman, living in a society ruled by people who seem to consider those of us who aren't happy/healthy/Conservative/Christian/Middle class/Married/Men to be a nasty inconvenience and a nuisance. I mean, at least we should be striving to BUPA ourselves and making it with micro chips. But we nasty inconveniences and nuisances are not about to go away, like the Year of the Disabled. We are getting stronger and are fighting back.

Multiple Sclerosis is a real mystery disease. The exact cause still isn't known and there is no cure. Healthy people have nerve fibres which are covered with a fatty substance called Myelin. The Myelin acts like the insulating cover on an electric wire and allows the nerve impulses to be conducted along the nerve fibre. In MS the Myelin disintegrates and so the nerve impulses cannot pass along quickly. The Myelin can re-form, only to break again, and this makes MS a very unpredictable disease. Some people have such bad attacks that in places the Myelin can never re-form because scarring has occurred and the nerve impulse can't get through at all. During my first attacks I was paralysed down one side of my body. It wasn't long before the paralyses went, but I was left with scarring which has made movements like running, jumping or walking quickly, impossible. Because Myelin may disintegrate along the nerve fibres in the brain we can develop an 'MS Personality' which is quick to feeling upset, confused, depressed, but also quick to feeling 'high' or elated. This 'mental' side of MS is of course very rarely mentioned. We are kept in ignorance. Everything I know about MS I have found out for myself; the doctors at the hospital told me nothing. Besides not being able to move spontaneously, if at all, we also suffer from extreme fatigue, which occurs suddenly. We must also try to avoid emotional upsets, as these can cause actual physical damage (this isn't easy!) So you see we have quite a few problems to live with.



GREEN CARD

Luckily, I was (and still am) working for a nationalised industry which has an extremely good network of Welfare Officers, and one visited me in hospital and told me of the benefits of getting 'Registered Disabled' and having a Green Card. I'm sure there are many disabled people who know nothing about this. Because I am Registered I am one of the 3% disabled people that my employer must take on, although this is of course widely ignored by most businesses, and the Tories are ready to do away with this rule altogether in the near future. Being Registered also helped to obtain my council flat. I had been living in a bedsit with a lot of stairs to climb, and eventually my landlord informed us that he was converting the house into flats to be sold. It is obvious what the present policies of not building or maintaining – and selling – council homes means for disabled people living in privately rented accommodation or run-down council property. At the moment I am trying to obtain a Mobility Allowance which is given to disabled people to enable them to travel about. Despite my not being able to walk more than very short distances; and this with difficulty, I have been informed by the DHSS that I do not qualify. I am now going to appeal against this decision.

PROBLEMS OF TRANSPORT

Then there are the problems of transport. Because London Transport has never been subsidised properly from central government, there aren't enough buses and tubes. Even though I use a stick I seldom get offered a seat on the tube; I have to ask for one. More trains means more seats. People push past me at bus stops and when I eventually get to the bus it is full up, but more buses means more seats. If the fight for new legislation doesn't succeed and buses and tubes start to disappear, it will be a nightmare for me to get to work; I won't have strength left to do any work if I do arrive.

I also take a lot of vitamin and mineral supplements: the Prescription charge for each item is so high that it is a tiny bit cheaper to buy them over the counter. MS people are known to have abnormalities in their levels of Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids: the only way to make sure we have a good intake of these (to help rebuild Myelin) is to use Sunflower Oil for cooking (preferably drinking it!), lots of Flora Margarine (for women!) and to take Oil of Evening Primrose Capsules. These capsules are very expensive A few years ago there was a debate in Parliament on whether to make Oil of Evening Primrose available on prescription for MS people but of course it didn't get anywhere.

ALREADY A SOCIALIST

I was born into a Labour voting family on a council estate in South London. I couldn't stay on at school because I had to start earning to help out. I went to a Comprehensive school in Catford, which was a great school. There were a group of us who loved Jazz, Beat Poetry and Banning the Bomb! We talked about injustices that we heard and felt. I was already a socialist. My background helped me to quickly come to terms with MS and to fight for what I was entitled to, although I couldn't have made it without the loving support that I received: but I have been forced into discovering that no matter how many friends a couple may have, that couple will usually depend on each other for their emotional and practical needs and not the people outside their relationship. My friendships have developed and grown since the first few years of having MS. I feel now that my friends are my extended family, and a group of us are trying, and mostly succeeding, to put our personal/political ideas into practice. Because of this I am feeling emotionally stronger now than ever before I had MS. We can only become stronger together. Isolation makes people weak and unable to fight back. Disabled people are very, very vulnerable to injustice. Under Socialism we would produce what we need, and have free health care and medicine. Instead of spending billions on nuclear weapons we could research and research incurable diseases and wipe them out. We would share our resources, our streets, our houses and our lives.

If there are any MS people reading this or readers who know of someone with MS and they don't know about Action Research Into Multiple Sclerosis (ARMS), I recommend they join. ARMS is very positive in that they put all their resources into research, and an MS person can go on the MS Patients Register (along with any immediate family). I have already completed and forwarded 2 questionnaires concerning my childhood, adolescence and present-day medical history, but they also ask lots of other questions relating to things not medical so that they can get as good a picture as possible of MS people and their environment. They also have a 24-hour Counselling Service for advice or a friendly chat. The address of ARMS is 71, Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8TR.

WOMEN AND HOUSING

Ann Bliss Prospective Borough Council Candidate
Drake Ward Lewisham East C.L.P.

RECLAIMING OUR STREETS

"Isolating and depressing." This is how much of Lewisham's housing stock is described in our Party's draft manifesto on housing policy. Lewisham is no exception: We all know how dismal and oppressive most council housing in London is. But what can we do to make a change? Three years ago I was involved in helping to organise a conference in London under the title of "Women and Space". This grew out of some links made by the feminist group within the New Architecture Movement and an architectural research unit at the Bartlett School of Architecture. It was a successful conference and we all learnt a lot about the ways in which the designs of our streets and houses isolate us – particularly women – and inhibit community-life. But I am writing this article because I feel that it's a pity that so little of what we learnt then has found its way into the Labour Party.

STREET-LIFE DESTROYED

At the Conference I gave an introductory talk in which I set out some of the concepts I had learnt from discussions with Julienne Hansen, Bill Hillier and others at the Bartlett school, linking this in with my own experiences. Basically our conclusion was that all forms of state housing over the past century or so had had the effect of destroying "street life" altogether. This is most clearly seen in the case of a tower block. In each flat women and sometimes her children are surrounded on all sides by emptiness instead of the life and bustle and neighbourliness of the old-fashioned "slum" housing which was nearly all bulldozed down in the 1950s and 60s. Architects attempted to sanitise and isolate each family unit by removing it from its previous position in the centre of the social life of a network of densely populated streets. Housing went from one extreme to the other – from overcrowding on the model of the old London rookeries to the graveyard like quietness and isolation of the kind felt by a woman living on the 10th floor of a tower block



AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE

But the problem goes deeper than this, because the tower block syndrome was only an extreme example of what all forms of state housing have tried to do. There is the assumption that all of us want to get away from our neighbours and live as privately within our family units as it is possible to do. So even when dwellings are built closely together, everything possible is done by the architects to prevent neighbours from encountering each other in the way which used to happen spontaneously in the old street systems when these covered the whole of London. Deep porches, recessed doors, high walls, balconies and access corridors with only one entrance at one end – these and all sorts of other techniques are used to re-inforce the basic assumption that "an Englishman's home is his castle". This phrase really does sum up everything which I feel as socialists we have to fight against. There is the *racist* assumption that immigrants, particularly blacks, are somehow morally suspect for not "valuing their privacy" in the way "an Englishman" does. (What is complained of is the fact that ethnic groups tend much more easily to use their homes and streets as a means of participating in social life rather than escaping from it.) The phrase is *sexist*, obviously, because the privacy of the home really is a "man's" in the sense that it is men, not women, whose privileges are maintained by the building of walls and doors which physically isolate women from the possibility of each other's help and support in the home. Finally the word *castle* perfectly expresses the individualistic assumption that all your neighbours are enemies whom you have to defend yourself against.

FEUDAL DUNGEON

There are no simple ways of breaking down these racist, sexist and capitalist forms of oppression which reproduce themselves in the internal life of each family whether middle class or working class in London toady. Certainly I'm not saying that just by changing the architecture we could revolutionise our patterns of family and social life at the level of the street. All that architecture does is to express faithfully and help perpetuate the existing structures of male (patriarchal) and capitalist power. On the other hand there can be no successful fight against this oppressive power without organising in the places where we live to contact and relate to our neighbours in ways which will mean contradicting everything which the architects have designed for us. It can only be the women's movement (both inside and outside the Labour Party) which can hope to organise politically on this level. Only as we begin to change the realities of our family, sexual and social lives will we begin to feel the need for forms of architecture which enable us to co-operate with and encounter each other easily and frequently. One of the most important points in this connection concerns the violence done against women in the privacy of the home. I work for Lewisham Women's Aid and come into contact daily with women who live in perpetual fear of male violence in their own homes. The crucial point is that nowadays a woman can be screaming in her home and the neighbours will feel that they shouldn't interfere even though they can hear. For many women, this is what the phrase "an Englishman's home is his castle" really means. You might as well be in a feudal dungeon with a moat all around for all the support or help you are likely to get!

BREAKING BARRIERS

Basically what we need is to be able to feel strong and supported in our own homes, streets and neighbourhoods. If you are at work, you organise and feel strong through your membership of the trade union movement. I want to see something similar for women who are not even permitted – either by their family situation or by unemployment – to discover such forms of solidarity and strength. For me, the women's movement is about breaking down both the physical and psychological barriers which separate us as women from each other in our sexual lives and in our homes.

ARCHITECTURE FOR WOMEN

But I would also like to see a repeat of the Women and Space conference to be organised, this time with full backing from the Labour Party and in particular from councillors with responsibility for housing in London. Just because the Tories are attempting to stop our building programme doesn't mean that we can accept housing as it is. Getting housebuilding started again may require throwing out the Tories and instituting major changes in society as a whole. But in order to build up support for this we must have a clear idea of the kind of society we mean to build. Specific architectural designs which will facilitate women's solidarity must be an integral part of this.

"NOBODY CARES"?

Finally though, even "clear ideas" themselves won't get us the support we need. At our recent Lewisham Local Government Conference one long-standing sister stood up and complained about conditions on the Downham estate. "The kids just roam about, vandalising everything", she said. "Their mothers just don't seem to care – nobody cares about each other anymore. Years ago they weren't like that. We'd have known the families, we'd have spoken to their mothers and things would have got sorted out. But now everyone feels there's nothing you can do." It would have been easy to dismiss her comments as implicitly racist, traditionalist and right-wing. And it's true that this comrade certainly doesn't identify at all with the Left. But I felt that in a real sense there was a lot in what she was saying, although she was placing the blame on the victims (mothers and children) rather than on the system as a whole. Of course we all know now widespread such sentiments as she expressed are. We've simply got to relate to these problems and not try to evade them. It's true that in practice, despite the existence of the women's movement, women are under more pressure now and feel more isolated than ever before. The traditional extended family network has almost completely broken down, more women than ever have paid work outside the home and yet we are still seen to have the individual responsibility for our children. I don't accept that as mothers "we don't care" what happens to our daughters and sons. It's just that we need desperately the support structure to *enable* us to really care effectively and *collectively*. Perhaps what is needed is something which has never existed before – a genuinely working-class basis of the women's movement, so that we can sort out these problems at the root. Hopefully, as women in the Labour Party, we can help build towards this in London.

Note: a very readable and thought-provoking book that goes into some of the issues I raise is "Wedlocked Women", by Lee Comer.



Dear Comrade,

Firstly, thanks for the February issue of BRIEFING which was, for the most part, excellent.

Now, (you knew it was too good to be true) let me take issue with one article. Obviously everyone on the Left of the Party supports Peter Tatchell in his fight against Foot and the NEC. Given the attack that the Right are launching on us, it really does no good to split ourselves with sectarian wranglings. I refer to the article 'Guilty without trial' by Nick Murray. In this, Cde Murray makes disparaging remarks about 'Socialist Challenge' and the Fourth International.

Before I go on, I wish to make it clear that I am not a member of the IMG; neither am I a subscriber to or regular reader of their paper. I am simply a Left member of the Party who happens to believe in unity amongst socialists. At the moment, it seems that the Right are witch-hunting Militant, and the Left (Or those who call themselves Left in certain instances) are replying by attacking Socialist Challenge supporters. Recently in Peckham we have had the spectacle of 'Left-wingers' organising Left meetings separately from those whom they see as being IMG supporters. Apparently, if they are to be believed, not only myself, but about three-quarters of the Left in Peckham are in IMG!

Cde Murray appears to have caught the bug. (At least we know that some ideas from elsewhere make it across the Great Divide to Bermondsey.) Perhaps he would be pleased to know which A-Z page Bermondsey is on (and some of it isn't on 63d either). Perhaps also, Cde Murray prefers the policies of the Third International, and would accept a commission in the Polish armed forces!

Can we please stop these sectarian point-scoring outbursts which only aid the Right. The Labour Party is the representative voice of the Labour movement and all socialists who accept its rules should be allowed to argue their politics in it without fear of bans and proscriptions. In Bermondsey, Nick and others have done great work. The O'Grady/Mellish axis has been broken. In Peckham a similar movement has taken place. We have united all Left strands to do it. With comments like Nick's floating around can Bermondsey (a) claim the same and (b) be sure that they are not trading in one group of machine-politicians for another (slightly more Left) one?

Fraternally,

Tony Goss
Peckham CLP

PS As Bermondsey still seem to believe in parochialism, I should point out that my dad was born and brought up in Paradise Street, and I am in Peckham rather than Bermondsey by the margin of about 50 yards. Does this qualify me to have a go, Nick???

Dear Comrades,

Readers of Briefing will no doubt wish to extend comradely greetings to F.A. Ridley, the veteran socialist and former leading light of the I.L.P. He has now reached the age of 85, in full command of his physical and mental faculties. We wish him many more years of radical writing and fearless free thought.

Fraternally,

Ellis Hillman

Dear Comrade,

I enclose a cheque for £2.50 as a year's subscription to *London Labour Briefing.*

I am sure I can sell 15 *Briefings* easily, if you can send to me.

Congratulations to the producers and contributors of February's *Labour Briefing* – for a constructive view on so many problems facing Londoners, and the Party in London.

Yours in solidarity,

Michael Hanley, London SE14

Dear *Labour Briefing* Friends:

We were very happy to read Virendra Sharma's article in your last issue and to see that you are strongly defending Tariq Ali's application for Labour Party membership.

We are circulating a petition in many factories in the Midlands and Yorkshire to demand from Labour NEC that Tariq is allowed to join. We have already got the support of 2000 trades unionists from the T&GWU, AUEW and GMWU and we hope that we will have 10,000 signatures to present to Michael Foot on 22 April 1982 when a delegation from the PWA will meet David Hughes, National Agent and other NEC members at Walworth Road in London. We have received a letter of support from Tony Benn and a friendly letter from Michael Foot, explaining the NEC decision. We are not satisfied with Brother Foot's reply and we hope to persuade him of our case in April.

Many Asian workers were very pleased when Tariq Ali applied to join the Labour Party and were angry when the NEC rejected his application. It was seen as a slap in the face of Asian people in this country. We will keep you informed of our campaign and would be happy to supply any of your readers with Petitions if they write to us.

The PWA is firmly committed to supporting the Labour Party and our support will be different to that of the IWA (Southall) whose President, Mr Khabra, has just joined the SDP. All our members are trade unionists and we do not permit businessmen to join our organisation although we happily accept any financial donations.

Keep up the fight.

Fraternally,

A.K.Khan, General Secretary
Pakistani Workers Association
56 Phipson Road, Birmingham B11 4JH

Dear *Briefing*,

I read with interest the article on Rasta solidarity in which Jeremy Corbyn and others interviewed Gladstone 'Jah Bones' Warburton. I do feel strongly that the Labour Party should indeed actively support the needs of Black groups, and also that members of such groups should become actively involved in the Party itself.

However it would be with considerable reservations that I would welcome the Rastafarian Movement into the Labour Movement because of their views on women. I know very little about Rastafarianism but I do know that they do not believe that women are equal and that they have strict rules surrounding the behaviour of women.

Jah Bones talks about racism but sexism is equally important.

Perhaps *Labour Briefing* could do an interview, or at least provide some correct information, on the Rastafarian view of women. In particular I should be very interested to know how those Rastas who are sympathetic to the Labour Party feel about (so-called) women's issues.

Yours fraternally,

Elaine Hume

Pauline Ashbridge's article 'Oh, so Militant!' in *Briefing* No 17 showed a complete lack of understanding of 'Militant's' proposals for fighting the attack on London Transport.

'Militant' has consistently argued that the only way to defeat the Tory attacks is by the Labour Movement being prepared to defy the Tories' demands and confront the Tory Government. This is the strategy we have fought for under both this and the previous Tory government.

To begin the campaign to defend London Transport we have called on the Labour GLC to first of all adopt a principled stand against any fare increases or cuts. Then on this firm foundation the GLC should work to build up support for an all-out battle with the Tories. In order to help mobilise backing and to give the Tories a warning shot we have called for the transport unions to hold a 24 hour stoppage in London. We do not see this as a 'safety valve' or token protest, which is how the right wing would hope to use it. Rather it must be a stepping stone towards further action, possibly an unlimited stoppage, if the Tories do not retreat.

We have argued for this position of confronting the Tories at Regional Conferences and on the Regional Executive. If comrade Ashbridge wants to debate 'Militant's' policies that's fair enough, but at least then she should criticise us for what *we* say and not any distortions of part of our policy by GLC members trying to justify voting for fares increases.

Fraternally,

Bob Labi
Hampstead CLP

Dear Comrades,

I am writing to you to express my pent-up exasperation at the kind of political line that has been coming to dominate *LLB* of late: eg. in pieces by Jon Lansman and Nigel Williamson as well as the more subtle positions of Tariq Ali and your Feb. '82 *Editorial*. It should hardly need saying that we are in a situation where the Left has made quite unprecedented gains in the Labour Party at all levels, while the Party is threatened with electoral nemesis (even in its 'safest' bailiwicks) by the new LASDA alliance (I thought it was a supermarket chain . . .). So it is scarcely amazing that many comrades are suggesting it may be time to regroup, consolidate and repair some of the damage done by a period of sustained Borgia-like infighting carried on in public. Yet those – like Vladimir Derer and the LCC majority – who draw the obvious conclusion of needing to turn to outward campaigning on the key policy issues and tone down the gung-ho triumphalism, hit-list of the week, fight to the finish mentality are getting vilified as if they were careerists, soggy fainthearts – not to say SDP 5th columnists!

PRINCIPLED COMPROMISE

Actually there *is* an alternative to capitulation v. intransigence: it's called a principled compromise. Those who reject compromise *on principle* should quit politics and join a closed monastic order. Nigel Williamson's 'compromise' consists of the Right being prepared to support official Party policy. Aside from the fact that everyone knows this is not going to happen, is it seriously proposed that the Left should have gone along and promoted the majority view 20 years back when the Right were in the saddle (eg supporting the Bomb)? The fundamental issue is what your conception of the Labour Party is. I have always taken it as axiomatic that its strength (and weakness in some ways) is

Letters continued

as an OPEN POLITICAL COALITION based on the trade unions – a 'broad democratic alliance' if you'll pardon the expression – and not a far-left rump or substitute Bolshevik Party. This inevitably means having some odd bedfellows in the Movement, likewise it implies that we appeal to the electorate not just in terms of already-convinced socialists and trade union militants but aiming at far wider constituencies (note the plural) among our 11½ million last-time voters such as tenants, ethnic minorities, environmentalists, feminists etc. When we hear (eg from Bro. Scargill) that those who don't buy Clause IV should quit the Party it not only makes it hard to combat charges of intolerance (too often justified ones, I fear), it would mean saying goodbye to most of our 8 million levy-paying trade unionists. I'm trying to get my union affiliated to Labour: if our members don't see it as a broad united-front type party to reflect their interests they will never be won over.

If comrades sometimes chafe at being publicly associated with D. Healey or T. Duffy they should consider the continental alternative where more 'pure' socialist groupings like PSU in France or VS in Denmark face mass social democrat outfits or Stalinist monoliths to end up with 1.5% of the poll or whatever. You don't need to venture further than your nearest pub to find that 'Socialism' (widely seen as a glorified cross between Pol Pot and Municipal housing) is less popular among working people than for decades. *This*, and not the dwindling Right-wing majority in the PLP, is our real bugbear (and it can't all be blamed on the media either). Much of the esoteric debate about re-selection, manifestos and the like is a joke in the context of an empty shell of a Movement where our radical activists have rarely built any credible mass base for their Socialist politics which could make the calls for accountability of MPs and councillors really meaningful (how many GMC delegacies are hotly contested?). In Southwark, it is the very same comrades who quite rightly denounce the veto on Tatchell who are most firm in wanting to prevent non-Left wards choosing their favoured reactionaries. They see no contradiction in this, and maybe the constitution is on their side (not being a lawyer I wouldn't know). To be crudely pragmatic, what has this tradition of 'activist democracy' (from the Benn campaign downwards) actually ACHIEVED in terms of shifting the balance of forces in this society to the left? Not a whole lot so far.

SACRED COWS

'Left Unity' is one of the great sacred cows which, like motherhood and apple pie, no one dares query. It's taken for granted that more umbrella groupings can only be positive, and for instance Tariq Ali calls for one (LL 82 I assume) that should 'struggle for commonly agreed policies'. But *what* policies? The Left is split from top to bottom on nearly every major current political issue bar CND (import controls/AES, Common Market, Ireland, feminism, Poland, rate rises, nationalisation, the role of Parliament, nuclear power, economic growth – all are highly contentious among Socialists and quite rightly so). The success of the Benn campaign lay in that we could all agree we hated Denis Healey and Tony Benn is a great guy (as he is, of course). Does the Left, in fact, have a commonly agreed vision of Socialism and the means to achieve it to put across to people? Just why *are* we against capitalism anyway? Is our vision one of centralised state control and endless growth in industrial production? None of these things are unproblematic. While the Left is starting to resolve these critical issues it should take stock of the fact that official Party policy on the major issues is clearly 'broad left' and, while not perfect in every detail, is not bad to be getting on with. So we should start to act as the *leadership* that we morally are (especially given recent changes for the better in Parliamentary selections and in union policies), not as a perpetually beleaguered minority of oppositionists who are always sold out. That means (a) going out to win greater public support on agreed policy issues (AES, disarmament etc) among rank and file trade unionists and others; (b) sharpening up policy in those areas where it is clearly deficient. If there's going to be a ruck, let the other lot start it and let them carry the blame. Fighting a perpetual confrontation on the organisatonal/constitutional issues shouldn't be our game, it means *inevitably* fighting on hostile terrain where the media can mount scare campaigns and reduce issues to personalities.

Just because one fears the situation when the only time Labour MPs seem to get the hearing of the media is to slag off other Party members does not make one a proponent of the 'unity of the graveyard'. What we're talking about are *tactics* for the real world (Britain, 1982) not universally applicable abstract principles. If we had a situation where the big issue for most trade unionists or Labour voters was "how do we get to Socialism?". then our approach could be rather different, but at the moment conscious Socialism is no more than a fringe, ghetto culture. We have no 'natural majority' to appeal to. Maybe there are people who think Socialism can be achieved in a country like this by an insurrectionary putsch without mass support. I beg to differ. Obviously, our necessary shift towards a 'battle for hearts and minds' campaign (a shift that should have been made *decades* ago) will not be made easier by the post-Brighton Rightist counter-offensive re: Tatchell, Militant group etc. That, however, is an argument for subtle, flexible tactics not over-the-top Battle of the Somme style offensives on our part. We don't have to be pessimistic: if our Party can capitalize on the positive aspects of the present situation, regroup under fire and begin a serious long-run campaign to win back our lost legions of voters we could be participating in a few years' time in a political radicalization of unprecedented breadth and depth. If we allow ourselves to be sidetracked, however, into futile battles in 'smoke-filled' conferences and GMC meetings over historically trivial issues, we could see Labour AND WITH IT THE ENTIRE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT being reduced to a marginal political role as in Ireland or Canada (as the SDP and its backers hope). No amount of sloganizing, bravado or wishful thinking can disguise the fact that we have no simple, off-the-peg solutions to our political ghettoization. Don't forget the *Water Margin* saying, 'yield and overcome' – and leave your head-banging for Status Quo gigs.

Yours fraternally,

Martin C. Cook

Dear *Briefing*,

In my view, it is indeed vitally necessary for us to attempt an in-depth analysis of the political scene in our country, to day – in 1982 – and as a beginning it is well to remember with shame and heartache, that it is exactly 50 years since the 'traitors', Ramsey Macdonald, Philip Snowden, J.H. Thomas and others, ratted on our Party, left us with but 50 members in Parliament, and joined with the Tories and Liberals to form a 'National Government'.

I was 16 at the time, a convinced socialist, and certain that I would see a Socialist Britain in my time!

It must be said, loud and clear, that Shirley Williams, David Owen, William Rodgers, and the many defectors up and down our country, are the 'Ramsey Macdonalds' of today!!

About Roy Jenkins – we can only repeat his own words. He has not even thought of, nor indeed mentioned, the word 'Socialism' over the last ten years. Fair enough. He never was a

London Labour Briefing, page thirty five.

Socialist. He loves the Common Market – who wouldn't with the kind of job he has just completed!

Incidentally, the Press categorised his term of 4 years, as being one of 'dismal failure'. I am not sure whether the media was referring to him, the EEC, or both!

The Alliance tells us that they are 'breaking the mould".

They lie!

Let us look at Alliance Policy – a re-hash of lashings of Liberal lollypopism!

1. Proportional Representation.
2. An incomes policy.
3. Profit sharing – workers directorships.
4. Decentralisation.

Without going into these wonder cures in any detail; what vagueness, utter stupidity – which will only lead to confrontation politics with the unions – and can anyone see the faceless people who really control every facet of our capitalist system in all its complexities, voluntarily pass over any kind of power sharing to the working masses of our country? This is sophistry of the highest order.

These policies will not produce a single job, but if they succeed and push through their version of proportional representation, the dangers of a right wing dictatorship – British Style – are very real.

'The Mould' indeed has to be broken.

Socialism alone – will 'break the mould'! How to make our people see this?

This is why the media never let up in categorising the word 'Socialism' as a dirty word.

They, the SDP, are the political failures of yesterday.

They are neither democratic – nor socialist.

Their very word is couched in demagogy, deceipt and double talk.

When they held sway in our Party, did they ever call for proportional representation? Never! It was over their dead bodies!

When did they ever oppose the block vote? The answer is never, certainly when it always assured their period of dominance in our Party and Movement as a whole.

I have stated that 'the Mould' indeed has to be broken.

This does not necessarily mean changing the two party system.

What it does mean is:

1. Ending the bi-partisan approach to Foreign Policy, Defence Spending, the nuclear deterrent, Ireland and the Common Market, as a beginning.
2. Above all, to change once and for all the useless attempts to prop up and reform a dying system of society.

A battle to defeat the Tories and their allies the Double Talking Alliance, cannot be fought in Parliament alone. The people, led by our Party, must be drawn into all manner of activities, for jobs, for life itself. This is what Tatchell means.

I am confident that common sense – humanity – and True Socialism will win the day.

yours fraternally,

Jack Rosenthal, Totteridge C.L.P.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

With increased costs, we've had no alternative but to increase the annual subscription to £4.50. Please complete the form below.

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Send to Graham Bash, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.

BRIEFING IN SHEFFIELD

Labour has a long record in local government with some fine examples of what can be done when the Party uses its power and imagination to develop and implement socialist policies. By contrast, the twenty-sixth local government conference, held this year in Sheffield, still displays the worst profile of the Party with some municipal statesmen assuring that they know best for their authority and the traditional rallying speeches from the Parliamentary leadership.

Fringe meetings and the opportunity to meet informally with other party members provide much of the life and thrust at such conferences. A joint meeting of London Labour Briefing and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy provided one of the high points of the Conference with Andy Harris, David Blunkett, Val Wise, Joan Maynard, Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn outlining policy initiatives that the Left needs to be pursuing over the coming year. With perceptive wit, Tony Benn reminded us that the Tories have provided a model for legislation to be enacted by an incoming Labour Government in which retrospective legislation can be made to discharge all Labour Councillors who have fought for Party Policy and have been dismissed and surcharged by the Courts. The model was provided by Soames who allowed Smith to escape from the crimes of his racist regime in Rhodesia.

This was quite in contrast to Gerald Kaufmann who said he would recommend to the Shadow Cabinet that the power of the District Auditor would be restricted to fraudulent investigations and corrupt practices. Is it good enough just to stop the District Auditor becoming a local Denning Conference though not and gave support to Ted Knight who reassured that some extra-Parliamentary activity was needed to save what little was left of local government. Briefing supporters are well aware of what can happen to Party members who call for extra-Parliamentary action against the Tories.

Conference attenders were treated to Michael Foot quoting from the Times and promising to fight for a "genuine and real autonomy of *our* local authorities" and that we had to find new "structural ways of *bringing* local government to the people". Judith Hart, from the Chair, gave a touching account of the need for party unity around the spirit of Bishop's Stortford, the basis of which is the need to campaign for the policies of Annual Conference, no more constitutional changes or challenges and no witchhunts, the last points being quite ironic as Roy Hattersley did not appear to know about this particular interpretation of this agreement. Perhaps he can't be blamed as this must have been more interpretations than local government conferences!

If the Party wants to make the local government conference have a value then we must all express our views to head offices and ensure that they are followed up. It is not enough to send in a letter or report as many party organisations did when the NEC called for evidence about Group/Party relations. The National Agent reported that the NEC had given consideration but had not come to any conclusions hence there was no report to Annual Conference last year. With new groups to be formed in May, it is vital that the old model of group accountability which seeks to maintain its independence from the party is changed.

Here, surely must be one constitutional change that must not be forgotten in 1982.

David Fryer
Peckham CLP

CONFERENCE

Democratise the labour movement!

WHERE: Lanchester Poly, Priory St, Coventry.
WHEN: Saturday April 3.
INITIAL SPONSORS: Socialist Organiser Alliance, London Labour Briefing, Oxford Trades Council, Nottingham Labour Briefing, Manchester Labour Left, CPSA British Library Branch, Kings Cross ASLEF, Oxford CATC.
DELEGATES: and observers invited from all labour movement organisations. Individuals also welcome. Credentials £2.
CRECHE: Available.
WRITE TO: Democracy Conference, c/o Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Rally for International Women's Day, Sponsored by Socialist Challenge, Revolution Youth. Speakers from the Fourth International. Mary Vinns, United Mineworkers of America. Speaker from Peoples' Democracy. Speaker from Nicaraguan women's movement. Camden Centre, off Euston Road, 7.30pm, March 12th. Doors open 5.30pm. Stalls and displays. Entrance; £1,50p unwaged.

TARGET '82
Monday March 1st at 7.30pm
County Hall
Speakers include Joan Maynard

Next Editorial Board Meeting
Thursday February 25th at 6.30pm
at County Hall, Room 175

Deadline for articles: Friday 5th March

DEADLINE for articles for BRIEFING's pamphlet on the S.D.P.: March 8th. We need MONEY and HELP in laying this out, or it won't appear. Send your material in quickly to Nigel Williamson, 14 Meon Ct., Rye Crescent, Orpington; phone 66-74220.
Note: articles on the S.D.P. which did not appear in this BRIEFING will be in the pamphlet. It will be on sale with the next issue of BRIEFING, 50p.

Articles for *Briefing* must be typed by the contributor. Hand-written articles will not be accepted in future. Use triple spacing and a very wide (2") margin each side; type one side of sheet only. NOTHING will be accepted after the deadline published.

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MARCH 27, 1982

WOMEN IN TRADE UNIONS

A NEW APPROACH

CONFERENCE

KINGSWAY PRINCETON COLLEGE
Sidmouth Street, WC1

REGISTRATION: £3.50 includes conference, lunch and films, plus reduced rate (£1) for bop. (This package will be reduced to £2 for non-delegates who are unwaged or low-waged). The LUNCH is only guaranteed for those who have registered in advance. FILMS only: £1. BOP only: £2

INFORMATION: from Women's Fightback, 41 Ellington Street, London N7 (607-9052) or local Fightback address

FREE THE BRADFORD 12!

CONFERENCE: SATURDAY 27 February, 10a.m. County Hall.
Demonstration: Leeds, April 3rd.
Protest outside Leeds Crown Court, Monday April 26th.
Donations and requests for speakers to: Unit 265, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. 250 1293.