LONDON LABOUR 30p

BRIEFING

No 20 JUNE 1982

Camden, Southwark, Hackney and Haringey - unite behind

FORTRESS ISLINGTON!

The local Council elections produced a very mixed series of results for Labour activists. The media rejoiced in the success of the Tories, who in many town halls were swept into office despite the cuts, the blunders and the existence of three million unemployed. The 'Falklands factor' was real enough in the way it produced a mindless surge of patriotism and shored up a Conservative vote that a few weeks before looked like coming a bad third in most Boroughs. In Boroughs that Labour could have won, like Ealing and Wandsworth, the result was that the Tories hung on by their fingertips. Worse still, Labour lost its overall majorities in Lambeth, Brent, Waltham Forest and was still in a tied Council in Hammersmith.

Nevertheless, the temporary resurgence of the Conservatives was balanced by two important developments. The first of these was the decisive humiliation of the SDP – which vanished from most Boroughs as swiftly as it appeared. In the words of Margaret Hodge, the new Labour Leader in Islington, the 'unelected had become the unelectable'. Indeed Islington proved to be the jewel in Labour's local government crown. The first, and probably last, SDP council in Britain was crushed in a Labour landslide that returned 51 out of 52 Labour Councillors and showed a 10% swing since the last election. The mere existence of an SDP council was enough to show the electorate that only Labour was able to defend working-class interests. The months of hard campaigning and organising paid off for a Labour Party that has fought a sharper and longer battle against the old gang who now run the SDP than anyone else in the country.

Interestingly enough, where the Liberals distanced themselves from their erstwhile Alliance partners, such as in Hackney and Tower Hamlets, they were successful. They failed in those areas where they ran as junior partners to the Social Democrats. This must put an even greater strain on an already rickety alliance.

Labour made strides forward not only in Islington but also in Camden, Southwark and the Hornsey part of Haringey. It can hardly be coincidence that the very areas where the Left, and in particular supporters of *Briefing*, wield a large influence the Labour Party campaigned hardest and achieved its best results. The lessons for the future are clear. Labour will lose ground if it is led by a tired, aged right-wing leadership unable to combat the superficially attractive community politics of the Liberals. Where a radical change has occurred and Labour is led by committed socialists who believe in accountability and community control, then the Liberals will fade out and Labour's success is assured.

But where does this now leave *Briefing* Councillors and how successful was Target '82? There is now little doubt that our early optimism of two dozen new socialist councils united to fight the Government has not happened. Labour now actually controls less than it did prior to the election. Nevertheless, there has been a real qualitative change in the sort of leadership we can offer. The Left is now in control of many Boroughs and the GLC is no longer isolated as the only avowedly socialist authority to publicly campaign against the Government. A launch by *Briefing* of an 'Association of Socialist Councillors' is the next stage in uniting London for a real battle against the Government – a battle that this time we can win. In the past an isolated Lambeth or Lothian was capable of being picked off. An alliance of Islington, Camden, Haringey and Hackney united with the GLC and ILEA poses a far more formidable threat to Thatcher. If no other issue explodes before, there is little doubt that Labour's pledge of a total rent freeze next year will produce a punitive attack from both the Government and its ally the District Auditor. Other such issues may well be the role of Labour Councils in supporting NUPE and NALGO in their pay claims, and clashes over iniquitous legislation like the 'Right to Buy' and withdrawal of support grant. The maximum unity in struggle between different Labour Councils, CLPs and trades unions is vital. *Briefing* and the Association of Socialist Councillors will play a major role in cementing this.

The next battle can be a decisive one in defeating Thatcher's government. In many ways it is up to us. Picking our best battlefield, refusing to be threatened and isolated and maintaining and strengthening our links to the community and the Labour Party are vital. The Left must prepare carefully for the next few months. The leadership of London is now ours – and we must see this is used to bring an end to this Government once and for all!

Keith Veness
Newly elected Islington Councillor

LABOUR – TAKE THE POWER!

BOROUGH ROUND-UP

SOUTHWARK

Goodbye Mr Mellish!

Labour's fine electoral success in Southwark on May 6th was marred only by the election of three anti-Labour independent candidates in the Riverside ward, an event directly attributable to the intervention of Bob Mellish.

'MELLISH SAYS: DON'T VOTE LABOUR' bellowed a headline in the *South London Press* at the end of April just as the local election campaign was beginning to warm up. Even the NEC was forced to issue a statement repudiating the Bermondsey Boy's endorsement of anti-Labour candidates in the local elections in Southwark.

EXPULSION INEVITABLE

The expulsion of Mellish from the Labour Party would now appear to be inevitable and he seems certain to be joined on the carpet by veteran ex-GLC Leader Sir Reg Goodwin and Southwark's former planning chairman, Ron Watts.

What has sparked off the latest series of events in Bermondsey was the decision of one of the Bermondsey wards, Riverside, not to reselect a sitting councillor, Coral Newell, who had been a councillor for one term of four years. Mellish had written to selected members of the ward prior to the selection meeting and had thus managed to pack it with 50 of his supporters. In spite of this the ward voted not to reselect Coral Newell and instead to choose as their three candidates local party members Sid Howard, Bette Crickmar and Brian Dawson.

Coral Newell did not, however, accept defeat gracefully and immediately attacked the voting system used at the meeting (a voting system used throughout Southwark and approved by the Labour Party Regional Office – the votes incidentally were counted by John O'Grady himself). Next a canard was raised about squatters who were accused – preposterously and totally without evidence – of using false names in order to vote at the selection meeting. Labour Party members outside Bermondsey may not be aware incidentally that squatters are a group of second class citizens in the eyes of certain local politicians in this part of South London. When these avenues had failed her, Coral Newell went to Bob Mellish and he advised her to stand as an Independent which she promptly decided to do in conjunction with two other tenants' leaders who were not even members of the Labour Party. The trio called themselves 'Independent Labour and Tenant' candidates and won the endorsement of Mellish in public statements and in a letter which he announced he would be distributing to electors throughout the ward. 'I don't care a tuppeny damn about Bermondsey Labour Party' he announced on the front page of the local paper.

FOOT EMBARRASSED

Michael Foot was clearly extremely embarrassed at Mellish's behaviour since he had recently tried to appease Mellish by refusing to endorse Peter Tatchell as prospective parliamentary candidate for the constituency. As a headline in *The Morning Star* nicely put it: 'Foot's choice in Bermondsey boots Labour.' But Michael Foot's attempt at intervention was in vain. Mellish 'didn't give a damn' and went ahead with his support for the anti-Labour candidates.

Under Party rules Mellish must certainly face expulsion, so the prospect of a by-election (and a damaging re-opening of 'The Tatchell Affair') is once more being faced in Bermondsey.

Mellish's example was followed by Ron Watts, Southwark's former planning chairman, who had not been chosen by his ward to stand either. A leading O'Grady mafioso, his angry message from the bunker was that it would be 'a serious day for the welfare of this borough' if Labour regained control of Southwark. A delighted *South London Press* reported his remarks in full and the local SDP/Lib and Tory candidates no doubt rubbed their hands with glee.

Into the fray then stepped Sir Reg Goodwin who declared his support for Mellish's position with the words: 'It seems to me that the methods used to de-select her are very similar to those used in other parts of the country by people with extreme Left-wing views who have had only a very short association with the Labour Party.'

Mellish has made no secret of the fact for some time that he wants to quit as MP to concentrate on his job as Vice-Chair of the Docklands Development Corporation, a body set up to speed up the handover of Bermondsey to speculators and private entrepreneurs. He clearly intends to inflict the maximum amount of damage on the local Labour Party (which has worked to keep him in power since the war) and the people of Bermondsey before he goes.

Nick Murray

Southwark : A Labour Borough

In recent months, the Labour Party in Southwark found itself faced by an almost impressive band of opposition to advancing its manifesto and democratising its structure. With fourteen defections to the SDP, the NEC attack on Peter Tatchell, the NEC intervention which put eight un-endorsed right-wing councillors onto the Borough panel, the Town Hall trade unions being provoked to go on strike, Alliance support apparently strong, and the intervention by Bermondsey MP Bob Mellish to back three independents with a mis-reported call to local people *not* to vote Labour, the battle for control of the Council would indeed to played out to the end.

The result? Labour won 53 out of the 64 seats on the Council, annihilated the Alliance who lost all their seats (?), even the bye-election victory of November 1981, and virtually regained the balance achieved in 1978 when Labour took 56 seats and the Tories took 8. Even though Bob Mellish's intervention has undoubtedly helped the three independents to win, the Left on the Group have been elected in a majority, who now mean to ensure that the manifesto commitments are carried out. An interim move has been to elect a new Leader and Whip at the AGM, which was then adjourned to allow the three CLP's to be consulted over nominations for office on the Council. To consult with the Party can only strengthen the links with the Group and joint working party has been established to look at ways to democratise Group practices.

ONLY THE START

Battles in Southwark though are far from being concluded. Even between the writing of this article and its subsequent printing, the actual timing and announcement of a bye-election in Bermondsey could leave the orbit of speculation and come firmly down to Earth. In this context, I would like to add a few personal observations which I encountered on the doorstep. Easy as it was to blame the Tories for cuts in Government grants and forcing the rents up and the lack of SDP policies, many remembered that the *last* Labour Government started the cuts, and then went on to point out, quite forcibly at times, that only Labour has been in power in Southwark and that they had heard all these promises before. Under a Labour Council, there had been too many empty flats, poor repairs, no consultation over local plans, no surgeries, and an apparent level of waste and inefficiency that meant that the Council bureau crats didn't care about local people. I lost

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TOWER HAMLETS

Left wins some victories

THE victory for Labour in retaining control of Tower Hamlets can largely be attributed to the left wards and activists who organised and campaigned for left policies.

Where the right have dominated in the party Labour seats were lost overwhelmingly to 'Focus' Liberals, or narrowly saved. But in two Bow and Bethnal wards the Liberal majorities were cut back by the campaigning left.

Where no threat of opposition parties was posed the right wing were returned on average polls. The Leader of the Labour Group was not even challenged and was elected unopposed.

The SDP showing was so poor that they were beaten into the lower end of the polls, except in Blackwall and Shadwell.

The SDP have such wide disagreements with local Liberals that no Alliance candidates stood – their agent (George Clark) had to be shipped in from Kensington, and their membership was largely recruited from the luxury riverside dwellers. In wards where Bengali candidates were standing they probably took most of the racist anti-black vote. In St. Katherine's ward, where a total of 14 candidates stood, there was an overwhelming 1,000 plus vote for two Bengali Labour councillors, a vindication of the ward's policy to select them.

In contrast, in Spitalfields, where there is an unfortunate history of Bengalis' and others' applications being stalled, the Bengali protest vote was strongly registered and a 'left' independent candidate returned.

Unfortunately the candidate that Labour lost was one of two left-wingers (Socialist Organiser supporters) who had conducted a vigorous campaign on the Nationality Act and against rent rises.

But many of the 'independent' supporters divided their vote, backing Labour candidates and many Bengalis applied to join the party over the election period, seeing this as part of the fight against the right wing council and against Tory policies.

Two 'other varieties' of Labour also stood. There were 'independents' on the Isle of Dogs, led by an ex-Labour councillor who was disgruntled with not being selected, with parochial anti-left views.

More worryingly, Labour candidates in a Bethnal Green ward put out a highly questionable 'popularistic' programme – calling for higher sentences for muggers, and advocating council housing for anyone in the area wanting to buy, and housing only for local people – to use all empty properties for sons and daughters of local people. This obviously was aimed against immigrants or outsiders and had racist connotations.

The ward was lost overwhelmingly to Liberals, and the Labour Party will be examining the election material.

The six left councillors now face a fight against privatisation, where Liberals could combine with the Labour right.



Photo by Chi Chau

Therese Shanahan celebrates victory on May 6th.

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count of the number of people who were amazed to actually meet a Labour candidate, many having lived in the ward for over twenty-five years!

If our manifesto is to be implemented, then that will not be achieved by Labour Councillors, even left councillors, sitting in plush town halls, making decisions that affect local people but without their involvement. The campaign to decentralise council services must take place at local level if Labour is going to win back support that will replace cynicism and mistrust with a clear and unequivocal support for socialist policies.

ONE LAST CHANCE

While the result was good for Labour in Southwark, it was heart-breaking to see many good comrades go down in their Boroughs. We needed their support for the fight against the reactionary policies of the Tories as well as bureaucratic intransigence at municipal battlegrounds like the AMA and LBA. We have won a last chance to prove that a socialist alternative exists, I personally have been promised many kicks up the arse if we don't do what we said, and clearly and firmly told by an astute working class population that there is no need to come back if we fail. That message still rings firmly in my ears and will not be forgotten.

David Fryer – Labour Councillor Bermondsey

HACKNEY

New leadership

The Labour Party gained 50 out of the 60 seats on Hackney Council, the opposition consisting of 3 Tories and 7 Shoreditch Liberals. The main Labour casualty was Ron Heisler.

The following day, the Broad Left met to discuss tactics for the Saturday Labour meeting. 26 attended. The Left was divided over the issue of whether or not to eject John Kotz from the leadership. The only alternative nomination for leadership was Anthony Kendall, a soft Labour 'liberal', who stands to the left of Kotz on a few issues, and to his right on class issues.

Kendall had refused to join the Broad Left. With great misgivings, but sorely tempted by offers of Chairs, the Left decided to back Kendall.

KOTZ DISMISSED

At the Saturday Group meeting, Kotz was dismissed by 30 votes to 18. This leaves the Left in Hackney in an awkward position, since the manifesto with its bland emphasis on decentralisation can be easily supported by Left and Right, but with vastly differing political interpretations.

The new Centre/Right leadership of Hackney Council consisting of Kendall, Brian Weller and Peter Kahn, is only balanced within the 'inner circle' by Patrick Kodikara of the Left. The hard Left, consisting of little more than a quarter of the Labour Group, will have its work cut out to mount any serious political offensive and will have to rely on external party pressures to have any impact.

A call is being made for a special Local Government Committee Conference to decide the immediate Council priorities.

(From our inside reporter)

BOROUGH ROUND-UP *(continued)*

HOUNSLOW

gains for left–but right still in charge

Following the election it looks as if the new Council will have the same Labour majority as before: 36-24. The final result depends upon the result in Feltham South, normally a safe Labour seat, where the election has been postponed until June following the death of one of the candidates.

Within the Labour Group, the Left has increased its strength as expected, but the old leadership is still safely in control. Some changes will be necessary owing to the defeats of the Chairman of Finance and Vice-Chairman of Education and the decision of the Chairman of Planning not to contest the election.

In the immediate future, newly elected Left Councillors will be concentrating on gaining election to key committees in order to ensure a platform for our policies, and in warding off any attempt to isolate Heather Wetzel and Enda Donnelly, the two Councillors expelled from the old Group because of their opposition to cuts.

Future tactics will be influenced by the approach adopted towards us by the leadership. Among the tasks we must set ourselves are:

1) We must develop links with the local anti-cuts campaigns and take the struggle for restoration of cuts in services back into the Council chamber.

2) We must build links with tenants' associations and other community groups in our respective wards in order to win active support for the no cuts policy. Similarly, we must link up with Council unions in order to develop a common front against the loss in jobs the present policies have created. An open campaigning approach will contrast sharply with the low profile 'no cuts' approach of the old Group – a line abandoned in the face of Tory threats.

3) We must demand that Labour Group meetings are made open to all Party members, and must seek the greatest possible degree of Group accountability to the Party as a whole.

John Connelly

LAMBETH

Labour is back—with the left at the helm

A tenuous majority of one – and that will be the Mayor's casting vote, assuming a Labour mayor is chosen – will be all that Labour can depend on after the elections gave 32 seats to the combined opposition of Tories (27) and Alliance (5), and 32 seats to Labour.

However, the Labour parties and the Labour group took power as the largest party with a hectic weekend of meetings following the May 6 elections, culminating with a series of elections roughly in line with the Local Government Committee's recommendations, and strongly in support of the left on the Labour group of councillors.

Ted Knight was re-elected as leader, with new committee chairs strongly reflecting the new trends of Lambeth's manifesto.

Kevin Moore takes over housing, with its commitment to extensive decentralisation, and Graham Norwood was elected chair of planning in support of Lambeth Labour Parties' proposals for modest redevelopment in Brixton town centre.

Lambeth's ILEA representative is now Helen Crossfield, taking over from Elsie Horstead, whose activities on the authority were much criticised by left ILEA members and Briefing supporters.

Janet Boateng, one of four members of the ethnic minorities on the Labour group, becomes chair of social services – although with one of the group's small numbers of right wingers as vice-chair.

The problems facing any administration forced to rely on such a tenuous majority are enormous – regular attendance, almost all members taking up a senior position in the administration, and so on.

But the possibility is that the new Labour council has a radical complexion with the intention of carrying out socialist policies in line with the aims of the Lambeth manifesto – no cuts, no job losses, and improved services for the people of the borough.

Graham Norwood



Pat Williams: Labour's choice for Mayor.

LEWISHAM

marginal shift to the left

Ann Bliss,
Councillor for Drake Branch,
Lewisham East CLP

Labour in Lewisham has maintained its large majority over the Tories on the Council. The figures are: Labour, 41; Tories, 26; with the SDP (who previously held four defectors' seats) getting completely smashed, with no seats at all. At our first Labour Group meeting, the agenda which had been sent to us by the Group's acting secretary was immediately challenged by one of the new councillors, Bala Gnanapragasam, who questioned the entire traditional structure of the Labour Group. He proposed (1) that the Group be opened up to observers from branches and the CLP's, to close the gap between the Group and the local Parties, (2) that the Group Policy Committee be reconstituted to enable it to oversee the political direction and manifesto commitment of the Council, (3) that monthly Group meetings be held, irrespective of whether there was going to be a full Council meeting afterwards, (4) that there be quarterly report-back meetings to the local parties by the Labour Group (instead of reliance as previously only on the annual Local Government Conference for such report-backs) and (5) the circulation of a newsletter to the parties from the Group. All these proposals were passed by the full Group.

We also agreed to set up a working party to examine how changes could be made in the current structures of the various committees.

Andy Hawkins, the previous Leader, was elected unopposed (despite my efforts to ensure a challenge when our left caucus met previously). There was a ballot for Deputy, as a result of which BRIEFING supporter Ron Stockbridge obtained an overall majority. During his address to the Group, Andy Hawkins, who had got to know about our left caucus the previous afternoon, directed most of what he said to us. 'We don't want any warring factions', he declared. There wasn't much danger of that, because unfortunately the new Group contains only eight BRIEFING supporters (an improvement – there were only two before!) and our 'left' caucus was largely swamped by figures such as Roger Godsiff and Ron Pepper, who can hardly be considered 'hard left'. Still, the new elections have resulted in a marginal shift to the left in Lewisham – the 20 councillors who voted in Ron Stockbridge as Deputy Leader give an indication of our strength on the new group. There are still only 8 women on the Group, all of whom are feminists, and all but four of the men are white.

Lewisham Labour Left

meeting to discuss
tasks and objectives
after the borough council elections

12.15 p.m.

Sunday, June 6

Lee Centre
1 Aislibie Road, SE12

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NEWHAM

Conor McAuley, Newham Councillor and Secretary Newham N. W. CLP in a personal capacity.

Labour win Plashet Ward

Regular readers of *Briefing* will be aware of the long struggle within the Plashet Ward of the Newham North West CLP to sort out the 'ghost' members and the right wing Freemason Councillors, Watts and Billups. Matters came to a head in January when the Plashet Branch members refused to shortlist their two remaining sitting council members Bill Watts, the Deputy Leader of Newham Council and Peter Billups, the Town Planning and Housing Committee Chairman.

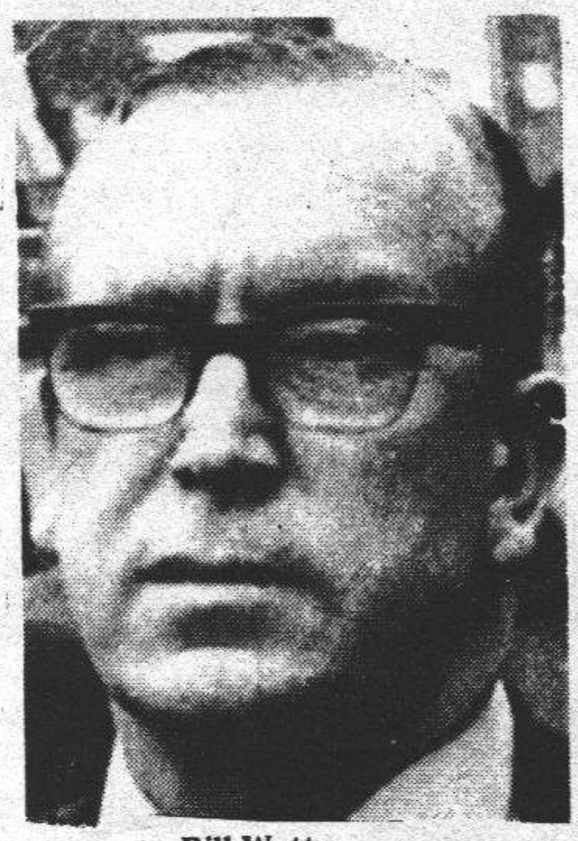
Watts and Billups fought back and managed to have the Branch reject the shortlist at the subsequent selection meeting. This did not happen without dispute. Two Branch members were refused by the Chairman, Cllr Watts, the right to vote as he claimed they had not yet joined the Branch. One was a new member who applied to join in September 1981, the other was another Newham Councillor who had transferred his membership.

A protracted dispute followed during which the Branch officers (Watts and Billups) refused to call an ordinary Branch meeting to settle the membership problems and the LGC refused to permit a new selection procedure to take place until the membership problems had been resolved. There was in fact a list of 18 new applicants wanting to join – one of whom had been waiting to join since December 1980!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE INTERVENES

The Newham Local Government Committee finally intervened and instructed me as Constituency Secretary to convene a selection meeting on Tuesday 30th March, less than a week before nominations closed. I was also instructed to place ALL the remaining candidates on the LGC panel on the shortlist. This included Cllrs Watts and Billups, thus putting them in a better position than they had been in January. This however was not enough for them. They went to the High Court on Thursday 25th March to seek an injunction to restrain the Party Chairman, John Saunders and myself from holding the meeting. They claimed that they alone as Branch officers had the right to convene Branch meetings. The Party Executive was convinced that they had done their arithmetic and had concluded that they could not win. We also believed that they did not want any selection to take place.

The case was finally heard in the High Court on the day of the selection meeting and the injunction was refused. John Saunders and I now have legal costs in excess of £600 to find. The judge made no order for costs so both sides must pay their own. (Now that the elections are over the Newham North West Party will be launching an appeal to help recover some of our costs.)



Bill Watts



Peter Billups

The selection meeting went ahead but Cllrs Watts and Billups refused to attend, announcing instead that they were going to contest the election as 'Labour Councillors'. They were joined by Cllr Williams the former Education Committee Chairman, who had failed to obtain a nomination from his own ward some weeks earlier.

Plashet Branch finally selected three new candidates. One of the Regional Organisers was present at the meeting and for once in Plashet Branch, everything was above board.

HARD AND BITTER

The election campaign was predictably, hard and rather bitter. Watts, Billups and Williams received help from strange sources, not least the independent Asian movement who were fielding candidates in four other Labour Wards. We also spotted former Labour Councillors and Party members from the Ilford area helping them.

Nevertheless we won fairly comfortably. The 'Labour Councillors' came in fourth, fifth and sixth. The SDP and the Tories came nowhere. Plashet Ward still needs some work to sort out its difficulties but the way is now clear to building the biggest branch in the constituency.

Plashet Ward was not our only success in the Borough elections. We retained 54 out of our previous 57 seats on the Council and 18 of these 54 are new Labour members, mainly from the Left. In many places we increased our majorities and in the traditional opposition ward, Greatfield Ward, we ran the SDP very close. The one surprise was Little Ilford Ward in the Newham North East constituency where a Liberal Focus Team came from nowhere to take the three seats.

The new Labour Group looks very different from the old. There is still a small majority for the old guard but they now realise that they can no longer put up the shutters and exclude the Left from all positions of responsibility. The real test came at the first Group meeting on Monday 10th May. The Party in Newham has long favoured the Group adopting the model standing orders for Labour Groups. It may be an obscure issue but the old Newham Group standing orders barred all new Councillors from committee chairmanships and vice chairmanships. The old Group members regarded the standing orders issue as a threat to their 'independence' from the Party. The Group leader Jack Hart and his new Deputy, GLC member Arthur Edwards both opposed the Party line on the standing orders. However the Group accepted the model rules by 27 votes to 26 with one abstention.

Almost immediately, peace broke out. The Group now has a separate chairman and leader. The new chairman is on the Left. The Housing Committee, which was previously the property of the Freemasons, now has a new Chairman, Cllr Jones. He is not on the Left but he is honest and arguably the best person to sort out the Housing Department. The new Housing Committee has a majority of new and Left Councillors. Indeed there are not enough Freemasons to go around any more and they will be hard pushed to dominate any committee.

This may not sound like a revolution – but in Newham terms it is certainly progress.

BRENT - The fight goes on

By Stephen Benn,
Brent South LGC Delegate

The Right is generally considered well in control of Brent after the Labour Group AGM on 12th May. But their hold, and the means by which it may have been achieved, had now been forced out well into the open – thanks to a crucial early decision to adopt recorded voting.

The Left were offered few concessions after an evening which decisively demonstrated the ability of the Group's new ruling majority to invite a head-on clash with the Brent Party. Only the previous evening, at a marathon session, the Local Government Committee had democratically elected a complete list of nominations for all major positions in the Group and on Committees. But within 24 hours the Group's new majority chose to defeat more than half of them.

This is not the spirit in which most Party members hoped to embark, as Labour is poised precariously in prospective knife-edged control of the Council (tied at 33-33) by the Mayor's casting vote.

Unprecedented

The stage was set by the 1982 AGM of the Brent LGC which had carefully planned the sequence of post-election meetings precisely to enable the Party at grass roots level to have the maximum influence on the shape, direction, and personnel of the new Group leadership. Thus Branch meetings, GCs, and the LGC were progressively scheduled for the Friday, Monday and Tuesday after Polling Day.

The LGC itself was an unprecedented experience: it was the first such meeting ever held before a Group AGM and it was well attended. With the allowable substitutes, each Brent Party (South, East and North) was at full 18-member voting strength. This 54-delegate maximum was supplemented (as was the Group AGM the following night) by a dozen or two Party members as observers. There wasn't a spare chair in the large Committee Room at Brent Town Hall for either meeting.

Challenge to Bryson

LGC delegates had been mandated by their GCs to vote for their respective CLP's list of nominations. Most of the LGC was spent in continual voting. It was at this meeting, as at the GCs earlier, that a formal challenge was made by the Left to Tom Bryson.

After the Local Elections the consensus of Left opinion favoured an election for the Leadership: not least to provide the Brent Party with a clear choice and an alternative Leader whom many thought better embodied the spirit and intention of the Manifesto we are committed to carrying through.

Ron Anderson was nominated by Brent East (having received a solid minority of the vote at the Brent South GC) but was defeated in the LGC by 18 votes to 33. Although Anderson lost, Left candidates predominated among most of the Committee Chair/Vice Chair nominations. Nevertheless mandating had begun to break down from the very first vote (for Leader) when Tom Bryson neglected Brent South's mandate (to vote for himself) – a 'neglect' which subsequently had a more crucial effect when applied (by him and others) elsewhere on other votes.



Photo by Andrew Wiard (Report).

Merle Amory-- now Deputy Leader.

The LGC finally made nominations for 22 major positions, only ten of which proved acceptable to the Labour Group. Even this degree of apparent support for the LGC list can be offset by two factors. First: that all ten were uncontested at the Group (six being uncontested at the LGC while four others, including Bryson's, necessitated an LGC vote). Second: the general political breakdown is considered roughly to be only three towards the Left and seven towards the Right. Among the six Group Officers the balance is widely thought to be tipped towards the Right – despite the appearance of equal balance as represented by Leader Tom Bryson and the new Deputy Leader Merle Amory.

Of the other 12 LGC nominations for important committee positions eight were simply brushed aside by the Group majority in votes that ranged from a close 15-17 to the wider 10-23. These eight comprised significant defeats for the Left in the face of a suspected series of deals that appeared to combine the old guard with an incoming ethnic bloc, (perhaps the most interesting feature to come to light after the 15-12 vote, with six crucial or inadvertent abstentions, in favour of recorded voting). The other four LGC nominations fell or, in unexplained circumstances, were withdrawn, thus opening the way for further Left defeats.

These eight major defeats included several notable cases where the ruling majority deliberately voted down people clearly chosen by the LGC only the night before. Thus Ron Anderson, who had defeated Bryan Stark 36-18 at the LGC for the post of Education Chair, went down 15-18 in the Group. Frank Hansen, the unanimous choice of the LGC as Chair of Finance, was defeated 13-20 by Phil Sealy (the outgoing Chair of the Group, who earlier had summarily ruled out of order a challenge to his Chairmanship which in turn had arisen from his ruling out of order Graham Durham's motion to boycott an invitation to a Buckingham Palace Garden Party). Manibhai Patel, defeated for the Chair of Leisure Services by the same score (13-20) had previously beaten his opponent T. Hanafin at the LGC by 36-18.

Changing the Structure

But if the Left have suffered a series of individual defeats they are poised to take an initiative for an immediate and radical overhaul of the structure of the Group, the way it conducts its business, and how it relates to the Party outside. Although all GCs were dominated by the lengthy business of agreeing nominations some reference was made at each to the urgent need to debate these questions.

At the LGC Stephen Benn, on behalf of Brent South CLP, accordingly moved a resolution entitled "Structure and Procedures of the Brent Labour Group". This incorporated within its demand for an immediate Review of Group Standing Orders, many items commonly agreed within all three CLPs (most of which were already LGC policy). These included:

1. The right of all Labour members to attend meetings of the Policy Committee.

2. The proper production of Labour Group Minutes and their circulation to all members of the Group and the three CLPs.

3. The establishment of an equal opportunities committee of the Council and the complete rewording of Standing Orders to eliminate all sexist language.

4. The creation of a Working Party to make recommendations on establishing the principle of Collective Leadership of the Labour Group.

5. The open election of all Committee Chairs/Vice Chairs by all members of the Labour Group.

6. Any necessary changes to Group Standing Orders to enable the Group to establish and maintain better links with the Brent Labour Party and its Branches. (Ideas being actively considered include access to Committee Agendas/Papers/Reports, more LGC input on Committee Labour Groups; and regular reporting-back requirements.

No effective voice was raised against any of these proposals at the LGC and the Group were scheduled to consider them at its reconvened AGM on 19th May.

We have come through a difficult Election Campaign and in the circumstances have done well to be able to retain control in Brent. The strain there will now be on all Labour members as we carry through our socialist manifesto makes it all the more imperative that these changes are introduced quickly. The real strength of this new Labour Council, with its large influx of new Left members, will be found in building the closest links with the Party – which such changes will enhance.

The Brent Labour Party (through the LGC) has a firm and legitimate interest in seeing the democratisation of the Labour Group whose Standing Orders are supposed to liberate and not imprison our Councillors in their task – and ours – of campaigning for socialism.

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WANDSWORTH
Bitter blow to Labour

Labour failed to regain control in Wandsworth on May 6, so the borough is condemned to four more years of vicious and destructive Tory rule.

The result came as a bitter blow to the Party, who had spend the years since 1978 looking forward to what was generally assumed to be our inevitable victory in 1982. At worst, we thought we would have a hung council with a Liberal/SDP group holding the balance. A huge amount of work went into producing not only the manifesto, but detailed papers on how to implement the policy. On this assumption, plans were laid for a meeting with the Chief Executive on the morning of May 7, to present him with a package of items to be put into effect immediately – not least our very ambitious decentralisation policy, which we intended to put into effect within the first year. And then, thanks to events 8,000 miles away, it all fell to pieces on the Thursday night. The Tories have a majority of five, which is not much – but one is enough. There were recounts in several wards and perhaps with better organisation we could have won them. . . perhaps if our leaflets had concentrated more on local issues it would have had an effect. . . perhaps. . .

Recriminations and post mortems are easy and will probably go on for months, but they don't alter the fact that we lost. What Labour has to do now is to hold together, and ensure that we do not collapse, as a party, in a welter of demoralisation and depression. The Local Government Committee has to be given a stronger role in co-ordination across the borough, and party members in general have got to take a far stronger part in campaigns by the Trades Council and community groups against the next round of cuts that will undoubtedly come. The most immediate issue is privatisation, on which Labour must show itself to be standing firm and fighting all the way. There were rumours among the unions, during the election campaign, that not every Labour candidate was sound on this – those who did get elected have to show, by their actions, that these rumours are unfounded.

Sue Ward

HARINGEY
A New Deal?

THE RESULTS in Haringey show a Labour Council returned with a reduced majority after Labour lost three right wingers in West Green ward, three left-wingers in Bowes Park and South Tottenham, and lost its only seat in Woodside.

The new Labour Group of 33 shows a marked swing to the left, with the best results being achieved in Hornsey where the Party fought on the slogans 'For Socialism' and 'Common Need not Private Greed'. The Party held its nine seats in Hornsey, in one case with a doubled majority and 5% increase on the share of the vote.

The SDP and Liberals, despite massive local newspaper support, failed to gain any seats and their best result was 27% of the vote in the Highgate ward. Both Tories and Alliance joined with the three local papers in attacking the Briefing statement by calling it the anarchists' charter, and at the start of the campaign the voices of the outgoing Labour leadership were added to the attacks on Briefing. The whole attempt backfired very badly, and the issues of the £26 million fine on Haringey and the legal threats to the Council by the District Auditor actually started to be discussed by voters.

The presentation of a socialist case locally helped to offset what can politely be called gross ineptitude by the Labour Leadership nationally. Instead of making the Council elections an issue for the whole movement Michael Foot deliberately got himself embroiled in the national issue of the Tory wars. Labour voters became more and more confused as the weeks wore on, and Labour suffered from being associated with the war by Michael Foot and Dennis Healey.

Immediately after the election the Local Government Committee executive met and agreed to an extension of the franchise for all Group and Council committee offices. A joint meeting of the LGC and Group is to be held on Monday May 17th to conduct the elections for the coming year.

A new style of leadership is promised, with the Council committees being restructured to take account of the pressing needs of the borough: jobs for youth, an end to racism and discriminatory practices; and the increasing elderly population.

Whilst Labour won the elections there is clearly a need for much clearer leadership at national and regional level so that Labour voters know what they are voting for, and for the Party to produce more aggressive recruiting and campaigning material. Many canvassers reported increased interest in the issues that are facing working people and a desire for political debate – the challenge now goes to the Party to fill that role.

Jeremy Corbyn

BROMLEY
SDP gains after backing from Edgar Smith

Hot on the heels of Bob Mellish and John Lebor, another fifth columnist within our ranks, Edgar Smith, the 75 year old retiring Leader of the Labour Group on Bromley Council, pitched into the local election battle only a week before polling day with a 'don't vote Labour' call.

Smith told the 'Bromley Advertiser' on the Thursday before the elections that two Labour councillors who defected to the SDP last October were 'very good councillors. They worked hard for that constituency. It would be churlish to kick them out".

And the electors of Anerley Ward took his advice. The SDP used his statement as a last minute vote today leaflet, and the two Labour candidates were defeated in a previously safe Labour ward.

In the neighbouring ward of Penge, another Labour councillor with an excellent record of service to her electors went down by a handful of votes to a Liberal.

In the same edition of the 'Bromley Advertiser' was a letter from Smith, signed as Leader of the 'Bromley Council Labour Group' in which he characterised the decisions of the Bromley Borough Labour Party Local Government Committee as 'the infantile vapourings of the loony left'.

These contributions to Labour's election campaign were not appreciated by Labour's candidates and must surely now result in Smith's expulsion from the Party.

They are, in fact, the latest in a long line of disagreements he has had with the local parties. In December 1980, the Local Government Committee was forced to censure Smith for attacks he made upon the Labour Party in the local press. In February 1981 he was involved in organising a secret meeting in the Bromley Labour Club with Bill Rodgers and other potential defectors only a few days before the 'Gang of Three' (as they were then) left the Party. When the two Bromley Labour councillors defected last October, Smith wrote a letter to the local paper criticising not the defectors but attacking another local Labour councillor who had dared publicly to criticise the two defectors! More recently, in fact during the elction campaign, Smith defied the wishes of the Labour group and attended a Tory reception for the Lord Mayor of London at Bromley's Town Hall.

One cannot help wondering if some of these people, like Lebor, Mellish and Smith, are actively seeking expulsion in order that they can turn around and day 'doesn't this just prove what an intolerant monster the Labour Party has become?' It doesn't prove anything of the sort, of course. But it does pose questions of why we have put up with these traitors for so long, and how many more of them are still infesting the Labour Party.

Nigel Williamson – Secretary,
Bromley Local Government Committee
(in personal capacity)

CAMDEN

Right wing leadership ousted

THURSDAY MAY 6, Camden Town Hall: The singing of the Red Flag and the ringing cheers at the final results – two Labour gains in Highgate and West Hampstead – reflected relief and delight that Labour had once against captured Camden Council.

The pundits of the media and the psephologists of the SWP (see *Socialist Worker* May 15) could claim that the poll was a disaster for Labour. In Camden all that apparently had happened was a reshuffling of the pack. Labour had 33 seats, the Tories 27, and the majority of 6 was a repeat of the 1978 election.

Yet with an increased turnout the Camden election demonstrated once again the bedrock loyalty of the working class to Labour. In working class areas such as Kilburn and Somers Town significant swings to Labour were registered, despite the fact that the old right wing council leadership had implicated Labour in managing Heseltine's cuts, the highest rates in the country, rent increases, and decimation of the building department.

Despite the fact that Camden boasts the largest and most active SDP branch in the country, they were unable to win a single seat. This was in a borough that they saw as second only to Richmond as a prospect for gaining power.

The most important factor was the enthusiasm and energy with which the Labour Party membership took on the task of nailing Heseltine's role in cuts and rent increases and exposing the shallowness of the SDP.

This is also reflected in the balance of the new Labour group.

At a meeting billed as a 'left caucus' held within 24 hours of the election result, 23 out of 33 Labour councillors turned up. Yet when the Group met on Monday, those in the 'centre' who on Friday had given a commitment to support candidates from the 'hard left' moved quickly to exclude us from most of the key positions.

The right wing leadership of Shaw, Mills and Bethell has been ousted. Leader, deputy leader and chief whip are now Phil Turner, Neil Fletcher and Anna Bowman. This is certainly a shift to the left: however, it represents a council which is in the main committed to (try to) administer an arm of the state in a more radical fashion, rather than a council seeing itself as an arm of the labour movement in defeating the Tories.

When external pressures mount on the new Labour group, three groupings will quickly emerge – the old right, with about 6 members; a large centre grouping of about 16 councillors; and a hard left of about 11 who will continue the work of the Camden Labour Left.

The hard left now has to organise, attempting to build together with the left in the unions a force for determined resistance to Heseltine..

GRAHAM SHURETY

Mitcham and Morden Bye-Election

THE by-election in Mitcham and Morden on Thursday June 3 caused by the defection to the SDP and resignation of Bruce Douglas Mann represents a great challenge and a great opportunity for the Labour Party. It is a challenge because we will face a determined campaign by the media, the SDP and the Tory Party to misrepresent and destroy the Labour Party. It is a challenge because we have failed in London to win a parliamentary by-election for over a decade; and it is a challenge because the SDP are still riding high in the opinion polls and on the basis of their showing in recent parliamentary by-elections and with a "sitting MP" they expect to win Mitcham and Morden.

However, a Labour victory can be ours if we stick clearly to issues of policy and not personality and campaign firmly in favour of the Labour Party policies agreed by conference.

The by-election therefore represents a golden opportunity. We can prick the SDP bubble and when it bursts, the alliance will be smashed. If the SDP lose this seat their chances of doing well at the General Election will be ruined. It is not too fanciful to suggest that in Mitcham and Morden we have the chance to destroy the social democratic virus and to ensure that the Labour Party wins the next general election.

At the forefront of the campaign will be the following three issues:

*Firstly total opposition to the madness of monetarism. It is not an act of God that there are over 3 million unemployed, it is an act of Margaret Thatcher. Although it must be said that sometimes Margaret Thatcher seems to think that she is God.

*Secondly, the attack on local authority services will be exposed and it will be made clear that the cuts are damaging and completely unnecessary.

*Thirdly, the importance of world peace will be stressed. It is not something just to be talked about over a glass of claret or put at risk by foreign adventures in the Falklands but is of vital concern to us all. It has to be worked for.

The Labour Party's detailed answers to these problems are proving increasingly popular. The electorate are starting to realise that the alternative ecnomic strategy is not a slogan but a carefully thought out policy agreed by the whole labour movement that will achieve a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working families.



by DAVID NICHOLAS

Its main components of massive public investment leading to an expansion of the economy, of social ownership and community control and of planned trade and control of imports will achieve fundamental socialist advance. This policy can only be implemented if we withdraw from the EEC so that we can regain control over our own trade policies.

Opposition to the EEC will thus be central theme of the campaign particularly as Douglas-Mann has now switched to supporting the Common Market.

Total opposition to cuts in local authority services and a demand for the restoration of government grant removed from London will be the second main campaign theme. Tory controlled Merton Council have carried out savage butchering of education, housing and social services and the electorate will only support us if it is made clear that our policy is based on no cuts in services, no redundancies and no privatisation.

The third campaign theme of opposition to increasing arms expenditure and of renouncing nuclear weapons is all the more important to stress at a time of increased world tension caused by the Falklands crisis.

The frightening ease with which war is contemplated and the terrifying consequences for all concerned highlights the urgency to rid ourselves of weapons that can bring death and destruction to millions.

The policies on which the by-election will be fought should command wide support but that support will only be translated into votes if the Mitcham and Morden CLP receives massive help with canvassing and distributing leaflets from every party in London. That help is needed now. Each party has been notified where to go but if you're not certain contact the Mitcham and Morden Party headquarters, 1 Crown Road, Mitcham tel: 542 4835.

Forward to a socialist victory!

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Photo: GM COOKSON

LONDON TRANSPORT: WHAT NEXT?

Martin Eady (NUR)

With the apparent failure of the Jay Bill to restore the legal position between the GLC and London Transport, it is time to draw a balance sheet of our Labour GLC's campaign to improve LT. An inauspicious start was made in summer '81 with the wrangling over the underground pay deal. The buses had settled for 6% in April (under the Tories). Eventually the underground got 11% as a result of the settlement on *British Rail* – the productivity strings were avoided by virtue of the increased patronage brought by the fares reduction of October '81. Still, we almost went on strike against our GLC. Now, we have pay negotiations again. LT's offer of 5% plus a massive productivity package which might bring a little more money, has been rejected and once more we are on collision course. But this time the cheap fares policy is outlawed and cutbacks in jobs and services are the order of the day.

Now, the policy of the trade union leaders on LT is clear. Their campaign against the Law Lords and the cuts is linked to the pay negotiations. They do not believe that LT workers will go into action on a 'political' issue such as the Law Lord's decision – this explains their extraordinary delays in starting the campaign. Also, they adhere to the traditional labourist division of labour – politics is not their 'department' – it is the preserve of the politicians. I believe they are wrong in this, but it is the reality we have to face, so people look to the Labour-led GLC for a political lead. Did they get one? No! The GLC leaders had all their discussions with those same TU bureaucrats. When they failed to act (as it was obvious they would) the GLC should have gone over their heads to organise a campaign amongst the shop stewards and the mass of the workers. This, and this alone, could have forced the Labour right on the GLC to line up behind them in a campaign aimed at the Tory government in Westminster.

EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

Whilst it was correct and necessary to sponsor and support the Jay bill in parliament, we all know (or should know) that parliament never does anything for the workers without them forcing it by extra-parliamentary action – in this case, industrial action. Instead of leading and building this, the GLC built dangerous illusions in parliamentarism by concentrating on letters to MPs and very little else. Industrial action for political ends is difficult but not impossible to build. With the Labour GLC *leading* we would have had a good chance. With them telling us that the TU bureaucrats were our own problem and refusing to link up with the rank-and-file in that fight, the Labour GLC compromised themselves and gave credibility to the TU leaders.

What now? The TUs are organising and continuing a campaign of leaflets and possibly industrial action. Cutbacks are being resisted. Although this campaign is not as effective as it should be, it is better than nothing. The GLC must join us in this fight against the Tory government – but this means repudiating the budget which demands cuts in jobs and services and a 5% pay rise at maximum.

If they don't do this we could find ourselves on strike against them – a poor advertisement for socialism indeed. Whether in power or not, GLC councillors ought to be supporting workers in struggle – if they don't they'll have no chance of defeating the right wingers, and we will be entitled to ask what use it is having them on the GLC at all (the GLC was the 'platform' from which socialism was to be advanced). In this sense, the argument about disengagement is a bit of a red herring. Disengagement would be nothing more than a means of saving face after a disastrous defeat. Has it really come to that, or is there still a chance to turn the fight round and defeat the Tory Government?

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LESSONS OF THE

The fight must continue

Fare Fight was set up originally to unite grass roots opposition to the proposed fare rises and press for new legislation before March 21st to prevent their being implemented. This part of the campaign having failed, despite massive public support, there is no question of our now accepting a fait accompli and learning to live with the extortionate fares imposed by the Law Lords. The fight continues until we win back the cheap fares we voted for.

Local Fare Fight groups all over London have worked ceaselessly throughout the last few months to raise public consciousness of the issues involved, by leafleting, recruiting and holding public meetings, and have campaigned vigorously through the proper democratic channels, such as writing to and lobbying MPs, petitioning, writing to newspapers, etc. It now seems that the argument is won. Most people agree that public transport is a vital service and must be subsidised. Even the London Transport Passengers Committee, whose chairman is a Conservative, have said 'The Committee believe that the affairs of London are best governed by the elected representatives of Londoners, and that the GLC should therefore be given the freedom to control the capital's transport affairs in the manner to which a proud, self-governing city should be entitled. Neither civil servants nor judges are better qualified to decide what policies are appropriate for London, and they are not available to answer for their actions on the hustings.'

The Government, however, have responded only by the usual meaningless sloganising, and by launching an attack on the existence of the GLC. David Howell has treated the will of the people with utter contempt, refusing, even after a fortnight's notice to receive Fare Fight's petition containing 200,000 signatures.

'CAN'T PAY, WON'T PAY'

In face of this kind of obduracy, as March 21st approached, most Fare Fight groups opted for the 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' tactic, as part of the continued campaign. Direct action such as this had always been discussed as a possibility if fares did go up, but we always hoped that common sense would prevail and that the Government would agree to review the 1969 Transport Act, now reduced to a nonsense by their Lordships. There was no merger between Fare Fight and the 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' Campaign, but Fare Fight groups began to distribute CPWP leaflets containing the name and address slips, and to print our own versions. There was a good public response to the leaflets, and in Haringey we were getting a number of calls from groups and individuals requesting more copies. Many thousands were distributed in the last week before March 21st, and thousands more were being printed. Londoners, and Sir Peter Masefield, prepared for what could well have been strong resistance to the unpopular rises.

As we now know, the civil disobedience campaign did not take off in the kind of numbers necessary to make the new fares inoperable and force a response from the Government. Despite the lack of an official blessing from the Transport Unions, I believe there was still a fighting chance of success until the last week before March 21st.

PROTESTORS DISCOURAGED

Then several things happened. Firstly, and most important, was Sir Peter Masefield's withdrawal of the concession that allowed ticket collectors and bus conductors to accept names and addresses in lieu of full payment. This had the desired effect of discouraging large numbers of would-be protestors, and of setting those who persisted in the action in direct opposition to the transport staff, who were then unable to follow the advice of their unions not to hassle fares protestors.



Photo : Sarah Saunders (Wandsworth Photo Co-op)

Fare Fight march on April 22 – the eve of the Jay Bill. 700 participated in an enjoyable evening parade ending in Covent Garden. Speeches included reels of platitudes from Bill Morris and Ken Livingstone and a powerful contribution from Cllr John McDonnell.

Secondly, with only three days to go, Ken Livingstone announced to the nation that CPWP wouldn't work. Whatever the rights and wrongs of his position, he could have chosen a better moment for this. Many people who would have taken part were deterred by Livingstone's opposition to it. The third factor has been the almost complete media blackout of CPWP activities, and the suppression of the facts by London Transport. This, plus the often very heavy reaction from LT inspectors at tube stations, has made the still considerable number of protestors feel isolated and discouraged. Despite all these problems, some of which

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FARES CAMPAIGN

perhaps should have been foreseen, many people continue to pay the People's Flat Fare of 40p on the tubes. For many members and supporters of Fare Fight – the young, the low-paid and the unwaged, it is the only way they can still afford to travel. The new fares are an intolerable burden which restricts their already limited freedom of action, and reduces their hopes of a good job and a better future.

I still believe CPWP was and is, a legitimate form of protest. It was not imposed from above by adventurist middle-class radicals, it was adopted democratically by grass-roots Fare Fight campaigners from all social levels, all over London. The image given by the Press to the group of GLC Councillors leading the CPWP Campaign has been used to undermine the credibility of what could have been a wide-spread popular protest movement.

Those in the Labour Party who did not support us because of CPWP's media image are following in the footsteps of those NEC members who voted against Peter Tatchell because of what the Press might do with his statements, regardless of whether or not he was a suitable candidate. I do not think the Labour Party helps its cause by bowing to this kind of media pressure.

DESERVE OUR SUPPORT

Dave Wetzel, Valerie Wise, John McDonnell and the others who have consistently refused to co-operate with the Law Lords' unjust interpretation of the Transport Act, deserve our support. The issue of fares is crucial to the success of the Labour GLC's manifesto, and has wider implications for the future of local democracy. There will never be a perfect moment to make a stand, the establishment and its media will always attempt, by ridicule and misrepresentation to divide the Left from their natural supporters in the community. But a refusal to fold under this kind of pressure can eventually show results, as Livingstone has already proved on previous occasions. Many people are still capable of recognising sincerity and courage when they see it.

Fare Fight is continuing the battle, and plan to strengthen and build upon links with trade unions, local Labour parties, and community groups, to unify the protest of Londoners into

unions, local Labour parties, and community groups, to unify the protest of Londoners into

a sustained opposition to the disastrous transport policy forced onto us by the ruling elite.

Jan Wallcraft

FARE FIGHT AND C.P.W.P. now share an office at:
97 Caledonian Rd., N1. Tel: 278-3327 (other numbers: 326-0029, 674 9679, 940-6422, 806-9211, 997-1159, 701-5691).

MONEY IS STILL NEEDED TO PAY FOR C.P.W.P. AND OTHER LEAFLETS . . . PLEASE RUSH IT IN NOW!

JOIN PICKETS JUNE 23rd, 10am:
Lavender Hill Magistrates Court, Clapham Junction (Suffragette 6) and Clerkenwell, Kings Cross (Goodge Street 1).

It's down to the unions

Piers Corbyn, Fare Fight and CPWP Campaigns

London's fares have doubled. One million passengers a day have deserted public transport and joined mounting road chaos and many low paid workers have left their jobs because of monstrous transport charges. More cuts are on the way. London's transport is now the laughing stock of Europe, but we are not laughing. The fares campaign has failed for the time being. The Labour GLC has been defeated on its last and most crucial manifesto plank.

However, many aspects of the fares campaign were very good and will have a lasting effect providing we draw the lessons of the 'Transport Spring'.

INANE LEADERSHIP

The first in a shameful train of failures was the GLC leadership's inane inaction in preparation for, and in the face of, judgements by Denning and then the Law Lords. The GLC should have mobilised passengers and workers right from the start to defend its policies. Extra-parliamentary democracy – through mass action – is more democratic than any other variety! Ken-who-remembers-Chile-so-well, isn't this true?

Despite the late start the Spring campaigns of the GLC, Fare Fight and Can't-Pay-Won't-Pay were as impressive as any since the Anti-Nazi League in their vitality, varieties of activity and the numbers involved.

FIGHTING TO LOSE

The prominent figures in the whole fight over fares, fell into two predictable categories. First, those who wanted to fight by any means necessary to stop the fare rises NOW; and second, those who didn't really care if the fare rises were halted just as long as it was made clear that it was not Labour who had put them up.

The line of this latter group unfortunately came to dominate the campaign. It is interesting to notice the way parliamentary 'struggle', such as waiting for the Jay Bill to be talked out (which would enable the GLC to carry out its mandate) or signing petitions which the Minister refused to even receive, undermined moves for direct action by trade unions and passengers.

UNDEMOCRACY NEGATES ACTION

Although trade union history was made on March 10 when LT unions united in their first tube and bus strike since 1926 their campaign remained firmly in the protest mould. The equation 'Fare rises = loss of passengers = cuts in services, overtime and jobs', was and is undoubtedly understood by the rank-and-file. However the way the leadership of the unions imposed the one-day protest stoppage without discussion among members only reinforced suspicion of the leadership. Declarations from the TGWU bus organiser Bill Morris that his members would 'at least not oppose' the Can't-Pay-Won't-Pay protest and would consider 'days of non-collection of fares' were not coupled to any discussion or communications with the membership and turned out to be pure hot air.

CAN'T PAY, WON'T PAY

The Can't Pay Won't Pay tactic was a courageous and memorable effort to develop passenger anger into a force which could bring the unions into real combat with LT. Its central importance was that it was a large scale public defiance of the law – an action of massive importance in this land of laws.

Over 20,000 people participated at some time or another in illegal CPWP activity but this is less than ½% of the travelling public. There is no way this number could have an economic effect on LT comparable with the 20% daily desertion rate of passengers but its political impact was very important. It is possible that with higher participation there could have been an economic effect but a more realistic route for the campaign was to cajole the unions into active non-collection of the increases. This destination was never reached for three main reasons. First, LT's last minute rule-change and widely publicised promise to prosecute any who travelled CPWP; second, the unions' meek acceptance of this change and associated edicts to workers; and third, Leader Ken's reconsiderations.

Interestingly LT have so far prosecuted NOT ONE PERSON who travelled CPWP. Presumably they do not want a court case which will discuss whether one million (votes) is more than five (Law Lords). Seven or so people have been arrested for peripheral offences such as chaining themselves to buses (the 'Wandsworth suffragette 6') or taking photos of CPWP bus stoppages ('The Goodge Street one'). These cases will be marked by pickets on June 23rd.

In view of the decline in CPWP-ing and the failure of the Jay Bill on May 7 the CPWP committee decided to suspend CPWP travelling for the time being and consider re-introduction at the next round of fare rises.

UNION TICKET

The fight for a sane transport system is now more than ever in the unions' hands. They failed to build on mass support and action by passengers, but now jobs are on the line maybe protests such as the rush hour bus stoppage on May 10 can be surpassed by effective frequent disruptions of the Capital. Anything less is certain to fail.

The TUC are calling a transport demonstration on July 23rd. This is a bit like locking the bus door after the passengers have bolted; but it remains to be seen if this event will be used to boost the actual struggles against transport cuts or if it will merely mobilise a parade to applaud pious complaints from a rostrum about the injustices of our time.

FARE FIGHT & C.P.W.P. NOW

Some Fare Fight groups have now dissolved and others have turned themselves into longer term transport campaigns. Fare Fight centrally is dedicated to ensure transport is kept at the centre of the political arena, to support the practical fightback now going on, and to defend anyone victimised for CPWP or other transport campaign actions.

At present ASLEF and engineers have been taking action against new tube timetables; and local campaign activity has been organised on specific routes (apart from the rush hour stoppages), and against the adult fare for youth after 9pm.

We have a lot to build on and a long journey ahead of us!

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Unite to stop the cuts

Andrew Rossing

The threat of industrial action by tube workers has been sufficient to force London Transport management twice to postpone its plans for cutbacks of up to 25% in rush-hour underground services. The cuts, first planned to come in on the day the fares doubled, have now been postponed until the end of May or early June. The London Bus Committee, made up of delegates from London Transport's sixty four bus garages, voted on April 21st for selective strike action against the bus schedule (the timetable) cuts planned for the end of July.

LT has told the GLC that without a change in the law, these cuts will be but the first of a series which will eventually lead to a bus service little more than half its present level. Particularly at risk are all 7,000 conductor jobs with LT considering the possibility of moving to 100% one-man operation of buses in four or five years.

A change in the law is certainly needed. But a refusal by bus and tube workers to accept any service or job cuts might force that change with London Transport no longer able to operate legally. The March 10th strike – the first company wide stoppage since 1926 – demonstrated the power LT workers have if they act together. As the July cuts come closer, it is likely that more serious (and effective) industrial action will be threatened, particularly as the effects of the cuts come home to workers.

Labour Parties should press GLC councillors to publicise any information they hear on the cuts in public transport. Labour Parties should also pass resolutions in June and July giving support to any action workers might take in defence of jobs and services and to win this year's pay claim of 12%. (Management has offered 5% – an offer which the GLC has approved.) They should call on their GLC councillor and GLC Labour Group to do the same. Labour Parties should enquire why the cuts were approved by the GLC (they were approved when the LT budget was passed) and pressurise their councillor to disassociate from this decision and to seek its reversal. The promise twelve months ago to defend jobs and working conditions led many London Transport workers to support Labour in the GLC election. Whatever rhetoric Council leaders may use, we now face cuts in jobs and pay which are worse than any imposed by Cutler's administration.

Labour Parties should also reflect on the disgrace at this year's London Labour Party Annual Conference. At the behest of the union leaders and probably the GLC leadership, the platform was allowed to get away with squeezing the transport debate into less than half an hour. At a Conference when every call for extra-parliamentary action won applause, it was inexcusable that industrial action by transport workers to save the main plank of the Labour GLC's manifesto was not even debated.

The only direct action to stop the fares increases themselves – the Can't Pay, Won't Pay Campaign – has failed, largely due to the opposition of transport workers themselves. Had drivers and conductors actively encouraged passengers to carry on paying the old fares, then it could have won enough support to have had a serious effect on London Transport's finances.

Attitudes towards the campaign amongst workers varied. But there was no way any bus crew could either support or even merely tolerate the campaign without a solid commitment from the unions that they would call their members out on strike as soon as the first conductor was suspended for failure to collect the right fare.

Joint action of this kind by workers and passengers is highly attractive. But the unions have a central role to play and far from being an alternative to strikes, it can only work when the unions are prepared to take industrial action to defend the workers taking part.

'Unity in Action' is a grouping of rank and file London Transport workers formed in March t co-ordinate efforts to win support within the unions for action to oppose the cuts in services, job and pay. With workers scattered across nearly a hundred bus and tube depots throughout Londo the group aims to support local trade union activists by keeping workers informed of actions planne or taken by workers in different parts of the company and by issuing leaflets to workers explainin the cuts and arguing for action. As a means of winning united action, the group is campaigning fo the recall of the company-wide conference of union delegates which approved the March 10th strike All LT workers are welcome. Unity in Action can be contacted via Box 47, 136 Kingsland Hig Street, London E8.



Defend the Suffragette 6! Picket of Lavender Hill Magistrates' Court on Maundy Thursday (yes, Maundy money is needed for the campaign) to support women arrested for chaining themselves to a bus in Wandsworth. Next show Wednesday June 23rd, 10am.

London Labour Briefing, page thirteen.

ACCOUNTABILITY: IT APPLIES TO US, TOO!



by Pete Willsman, Assistant Secretary CLPD, CLP representative on the Standing Orders Committee of Annual Conference.

THE success the Left has achieved in recent years at the Greater London Regional Council of the Party should not lead to complacency. Nor should it lead comrades to think that the question of simple democratic reforms at the GLRC can safely be left on one side while we concentrate on democratising the Party at national level. Aside from the fact that this is a somewhat unprincipled position it is also very short sighted, since it is by no means guaranteed that the London Left will always be so favourably situated.

Some comrades may be unaware that the procedures associated with the GLRC in general and the Regional Conference in particular, are among the most undemocratic of any Region in the Labour Party. The Annual Report of the Regional Executive Committee contains no mention of the previous year's Conference or of any of the decisions made at that Conference – it is as if previous Conferences did not exist. The resolutions that are ruled out of order are not published and disappear without trace. The delegates are denied a right of reply and so on; the list of undemocratic practices is a long one.

Comparison With Southern Region

A comparison with the procedures at the Southern Region Conference, which is certainly not Left dominated, dispels any illusions about the GLRC and reveals just how undemocratic it is. The following are some of the democratic practices at the Southern Region:

a) Soon after the Regional Conference all organisations are advised, in a summary of the proceedings of the Conference, of the resolutions carried or remitted to the Regional E.C.

b) The E.C. examines each resolution and where applicable, during the year informs appropriate organistions of progress in dealing with their resolution.

c) The Annual Report of the Regional E.C. gives details of the decisions taken by the Regional E.C. in relation to resolutions carried or remitted at the previous Regional Conference. In a similar way the NEC reports to Annual Conference on the decisions they have taken in relation to resolutions carried or remitted at the previous Annual Conference.

d) The Annual Report contains a list of all the CLP Secretaries in the Region together with addresses and phone numbers.

e) The Annual Report also contains a list of the affiliation levels of all affiliated organisations.

f) Resolutions ruled out of order are published in both the preliminary and final agendas. This is also the practice at trade union conferences and CLPD is pressing for this reform to be adopted at Annual Conference.

g) At the Southern Regional Conference the Annual Report of the E.C. is examined page by page, questions are put from the floor, and the Report is put to the vote (as at Annual Conference). By contrast it seems that at the GLRC organisations have to write to the E.C. if they wish to have a question put on the Annual Report.

h) At the Regional Conference the proposers of motions have the right of reply at the end of the debate, in common with the practice at trade union conferences, not to mention GMCs and every other Party meeting (except the GLRC and Annual Conference).

Other Simple Reforms

There are several other simple democratic reforms that could be carried out at the GLRC. For instance delegates could be told at the start of the Regional Conference (on a duplicated sheet or verbally, if there is not time) exactly what the E.C.'s recommendation will be on every resolution which will come before Conference. This is important information for delegates when preparing their speeches, since with no right of reply they have no opportunity to answer the E.C. speaker. This reform was achieved by the delegates at the 1981 Annual Conference at Brighton. In future delegates will always be made aware at the beginning of Annual Conference exactly what the NEC will be recommending on each resolution.

Also the NEC has now agreed that its minutes should be made available to affiliated organisations and the Regional E.C. should follow suit with its own minutes. This will help to increase interest in the activities of the Regional E.C., since at present the prevailing impression among the rank and file seems to be that the E.C. is a little known irrelevancy. There is also very little, if any, attempt by the members of the Regional E.C. to ascertain the views of the organisations who elected them and who they are in theory representing. Nor do they give any individual report back. Without minutes of E.C. meetings or individual report backs the members of the E.C. are not accountable in any meaningful sense.

Finally, there is the question of the election of the Leader of the GLC Labour Group by the Regional Confernece which I understand was agreed as long ago as 1979. Since then the issue has almost disappeared from sight, despite the fact that in the meantime the Party at national level has changed its system for electing the Leader and now involves all sections of the Party in the College. I can find no reference whatsoever to the 1979 decision in either the 1981 or 1982 Annual Reports of the Regional EC. Very little, if any, pressure has been put on the NEC (a reference to it by Arthur Latham at the recent Regional Conference hardly amounts to pressure) and no campaigning has been done on this issue among the rank and file. This despite the achievements in this direction in other Regions such as Scotland.

London Labour Briefing, which has always championed the cause of democracy in the Party, should be asking its supporters on the Executive and the Standing Orders Committee of the GLRC exactly what have they been doing to eliminate the undemocratic procedures, exactly what are they doing at the moment and exactly what do they intend to do in the future. Individuals and organisations should be adding their weight to this. After all it makes it a little difficult for us to criticise the lack of democracy at national level if the situation in London is as bad if not worse.

.Only A Talking Shop

A suggestion is sometimes made in cynical quarters that the GLRC is really only a talking shop where people make their mark with an eye on higher places. A serious attempt by the E.C. and the SOC to introduce democratic reforms into the GLRC would be a very constructive and positive rejoinder to such cynicism.

TARIQ ALI ..... THE LATEST

THE HORNSEY Labour Party General Management Committee voted by a huge majority to endorse Tariq Ali's membership at its March meeting – despite continual baying, points of order, and disruptive tactics by a right wing rump including the New Statesman's chief pontificator on the Labour Party and Andrew McIntosh (well known to readers of LLB).

During the Borough election campaign a series of newspaper reports appeared which quoted heavily from a report to the NEC by David Hughes and George Page. Requests for a copy of this report to both George Page and David Hughes at regional and Head Offices of the Party met with a flat refusal, despite the suggestion that many of its comments were of a personal nature against Jeremy Corbyn as Party chair and Pauline Ashbridge, a Co-op delegate.

The report has now been seen by the officers of the Hornsey Party and it is a couple of pages of hysterical and totally inaccurate criticism of the Party and its officers. It also shows an extreme bias against the Party locally by a paid official and a desire to attack the decisions taken. Nowhere does it state the expressed reasons for Hornsey taking a decision to admit Tariq Ali, or the way the NEC acted on reports in the Daily Mail by instructing Hornsey Party not to admit Tariq Ali.

The local Party Executive voted by 10 votes to 7 to hand Tariq Ali a card on Wednesday May 12th, and visit from David Hughes and Eric Heffer is now awaited where they will be asked to explain the irrational behaviour of the NEC and their continued witch-hunt against activists in the Party.

Hornsey has now voted on four occasions in support of Tariq Ali's membership, and seven of the nine Branches have passed motions expressing support for his membership.

..... letter to Eric Heffer

Eric Heffer MP
House of Commons
LONDON SW1 *2 April 1982*

Dear Eric:

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chairman of the Organisation Sub-Committee of the NEC of the Labour Party, which is due to discuss the question of my membership next Monday. I felt that I should write to you directly to stress some points since there has been a great deal of biased reporting and misquoting in the national press.

1. Since I applied for membership six months ago I have followed the rules of the Party. I applied through my local ward and was rung up by the BBC's Political Editor 48 hours later to get confirmation as the matter had been raised at a meeting of the PLP. In other words it was not my decision that this issue (which I regard as trivial) should become a matter of dispute in the LP. That was the choice of others. I made it clear when questioned by my GMC that: (a) I was prepared to abide by the LP Constitution and rules and (b) That I had genuinely left the IMG. The latter fact is now well-known on the left. (c) I was a member of the LP from 1963-66 in Oxford. My case is not that unique. Thousands left the Party at that stage because of Government policies and many of them have since rejoined.

2. After my ward rejected my application I appealed to the GMC, which has voted on two occasions both to admit me to membership and give me a party card. I hoped that the matter would end there, but read George Page's statement in which he said: 'Tariq Ali is not a member of the Labour Party and never will be.*' The first section of the sentence is a matter of dispute, but surely you will agree that the second half is impermissible. It is tantamount to political discrimination or worse.*

3. I had been thinking of applying for membership for at least a year before I actually took the step. My reasons for this were undoubtedly motivated by the changes currently taking place in British politics. I think it would be a political disaster if Labour did not win a majority at the next election and that everything possible has to be done to ensure that it does. That is why I think all socialists should join and build the Labour Party. I would add that I do not believe that Labour will win by becoming an SDP Mark 2, but by campaigning vigorously for its policies and by developing its own network of local and national newspapers and independent propaganda. Of course I remain a Marxist, but there is nothing in the LP constitution that debars Marxists. I have also stated on numerous occasions that I do not believe that socialism is possible without the active support and involvement of a vast majority *of working people. So what is the basis for keeping me out?*

4. It is true that I stood as a Socialist Unity candidate in the last general election, but so did other people. Max Morris stood as the Communist Party candidate in Hornsey in 1966 and lost Labour the seat. He is currently Chairman of Crouch End Ward and the most vigorous opponent to my entry. There is a more recent case. Pat Arrowsmith stood against Jim Callaghan in Cardiff in 1979. She is a member of Hornsey Labour Party. Clearly when one decides to join a party one automatically rejects all other candidates in local or national elections.

5. I am deluged with speaking invitations from Labour Clubs and CLPs, most of which I accept, and campaign against the Tories and the SDP-Liberal Alliance. It is therefore somewhat odd that I cannot be allowed into the Party itself. As you probably know, for some years I have been under very heavy pressure from the Pakistani Workers Association to join the LP and they find it odd and somewhat incomprehensible that the NEC has vetoed my application. At the very least one would expect a reasoned explanation of the case against me to be given to me and others.

6. In my view it is those who have made my application into a point of contention who are really damaging the Party and the longer this wretched business drags on the more it will detract from the very real issues that need to be confronted and the campaigns that need to be waged against the Tories and the SDP and those who accept their basic political framework. I therefore hope that the matter can be sorted out amicably and rapidly. I have no desire to waste my time on a campaign to get into the Party. There are more useful things that need to be done. I would be perfectly prepared to answer any questions regarding my past or present ideas before any LP committee should that be necessary.

Yours fraternally,
Tariq Ali

Out of the struggle over Tariq Ali's membership emerge revelations on.....

SECRET REPORTS

Pauline Ashbridge
Hornsey CLP

We have news, in Hornsey, for Ian Mikardo, about his confident claim in *New Socialist* that the present-day Labour Party has 'no secret-police dossiers'. In the 'History' slot of the March/April issue, Mikardo told of the bad old days in the fifties when regional organisers fed in information to Transport House about articles and speeches by left-wingers. Alas, Ian, I'm afraid no-one told George Page, General Secretary of the Greater London Labour Party (and how many other Regional Organisers?) that he's got his decades mixed up.

The first inkling Hornsey Labour Party members got that the regional organiser had compiled, for the National Executive Committee and Walworth Road files, a secret (and highly inaccurate and libellous) report on the way we dealt with the Tariq Ali membership issue at our March GMC, was when a leaked copy found its way to the press.

Two of us on the GMC, in particular, had our words and actions grossly misrepresented. (A month later, despite appeals to Walworth Road, the Hornsey party has not been sent a copy. One gathers, from a reference in the report, that there has been a previous report, also secret, also false, which hasn't even seen the light of day to the extent of being leaked.)

It would be somewhat tedious, and furthermore would compound the libels, if I were to go point by point, through the distortions and downright lies in the report.

More useful, I think, would be to draw some conclusions and raise some thoughts about the issue.

Firstly, what are our left members on the NEC doing concealing such secret reports from us? It was the left in the constituency parties who put them there. Do they think they owe more loyalty to £14,000 a year Regional Organisers and other paid party officials?

Second, what other inaccuracies are contained in the hundreds of confidential reports written every year by regional organising staff and destined for the files at Walworth Road? For instance, organisers attend all Parliamentary selection meetings, and are seen to make notes of speeches.

Third, what qualifications do our regional organising staff have for making fine political judgements on the relevant points and implications in any political speech? (Actually, I used to think paid organisers were paid to organise, not to make political judgements which should be the prerogative of ordinary

Continued next page

Editorial

STOP THIS SENSELESS WAR

The Labour Party leadership over the last few weeks of the Malvinas crisis has revealed itself to be totally bankrupt.

Not a single voice in the Shadow Cabinet has been raised against Thatcher's war. Those who now call for negotiations but supported the sending of the fleet are hypocrites. For no one can be surprised that a "show of strength" results in death and bloodshed. And the blood that has been spilled is on the hands of those Labour MPs who supported the government as much as it is on the hands of Thatcher and Nott. The fleet has merely done the job it was sent to do. No one who supported its sending is now entitled to complain about the result, least of all those closet imperialists on the Labour front-bench.

Regrettably, Michael Foot's position has been the most pathetic and hypocritical of all. Apparently he is in favour of war, but against bloodshed. "I am an inveterate peacemonger", he told the Labour Party Annual Conference only eight months ago. The qualification which it appears he omitted to add was "except when there's a war".

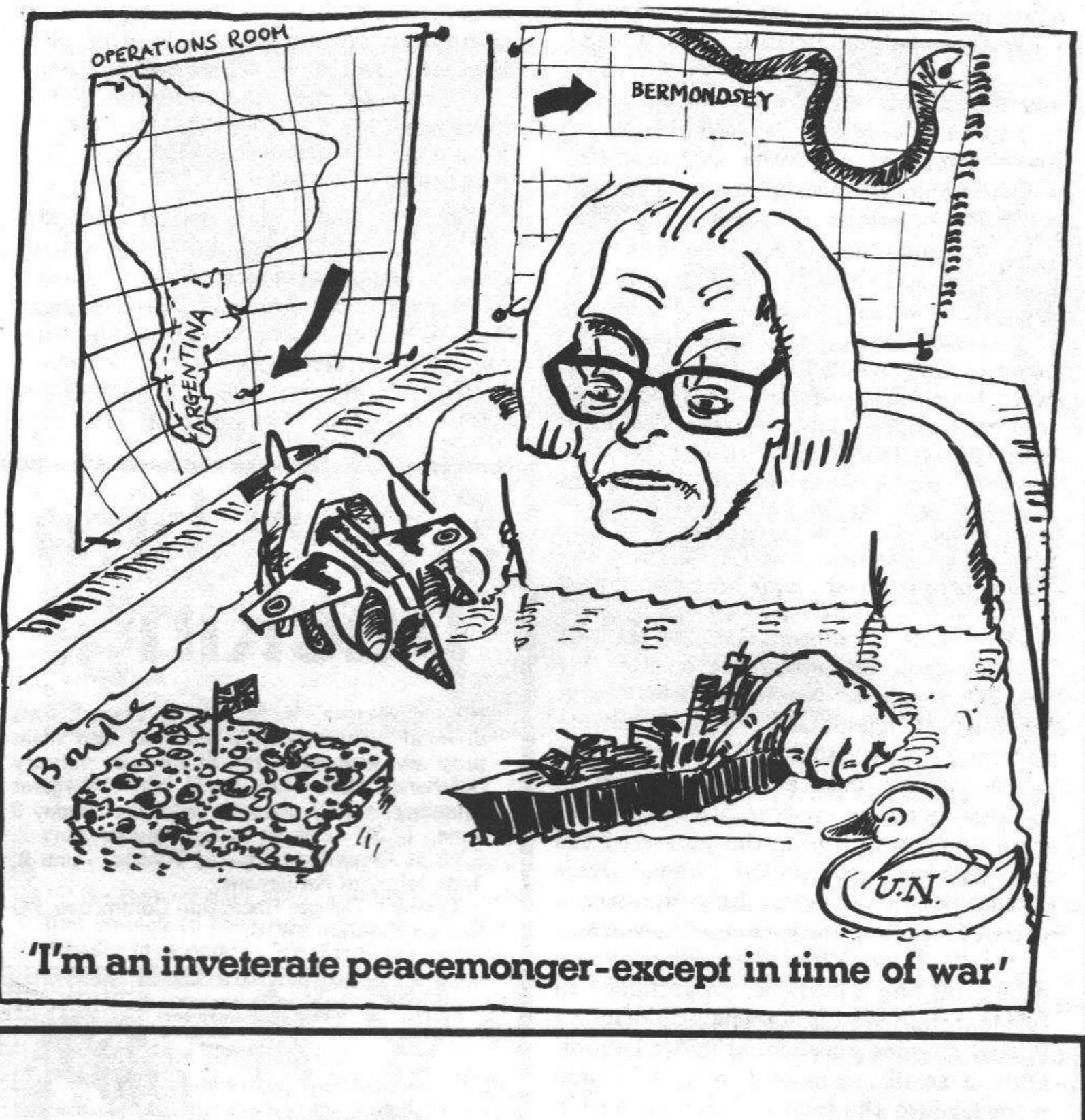
Many may now feel, quite justifiably, that Foot is not the right man to lead Labour into the next General Election. His role in this whole affair has been hugely damaging to the Labour movement. This year's Annual Conference will be the last opportunity to replace him before that election, and pressure is bound to grow for someone to come forward and challenge him for the leadership.

For such weak, decrepit and clapped out leadership is an electoral liability. This was apparent in the council elections where Foot's 'national unity' stance actually encouraged those who felt that they had to use their vote to express support for the Government and its 'national war effort'. It also alienated that large and growing section of the British public which is totally opposed to the loss of life over islands to which we have no claim to sovereignty.

Because of the council elections, few constituency parties had the opportunity to meet and condemn the support of Labour's front bench for this imperialist war. But now the elections are out of the way, we confidently expect a flood of resolutions demanding that the fleet be recalled and calling on the Labour leadership to abandon its chauvinist and imperialist stance.

Britain holds the Malvinas as a colonial possession. Of course Argentina is governed by a corrupt fascist junta – many of us have not just suddenly discovered that but have been saying so for years to British Governments which continued to sell arms to them. But that cannot alter the fact that this war is senseless and unnecessary, Britain has no role to play in the South Atlantic, and the whole episode can only end in unmitigated disaster.

Only when the Labour movement is united in calling for the return of the fleet and an end to the war will we be in a position to aid the Argentinian workers in *their* fight to rid themselves of the junta and build socialism.



'I'm an inveterate peacemonger-except in time of war'

(Continued from previous page)

unpaid party members and their elected representatives.)

Fourth, when these secret political reports by organisers find their way into the Walworth Road files, does it ever occur to any of our head office bureaucrats to consult any of the members mentioned or quoted in the reports, as to their views on their accuracy?

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

At Annual Conference last year we agreed to introduce a Freedom of Information Act when Labour gets back into government. Isn't it about time we started following the same principles in the party itself? For instance, we could:

- Propose, in resolutions to the NEC, that copies of all reports should be submitted to parties and individuals concerned, for comments on their accuracy to be added, before they are sent on to anyone else. (That provision, in itself, might do wonders for their accuracy!)

- While awaiting the implementation of this proposal, Regional Executives could insist on seeing all reports written by regional staff, and could themselves make sure that they are copied and distributed to relevant local party bodies and individuals.

A few measures like these could bring an end to the sort of scene that I'm sure we can all imagine – poor old George (or should it rather be 'devious, reactionary old George'?) poring over his hastily scribbled snatches of speeches, until, eventually, incompetence making common cause with political ignorance, he manages (Thank God!) to string together a few grammatical sentences. Granted, they make no sort of political or logical sense at all. But never mind, it's a secret report, no-one who would mind will ever actually see it, so it's safe to send it in . . .

BRIEFING readers should obtain the current issue (No. 132) of New Left Review. It contains an important article entitled "Remaking the Labour Party", by Tariq Ali and Quintin Hoare – both active supporters of BRIEFING.

London Labour Briefing, page sixteen.

Beware of Labour`s Atlanticists

Ron Huzzard
(member of the Executive Committee of Labour Action for Peace)

Cries for a purge of the Labour Left by prominent Labour frontbenchers and trade union leaders are becoming more frequent. Roy Hattersley at the Midland area Miners conference said 'Labour must kick the cuckoos out of the nest'. At the AUEW Engineering Section National Committee annual conference both Sir John Boyd and Terry Duffy called for a purge. The latter demanded 'surgery to remove the cancer.' What lies behind this renewed attack on the Left? Is this a smokescreen to divert attention from the sinister activities of groups at the other end of Labour's political spectrum?

London Labour Briefing (March 1982 issue) has spotlighted the role of leading Labour and SDP figures in promoting the work of the Trilateral Commission. May I draw attention to other organisations which should be investigated by Labour's NEC if it is serious in checking the influence of groups that promote policies alien to everything Labour is striving to achieve? The activities of the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding first came to light when Fenner Brockway, in reply to a House of Lords question, was told that LCTU had received £32,000 in four years from NATO sources. The leading figures were named as William Rodgers, Roy Mason, Dr. David Owen, Frank Chapple and Terry Duffy.

PROMOTE PENTAGON POLICIES

LCTU exists to promote the policies of the Pentagon including full backing for American plans to base Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe and increased spending on arms at a time when massive cuts are taking place in essential welfare services. These policies were under way during the period of the last Labour government when Denis Healey was Chancellor, Roy Mason was the Defence Secretary and Dr. Owen was at the Foreign Office. The secret expenditure on the Chevaline programme, to test and improve the warheads on Britain's Polaris missiles, accelerated under Labour. Only a small group in Labour's Cabinet were let into the secret. The total cost is now well over £1,000 million. Our 1974 election manifestoes clearly committed Labour to 'no new strategic nuclear weapon system to replace Polaris' yet in addition to Chevaline, preliminary backing seems to have been given to Trident or some other new strategic nuclear weapon system.

Dr. Owen, and William Rodgers have been impelled to leave the Labour Party and attack it from outside. Clearly the aim has been to destabilise our party at a time when it was reaffirming its backing for real socialist advance and disarmament policies that call for an end to nuclear weapons and US bases in these islands. The prominent trade union supporters of the LCTU still remain *inside* the Labour Party.

BRITISH ATLANTIC COMMITTEE

Another group promoting pro-Pentagon policies is the British Atlantic Committee. Its speakers visit Britain's schools to promote militarism. According to the Sunday Times (27March 1982) this organisation is funded by private industry and the Foreign Office. It is fiercely opposed to CND and the policies agreed by Labour's conference on nuclear disarmament and related issues. On its committee are six Tory MPs, four SDP MPs and five Labour MPs. The latter, according to the Sunday Times, are Brynmor John, Giles Radice, George Robertson, Roland Moyle and Jack Dormand.

Groups like the British Atlantic Committee and the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding are undermining the clear peace and disarmament policies widely accepted throughout the Labour movement.

Significantly over the Falkland Islands crisis prominent Labour and SDP MPs connected with these groups have spoke with one voice. The aim always is t prevent Labour voicing distinctive polici in the fields of defence and foreign affai that are not to the liking of Atlanticists Washington and London.

SECRET GROUPINGS

I have never favoured bans and proscri tions except against those groups whic field candidates in elections in oppositio to official Labour candidates. However there are to be NEC inquests into grou on the Left then it will be intolerable organisations financed by NATO an similar sources go free. These secr groupings are in business to undermi Labour's internationalist ideals and pr vent the carrying out of our policies o the most urgent issues – eliminatin nuclear weapons from Britain and releasin resources wasted on the arms race.

Groups which give unswerving a legiance to policies inspired by th Pentagon and NATO have for too lon been in prominent positions in th Labour Party. They must now be stoppe in their efforts to shape Labour's polici inside and outside Parliament.

Send him packing!

Ronald Reagan, leader of the biggest arms drive in history outside wartime, and main prop and support of the El Salvador military butchers, visits his loyal ally Margaret Thatcher in June. Join the protests: Sunday 6 June, 12.30 at Hyde Park; Monday June 7, 5.30 at Grosvenor Square; Tuesday June 8, 1pm, lobby of Parliament.

Contact: Reagan Reception Committee, PO Box 51, London SW10.



AN AD HOC coming together of the pea movement, dozens of anti-imperialist cam aigns and scores of Labour Movement bodi plans to give Ronald Reagan the working cla welcome he deserves.

While the Tories and Labour toadies che the leader of the 'wild West' when he com here on June 6, the Reagan Reception Comm tee will be organising pickets and calling on t American people to dump this warmonger.

This is no 'Yanks Go Home!' stunt. T Reagan Reception Committee is quite clea its appeal to the American people will be internationalist handshake.

When they heard that Reagan would be London on June 6, CND switched their demo stration for that weekend to London. With new focus, that demonstration should be o of the biggest in Britain for a long time. (U fortunately, while the CND leaders realise t need to focus on Reagan's visit and while t rank and file of CND want to support t Reception Committee, the CND leadersh refuses to back the Committee's calls).

The Reagan Reception Committee h called for a huge picket of the US Embassy Grosvenor Square at 5.30pm on Monday Ju 7.

On the following day, when the nuclear gu slinger addresses Parliament, the Recepti Committee will be trying to get MPs to boyco the event. It hopes MPs will leave Parliament if possible, as a body – and go across to We minster Central Hall. Chile Solidarity Campai have organised a Festival of Peace and Liber there from 11am.

At 1pm, anti-Reagan protestors will asked to go to the Grand Committee Rooms Parliament, where the appeal to the Americ people will be read out.

Local Reagan Reception Committee a being set up in a number of towns, uniti various local campaigns, to give Reagan a lou clear, anti-war and anti-imperialist message.

KEN LIVINGSTONE
is interviewed by London Labour Briefing

Over the past few months, many 'Briefing' comrades have had considerable disagreements with Ken Livingstone over the direction in which the Labour controlled GLC has been going. Those disagreements were expressed very strongly in a number of articles in the last issue of 'Briefing'.

In an attempt to give Ken Livingstone the opportunity to respond to those articles, but at the same time to pose to him some of the very real concerns which 'Briefing' has about the Labour GLC and its recent set-backs, two members of the editorial board, Chris Knight and Nigel Williamson, spoke to Ken at length in his office at County Hall on Tuesday 4 May.

What we print below is a largely unedited transcript of that discussion. Much of it is challenging and controversial and will certainly provoke further debate amongst 'Briefing' comrades.

Williamson: We've now had the first twelve months of Labour control at County Hall. If, last May, we had said to you within that first year we would be defeated on school meals, fares, ESTMANCOs, transfer of housing estates, rents and so on, what would your reaction have been? We feel, actually, you would have said at that time, if we lose on those issues there will be very little left to remain in office for.

Livingstone: Well, in the first place I don't accept that we've lost on fares. That is our biggest victory because we have done what is the most important thing in any political struggle, we've actually won the argument.

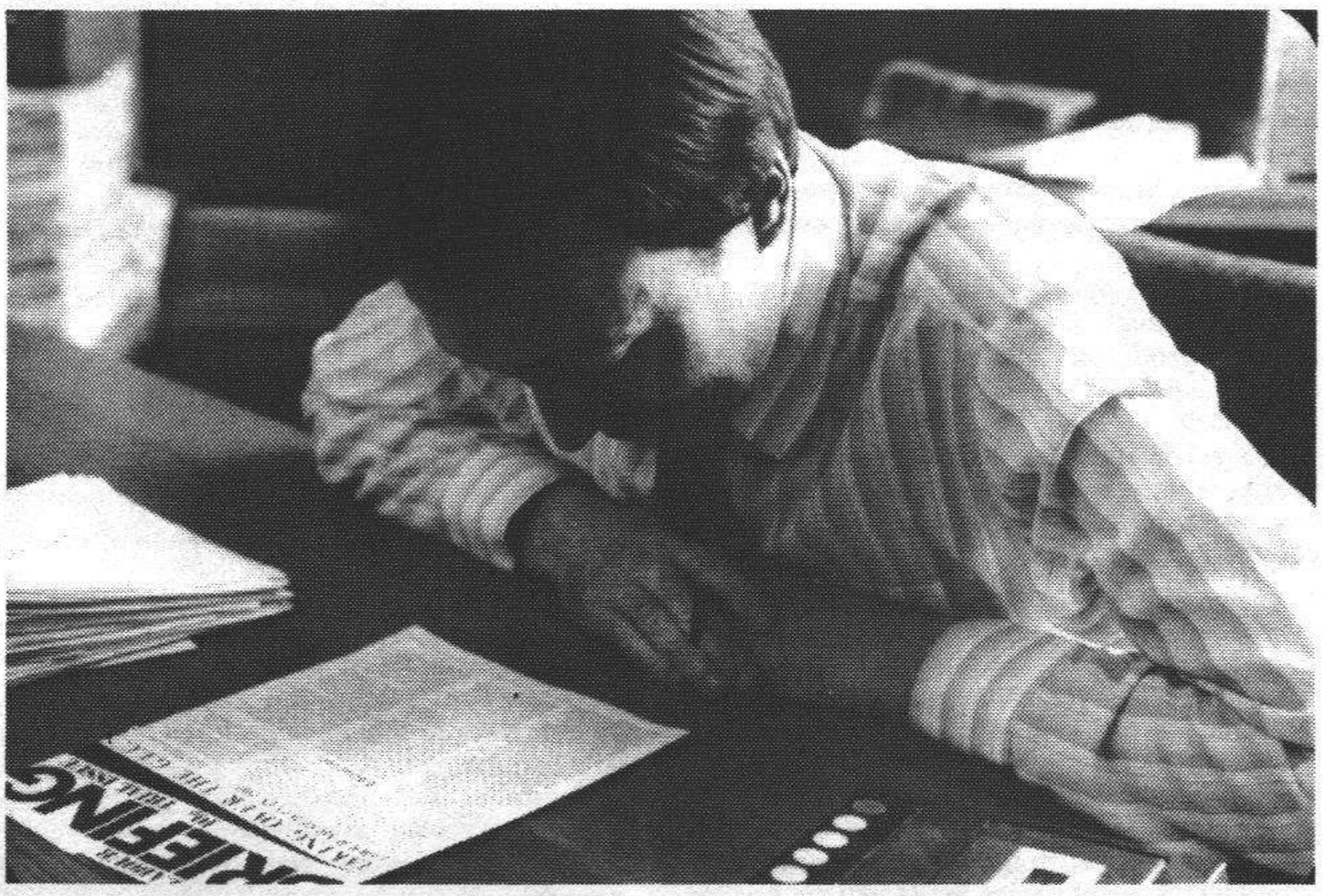
Through the election campaign there wasn't that degree of commitment to the policy, and certainly when we put the rates up, people were much more ambivalent. Over the last six months, both the impact of the policy being shown to work, and the campaign we raised following the Law Lords decision, has actually won the debate. That's the first time anyone's made public transport a centrepiece of the political debate since the war, and it will not be possible for the Tories to move away from that.

Now at the moment we're in a stalemate. But the Government's in the position where it's got to do something. It either allows the present impasse to continue, which means a continuing campaign from us with pressure on Tory MPs which will scare the hell out of them; or they give in to us – AND I THINK, FRANKLY, THATCHER WOULD RATHER GIVE IN TO THE ARGENTINIANS THAN GIVE IN TO THE LABOUR GLC. Or they try and take it away, and I think that's what the government's decided to go for, to remove London Transport from the GLC.

Now that is going to protract the struggle around fares and public transport into the next Parliament with a major campaign to defeat that legislation when the Government raises it.

So I don't think that's a defeat. It's clearly a setback that the fares have gone up. But we've won the debate. For the first time since the General Strike the transport unions undertook industrial action together, and there's been tremendous support from the population behind that policy.

Now you look at the other areas. We have, since the election, built another 1,000 council homes, which is a major annoyance to the Government. They're not giving us anything like enough money to have the sort of housing programme we want because the Government's got complete control of capital spending. But if you read the manifesto, right the way through we talked about a campaign to get the resources we want from the Government, but geared almost all our manifesto commitments to revenue spending.



Above: *At the start of the interview, Ken Livingstone was invited to re-read his front-page article, 'Taking Over the GLC', written for the first 'trial issue' of BRIEFING in January 1981.*

On that we have been successful. We are the first council to have a growth rate of 10% in a decade in London. We have got through a growth budget which effectively restores the bulk of the cuts in the fire service, expanding our services in every other area except fares. That is a major achievement.

The movement only ever focusses on defeats because that's all that gets coverage. That's why when we drew up the budget for next year, we brought all the unions in – the only one which declined to come was NUPE. We went round the table, discussed what was in the budget, and put to them this debate about whether we should stay in control or go into opposition. And the unions thought we were joking. It wasn't conceivable to them that we should surrender what control we have here, because once you move away from the defeats a dramatic amount is happening.

When we inherited the GLC, we were told by the officers there were 1800 redundancies we had to make in the housing department. We've been able to prevent that. You can't save those jobs in opposition. And that's repeated in virtually every service of the council.

We've also had thousands of letters from all over the country saying it's fantastic to see a council fighting for socialist policies in the way we are. We haven't had a single letter suggesting we go into opposition. That call has only come from the left in London who, perhaps, are too concerned with our setbacks and aren't aware of the degree of support we've built up.

Williamson: So despite all the setbacks, the balance-sheet of the first year very clearly shows a plus as far as you are concerned?

Livingstone: Massively. Where else has a council campaigned on the scale that we have done, using the whole of the council bureaucracy. The only precedents are Lambeth and Lothian. The Tories are furious. They consider us the most appalling threat. They're outraged. They want the GLC abolished. If Thatcher wins the next election the GLC would be abolished in the first year of the Government.

Knight: But the bulk of those who were really committed to the fares policy and were determined to see it through to the end, became involved in the 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' campaign. And they were bitterly angry at the way you stabbed them, as they felt, in the back, on the issue of defiance of the Lords and refusing to pay the increased fares. In your position as Leader of the GLC you could have swung large numbers of people behind that.

Continued next page

'... there's still this campaign saying it's all a great

Livingstone: I think you equate more influence around my name than is the case. I think the position is not as it has been perceived. When the initiators of 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' first thought of it after the GLC vote had gone against us and the fares increase was agreed by three votes, they came to me and said they thought this was a good scheme.

I said fine, in principle I'm in favour – if we can mobilise hundreds of thousands of Londoners, great. When they asked me if I would support them, I said first you must go to the Labour Group or the Regional Executive and get support there. Or put down emergency resolutions to the London Labour Party Conference so that the movement could debate it.

They specifically refused. It wasn't because there wasn't time. At no time has anyone supporting 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' put forward the proposal to any level of the Labour movement. There was a deliberate decision to ignore the movement, to by-pass the Labour Party, because they felt there wouldn't be support for it.

I didn't believe I should use my position to by-pass the organisations of the Labour movement in London.

I also said approach the trade unions. But it was this small group of left activists and strongly motivated middle class people who came in, and it worked outside of the Labour movement.

When the unions heard about it from the media, there was a tremendous degree of doubt and anger, because they had not been told or consulted beforehand.

The Central Bus Committee, which has one representative from each of the 64 garages, passed a motion of censure on those Labour members supporting 'Can't Pay Won't Pay'. Fortunately that didn't leak to the press. We then had the ridiculous position of people who hadn't thought through how it would work, or whether it bore any relation to traditional means of political struggle in this country, the nonsense of people being voted off the bus by ordinary working-class Londoners and a derisory collapse.

You can't condemn those of us who were more in touch with the trade union movement and had some concept of what would happen among ordinary working class people when faced with that kind of individual campaign rather than collective action. We tried to urge them against it, and if you now go and talk to Dave Wetzel and Valerie Wise privately, they will admit it was a great mistake and they were wrong. It's only in some left journals that there's still this campaign saying it's all a great betrayal by Ken Livingstone.

These people ignored the movement and treated it with contempt and they fell flat on their face.

They had all the time in the world to take the Party or the unions with them. They avoided it because they knew in their own hearts that this was not the sort of political action which has any sort of tradition or background in this country. It's easy to seize on something as a gesture of frustration, and I don't think there's any bad feeling, but it was a very ill-thought out campaign.

The other thing that didn't come out was that the unions themselves sat down with management and changed the rules in an attempt to prevent that campaign working. That's what they thought of it. People in the 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' campaign were lucky that all those things didn't hit the newspapers.

Williamson: But surely there's a difference between not supporting something and positively seeking to undermine it as you did by going on television saying it's not going to work or being photographed paying the increased fare?

Livingstone: We're not talking about defending the fares policy, we're talking about whether 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' was an effective form of political protest. If you expect me to go on television and lie, I'm not going to do it.

I managed to avoid being as scathing about it as I've been in this interview. But I was having trade unionists in and out of my office saying 'for God's sake what are you going to do to stop these loonies', and that was how it was perceived. I played it as softly as I could because they're all people I support politically. I made it clear that I would have supported it if there was a chance of getting a few thousand Londoners to do it. But once on that first day we saw the figures from LT, that at virtually no station had we even got into double figures, it was important to say that's it, it's folded, and move onto something else, and not allow it to straggle on.

Knight: At the Briefing meeting at the London Labour Party Conference, you made the parallel between the Lords judgement and fares fair, and the problems which would face a left Labour Government. You went on to say that a left government would have to defy not only the Lords, but the monarchy, the armed forces, the police and break the structure of State power in order to mobilise the movement to take power.

There's a good deal of cynicism from those who agree that is the lesson of this experience, that you are saying that's what we have to do in the future, take on the army, the crown, and the rest of it, but Ken Livingstone can't defy the pressures to induce him to pay the full fare on a London bus.

Livingstone: But I'm afraid the policy was wrong. It was misconceived and totally contrary to working class tradition in this country.

If you look at the positive side, I don't believe that the Camden surcharge case would have gone our way if we hadn't had an effective fares campaign. It has forced the judiciary to take a step back. It wasn't forced by 'Can't Pay Won't Pay'.

One thing that gets me is that a lot of people will come to a Briefing meeting and make a statement there completely at variance with what they've done or said elsewhere. There is a great tendency to get up inside the Labour Group and say we've got to have a lobby of Parliament and then go to a left wing meeting and call it a siege. That isn't terribly honest.

It's very easy to say 'these are the comrades fighting with great integrity'. I think that's bullshit. They're using the same old political techniques that party politicians have carried on for years, of tailoring what they say to the audience they address.

Knight: I think it's obviously true that in the long term what is going to be forced upon us is going to be of the nature of insurrectionary extra-parliamentary activity. But it's nevertheless the case that if that isn't made legal in the eyes of the working class themselves, it's not going to succeed.

Livingstone: If you look at the role of the GLC, we've been defeated not because Bryn Davies or I said we've got to give in on the law. We put everything into winning the initial vote inside the council on January 11 as to whether or not to defy the Law Lords. We came within three votes of winning.

If we'd won that, we would have produced the most dramatic rejection of the powers of central government and the State that we have seen in this country since the General Strike – a major local authority defying the law which quite surpassed anything that happened at Clay Cross.

Knight: We'd have had two laws. The legality of the Labour GLC with its manifesto and the legality of the Law Lords. In that context the working class would have to choose . . .

Williamson: Between the sovereignty of the people and the unelected, unaccountable power of the ruling class and their state.



Photo: Sarah Saunders (Wandsworth Photo Co-op)

A Can't-Pay-Won't-Pay hold-up of a bus. M
and police on the changing role of the la

Livingstone: Right, and that was posed and it was posed by the leadership of the GLC Labour Group and we came very close to winning. It seems to me strange that that is immediately forgotten.

Williamson: Let's finish off the fares issue. Where do we go now? You may have put transport on the political agenda, but the kind of legislation the Government is talking about is not going to allow you to continue what you're doing, they're talking in terms of taking London Transport away from the GLC completely.

Then there's this LT executive plan. They've stopped approving all investment projects, haven't they? It talks about halving the volume of bus services and raising the fares by 25-50% – a "core network" in fact. The Transport Committee here at County Hall has said "this must be contemplated in the present legal circumstances".

Could we honestly contemplate that, could we remain in office and do that?

Livingstone: I think there's a fundamental mis-

t betrayal ...'

understanding here. What will happen will be a further package of cuts and fares increases coming up at the end of the year which the council might have to vote for or reject. My view is that we should reject them.

Between now and then LT has to find a way of introducing the cuts which are inherent in the decision of the Law Lords for this year. So far they've had to back down in the face of trade union pressure. If the trade unions decide to strike to prevent that, they have our support. I hope they do strike to prevent the introduction of massive cuts in services because they will be striking to defend the overwhelming majority of Londoners.

that point.

Last July, Heseltine started to introduce the Local Government Finance Bill No. 1 which would have given him total control over our budget. We raised a firm position which I got through the Labour Group saying that if those powers were taken by the Government we would refuse to implement them.

And I met with the trade unions and alerted them to the fact that this wasn't a campaign where at the end of the day I would sit down and say we've lost, now how do we implement the cuts – and it would have meant going back from every area of our programme.

we could nominally still have had the majority in council but effectively have been a minority administration. My view would have been to still put up nominations for Committee chairs, because unless you have control of those almost administrative positions you don't control the flow of what goes to the council. If you've got an alliance of Tories and Social Democrats in those positions, most of the cuts will be made behind closed doors.

So you can be in opposition by fighting what's happening in the council, but formally to go into it actually passes a lot of power into the hands of your opponents. You can't use the council machine for organising demonstrations, producing 'The Londoner' and so on.

But if some people said, look, we just can't vote with the Labour Group on surcharge issues effectively you're not in control, but they wouldn't be prepared to put a Tory administration in. It's such a complicated position, I don't think you can say what would happen under the pressure of events. But Londoners would be in no doubt that effectively we had lost control of the building.

Williamson: So to what extent do you feel a prisoner of the right-wing, in that on those crunch issues where surcharge may be involved there are half a dozen people who may well vote with the Tories?

Livingstone: It's a factor that is there in every decision you take. Say an issue like rents is coming up. If you're trying to win you've got to find a legal opinion which will satisfy the right-wing. And that is the constraint that operated upon us all the time.

It's another area the movement hasn't really thought through, before the election, how we survive in that situation. I think we worked on the assumption that we'd have a sufficiently large majority that it might not be a problem. But it's quite clear now that the only way you will get a Labour Council prepared to risk surcharge knowingly is if it's virtually a 100% Labour Council. The threat of surcharge is such a real one, you can rely on it dislodging a good third of any Labour Group, and possibly even as much as half.

It's also another thing to think of in terms of future Labour Government. If we were to win a majority in the next Parliament it would be not too dissimilar to the majority here. On key issues you would find, perhaps, people on the right not supporting that Government. It might be on something like withdrawal from Europe, that if no more than a dozen Labour MPs are so opposed to the policy, you can't get it through the House.

That's a problem I haven't got an answer for, other than that you don't put us in that position by re-adopting the people who get re-adopted!

Knight: Can we now talk about Briefing itself – what do you feel is the state of your relationship with it?

Livingstone: Well, my involvement with Briefing had its origins in Socialist Organiser. When SO was set up in the summer of 1978, it used Ted (Knight) and myself to help get people together and so on, it was a broad forum of the left and was very effective. Then one particular faction decided to seek control of it, and it became useless as far as the broad left was concerned. And so we went and set up 'Briefing'. Now I'm saddened that some of the comrades from that same faction seem to be using it in a fairly sectarian way, although they're not going to make the mistake of seizing a majority.

Basically I still support Briefing although there are articles that come out that I disagree



Many hundreds of incidents like this provoked lively and interesting discussions between passengers, workers w, police and democracy.

We will be submitting a transport programme to the Government for funding for next year based on our manifesto. But I think you're right. The Government's next step will be to try and take LT away from us. So we may get a campaign against that linked to the industrial action the unions will be taking to defend service levels.

Williamson: But you see, if at the end of the day, we lost the vote again by three votes, and therefore the vote was actually to implement a plan that meant reducing LT to a core network . . . I supposed what I'm asking is does there ever come a point as far as you are concerned where we have responsibility without any power whatsoever . . . it's a case of defining the line that Keith Veness drew in the last 'Briefing' between socialists and social administrators. He thinks we've already crossed that line, where does it come for you?

Livingstone: There is that point where we can do nothing but implement Government policies. Then you would have to refuse to do it and go into opposition. And we were getting to

We put that to the London Labour Party Conference and it was broadly endorsed, with one minor setback about staying within the law which was in conflict with the overall mood of the Conference and the later vote.

The Government has stepped back from that, withdrawn the Bill and put forward another one. That may still leave the GLC facing that same position. If that legislation goes through, that would be the position I would adopt. If we get to the point where effectively power has passed into the hands of the Government, as it would have done with Heseltine's Bill No. 1, then I wouldn't be prepared to sit and administer that, you'd have to totally oppose it.

Knight: So what would you do precisely?

Livingstone: Let's look at what would have happened on Heseltine's first Bill, because it's clearer. Whether we would have been in opposition or not is hard to say. The fact that some people in the Labour Group feared surcharge and might have defeated us, might not necessarily have meant that they left the Party. So

LIVINGSTONE interview (continued)

with. But no, fine, no disagreements with Briefing at all, as a rule.

Williamson: Let's look on the brighter side now. There was the Camden judgement and I think you're right, the ruling class were forced to take a step back there. If we do this again in another twelve months time, a half-term GLC report, what do you think the position will be? How do you see things developing?

Livingstone: It depends on the general election, when it comes and its outcome. If we can't elect a Labour Government, the Labour GLC is finished. We cannot survive the election of a Tory Government or a Tory/SDP coalition. We would be abolished within a year.

Equally, there will be a response to Tebbit's legislation and the wage round that's coming. One of the big gains of the Camden judgement is to say yes, councils can break Government pay guide-lines with quite dramatic increases provided they're forced into it by industrial action. This opens up an incredible range of possibilities for councils where unions like GMWU and NUPE have got vast numbers of low paid members. At today's prices the Camden low pay supplement would mean a minimum take home pay of £85 to £90 per week. That's a demand that clearly NUPE and the other unions must raise. It was a major redistribution of wealth in favour of the low-paid in Camden to have that policy – but it requires the unions to fight for it. The Government's policies are going to force unions into action mainly in the public sector. You could get any of those disputes escalating.

You can't tell where we're going to be next year. If we've won a Labour Government . . . in a sense, the efforts of a Labour GLC must go in that direction of returning a Labour Government, and the struggle will then immediately move to that. The struggle to uphold the Conference policies will become the major one.

(The conversation then turned to the attacks upon Ken Livingstone's position by several comrades in the last issue of Briefing).

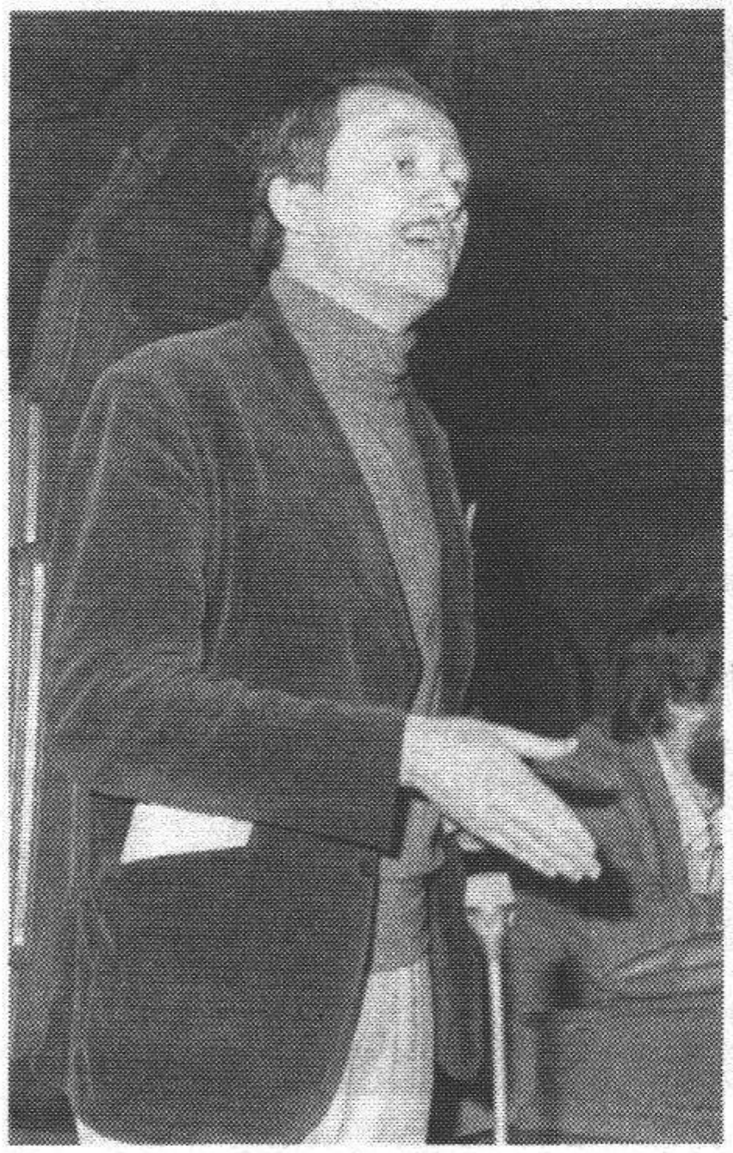
Livingstone: One of the things that most annoyed me about the Briefing articles was the one which disparagingly suggested that what we had done in terms of building links with women and gays and blacks really wasn't relevant. In a sense, it's the most important thing we've done, surpassing even fares. Because the long-term implications for the movement of building links, slowly widening the Labour movement to include the groups we've ignored in the past, ar are absolutely fundamental to what the movement will become in the next ten years.

I can understand people in the Briefing group who, with a tremendous degree of sophistication and political consciousness, are mainly concerned that we will go the way of every other Labour administration and sell out and just be slowly incorporated into the building. But you also have to see the response we get, and the effect on us, when you go and talk anywhere else in the country. Up to 200 people turn up to hear what the GLC is doing, and with tremendous enthusiasm. They are stuck there with their local awful north-east council. Most of them aren't even in the Labour Party. Or the volume of letters that come in saying how they'd given up on the Labour Party these last thirty years in some cases, and now are really delighted to see a council doing what we're doing.

You've got to strike the balance between those two sets of forces. In a sense, the most important thing to do is to carry with us that tide of people who are saying, well perhaps there is something about the Labour Party as well.

That is where there is bound to be a difference. We are getting that kind of feedback, and a lot of people in Briefing aren't.

Williamson: Can we get back to the next Labour Government, and some of the issues raised by what Pat Wall said. Because in some ways the Denning and House of Lords judgements were a small-scale model of the kind of thing the next Labour Government may very well be up against. It's not just going to be a capital strike. We are talking about the mobilis-



ation of the whole state machinery against a left government. Pat Wall seemed to highlight some real problems which the leadership of the Party would rather ignore.

Livingstone: The basic speech I give everywhere is that. This is a warning of what will assault the next Labour Government, and we need to build a mass base, mainly by reaching out to those groups we've ignored in the past, to defend us from that.

Everything that Pat Wall said, I've said about the army. The press goes beserk for a little while when I mention the possibility of a military coup or a police intervention against an elected Labour Government. I was surprised Pat Wall got quite the hysteria attached to what he said.

Knight: Well he did say we have to get rid of the monarchy, sack all the generals, trade unionise the army, disband the police force, the judiciary . . . I mean, he really did spell it out.

Livingstone: I suppose putting it all together in one speech is what makes it . . . I wonder if what gives it all the colour is getting rid of the monarchy, which isn't something I spend a great deal of time thinking about, I must confess. Clearly the major problem is if the monarchy was involved in removing a Government like it did with Whitlam.

Knight: It certainly could be. The monarchy has residual powers . . .

Williamson: And Crowther-Hunt, who actually sits on the NEC Machinery of Government Sub-Committee, is going around saying if a Labour Government carries a Bill to abolish the House of Lords the Queen would have to use those powers to veto it.

Livingstone: That's why you must have it as a clear election commitment, and it's a really important one. Without getting rid of the Lords we are going to have intolerable problems. You see, I think our problems won't come so much from the army and the police, because they will rely upon the judiciary and the Lords to shackle a Labour Government. If you look at it in terms of the order of use of resources of the state, the monarchy is wheeled in as the very last thing to use against us. Our first problem will be the Lords and the judiciary.

Knight: But when it comes to a Labour Government and we say now we are making the law because we have a majority in Parliament, then what backs up the capacity of the Lords and the judiciary to say 'no you won't', is the monarchy. Then it becomes a political fight between our law, representing the will of the people through an election, and their law, which represents the privileges of the rich and powerful. Then it comes down to force, us and them, and I think we have to look at that.

Livingstone: One of the key things will be changes in the police force. In removing the racists from the police you will change its whole nature and composition.

Knight: And introduce trade union rights in the armed forces.

Livingstone: You need to do more than that. Giving union rights to the army as it now is, with such a pool to draw from . . . I think they've constructed an army which shares the political values of its generals. You hear all sorts of stories about people who couldn't get into the army whose dads are Labour activists and things like that. I think there's a much bigger problem there than just giving them trade union rights. That just gives them a democratic structure through which they could vote to intervene against a Labour Government.

And all the techniques of Norther Ireland have produced such a degree of sophistication within the army – more so, I should imagine, than any other armed force in the world. That would be a major problem.

Knight: Finally, Graham Bash told us to get a brief comment on the Falkland Islands!

Livingstone: A brief comment! You know everything I say. It's just being used as a pure diversion from what's happening at home. There can be no justification for having the task force there, nor can there by any justification for our demanding the right to retain what is part of the continental land-mass which we seized at the time of the independence struggle of the Argentine in 18-whatever. What else can I say?

London Labour Briefing, page twenty one.

PARLIAMENTARY REPORT



Michael Foot and Judith Hart: at odds over the Malvinas.

Action in the House of Commons has, of course, been dominated by the Falklands.

It was clear from the beginning that there had been unprovoked Argentinian aggression, and that the Government had failed to take notice of the increasingly hostile noises eminating from the Junta. It is clear that the invasion took place as a direct result of incompetence and lethargy in the Foreign Office.

But what reaction should the Government have given? Thatcher did have a choice. She had the option of sending the fleet, with the likelihood that this Armada would take several weeks to reach the Falklands, leaving time for negotiations in between. Alternatively, she had the option of placing substantial economic pressure on the Argentinian Government, which was highly vulnerable to pressure of this kind. However, it now appears that an early meeting of the Cabinet ruled out the option of serious economic sanctions. Why? Because Britain has a £5 billion investment in Argentina which was vulnerable to counter-action (i.e. nationalisation) by the Argentinian Government. Even now, the Bank of England is rolling over Argentinian central government banking dept – i.e. refinancing the Argentinians public sector borrowing requirement, which it has to borrow from abroad. Even more interesting, banks like Schroder-Wagg have sent their order books for Argentinian business out of Britain in order that they can continue to meet it. Thus the Cabinet chose the option least likely to damage Britain's long-term economic interests in Argentina, and of course in South America as a whole. The choice that was made was therefore to lay down British lives in order to recover islands whose sovereignity we did not want, and when we were not prepared to take economic action to get them back. The interests of capitalism always come first.

It was always clear that military action would involve killing people. By the time the task force reached the Falklands, the Argentinians would have been well dug in. And they are. A frontal assault in key Argentinian positions would therefore result in considerable loss of life. The alternative military option, that of blockading the islands, must involve shooting down planes that tried to break any exclusion zone and torpedoing ships which crossed the naval exclusion area. Both of these solutions, had they been thought through by the Government, must have been seen as involving a heavy military financial, and loss of life penalty to the Thatcher Cabinet.

What has been the Labour Party's response in Parliament? That response has been extremely muted, complicated no doubt by the clear aggression by the fascist government of the Argentine. This single fact led many Labour MPs with impeccable records of fighting fascism and opposing colonialism to demand tough military action in the South Atlantic. The response of the Parliamentary leadership was rather more timid. Their policy was to approve of sending the fleet, and to play the crisis by ear. However, pragmatism is not enough. You cannot judge the actions of the Government if you do not have clear political objectives in mind; and if we were to agree that a reasonable socialist solution to the crisis would be the creation of an interim administration in the Islands under United Nations auspices, why should we send a fleet to kill people in order to concede sovereignty later?

The Labour Front Bench's response has, probably deliberately, given the public the appearance of condoning Tory policy. Condoning first the sending of the fleet; condoning second, the bombing of Port Stanley airfield; and condoning third, the blockade by air and sea. The only differentation of any substance – and that is pretty thin – between the policies of the Labour Party and that of the Conservative Government has been the protest made concerning the sinking of the Argentinian cruiser General Belgrano. This amounted to questions as to whether the ship was outside the exclusion zone or not, and in which direction it was heading. Second, an attempt has been made to distance the Labour Front Bench from the Tories by stating that we could not condone the bombing of mainland Airfields in order to provide certain air cover for any naval operations that may take place.

This differentiation between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party is just not good enough. Pragmatism does not amount to a policy; neither does it cast credit on our movement to be frightened of an alleged public opinion that is volatile and which could swing decisively in favour of peace if the killing continues.

As I write, key decisions are being taken by the Cabinet on whether to support a negotiated settlement or the continuation of the war. The Government's ability to choose war would have been greatly restricted had the Labour Movement come out firmly in favour of peace. It is not yet too late to salvage the reputation of the Labour Movement. Let us make our slogan; "Peace and a negotiated settlement". This is the time the killing has to stop.

Reg Race

GLC BACKS WOMEN

By Valerie Wise,
Chair, GLC's
Women's Committee

The GLC has just set up a new committee – the Women's Committee. This is the first local authority in the country to set up such a committee, although it will soon be followed by Islington, Camden and Southwark Councils.

The GLC's Women's Committee is a new radical departure and will not be another boring male dominated committee (at least on the Labour side), but instead will be a campaigning committee. The Committee will work alongside the women's movement with the aim of mobilising women in London and encouraging them to take up initiatives. For too long women's needs have been neglected and ignored.

Socialism will never be achieved in this country unless the majority of the population – women – are fully involved in the struggle. But before women participate in the struggle they will need to see that the Labour Party is serious about improving their lot. Labour Councils have a duty to start implementing policies that will be beneficial to women as well as to men.

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

The GLC's Women's Committee has a wide scope – 'The promotion of the welfare and interests of women in Greater London.' Certainly an enormous task! The terms of reference go on to say 'The implementation of policies to promote equal opportunity for women and to increase the range and level of opportunities open to women within the Council's employment in conjunction with the Staff Committee. The promotion of adoption by London borough councils and other employers in Greater London of equal opportunity policies for women. Advocacy of the abolition of practices which discriminate against women on grounds of sex".

The GLC has already started helping women in London. We have become an equal opportunities employer and are in the process of recruiting a GLC officer to see that this policy actually gets carried



out. The GLC has also given support to some women's groups, through its Grants Panel and its Industry and Employment Committee. The GLC also produced a leaflet on the effects of the Law Lords decision on women. However everything has been done in an ad hoc way and it is important that there be an overall co-ordinated strategy in carrying out policies which will be beneficial to women. This will be the task of the Women's Committee.

So the Committee will ensure that areas over which the GLC has some jurisdiction like employment, transport, housing and planning, will fully take into account the needs of women. For example, the Council has already agreed to hold a conference on women and employment which will deal with all facets of this question including the failure of the Equal Pay Act, the lack of child care facilities, poor training and job opportunities. With the Council setting up the Greater London Enterprise Board it has a marvellous chance of showing that it does want to improve the employment situation of women.

CAMPAIGN

However there are many other things that affect women in London, like the taxation system and maternity care. The GLC has no jurisdiction over these areas but as a strategic authority it should not neglect these issues. We must campaign on these issues as well as on things that we can materially alter.

One part of its campaigning work will be to call conferences both at a London level and at a local level. It has already been suggested that the Women's Committee produce a pamphlet for a wide distribution on women in London and their needs.

The GLC's Women's Committee will be a full standing committee of the Council and so will have its own budget. This should be £½million in the first year. £350,000 of this will be for assisting women's groups in London. It will also have its own support unit for carrying out research and liaising with the women's movement.

No matter how good the members of the Women's Committee are it is important that we recognise that we do not have all the answers on what women in London need. The Women's Committee will have to work very closely with the women's movement so that together we can have more effective campaigns. One way of doing this may well be to have a working party consisting of representatives of the women's movement, labour movement and community organisations meeting on a regular basis in tandem with the Committee. A special effort must be made to ensure that black women fully participate in the work of the Committee. They are doubly discriminated against, both as women and as black people, and so much be fully involved.

The GLC's Women's Committee has a daunting task ahead of it and its important to ensure that we use this opportunity in the struggle towards a better life for women (and men).

County Hall News

from Valerie Wise

At the GLC Labour Group meeting at the beginning of April the people occupying the following positions changed as follows:

Chairman of the GLC – Sir Ashley Bramall
Assistant Whips – Alex MacKay
Gerry Ross
Chair Finance and General Purposes Committee – John McDonnell
V/chair Fiance and General Purposes Committee – Andy Harris
Chair Housing Committee – Tony McBrearty
Chair Women's Committee – Valerie Wise
C/chair Women's Committee – Ken Little
V/chair Planning Committee (North area) – Alan Williams
V/chair Public Services and Fire Brigade Committee – Lewis Herbert

The GLC's Industry and Employment Committee has just agreed to give a new women's co-operative a grant of £3000 for a feasibility study. The women formally worked for Lee Cooper Jeans in Romford. The management have closed this factory but have not been able to undermine the spirit of all the women who worked there. Eleven out of the 287 have decided to form a co-operative to make children's clothes. Their plan is to sell the clothes in a way which meets the needs of local parents directly. They will organise parties and meetings throughout the Harold Hill estate, to which they will take samples and receive orders. They will also go round Parent/Teacher Associations, Health Centres and so on with their samples. At the same time they hope to get orders from traditional retail outlets, but they do not intend to rely on these more orthodox outlets because of their exploitative relationship with their suppliers.

The GLC has given the co-operative, which the women have called, POCO, the £3000 grant to carry out a feasibility study and a detailed business plan. Perhaps this women's co-operative will be one of the first projects which the Greater London Enterprise Board will help to get off the ground later this year.

MARCH

On June 5th, thousands of women from all over the country will be assembling in Battersea Park for the Labour Party sponsored Festival for 'A Woman's Right to Work!'

We will be making the point that women are no longer prepared to be the 'reserve army of labour', to be thrown on the unemployment scrap heap when no longer needed. The Tories are trying to drive women back to the kitchen sink by cutting our jobs, cutting childcare facilities and social services, and by a barrage of propaganda along the lines of Patrick Jenkin's famous statement that 'if the good Lord had intended us all having equal rights to go out to work and behave equally, he wouldn't have created man and woman!'

Women are demanding a *right* to *waged* work (of course women have always worked!) as access to all areas of employment, not just the areas of traditional 'women's work' which are invariably classed as unskilled (the definition of skilled work is often made on the basis that it is traditionally done by men!) and therefore low paid.

The fight is not only against the Tories, but against the forces of the Trade Union and Labour Movement which have long colluded with the concept of the family wage and the ghettoising of women into unskilled, low paid jobs, in order to safeguard men's jobs and wages. We are fighting for a policy of positive action for women in employment, and for the right of all women to have childcare facilities and financial independence.

Women's anger is beginning to be organised. The Festival came about solely through pressure exerted on the Labour Party by women organised around



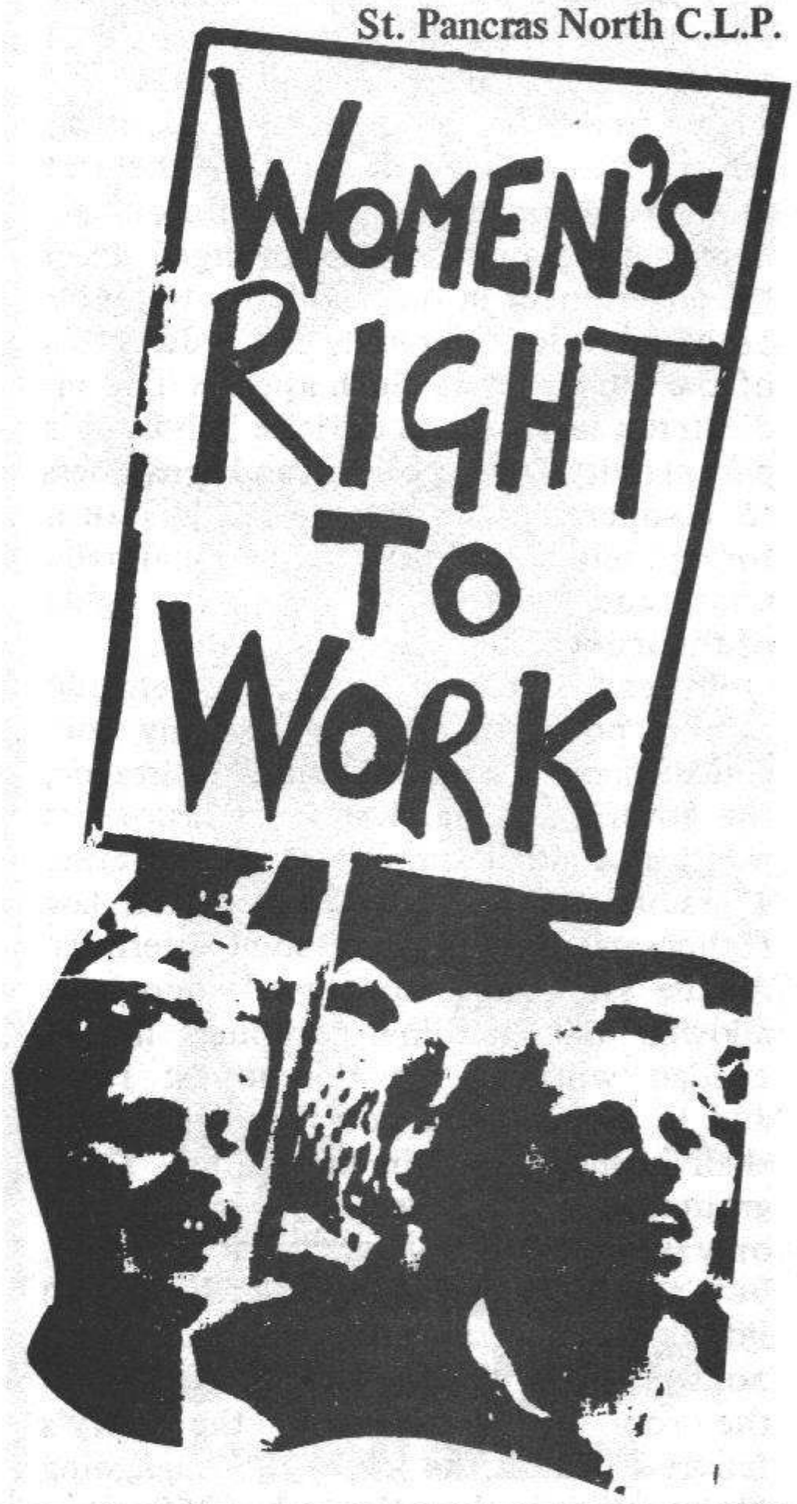
the Action Committee for a 'Woman's Right to Work!' Women are taking a leading role in many industrial struggles, for union recognition, higher pay etc., and many of them will be participating in the Festival. In particular many of the women fighting the 4% pay offer in the Health Service will be there, and black women and disabled women's groups will be represented.

The festival is to be preceded by a March, assembling from 10.30am at County Hall, Waterloo to move off at 11am to Battersea Park. In the park there'll be women's bands, stalls, theatre, open-air discussion forums, a rally with national and international speakers, plus food, kids' entertainment and creche, and lots more.

Offers of accommodation for the nights of June 4/5 are needed, and anyone who can help should contact the Regional Women's Organiser (Stephen Morgan!) at Herbert Morrison House, Walworth Road, SE17.

It is hoped that the Campaign will not stop after June 5th, and plans are already underway for further activities including the production of a broadsheet. However the Action Committee is desperately short of money and donations would be very gratefully received. For further information and/or donations contact: Action Committee for a Women's Right to Work, c/o L.S.O. Office, U.L.C., Malet St., London W.C.1.

Jane Stockton
St. Pancras North C.L.P.



Support the Bradford 12

The Bradford 12 are now on trial in Leeds. They are accused of 'conspiracy to cause explosions', and face many years in prison if they are found guilty. It was quite a fight to get a jury that included any black jurors at all. None of those black jurors actually come from Bradford.

The press won't tell you much about the trial itself, let alone about the background to the case. These twelve Asian men were arrested last July after the 'riots'. Some milk bottles filled with petrol were found dumped in hospital grounds. The police picked up twelve of the leading black activists in the city and accused them of filling those bottles.

You may remember that on July 3rd in Southall, Asian youth repulsed an attack by hundreds of fascist skinheads. Over the next three days the Toxteth police took a hammering. That following week rumours were put about by the police in towns and cities all over the country: in white areas 'The blacks are coming!'; where many black people lived it was, 'The skinheads are coming!'. After what happened in Southall it would have been foolish for Asians in Bradford not to have been prepared for some attack. The skinheads never came and no petrol bombs were thrown in Bradford. And while the Bradford 12, mostly members of the United Black Youth League, certainly organised defence of their community from skinhead invasion and certainly fought the day to day racial attacks, the prosecution still have to prove that they filled those bottles with petrol.

The UBYL also campaigned against police frame-ups, against deportations, against attacks on gay people, they fought to bring Anwar Ditta's children to Britain. The arrest of the 12 is seen as yet another frame-up by the West Yorkshire Police who kept letting the Ripper slip through their fingers. It is seen as an attack on the right of black people to organise. It is significant that the prosecution have brought in conspiracy charges – which require far less evidence than charges of actually doing a deed and carry a heavier sentence.

'The 'Shrewsbury 3' building workers were convicted of conspiracy. However, a few years later, 14 pacifists were acquitted of 'conspiracy to cause disaffection' when they leafleted soldiers on how they could legally leave the Army.

So your protests are important. We need your money and the money of your Labour Party, trade union branch etc. (tell them that the London Labour Party supports the Bradford 12). We need you to join the picket of Leeds Crown Court very Wednesday. We need you to declare your support publicly for these Asian men who fought British racism.

Write to the National Mobilising Committee, Box JK, 59 Cookridge Street, Leeds 2 (tel. 0532 439500) to send money, to ask for speakers for meetings etc.

Poland's May Day upsets Military Rulers

By OLIVER MacDONALD

Solidarity's large May Day demonstrations in 13 Polish cities have shattered the military government's efforts to persuade its own population and foreign opinion that Poland's independent labour movement is a thing of the past. The marches have also put General Jaruzelski's entire political strategy into jeopardy.

The demonstrations, in the teeth of ferocious martial law regulations, were very large, drawing 50,000 a piece in Warsaw and Gdansk. Very large numbers were also evidently involved in the Baltic port of Szczecin, (information from other cities remains scanty). In Warsaw with its corps of foreign correspondents the police did not attack the May Day march but they did seek to crush the other marches as well as a second demonstration in Warsaw on May 3rd, provoking riots and making more than 1,000 arrests throughout the country.

These events make Jaruzelski's policy – or rather, lack of political initiative – over the last five months of martial law look like a major blunder. The circle of self-styled 'reformers' around the General have offered no programme of political reform from above despite the rhetoric that accompanied the coup last December. Such a programme has been urged upon the government in very moderate terms by both the Church hierarchy and wide circles of the intelligentsia. Such appeals have indicated a readiness to criticise Solidarity's past activity as too political and a readiness to co-operate with the regime in return for a purely 'non-political', sectional trade union and for a restoration of the rights of the independent Catholic groups.

Instead of taking up these offers and gaining powerful allies against any continuation of the underground resistance, the government has hoped to restore its political control simply through offering a gradual relaxation of the martial law regime and the release of some internees. At the same time, the army leaders have allowed the hardline groupings in the civilian wing of the Communist Party and in the political police to strengthen their influence within the regime. These groupings would like to see a drive not only against the Solidarity underground, but against the Church and the liberal intelligentsia in an effort to take Polish politics back beyond 1956. They see the root of the crisis in the Party's failure to finish the job of thoroughgoing Stalinisation back in the early 1950s.

RESISTANCE MOVEMENT GROWS STRONGER

The May Day demonstrations show that Solidarity's working class activists have been able to regroup and build up a resistance movement which grows stronger with every passing month. The size, scope and degree of organisation of the marches is one indication of the movement's formidable strength. Another is the scale of the underground press, involving at least 700 different bulletins across the country, some well produced and running several thousand copies of each issue. Among the many different types of underground network, one of the most popular models is that of the KOS (popular resistance committees) with interlocking cells of five people each of whom creates another cell of five. In Warsaw alone there are reportedly 12 such networks, each of which takes between 600 and 800 copies of the main underground bulletins and gives one copy to each cell.



Gdansk: The day after the crackdown

The Warsaw demonstration was organised by a committee claiming to represent organisations in 60 of the capital's factories.

Strong regional Solidarity organisations exist in Gdansk and Wroclaw and are reportedly to exist in Cracow, Szczecin, Lodz and Poznan. Only in the important industrial region of Upper Silesia do the police seem to have been successful in blocking the emergence of a powerful regional network – repression has been especially severe there. But it appears that even in the strong regions there is a patchwork of often autonomous groups, kept apart through both security precautions and differences in policy and outlook.

The most general themes running through the underground press are the need for a thoroughgoing struggle to overthrow the military regime, the character of the regime as a clique of national traitors, the need for mass action, the exposure of collaborators, and readiness to make sacrifices in the sacred cause of the workers and the nation. At the same time, as the regime's own sources acknowledge, the Solidarity underground universally condemns the use of terrorism and violence on the part of the resistance.

MEETING IN SECRET

In April the first national meeting of prominent regional Solidarity leaders was held in secret. Among those involved was Zbigniew Bujak of Warsaw, Bogdan Lis and Bogdan Borusewicz of Gdansk, the Wroclaw Solidarity leader Wladyslaw Frasyniuk, and a Cracow leader. The holding of the meeting indicated that a measure of consensus had been achieved on the policy that Solidarity should pursue. The statement issued afterwards showed that the group is seeking to create an alliance between the underground working class movement and both the Church leadership and the liberal, reformist intelligentsia around a common platform of demands for political reform and a return of Solidarity's rights. Lech Walesa has reportedly agreed to accept any negotiating basis which the Church hierarchy puts forward, and the underground leaders have been attempting to ensure a link between these forces and the increasingly radical mass resistance movement. In this context, they evidently fear attempts by the regime to turn peaceful protests into uncontrolled riots by young people and for this reason they have advocated short token strikes and other token protests that cannot be provoked in this way.

The Jaruzelski group now faces a critical choice. If it produces a serious initiative to make a deal with the Church and the liberal intelligentsia it can expect the full weight of these forces' authority to be thrown behind the agreement, thus isolating sections of the resistance that reject the deal, and thus also gaining support in the West along with further credits which are vitally necessary to avert the threat of economic collapse. But such an agreement may involve a showdown with the civilian hard-liners in the party and a strengthening of control over the party bureaucracy by the officers loyal to Jaruzelski. The longer such a deal is delayed the weaker will be the Episcopate's influence over the growing resistance movement.

PROVOKE CONFRONTATION

Alternatively, the regime must attempt to provoke the resistance movement into a new, general confrontation in the near

Palestine – the forgotten issue

by Tony Greenstein (reprtinted from Brighton Labour Briefing)

IN most countries colonised by European imperialism, the colonisers occupied positions in the upper echelons of the political and economic institutions. The native population would occupy the most menial jobs and positions. In the case of Israel and Northern Ireland and to a lesser extent South Africa, the settler population took on the structure of a nation in itself, filling the ranks of both the working and ruling classes.

In Palestine, what was termed the Labour Zionists, operated a policy of boycotting Arab Produce and Labour in order to create a self contained Jewish economy. The Jewish only 'trade union', the Histradut (which besides being the major trade union is also the major employer!) conducted strikes and pickets not in defence of the living standards of its membership against their employers, but against Arabs being employed or Arab produce being bought in preference to Jewish produce.

In short an apartheid settler economy was created from which Palestinians were excluded. This also applied to land, which was bought up, often from absentee landlords. The Arab farmers were evicted and Jewish-only settlements established (Kibbutzim). Indeed this was the major distinction between colonisation as practised in Palestine and South Africa. In the latter the native populace was exploited in order to create wealth for the white minority and at the same time deprived of any political rights, in Palestine the settlers preferred to exclude Arabs from the economy and from there to exclude them physically from the country.

In Ireland too there was a settler working class which was given preference over the nationalist working class, the latter developing as a working class later than their Protestant equivalents. Catholic unemployment has always been markedly higher than that of the Protestant workers with the latter scarcely represented at all in the major shipyard and engineering works. In the 18th Century the Catholics, like their Palestinian equivalents today, had been driven off the land.

In Northern Ireland as in Israel, joint working class action which at all threatens the state is impossible – and this is something Militant ignores – because of the already existing divisions between the two peoples. The result in Palestine, and to a lesser extent in Northern Ireland, is that even the development of a minority working class was stifled.

It is also more than just coincidence that the same notorious imperialist, a Winston Churchill, played a major role in the creation of both states. In 1922 the Churchill Memorandum outlined Britain's attitude towards the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine – against the express wishes of the Palestinians – as a means of securing Britain's hold on Palestine to which it had no intention of giving even nominal independance to. Only a year before, Churchill had been one of the major figures in the Lloyd George Cabinet pushing for partition as a reply to demands for Home Rule and Independence. In succeeding years there was no greater friend of Ulster Loyalism and Zionism than Churchill. (In Northern Ireland, the legacy of Partition has been the existence of a police state in which Catholics were systematically discriminated against in every sphere of activity and subject to fierce repression by the state. Such is the case in Israel where the Arab population are still subject to the British Defence Regulations introduced in 1946 and which are very similar to the Emergency Powers Act in Ireland.

In both countries, the dominant community uses religion and the bible as the ideological cloak and justification for their racist practises. In both the Jewish community in Israel and the Protestant community in Northern Ireland, religion has provided the ideological cement which binds together the different classes of the settler community. In both states the settlers have manoeuvred themselves into a position where they are in a numerical majority. In Ireland this was done by artificially cutting off six counties to form the Ulster statelet (combined with pogroms and expulsions of Catholics) and in Palestine the numerical imbalance between 600,000 Jews and nearly twice that number of Arabs was resolved by both partition and expelling nearly 90% of the latter from their lands.

And it is because both states rest on artificial majorities carved out at the expense of the indigenous population, that in both cases these states are inherently unstable – politically and economically. It is not surprising that Sir Ronald Storres called a Jewish state "a little loyal Ulster" after becoming Military Governor of Jerusalem. It is no surprise that the UDA admires the Zionists in Israel. And there is one other similarity – for far too long the labour movement has been on the wrong side of the fence.

future, enabling the security forces to use massive violence against the workers, take repressive measures against the Church and the liberal intelligentsia on a much wider scale than hitherto, and install an old-style Stalinist dictatorship presiding over a galloping economic decline.

Those in the British labour movement who appreciate that the fate of Solidarity will affect the future of the labour movement throughout Europe for many years must therefore recognise that the coming weeks and months will very likely be crucial. Now is the time for us to renew our demands on the Polish government to end its repressive drive against Solidarity and seek to find some way of living at peace with Poland's working people.

Massacre in Beirut



the 17th July 1981 Israeli attack



SET-BACK FOR THE DISTRICT AUDITOR

Robert Latham
New Councillor in Camden

Over the twelve months since last May's GLC elections, the concept of government by lawyers has dominated local government. First the ILEA abandoned the GLC manifesto commitment to reduce the cost of school meals by 10p after advice from lawyers. Soon afterwards followed the fiasco of the London Transport fares case. The victory in the Camden Supplement case now seems to reverse that trend.

It will be recalled that in the fares case, Lord Denning made his banal comments about electorates not reading manifestos, adding that manifestos were issued to get votes and included promises which were often unattainable in practice. The judgement in the House of Lords whilst more sophisticated, still interpreted the law in a way that no-one had previously envisaged.

The watermark of the Lord's judgement was their emphasis on the fiduciary duty owed by Councils to their ratepayers. Lord Diplock even implied that it might be illegal for Councils to defy the government by refusing to make cuts if this were to lead to loss of government block grant and to a greater burden on ratepayers.

This judgement has been an invitation to every crank and busybody to sue local councils. Spending ratepayers money on seeking legal advice has become an alarming growth industry. Earlier this year the GLC sought legal opinions before fixing rents.

The Camden Supplement case predated these developments. It was in February 1981 that the District Auditor, Ian Pickwell, announced his intention to take 31 Camden Councillors to court after two Tory councillors, Kenneth Avery and Derek Spencer had made a complaint. It is significant that neither of them had suggested that the decision to pay the supplement might be illegal, when it was discussed in Council, even though one of them is a QC.

It may well have been a decisive factor that the Camden case was heard after the fares decision. Even though that decision turned the law back by half a century, the Lords generated such a wave of public protest that cheap fares has now become the popular issue which it never was at the time of the GLC election. The courts also seem to have realised the dangers of allowing themselves to become the stamping ground of political miscontents.

Last month, Mr. Justice McNeill criticised the Kensington and Chelsea Council for using the courts for political purposes by superficially dressing up issues as points of law. The Council has sought to challenge the latest GLC precept because of its rent subsidies. In the Camden Supplement case, the Divisional Court again emphasised that it was not the role of the courts to pass judgement over political issues which were matters for the electorate.

THE CAMDEN CASE

The Camden case arose from the Council's decision to pay a minimum wage of £60 to manual staff to settle the dirty jobs strike of 1978/9. The Council also reduced the working week from 37½ to 35 hours whilst the national agreement remained at 40 hours. The Council had been sympathetic to the demands of the strikers and were dissatisfied with the progress of national negotiations.

The District Auditor had estimated the alleged illegal expenditure at £950,000. Whilst accepting that local authorities had a discretion as to the remuneration they paid to their staff, he argued that this was subject to their duty towards their ratepayers. He suggested that their discretion to be 'generous' was limited to a 15% margin above the national rates and that anything in excess of this was illegal. Some of the lowest paid received some 40% more as a result of the settlement. David Widdicombe QC who had also appeared for Bromley in the fares case, argued that Camden had been 'sidetracked by some policy of social reform' or had indulged in 'philanthropic enthusiasm' at the expense of the ratepayers.

The case is likely to act as a brake on the activities of Ian Pickwell

The Divisional Court were wholly unsatisfied with the case put forward by the District Auditor. The evidence necessary to show that Camden had reached a decision that no reasonable authority could have made needed to be clear and compelling. The basis of the figures upon which the District Auditor relied were challenged in an affidavit by Professor Metcalfe from Kent University, and the court preferred his computations to those of the District Auditor. The Poplar case in 1925 in which a minimum wage of £4 was ruled illegal, was distinguised. The legal procedure had changed, and in any event the Poplar Councillors were found not to have paid 'excessive wages', but 'gifts or gratuities' without any regard to commercial considerations.

The Divisional Court concluded that while the District Auditor had felt that Camden had given in too easily to the strikers, there was nothing to suggest that the councillors had acted improperly when faced with an emergency situation. The court stressed that they were making no criticism against Mr. Pickwell, but he was ordered to pay all the costs, estimated at £100,000. He has a right to appeal, but is unlikely to do so.

EFFECT OF THE DECISION

The High Court has now given a much more liberal interpretation of the concept of fiduciary duty. Lord Justice Ormrod defined it as merely using ratepayers' money for 'legally authorised purposes'. Mr. Justice Forbes said that the duty had to be weighed against other duties whether these be to council staff or to those who benefit from council services and who were affected by the strike. Fiduciary duty did not mean that the courts could reopen and undermine any local authority decision.

Council have recently been inundated with legal opinions advising them on what factors are relevant to a decision, say to fix rents, and what are irrelevent. Failure to consider relevant factors, or being swayed by irrelevant factors would make the decision illegal, they are advised. The court suggested that this would not inevitably lead to illegality. Regard had to be had to the overall decision in deciding whether the authority had acted legally. It was even suggested that provided councillors took relevant considerations into account, they could give nil weight to them.

THE DISTRICT AUDITOR

The case is likely to act as a brake on the activities of Ian Pickwell. This year he has made several comments on matters of council policy criticising Camden for its level of spending and calling for cuts in services. These comments conflict with the Local Government Code of Practice which emphasises that it is not the role of the auditor to express opinions on the wisdom of particular decisions but merely to consider their legality. Tom King, the local government minister has recently supported this view. 'I want to make it clear', he has said, 'that it is not the auditor's duty to consider political merits.' He added that auditors themselves had 'no doubt on this point'. This comment would not seem to apply to Mr. Pickwell.

The District Auditor is still considering a number of complaints against Camden. His decision on rent levels for 1980/81 has been deferred until a legal action by the Camden Ratepayer's Association, CRA, has been heard. The latest tactic by the CRA and Tories is to intimidate council officers by making complaints

PREPARE DRAFT LEGISLATION NOW!

AFTER years of Tory devastation and mis-rule, the electorate will have high expectations of the next Labour government. People will rightly want to see the swift implementation of Labour's remedies to cure the recession and social inequalities. We cannot afford to disappoint our supporters for want of ready legislation, as has happened in the past.

PETER TATCHELL

For this reason, to ensure the speedy implementation of Labour's programme once it is elected to power, the Party should *now* begin the task of drawing up draft Bills on key policies. Tony Benn has recently given a lead in this direction with his Bill to ban nuclear, chemical and biological weapons from British soil.

On other issues, the NEC could take the initiative by convening working parties on each major area of policy. These could consist of members of the NEC, PLP and ordinary Party members with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise. Each working party could draw up detailed outline legislation on policies such as withdrawal from the EEC and the north of Ireland, nationalisation of banks and insurance companies, women's equality, gay rights, industrial democracy, nuclear disarmament, abolition of the House of Lords and Labour's plan to create jobs and end low pay, etc.

The draft Bills could then be circulated for scrutiny within the Party. Comments and suggested amendments could be invited, thereby involving grassroots Labour members in the formulation of legislation and ensuring that it enjoys the widest possible endorsement. This wider consultation on draft Bills might avoid a repetition of past experiences when Annual Conference policies were watered down in the legislative stages. It could ensure that future Bills passed by Labour governments bear greater resemblance to the Party's democratically agreed policies.

Many of these policies, such as withdrawal from the EEC, are highly complex. They will require detailed legislative planning well in advance of the next election. It would not be satisfactory for Bills to be hastily cobbled together after a Labour victory at the polls. Nor would it be tolerable for there to be months, if not years, of delay before legislation was placed before Parliament.

If Labour is to win an electoral majority, voters have to be convinced that the Party has worthwhile and workable solutions to Britain's problems. They therefore quite rightly want, and need, to know Labour's legislative proposals. This requires the honest and open presentation of Labour's alternative in the form of draft Bills, which I am sure will win popular support and give the next Labour government a clear mandate for far-reaching socialist reforms.

The drawing up of outline legislation prior to the next election could also help break down public cynicism regarding pre-election promises. It would be proof of Labour's commitment to honour its election manifesto. It would show our determination to get Britain back on the road to economic prosperity and to put an end to social injustice and inequality.

The preparation of draft Bills is vital if Labour is to present itself as a credible alternative to the Tories. Such Bills are necessary, not only to win electoral victory, but to fulfill people's expectations and sustain popular support through a speedy and radical redistribution of wealth and power *within the lifetime of the next Parliament.*

against their advisers rather than attack the final decision of the council.

THE CRA

The CRA action against Camden claiming £30m is still pending. It was dismissed last year by Mr. Justice Warner who described them as 'cranks and busybodies'. Despite this, the Attorney General has now given his permission for the case to proceed in his name, the case alleging illegally low rents, and seeking to impose liability for alleged inefficiencies in the building department and for 'defiance of government' leading to loss of block grant. The Attorney General is now unsure as to which side to back and has informed Roy Shaw, the former leader of the Council, that he has given his fiat for a case to proceed against the CRA arising from their attempts last year to incite ratepayers to illegally withhold rates by paying them into a 'Camden Council Trust' account.

The local council elections have showed that Camden has continued to hold the confidence of the electorate despite these legal diversions and constant criticisms in the press and on television as a 'profligate spender'. One elector explained to a canvasser how he had always voted Tory in the past, but would never do so again in view of their hypocrisy over the Camden Supplement case. The outgoing labour group in Camden have been criticised for concentrating on being 'administrators' rather than taking the political initiative against the government. This will now be the aim of the new group.

HELP!

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ASTMS: Conference season opens

This year's Annual Delegate Conference of ASTMS meets in Harrogate from May 22-24. Important questions face the union. After several years of growth, which took membership from around 80,000 in 1968 to 450,000 in 79/80, membership has declined with little prospect of recovery in the immediate future. It is the first major union conference of the 'Conference Season'. The 1981 conference vote for Benn as deputy leader, confirmed the challenge of Benn, and helped quash the idea that he was an outsider. With conference policy in favour of withdrawal from NATO, plus opposition to Nuclear Power & Trident, the Left could claim a victory!

But little has been done in the intervening years at a local or national level to unify the left as an ongoing campaigning organisation, which would be prepared to challenge the NEC and HQ bureaucracy, as it reached for the dustbin to quietly dispose of these left advances. There is a real need for an open left wing movement, which will campaign amongst the rank and file of the union, to promote working class struggles against redundancies and cuts, to defeat the Tebbitt Bill, and to support the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

In this respect the ADC offers a new opportunity to advance the policy of the union, and to develop contacts for a new Left wing movement in workplace groups, branches, Divisional Council, and advisory committees.

The Final Programme of business now available to delegates places a number of very important issues before Conference. The Tebbitt Bill is the subject of a motion from No.5 Div. Council. This motion points out the serious nature of the attacks on basic trade union rights, that Tebbitt represents. But it stops short of clear calls for co-ordinated action. Six of the ten amendments, if passed would commit the union to support such a cause, in particular the amendments from Bristol (ISS)471, North East London Medical, Nottingham University and Shell Ellesmere Port.

Only one motion and 3 amendments on Incomes Policy appear this year. But their presence is timely. The TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee's increasing advocacy of a new 'Social Contract' is disastrous.

A good composite on the NHS will offer delegates the opportunity to question the NEC on what happened to previous anti-cuts and anti private practice policy. Both amendments should be supported.

No.15 Divisional Council motion calls for a full report of the position of women in the union. If passed, continuous pressure on the NEC may be necessary to have this information made available.

For the first time in many years the ADC will discuss Ireland. Motions are from Liverpool Shipping & Freight and the Scientific Staffs, with an amendment from Merseyside Community Branch. Unfortunately a clear commitment to call for the withdrawal of British troops, which is contained in 8 of the 11 motions originally submitted on this subject, cannot be discussed as surprise, surprise, they don't appear. Reference back of the Final Programme of business may be an option, in order to correct this gross disorder.

Glyn Beagley,
South East London Medical
(in a personal capacity)

Labour Councils: Lessons of the GLC

'The new council will have no alternative but to lead a massive and continuing campaign against the government and speed the election of a Labour government.'

'We will seek to unite Labour local authorities and the trade union movement in a mass campaign to bring down this government and the system it represents at the earliest possible opportunity.'

One year separates these two statements and much water has flowed under the bridge in that time. The first was said by Ken Livingstone, now leader of the GLC, before the elections last May.

The second was part of the statement published in the April issue of *Briefing* and signed by many Labour candidates for the local elections – as well as GLC councillors, including Ken Livingstone.

The statement does recognise that the GLC has been 'forced to retreat on a number of issues'. There is at present much bitterness and acrimony inside the Labour left in London, as was shown in the previous two issues of *Briefing*, over what is regarded as betrayal of left Councillors on the GLC.

Ken Livingstone has been the main target of these attacks. The GLC has failed over and over again to carry out promises made in the Manifesto which was decided upon by the Greater London Labour Party. It failed to decrease the price of school dinners, it sold council houses, and despite increasing the fares on London Transport, it has just increased them by 100 per cent after the Law Lords' ruling.

THE FARES ISSUE

It has been the fares issue above all else that has brought matters to a head. The left has been thrown into disarray as to what is the best strategy to adopt.

Last year, at the *London Labour Briefing* conference a policy of 'disengagement' was adopted. This was to refuse to carry out Tory cuts by letting go the reins of office and letting chaos ensue.

Yet the Labour group on the GLC could not bring itself to vote against the budget which contained the fares increases on the grounds that this would make the budget 'illegal'.

That is the crunch of the matter. There is no doubt that the GLC has been faced with a most vicious and sustained onslaught from both the press and the Tories, directly through the penalties imposed by Heseltine as well as the verdicts handed down by the courts.

The real issue at stake for both the GLC and all left Councillors and councils elected next week is not what parts of the Manifesto will get defeated, but how the left take on the government. It has been the GLC voting for these cuts at the same time as refusing to organise 'a massive and continuing campaign against the government' – as Ken Livingstone put it – that has been the GLC's undoing.

And of course, it is very difficult for people like Ken Livingstone to lead such a campaign *when they vote for Tory cuts.* Nor is it enough to plead, as Lambeth Council leader, Ted Knight, is wont to do, that the problem is that the labour movement, in particular the trade unions, are not outside the town halls waiting to give support.

At a time when workers are increasingly under attack from the Tories, when union leaders have failed to give a lead in the fightback, the left in the Labour Party has to make a stand. On every issue, fares, school dinners, council house sales, and so on, the Labour group should have voted to carry out its manifesto pledges and have carried that fight into the workplaces, as well as trade union and Labour Party branches.

This is a decisive break from the 'campaigning' that is the norm inside the Labour Party. Immediately after the Denning judgement huge demonstrations and rallies should have been organised, the Law Lords should have been picketed and lobbied.

More important, the GLC should have established close organisational and political links with the rank and file leaders of the union, that is the shop stewards and convenors, particularly those in the council and transport unions.

Not only are they the best allies in the fight that has to come against this government, they are in fact the only ones who can bring Thatcher finally to her knees.

Newly elected Labour Councillors should carry out their promises not to make cuts. This means a freezing (if not reduction) of rents and rates and not a job to be lost. Trade unionists may be too disillusioned to support such actions the first time around, but there is no other option if they are to be convinced that this time, the Labour Party means business.

Tessa van Gelderen
Brent South CLP



PHOTOMONTAGE: CATH TATE

PREVENT STREET CRIME

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Don't take MY children with you!

OVER a year ago Families Against the Bomb was formed. Firstly I would like to explain how we came to be called *Families* Against the Bomb. We have been criticised by feminists for using the word families. It is a reactionary title we have been told. This is because it has been presupposed that by families we mean "nuclear" families, i.e. husband, wife and two point whatever kids, presumably called the nuclear family because it is a potentially explosive combination. My understanding of the word family is any person or persons who are caring for, and concerned for the future of, a child or children. This encompasses everyone from single parent families, the dreaded "nuclear" family, extended families, groups of people men and/or women caring for children communally, lesbian households with children, etc. etc.

FAB (corny initials eh?!) was formed because we found that many people with children found it very difficult, if not impossible, to get to evening CND meetings. FAB meets during the day in each other's homes with our children. (We have a rota of members who care for the children in a separate room while we get on with the business of the meeting, we tried having the kids in with us but it just took twice as long to get through the business). People without children are not excluded from FAB meetings, but usually they would be members of CND and attend their evening meetings.

Primarily Female

The group was initiated by two women and is primarily female in composition. We do not exclude male members of families i.e. any men involved in caring for children who would rather use their energies in FAB rather than CND, and often supportive men come with us on marches, to Greenham Common, and sometimes look after the kids in the "creche". However we do liaise with the Women's Peace Alliance and other women only peace groups but we are not strictly women and children only (at what age does a male child cease to be a child and become a man??).

We are in a way part of Hornsey CND, we try to liaise with them on most things and we receive much help and information from CND headquarters. Since we came into being we have held a public meeting (with a creche), formed a telephone tree, been to Greenham Common to support the women's peace camp several times (once to the festival there), spoken to mother and toddler groups,

FAMILIES AGAINST THE BOMB

shown a video to Haringey Mothers group, held two very successful benefit gigs, and have been heavily involved in organising a **Families Against the Bomb mass lobby of Parliament by women and children on May 18**, to show our MPs that we will not accept the siting of Cruise or Trident in this country.

We have been in constant contact with the media through press releases, letters and phone calls. To be honest, a million women and kids lobbying Parliament would not shift the Thatcher government, but we hope and pray for good media coverage. Our primary aim is to mobilise women and children and obviously the more publicity we get, the more the idea of women and children fighting for survival against the nuclear threat will spread.

Their Children May Never Grow Up

We all live with the nightmare of possible nuclear destruction, but for those caring for children it is even more horrendous. For example, there are many women at home whose main occupation is bringing up children and many of these women are not politicised at all. Mother and toddler clubs and playgroups are full of them and their children. These women are becoming very concerned, frightened, worried and ANGRY about the fact that their children may never grow up. The media no longer refers to *if* there is a nuclear war, but *when*.

What is the point of caring for your children's health, making sure their teeth are good, their feet growing properly, fighting for good education for them, if, in the back of your mind is the fear that we are all doomed, that they are the last generation, that they may never grow to change the world. Then there is the ultimate nightmare, if (or when) the bomb drops. If you are not caring for children your primary concern would be your own life or death. When you have children you seriously begin to imagine how you would put your children out of their misery. How you would "put them down". What if they survived while you died? What would you say to your children when the warning went? How would you answer the question "why did you allow this to happen?". Mothers, often isolated at home, are becoming severely depressed. Women weep with their friends. We must harness and encourage their ANGER. If you look back to previous holocausts and disasters, women laid down their lives to try to save their children every time. Maybe it is an instinct, maybe not, but now is the time for women to rise up and say WE WILL

NOT ALLOW WORLD GOVERNMENTS AND OUR OWN IN PARTICULAR, TO SACRIFICE OUR AND OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE FOR *THEIR* PRINCIPLES.

If anyone would rather be dead than red then fair enough, if it comes to the crunch they can commit suicide, but they are not taking my children with them. Ask a mother in the USSR if she would rather her child be burned to death than live. She would think you insane. The media fed argument you initially receive when talking to mothers who have



limited or no political knowledge is "What about the Russians?" There are many answers to this like the arguments above, but anyone who has heard of El Salvador is seriously doubting the intelligence of blindly supporting the US and their foreign policy and war mongering.

Consciousness Raising Exercise

I see little point in preaching to the converted. This is a massive consciousness raising exercise. We have had good results everywhere we have spoken. Women are becoming aware and involved instead of depressed. Contrary to popular opinion, becoming involved in an anti-nuclear group does not make you think about nuclear destruction more and consequently make you more depressed and despairing. You realise that there are millions of mothers all around the world who do not want themselves or their children to die. We must join together and fight tooth and nail to prevent what will surely materialise if massive resistance is not mobilised immediately.

Anyone who feels that they would like to join us or support us in any way, please contact Glynis Williams, 124a Northview Road, London N8. We can send you posters, stickers, etc.

by Josette Morgan
Hornsey C.L.P.

ANTI-SEXIST MEN'S WEEKEND IN LONDON 4-6 JUNE 1982

Venue: 83 Endell Street, WC2 6pm Friday to 4pm Sunday.

If you want to come, please send £4.00 (£2.00 unwaged) by May 28 to Peter Davey, 101 Constantine Rd., NW3, giving your name, address, 'phone no. and stating whether you need sleeping space, creche facilities and/or vegetarian food.

Disabled access: 3 steps at front entrance, lift to all floors, some toilets accessible without steps, all doors standard sizes.

The bedsitter

by

Geoff Dixon

JUST as I was about to open the door I heard the street door open. I hesitated. Why? Why didn't I want to bump into the person just coming in? I waited until the footsteps disappeared up the stairs and the door slammed. Only then did I venture out and go to the toilet.

If my sister didn't live in the same house I'd probably go mad. There are ten bed-sits in this converted, Victorian slum, yet sometimes you feel that the other people are invisible. You know they are there because you can hear the hi-fi or the TV or the toilet flush. Yet it can be months between seeing them and then it's usually an unavoidable accident.

I only know two other people's names. We never socialise and you only know them from the mail when you search for some letter in the mornings, hoping there's one for you.

The old lady is over 85 and she went away in November. By late January we (my sister and I) thought perhaps she had died. Neither of us went to the trouble of contacting the landlord to find out. Somehow, it was too much effort. It didn't concern us.

About Christmas the local Vicar called with a hamper for the old lady. I couldn't advise him of the situation and I wouldn't take the hamper to look after.

Suddenly in February the old lady returned. She had been in hospital and had stayed with friends convalescing.

As she wasn't allowed out I went to the shops to buy her a new pen so that she could do the crossword. A friend drops in on Fridays with shopping and her pension. She tells me this when she knocks on my door. I have never knocked on her door to see if I can help.

She is so frail she broke a finger while putting 50p in the meter. A week is a long time between visits – I *should* knock on her door.

I feel guilty but there is some kind of atmosphere that prevents you being "nosy".

There is no real privacy because of the constant noise, so you avoid physical contact to preserve physical privacy. The mental, noisy intrusions are not a nuisance but accepted as part of the living conditions. You can't shut off your mind, but you can shut the door and avoid people.

The landlord has just died. I don't really care because I despise his exploitation of students, divorcees, single working people who depend on people like him to provide a damp room for £12 a week.

We should form a tenants association but there is always an excuse like a high turnover, no time, nobody's in or can't be bothered.

We are a group, we are not isolated. We all know each other exists but we don't mix physically. It's as if mental telepathy keeps us together in a vacuum of mutual existence without communication.

After 5 years you hate it. The damp, the condensation, the cold, the lack of space, the dirt and the piles of "stuff" everywhere. You go out every night and just sleep there and have one meal a day. Eight hours in all and only one or two conscious hours.

Hell is the rotten conditions and the mental torture of an ancient bed sit, knowing there are other people around you with barriers impossible to break down, but wishing, somehow you could.

Four comrades spent a week over Easter in Weymouth, Dorset, with their three young children. The experience prompted Les Tate (Lambeth Central CLP) to write these poems:

ON CHESIL BANK

Your feet scrunch
Like climbing coke
As you chew and slither
Up the pebble hump
Hand in hand
To where the sea toes a line
Wind frets bare heads
As you examine the chisled dyke
Ruled direct to the horizon
The ridge from which the children
Drag you
Skidding, scrambling through scree
They're whimpering, complaining
Salt eating in
Eroding your attention
So you huddle against the cold
And wave them off to the sea
Curling up like hedgehogs together
But the kids keep trickling in
Pleading, pawing, niggling in gusts
Wedging cries into your heart
Wriggling into gaps
Prizing apart with the relentlessness of waves
They'll dig and dig
Till the cracks split open.

HOLIDAY GROUP

First taste for
Four revolutionaries
Graham striding out the breeze
Head sloped back like a Mayan
Balding, tonsured, frank-mouthed
Cath and I arranging each other's lives,
And Ann
With her two theatrical children
Adamant Ann
Eyes at flash point
Arms wound round her lovers.

There's a meeting every night
Where we turn over stones
Analysing the lines round our lives
Ann is quick scissors
Cutting open Adam
Cath deals the cards
Graham's seen his grail
We're rewriting the testament
Dispossessing the jealous fathers
Collectivising sex
Under the watchful wrathful eyes of women
The rising of the working class.

ALL OUR CHILDREN

'A place in a day nursery – open all hours – for all under 5s.' That's the left programme on childcare. In those boroughs where they wield enough influence that aim even appeared in the local manifesto.

It's not just that there isn't much chance of fulfilling such a promise in these times. The main trouble is that supporters of this aim don't usually consider what such a nursery would be like for the children. Whether the care, education and stimulation given in existing state nurseries is adequate. Whether all we need to do is just produce more nurseries like we have now or whether we want something different.

The resolutionary socialism that typifies Labour Party politics distances us from what is actually being discussed – in this case that is children, parents and other childcarers. People support resolutions for day nurseries carried in meetings where children are not welcome and where no provision is made to help those comrades who can't attend the meeting because they have young children.

ALTERNATIVES

Chartist (No 90) has tried to present this issue in a different way. Those writing in this issue which is devoted to 'Caring for children' have written mainly from their own experience in looking after young children, and from this experience have suggested alternatives. We think the 'personal politics' section of Briefing is an appropriate place to tell you about it.

'Caring for children' doesn't mention nurseries or creches much – you'll have to wait for a future issue for that. We do write about play, about comics, about adult attitudes to childhood sexuality, about single parents and childminders.

Writing about children is often writing about parents. Jim Barrow and Anna Lis have just had a baby. 'Jim's office union branch had voted to drop a claim for paternity leave from their last lot of negotiations, when management took a strong line on the claim.' What's more, Jim is a county councillor. 'The situation is easing as Anna has returned to work and Jim makes a lot more time available to care for Jenny. Although the share of caring has swung back the major burden falls on Anna still.' The job market is geared to making it difficult even for willing fathers to really share the childcare. They usually get paid more, so the pressure is on him to continue to work and for her to work part-time at most. Chances are he will therefore leave for work before the child is up and return when the child is already fed – if not in bed. Not surprisingly most people consider the typical father's role in parenting to be so peripheral that when 'Jim is staying at home most people refer to it as babysitting, as if Jenny is someone else's responsibility.'

SEMI-COMMUNAL

Mike lives in a sort of semi-communal household with several adults and children where although the childcare is shared to some extent, the parents still have the major responsibility for their 'own' children. So Mike stays at home to look after his two year old son. Why him? 'Not for political reasons, but because she earns twice as much as me. It is ridiculous that when a bloke stays at home he is considered exceptional.'

There is rarely any problem in Mike's house about babysitting, as there is usually someone who is staying in anyway. I once tried to set up a babysitters network in my borough to help those less lucky. I printed leaflets with tear-off slips asking for volunteers. Very few women and almost no men stepped forward. Luckily, my system for telling parents who these volunteers were was even more inefficient (another slip of paper) – so few parents knew of the service. I was naively encouraged to try to set up a network in my own Labour Party after a resolution was passed (that didn't come from me) which proposed that the Party should provide childcare for meetings. Silly me! Fancy thinking such resolutions actually apply to us!

A few years ago I turned up one afternoon to meet David and Carol – then aged 4 and 2. 'Can you make paper airplanes?' was David's greeting. I couldn't, and had to go back every few weeks to learn – and to play games which grew rougher and rougher, and, oh yes, to make sure they got to bed at a reasonable hour. I looked for an opportunity to do more and found it with Sally and Louise who live nearer. I often call round when I'm not actually babysitting to put to bed the younger child, Sally; and read her a story. I became more than a babysitter without really sharing the parenting, and I often feel that however much I do will not really be enough.

Why bother? Because with children one can be playful and childlike. Because children snuggle up beside you when you read them a story. There is something very rewarding about looking after a baby who is so dependent – changing her nappy, bathing or feeding him, pacifying them or rocking them to sleep in your arms. And it is even more wonderful to behold their growing independence when they begin to walk, to feed themselves and to talk.

NON-PARENTS MISS OUT

All this sounds so obvious, why bother writing it? Because most non-parents are missing out on this contact with the very young. A socialist society might have full nursery provision. More than that, I hope it will be a society where children are the responsibility of all of us and where there are always friends willing to share their company when their parents want to do something else (not necessarily together).

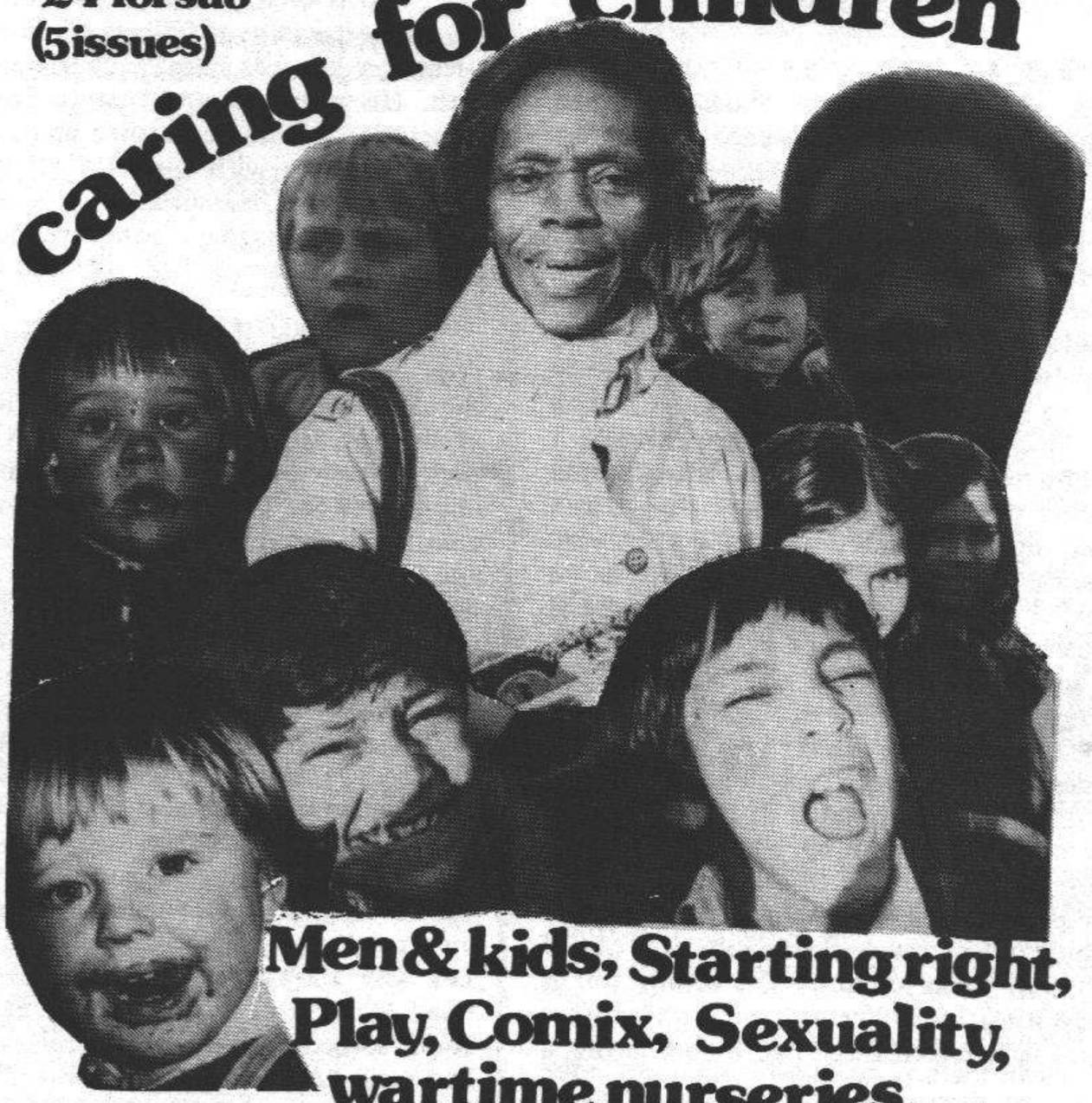
It's not just a question of duty to our comrades but of bringing out the playful, gentle, caring side of our nature that leftist meetings deaden. Those of you who have staffed creches before – be honest – weren't you glad you missed the meeting itself?

Bernard Misrahi

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caring for children



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SOCIALISM BEGINS AT HOME



Cath Tate
Lambeth Central CLP

I met Les 10 years ago when we were both students. We were both, along with most of our contemporaries, believers of the Great Relationship. You got it together with someone, started screwing 24 hours a day and then started living together. All difficulties you encountered in the relationship, you worked through together and if you did that properly there was no reason why you should not stay together for ever. We all disagreed with the restrictions that a traditional morality called for but it took me ten years to discover the restriction of the 'free' relationship I had entered into.

Les and I shared a lot of experiences together. We shared sexual experiences, we spent long hours talking to each other, we shared political and cultural experiences, we travelled widely together, we share the same friends and work together. We also had differences of opinion and different ways of doing things and occasionally these would flare up into violent rows. Les would sometimes flare up over what I would regard as a relatively minor matter. I found myself caught in a double bind of fear and pity towards Les. I was frightened of his temper and often would not bother to argue back because of the storm it would produce, and I would be then very cross with myself for not having done so. I thought at times that I had to change the relationship or break out of it, but as he got worse so my pity for him also increased and that drew me closer towards him. He would collapse helpless at times with debilitating migraines which he needed me to get over.

Most women are bonded to their men to a greater or lesser extent by a mixture of fear and pity similar to mine. It is very easy to exist in an unsatisfactory relationship for years until something out of the ordinary jolts you out of your stupor. I was jolted by Les coming out as a transvestite, by falling in love with another man and in between these two events having a baby.

During the cold winter of 1978/9 Les, who by now was drinking very heavily, started to get a series of dreadful migraines that neither increased doses of pills or my massaging would get rid of. They became so severe and unrelenting that there were nights when he hardly slept, when he would turn on the light, wake me up and cling to me, telling me that his head was disintegrating. It was our GP who was prepared to sit and listen to Les talking about his fears and problems who proved to be the catalyst. He got Les to tell me that he (Les) had been cross dressing without my knowing, an activity that Les had dismissed as of no great importance in his life. Les was terrified of what my reaction would be but I was just immensely relieved to find that that was all that had been troubling him.

Over the next year Les discussed and read endlessly all about the different ramifications of transvestism, gay and straight sexuality, sex roles and sexual politics. I found the whole process, especially at first, very interesting and I learnt a lot. Les became much easier to live with. His migraines and temper diminished as his irrational fears diminished and he gradually came to terms with himself. All that time I supported and reassured him and probably prevented him having a complete mental breakdown. I also became pregnant and had a baby in this period.

By the time Rosemary was born, Les had been 'out' for a year and was fairly stable, though I still occasionally had to give him a lot of support, on top of the physical exhaustion that a new baby brings. What I was quite unprepared for with a new baby though was the emotional mood swings that pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding bring with them. I had spent hours rationally talking through my relationship with Les to come to some sort of understanding of the situation and then suddenly I found a tiny baby producing feelings within me of an intensity that I had forgotten existed. Three days after I had weaned Rosemary I became completely besotted by another man.

Over the next few months everything I had believed in about relationships was turned upside down and I found myself breaking my own rules. Having been through so much with Les why should I feel so negatively towards him? Why was I lying awake at night thinking about someone else? Had the relationship I had had with Les just been a big sham? I probably would have come to that conclusion in the end and replaced Les in my life by the other man. I would have ended up in the same type of relationship all over again and been none the wiser for it. There was one thing that stopped that. The man I fell for, though he wanted to have a relationship with me, wouldn't.

This period was a very painful one for me because I felt so strongly for this man and for several months the situation was not clear. When he backed out of a relationship with me for a second time I realised that I was banging my head against a brick wall and I gave up the idea of any sort of relationship with him, though it took me a long time to forget him. I was then thrown back into a monogamous relationship with Les but there was no way now that I could easily settle back into that. A potential relationship with another man got nowhere a couple of months later and when that happened I realised that I *had* to sort out where my relationship with Les was at.

I fell for another man because I had had too many emotional demands put on me. Having another relationship was a way out of what had become a claustrophobic relationship with Les. It is the job of mothers and wives in a capitalist society to provide limitless emotional support for their men. In order to keep a constant, stable, emotional life for themselves men dominate women mentally and physically so that women are bonded to them and won't withdraw their support. The women's movement has quite rightly aimed to free women from this domination of men. In practice though this means that women have to stand up to men who shout at them, men who are condescending to them and also men who burst into floods of tears on them. In turn though, if we are to hope to form any sort of socialist society, men have to free themselves from this emotional dependence on individual women and in doing so free themselves from the need to dominate women. This means that while women have to concentrate more on their public lives, men have to turn their attention to their private lives and to start learning a new language to express their feelings. I still feel that I give Les more emotional support than I receive though he is now very aware of the problem and we are both changing.

No socialist society will emerge so long as people are holed up in exclusive monogamous relationships that are held together by domination by either partner. True socialism will not come until people feel free to express their feelings to whoever they want to without fear of reprisals. Socialism begins at home.

Sexist Violence —

WE'VE HAD ENOUGH!

ALTHOUGH the feminist resurgence started in the late sixties, the left's adoption of women's rights has been slow and is still relatively embryonic.

At the GLLP Conference in March there were many resolutions on women's issues and violence against women and they were given top billing – first on the agenda. Great! – or was it? I must be forgiven if I am too harsh, but the issue suddenly seemed to have risen in importance. Why? Does the Labour Party take up issues (topics) like the press does? My fear was reinforced later in the conference when there was a resolution on housing. ONE resolution! Half the hall emptied into the canteen and the worthy resolution – like all resolutions that are worthy – was agreed. Ten years ago housing would have been top of the bill. Everybody would have been clamouring to requisition this or that and now we have just the one resolution though the housing problem is greater than ever. But forget it, housing is not in vogue – women's rights are.

Not a Fashion

We women must take this as a lesson and we must ensure that women's rights are not treated so contemptuously; they are NOT a fashion. Women's rights span the whole gamut of politics and at that March conference there were excellent resolutions which will help we women in our fight but – and this is a big but – many of the resolutions are pure luxuries for the thousands of women living under curfew, unable to go out at night because of the fear of violence from men.

Safe Women's Transport (SWT) interviewed 250 women in the Lewisham area and found that a staggering 85% of them never go out alone at night. This is not to say that 85% of the women have been attacked by men. The stranglehold of men's power over women is such that one man attacks one woman and all women are in fear.

Peter Sutcliffe, for example, killed 13 women and attacked some others and the result was that almost *all* the women in this country were terrified. I recall in the autumn of 1980 just before Sutcliffe was arrested that I had to go to Liverpool for my job and catch the sleeper back, a thing I do fairly frequently. But on this occasion I had been worked up into such a panic that I was physically sick and became too frightened to get on the train. A male reader may be thinking that I over reacted. I did. But women readers will know that my experience was unremarkable. Thousands of women were reacting similarly.

And the other side of this coin is that whilst everyone's attention was being focused on Sutcliffe, other women were being attacked, molested, interfered with and insulted but they were not acknowledged by the press. We could all hate Sutcliffe. How convenient he was. He made all other men innocent. But Peter Sutcliffe was not alone, holding half the population in fear.

Stop This Violence

This situation where women live in fear of men has got to change. We must stop this violence. It's not going to be easy. There are no easy answers. But we can make a start. We can start by recognising where the violence really starts.

I am not going to discuss here left-v-right. Accept that, naturally, women's position will be better with (good) socialist administrations. But that will never be enough and because it is going to be quite some time before we get a good socialist set-up and women want action now, we have got to look to things other than resolutions. Adopting resolutions is the easy bit.

At the heart of the problem is the way society (and you won't need me to remind you who runs most of it) sees and treats women, and violence against women is simply a part of that.

Look at the newspapers. Violence against women is made a sexy read and, printed alongside a (pretty, slim, young, white) naked woman, who can tell what reactions are stirred in male readers? Rape cases are usually reported as acts of sex rather than crimes of violence that they are and rapists are portrayed as butch, virile men or psychopaths. Portraying rapists thus helps reassure men's fantasies and cleanse men's consciences. We've got to face the fact that rapists are usually ordinary, everday men; left wing, right wing, non-political, all races. Religious and non-religious. Husbands, fathers, lovers, brothers, sons. They don't stand out in the crowd and so until a woman knows a man she must regard him carefully and as a potential rapist. She can't afford to take any chances.

But violence against women is not merely about rape. Rape is part of a series of events in which murder is the finale. In a way murder and rape are the easy bits to deal with. Although an alarming number of men still snigger and nudge each other (she asked for it, she's a goer, etc., etc.,) when a woman is raped (and left wing men do this too) – thankfully most people now accept that it is not OK for men to rape women, that a husband has no right to beat his wife and that murder is not tolerable. But folks find it hard to accept where the violence actually begins. The threshold is, unfortunately, incredibly low.

Men Are The Predators

If you can accept that violence against women is the manifestation of women's position in society and merely the physical demonstration of man's power over woman then you are accepting that men are the predators and women their prey and so the nice lefty man who gives a woman the 'once over' or 'eyes her up' is, face it folks, on the first step up this slippery sliding scale. Not a comforting thought! The next step is 'hello darling' or 'you've got a nice pair of tits' or, for the really 'bold' there's always 'I've got what you want, sweetheart' and progressing onto touching up and so on. If you think I exaggerate here I must remind you of the woman who was attacked on Charing Cross tube station just before Christmas by a small group of well dressed men who 'playfully' tried to put a vibrator in her mouth. The further we progress the easier it is to identify and accept the wrong. And, naturally, it is easier to see what's wrong with the big bad world outside than to look inside ourselves – so beware, clever men who think that by learning a few 'correct' phrases and championing women's rights that you're going to be safe to carry on as before, because I've got news for you – most women can see right through your claptrap.

Challenge Attitudes

Before we go on to talking about what can be done in the 'real' political arena start to think what YOU, male reader, can do yourself. Remember the feminist philosophy, the personal *is* the political. Men must join women in challenging first their own and then their brothers' sexist and patriarchal attitudes – and there are, I'm afraid, no points or prizes for 'goodies'!

Now, having recognised that violence against women is a political issue, we need political solutions – fast. The forthcoming National Conference of Labour Women has 12 resolutions on violence against women which shows how very important women regard the problem. How many similar resolutions will there be at the (real) National Conference. If not as many – why not?

The GLC's women's committee can, undoubtedly play an important role alongside women's organisations, sections, councils, and the GLC's Police Committee must look at the problem as a matter of urgency. 50,000 women were attacked in London in 1980. I do not know how many women were attacked in 1981 because the police say that "compiling these figures cost an inordinate amount of time and money" so we are, in all senses, fighting in the dark.

More resources must be made available. Research is desperately needed. We must change law and public opinion as always this means more money must be spend on educating and advertising (and why are there STILL sexist ads on London Transport, for Christ sake?) on women's aid and rape crisis, on self-awareness and self-defence, on transportation. Because violence against women is a political issue we must get it into the political arena to stimulate discussion and advocate action. It is going to cost a lot, but what price is there on women's freedom?

The streets of London – and everywhere else – belong to women too and we intend to use them – whether we are in "fashion" or not. So, Comrade – where does that leave YOU?

If you would like to know more about Safe Women's Transport contact Mary Evans, 35 Pembridge Square, W2 4DT. Tel: 01-221 3603.

Mary Evans,
(Kensington and Chelsea C.L.P.).

ALONE?

The tube gone midnight, a woman all alone,
Men staring, summing you up – why?
What is she doing here?
The woman uneasy trying not to catch 'their' eyes.
Please don't look, don't notice that I'm here.
I am a decent girl, it's not my fault it's so late.
At last, the train stops and yet another woman appears, afraid.
We catch each other's eyes, we smile –
Oh, that smile spoke so many words.
Now we are not afraid – we don't
Have to justify our being to these strange men.
We also can travel late at night.
Women together are not afraid.

Written September 1979
during a 'bad' journey
Ann Flowers, Brent South

Brighton Labour Briefing *is taking sexual politics seriously, and many of those involved are following the example set by the* **Wome and Labour** *collective in working to ensure that women's solidarity is not broken up by sexual relations with men. Ann Bliss spoke o her pamphlet 'Our Sex-Lives – Our Strength' to a* **Brighton Briefing** *meeting some weeks ago, and more recently a similar meeting wa held at Sussex University. On each occasion the participants came away feeling strengthened, and for those who attended fro London the meetings were an inspiration.* **Jane Mardell**, *from Queens Park Ward, Brighton, reports on the first meeting.*

Personal politics in Brighton

Half of the 25-30 people present at Brighton Labour Briefing's meeting on 'Women and the Labour Movement' were women. This compared with six women out of 50 present at BLB's inaugural meeting, and 12 out of 40 or so at our second meeting. Is this a positive indication of the increasing involvement of women in BLB? Or a reflection of the lack of real commitment on the part of a large number of our male comrades to the feminist perspective?

My first impression was that the men who were there on Sunday kept an unusually low profile. On reflection I realise that it was precisely those men who have been most vocal in past meetings who were absent from Sunday's meeting on women. Does it need to be pointed out yet again that feminism is *not* an issue to be separated out and ignored as a largely irrelevant diversion, but is central to all our struggles?

For the benefit of those unable to attend what proved to be an excellent meeting I'll try to summarize, but I must point out that it will be a very personal recollection (I was unaware that I would be asked to write this report, and didn't take any notes).

'THE RIGHT TO BE ANECDOTAL'

Ann spoke around the theme that the personal is political. We need, she said, to redefine 'politics' (at present a public, intellectualizing, male preserve) so that it includes the private and personal realm, which is what most women's lives revolve around. She used a phrase which struck me very forcibly: 'our right to be anecdotal' – a phrase which came back to me when, later in the discussion, much time was spent drawing parallels between women/men, working class/capitalists, black/white etc. etc., whilst only a few people were able to follow Ann and break down the barriers enough to make one or two very personal, 'anecdotal', contributions.

THE ROLE OF MEN

The 'co-operation' and 'goodwill' of men – Ann went on to say – was not enough whilst in these men's own relationship-structures the final responsibility for caring still rested with women. We need to bring men into our supportstructures *on our terms.* In the end, she stressed, our aim should be sufficient collective commitment to one another to enable us to surpass traditional sexual relationships and taboos (if you want a full account of how Ann Bliss and Chris Knight fought these traditions and came out on the other side, after what Chris described at the meeting as 'armed insurrection', read their pamphlets).

In the discussion which followed, much time was spent on the distinction between autonomy and separatism, and on the value of the radical feminist viewpoint. When finally pressed into speaking, some of the men started to ask what they should be doing. There were strong feelings that women and men can only come to an understanding of the nature of personal oppression if they work together – but there were also equally strong feelings from others that women have more important things to do with their time and energy than sort out individual men's difficulties in coping with feminism.

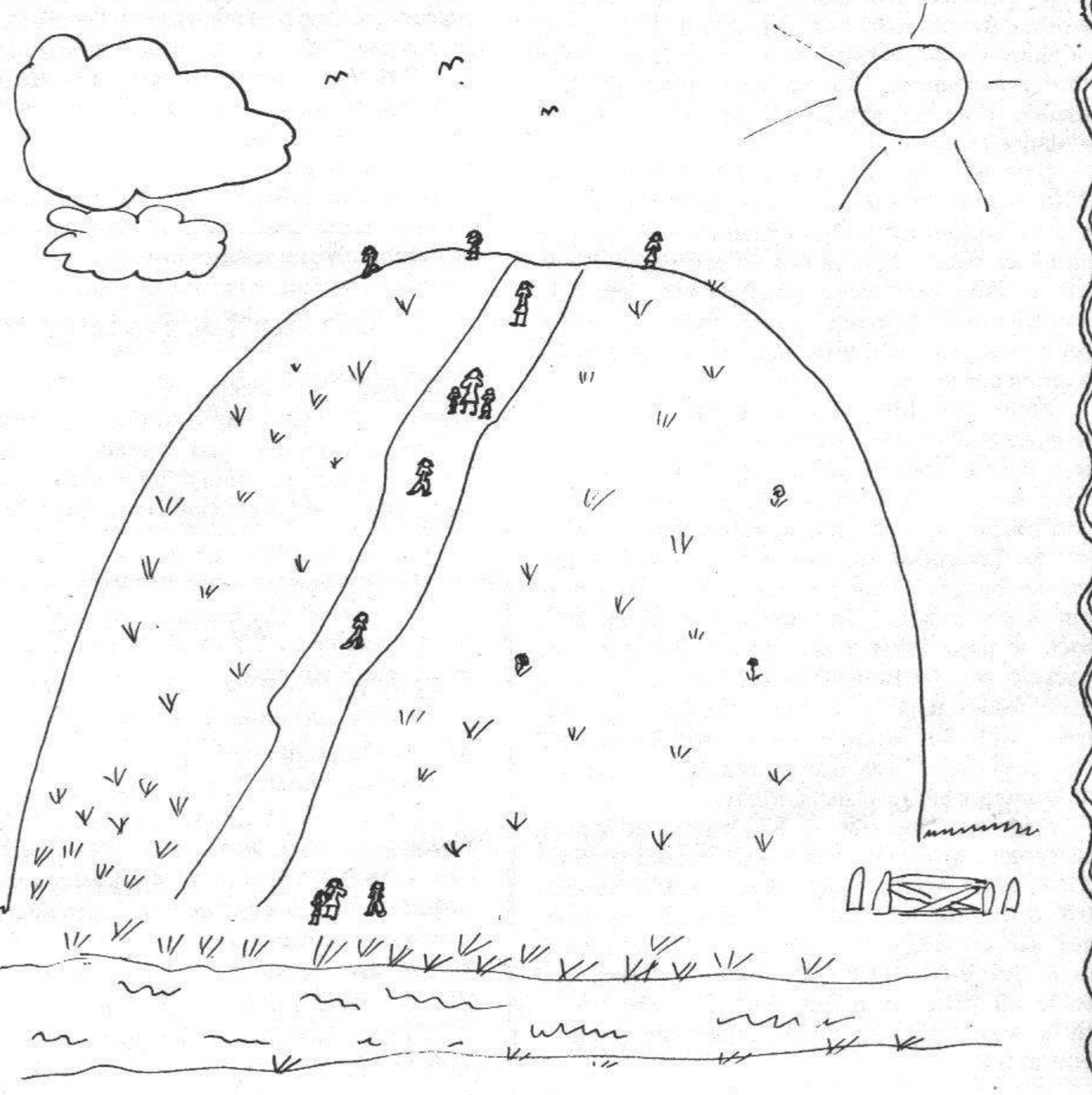
'Do men have a vested interest in feminism?' This question generated much discussion on the interrelationship between patriarchy and capitalism. Whilst nowadays patriarchy is inextricably bound up with capitalism, it nevertheless predates it, and to suppose that the removal of the latter will necessarily remove patriarchy itself is ridiculous.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

What can we do? How do we fight? At two levels. Using the structure of the Labour Party and its legislative potential we can tackle the issues of benefits, child care etc.; using our own relationships we can challenge at a personal level the structures and traditions that oppress us. There were signs on Sunday afternoon that there is a basis in *Brighton Labour Briefing* of trust and commitment to each other that we will be able to build on. I hope that those who do not yet see the significance of the struggle will be brought in by th enthusiasm of those who do.

Dave Lewney and Tony Greenstein (Queen's Park ward) add:

In the discussion following Ann's lead-off, th men – especially at first – seemed very reticen to speak. Possibly there were two reasons fo this. First, men here were experiencing the inhibitions that women more usuall experience in meetings of this size (about 30) Secondly, men have been given the excuse t do absolutely nothing about sexism becaus they have been left operating purely i traditional structures, a large section of th women's movement having traditionally hive themselves off from men. Our own experienc of such discussions in the Socialist Student Alliance was that men at best spoke in plati tudes and at worst said nothing at all for fea that the women present would jump dow their throats. It was precisely because thi didn't happen that this was the best suc meeting we have attended.



Picture by Rosie (age 7)

Children's (and adults) Midsummer's Outing to Silbury Hill Sunday June 20th; coaches leave County Hall 10a.m. Bring picnic lunch. Book through Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, N.W.1. Adults: £2.50; children: £1.25.

Letters

Dear comrades,

As a regular reader of Briefing I think the statement fronting issue No. 19 is a useful initiative and as a candidate for Councillor in the Hammersmith North Constituency, I would be pleased to append my name to it. The first point of this statement pledges defence of the living standards of the people of London. This formulation, you will agree, is somewhat leaky, as evidenced by the support given to the statement by Ken Livingstone and other GLC members. The large increases in rates favoured by the GLC do hit working people and, as the Lambeth experience shows, undercut support for policies aimed at defending jobs and services. In fact, Lambeth Council ultimately had to make cuts when the rate-rise strategy backfired on them.

Our defence of living standards is a non-negotiable principle. We will not gain the large-scale support needed to successfully confront central government if Councillors are seen to be lowering living standards through high rates in order to defend living standards in other respects.

Socialist greetings,
Mike Phipps
Hammersmith North CLP

Dear Briefing,

I was interested to read your front page article on surcharges, illegality, etc. I was even more interested to discover that I appeared as a signatory to the declaration; nobody asked me first.

I would certainly go along with most of what the declaration contains – as I made clear to my Branch when they selected me as a candidate for North Defoe, Hackney North, in January. But I will resign my Council seat before being faced with fines or surcharges – unless, of course, Briefing would like to pay these for me . . .

Yours in socialism,
Lou Eustace,
Branch Vice-Chair and Prospective Councillor, North Defoe Branch
Hackney North and Stoke Newington CLP

Dear Comrades,

Having written to Jeremy Corbyn about your last issue and the bizarre way in which you draw up your 'slate' for the London Labour Party Conference, I am sorry to have to follow this up by writing a letter to protest most strongly at the character assassination of Kate Hoey on page 30 of the latest issue of Briefing.

Even I, living in South London, know a lot about the personal rivalry between Ms. Warnock, her friend Patrick and Kate Hoey. No-one who has watched Kate at work in South London over the last few months could possibly describe her as a "bureaucratic right-winger". If Ms. Warnock can't tell the difference between Kate Hoey and genuine hard line right-wingers such as Denis Healey and Sam Silkin, it shows what a sad state the Party has come to.

Up to the present, one of the strengths of the left has been that in contrast to the right it has not indulged in the politics of the personality. Could I suggest that London Labour Briefing returns to this philosophy and stops publishing knocking copy, which seems to be largely designed to pursue personal vendettas rather than to encourage the onward march of Socialism.

Yours fraternally,
RICHARD BALFE MEP

Dear Briefing,

Concerning Julian Wells's "Mean Time in Greenwich" in your March issue. My voting credentials since joining the Labour Party in 1948 have been not less than 90% 'LEFT', i.e. pro-Socialist Labour League in Norwood prior to 1962 and pro-Militant in Greenwich. So I was disappointed to read that Julian Wells felt it necessary to pollute the political message in his "Mean Time in Greenwich" by reference to the Jeffrey family.

Since becoming politically committed in 1938, it has been my understanding that what really mattered was dialectic, not personal abuse. Should the correctness of this have escaped Julian's attention, today's K.I's headline might have brought that message home to him. For despite the cogent political content of his article, most local constituents will read only that: "Now the Jeffrey family is too right wing", et seq.

I hold no personal brief for "the Jeffrey chain", indeed, until last May I hardly knew of their existence, but to say of them, quite gratuitously, that their "most notable political attribute is that they are all members of the same family" is paltry and politically vacuous.

After 44 years of political activity including some whilst in the Army in wartime, I would presume to advise Julian with whom I hope to be associated on the new Greenwich Council together with the Jeffrey 'chain' that he does our Socialist cause a disservice in descending to sarcastic abuse of four comrades whose cumulative efforts on behalf of the community probably exceed the input of any other family in Greenwich. Whether left, right or centre enough, is another question which no doubt Julian will learn when the ink has dried on his membership card.

Fraternally,
Brian Williams
Greenwich CLP

Dear comrades,

It appears to me that Geoff Dixon (LLB p.8 April edition) has come up against that age old foe, impatience. His attitude, that one can force an issue through by sheer determination, irrespective of the majority wish, can surely only end in frustration. Frustration for himself and others alike when his only achievement will have been to alienate his otherwise allies and cause bitterness all round.

If one accepts that to belong to the Labour Party is to believe that socialism can be achieved through the democratic processes of the Party, then one has to accept that the rules, both written and unwritten, of that Party and the democratic processes within that structure must be adhered to.

The Constituency Parties have perfectly sound, democratic structures that enable one, in time, to influence the course that the CLP will take. It matters not that many harsh words are spoken and heated exchanges of ideology voiced if at the end of the day those differences of opinion are put to the vote and the majority decision abided by. If a group within the Party disagree with those decisions then they must find themselves with a majority before they can be changed. This is the democratic process by which the Party functions and if there are members that can't accept it then they should consider their position within the Party.

I believe that the only way in which we can achieve a true socialist society is by way of democracy. A state in which we have to impose socialism on a reluctant majority goes against those very ideals of care and working for the common good that we as socialists encourage.

We must therefore not bully and cajole but educate and encourage, argue and persuade so that finally we can create a socialist state, embraced by all, through the democratic means of Party structure and the ballot box.

Fraternally,
David Costello,
Chislehurst CLP

Dear Briefing,

While I admire your stand for ethnic minorities and women against attacks, and supporting the demands made by ethnic minorities, women, tenants, residents and working class organisations, I feel that something has been omitted.

Do homosexuals get your support too, or is it implicit in all you've said? They need your support as much, if not more than any of the other groups. They are not free from the injustice of losing house and job for what they are.

The Labour Party itself has issued a discussion document expressing its support for homosexuals and its determination to end such injustices.

So I hope we can rely on you to preserve our rights, to defend our liberties.

Also I think women need support for their struggle to get equal pay and work benefits. That's another way you can fulfil your aims.

Hope you are in sympathy.

Yours sincerely,
(Miss) Meryl Pont.

Dear Comrades,

I note with interest that the GLC is setting up a women's committee. As a woman very heavily committed to feminist campaigns, I am glad the GLC has taken some action.

However, the GLC, as for all its new appointments, is paying to appoint people at company director salary level. The rationale for this seems to be that we can only appoint the people we want if we pay huge salaries. I think this policy is profligate, and does the GLC no good at all.

As a socialist I think income redistribution is a really important issue, and consider that all local authorities ought have a ceiling on the money they pay out in salaries. The GLC appear to be spending money like water, even if it is in a good cause. The public at large don't know that it is a good cause, they only see that someone is getting £16-17,000 plus per year, and it looks very like jobs for the boys (or girls as the case may be). It's a real two fingers at the low paid and the unemployed.

In sisterhood,
Helen Penn,
Dulwich CLP

The next TARGET '82 meeting will be on Thursday May 27th 7.30 pm County Hall, SE1.

The date was changed to allow a speaker from the Socialist Republic of Islington to attend.

In the next issue of Briefing, the 'Street Life Supplement' will contain a feature on disablement. Any contributions on this subject, together with any other articles for the 'Street Life Supplement' should be sent to: Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1.

CONFERENCE · RUNNING · ON YOUR OWN · LONDON

London Labour Briefing is organising a working conference of Labour Councillors and other activists. Labour Councillors need to break out of the confines of Council Chamber politics and link up with those "extra-parliamentary" forces — the trade unions, ethnic minority organisation, women's movement, tenants' and residents' organisations etc. etc. — which alone can provide the forces for a real fight. For this reason, the conference is not being restricted to councillors: all Labour-supporting activists are welcome to attend. It is hoped to set up, as a result of the Conference, an "association of Socialist Councillors in London" to provide a London-wide means through which the pressures and demands of activists can be brought to bear on our Councillors, and through which the Councillors in turn can organise across borough boundaries, and call on the help of the movement as required.

At:

County Hall. June 19th. 11a.m. to 5p.m.

Credentials from:

Jim Ring, 55 Stonard Rd., London N.13. Price £1

Full Agenda to follow.

SPONSORED BY

The following members of the Executive Committee of the G.L.R.C.

JEREMY CORBYN, VIDYA ANAND, PAUL FRANKLIN, MARK FEENY, ANDY LOVE, NADINE FINCH, NEALE COLEMAN, CONOR McAULEY, JOHN CONSIDINE, NICK BRADLEY, EDDIE McPARLAND, KEVIN RAMAGE, BOB LABI

* *A creche is available.*

AGENDA

11a.m. *PLENARY SESSION*

An assessment of the election results and the balance of power within the Labour Groups — **David Fryer (Southwark Councillor)**

Which way for the Labour authorities? An assessment of the political challenge facing the new Labour Groups
Valerie Veness (Deputy Leader, Islington), & Frank Hansen (Brent Councillor)

Followed by Discussion

Lunch *1p.m. — 2p.m.*

2p.m. to 3p.m. **WORKSHOPS**

1. Facing Up To The Law. The problem of surcharge, and of the power of the Courts. — **Speakers from Camden**

2. The Police, Racial and Sexual Violence, And The Struggle For Workers Law And Order — **Ann Bliss (Lewisham Councillor) & Chris Knight (Lewisham East CLP)**

3. Mobilising Support Ouside the Council Chamber. The Lessons of Lambeth.
Vanessa Wiseman (Lambeth Trades Council) and Sue Carlyle (Tower Hamlets Councillor)

4. Decentralisation and the Fight Against the Local Bureaucracy
Bob Crossman (Islington Councillor)

3p.m. to 3.45p.m. **Report backs from Workshops**

3.45p.m. **Equal Opportunities Employment Policy**
Valerie Wise (GLC)

4p.m. **Towards the Association of Socialist Councillors**
Keith Veness (Islington Councillor)

Summary by Jeremy Corbyn (Haringey Councillor and prospective parliamentary candidate for Islington North)

Chair: Arthur Latham

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