LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 21 JULY 1982

After the bloody carnage:
NEVER AGAIN!
by Tony Benn.

Now that the fighting is over, working people throughout Britain are thinking. Millions are expecting and demanding that the challenges of peacetime — the securing of jobs, housing, dignity and a future for all our people — are met with a determination no less uncompromising than that which has been shown in the pursuit of war.

The Tories were hoping to turn the Falklands war into an election winner that would obscure all other issues and give them five more years of power. But war makes people think, and as the cost in lives and money becomes apparent, more questions are asked about the alternatives to war.

Labour must respond with a clear campaign:

1. **We must resolve never to allow this conflict to erupt again, demanding the transfer of the Falklands to the UN pending a final settlement.**
2. **We must warn against the bigger arms budget the Government will propose and step up the campaign for nuclear disarmament.**
3. **We must fight alongside all those engaged in direct struggles on pay, jobs, women's rights, trade union rights and against racism.**
4. **We must campaign for an overwhelming majority — well above two-thirds on a card vote — for the entire text of LABOUR'S PROGRAMME 1982 at this year's Conference and for an Executive that will fight for it and defend and extend Party democracy.**
5. **We must insist on an early Campaign document that spells out in clear language the commitments that are to go into Labour's manifesto, and put that document to Conference too for endorsement.**
6. **We shall need at least 12 months if we are going to by-pass a bitterly hostile press and put our arguments straight to our people where they live and work and relate what we are saying to their experiences.**

If we do all that we can replace this Government with a Labour Government committed to policies that are relevant to the lives of working people and their families whom we represent.

We've no right to be there!

A Labour Committee for Withdrawal from the South Atlantic has been set up. The aims of this committee are:

a) **To campaign in the Labour Party and affiliated organisations for a policy of complete military withdrawal by Britain from the South Atlantic. We defend those Labour MPs who voted against the Tory government's war policy. We totally oppose the stand taken by the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party, which has compromised the Party, identifying it with the jingoistic line adopted by the Thatcher government.**

b) **To oppose the stationing or maintenance by Britain of a military garrison in the Falklands and the closer military and political ties with the reactionary Chilean regime which such a measure would require.**

To these ends:

1) **We shall issue the above as a statement to the Labour and trade union press, and circularise national briefings defending our aims throughout the movement.**

2) **We shall mobilise support for resolutions on the above lines coming before conference this year.**

3) **We shall seek the support and sponsorship of leading individuals and organisations of our movement for this policy.**

4) **We shall work towards building forums which debate out the main lines of a socialist foreign policy for our movement.**

Sponsors so far:

Ken Livingstone	**Reg Race MP**
Chris Mullin	**Peter Tatchell**
Nigel Williamson	**Valerie Wise**

(all in their personal capacity)
Plus individuals from the editorial boards of London Labour Briefing, Socialist Challenge and Socialist Organiser.

Further information c/o 23 Leghorn Rd, London NW10 or ring Nigel Williamson 01-278 0911 (daytime).

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

ISLINGTON-POWER

Council Pledge to Decentralise

NOW that the euphoria of 7 May has gone, some comrades in London's Left are licking their wounds, others are breathing huge sighs of relief following their Mayor-makings, and we in Islington are hit four-sqaure by some nasty realities. As a new Council, which will behave like no other before in Islington's history, we face horrendous problems of financing, maintaining our momentum and a test of the commitment of every Labour Party member to politicise Islington's population. We have been elected on a manifesto which promises to bring decision-making to the localities – so that instead of being informed each year how much of the central cake will be doled out to each area, people in the wards will have been part of the process which constructs the budget. That is a central pledge which must be made a reality as soon as possible in the life of this Council.

Cynicism

But there are problems in trying to decentralise. Because of the sudden changes in Council policy over the last four years, depending on which part of the Labour Group could cobble the votes together on an issue, some departments are rightly cynical about our ability to deliver. The Social Services Department, which used to be regarded as one of the best in the country, has been kicked about over the last year, the wishes of its workers ignored, at least one senior worker was sacked because she followed her union policy of no-cover. The SDP plan to centralise, taking social workers away from the areas and making them available in libraries with no secure base, was bulldozed through despite a massive thumbs-down from public meetings and the staff.

Power to the People

We hope to have the first Neighbourhood Office open within a year. This will be after the form of local neighbourhood and area committees has been established. It is no good providing a facility like some hand-out if the mechanism for ensuring decision-making about the function of that office has not been worked out by representatives of the people who will use it and work in it. These offices should be able to supply information and *action* on Council services, as well as Social Security and othe benefits, act as an area resource centre for local tenants and community groups, and provide the political base for campaigning against the Tory government. After computerisation, repairs and maintenance to Council properties, and applications for the General Waiting List and Transfers will be speeded up. At present, no-one knows the exact number of empty properties there are on council estates and street houses, and it takes about six months for these 'voids' to come into use. A property I have just moved into was still occupied, according to my District Office, although we know the last tenant moved out about 15 months ago! Our promises will mean nothing unless we can humanise the Council machine, and we have begun the process already. But it is a sad reflection on the previous state of the Labour Party in Islington that it was a Tory Council, from 1968 to 1971, which set up the Participation Office and a Labour Council which closed it down, in 1979.



Islington's Feminist First – from left to right. Val Veness (Deputy Leader), Sally Gilbert (Chair of Labour Group) and Margaret Hodge (Leader).

Tenants

We have a commitment to include six directly elected Tenants Reps onto the Housing Committee. This, together with the fact that 30 of the 51 members of the Labour Group are tenants, will change the way that public sector housing is viewed. Tenants will be consulted at every stage of design for new build and for the rehabilitation programme. We have made available about 200 extra short-life properties, and will look at ways of making shared-single housing available to people who at present may be put off by the young trendy image of shared-singles.

We have cut the punitive shared-single rents from the level of £13.50 per bedroom, plus rates, to the level of other council flats in the same condition. This means that a former rent of about £50 per week for an unrehabilitated 3 bedroom flat built in 1935, will now be about £22. Housing Committee has decided also to make it easier for gay people living together to use the "low priority" routes into council housing.

All this might seem like pretty tame stuff to comrades used to Brent, Camden and Lambeth's radical chic over the last few years – but it represents a revolution in Islington where the police used to eject the public from committee meetings if they even opened their mouths and single people were reviled at every meeting of the Housing Committee.

Working for New Jobs

Islington has the second highest percentage of unemployed in any London borough, and the Holloway Dole Office has the highest number of people signing on of any employment district in Greater London. What was the response of the old Council? Cut the Direct Labour workforce, plan redundancies in caretaking staff, and throw hundreds of thousands of public money at "small businesses". The myth that the so-called small business actually provides jobs for the local community was alive, well and kicking when we took over. One of our hardest tasks as a Council is going to be to convince our officers and the Chamber of Commerce that we don't think keeping capitalist employers and their unenlightened practices going is the best way of providing job creation or job satisfaction. We have a commitment to expanding our Direct Labour force, and a new Committee of Council has been set up to do just that. The Employment Committee has made a public commitment to giving preference to co-operatives, and we intend to set up a local Enterprise Board.

A Municipal Enterprise Task Force will look at new ways of providing work, and there have already been discussions with the GLC, SERA, and CAITS about a "Jobs through Warmth" campaign which would tackle the problems of dampness and condensation on council estates, and involve tenants and Building Works in drawing up plans for recycling material and new heating systems.

We hope that there will be plans to run departments of the Council in a less hierarchical manner, and we have already been approached about the possibility of one unit becoming a

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TO THE PEOPLE

Bob Crossman
Deputy Chief Whip

workers' cooperative. This kind of arrangement would make "working for the Council" much less alienating than in most local authorities.

Women

Although the new Council has fewer women than the last (16 compared with 19) there is a firmer commitment to enhancing the role of women. Women hold the posts of Leader, Deputy Leader, Chair of Labour Group, Chair of Partnership, Chair and Vice-chair of Social Services, Vice-chair of Development and Planning, Vice-chair of Recreation, and of course Chair and Vice-chair of the all-women Women's Committee. Women's Committee have already held a successful open meeting when hundreds of Islington women came to listen and speak their minds. We have a commitment to building 3 new nurseries in the borough, in addition to providing creche facilities to Town Hall staff. All Town Hall jobs will be open to Job-Sharing, and there will be more recognition of the needs of women who do unpaid work at home as well as wage-earning. There will be a Women's Employment Rights Officer.

Solidarity

Of course, none of these things will be achieved unless the Party, as individual members, in Ward branches, affiliated organisations, GCs, the Labour Group, the Local Government Committee, can establish and maintain proper lines of communication. It is unfortunate that some comrades, having spent so long in opposition, have now dug themselves in for four years of opposing the Labour Group. When we began to examine the practical difficulties of maintaining a Committee structure which would have stretched the stamina of most members of the Group, and voiced these fears there were immediate cries of "sell-out". It would be unfortunate if constructive thinking out loud was condemned as ideologically unsound. Of the new Labour Group, 39 have never been councillors before, and this is an asset because it means that there is less likelihood of Committee chairs being allowed to get away with "Chair's action" quite so often as in the past. We have all got to proceed at the pace which is most comfortable for most of the Group.

One way of making sure that paranoia and suspicion are not a feature of this Council as they have in all previous Councils, is to involve the Party as an integral part of decision-making. We will get rid of the notion that having control of the Council is a neutral state, and it must not be contaminated with politics. We will set up the Policy Groups which wrote the Manifesto last year, and they will work with the Group in refining and up-dating Manifesto commitments. About 300 people were involved in producing the Manifesto, and we can build on that fund of energy and enthusiasm.

The Crunch

Of course, we cannot hope to implement the Manifesto without a head-on clash with the Tory Government. The SDP Council made cuts of about £2½ million as one of their dying acts. They even cut money from voluntary organisations in their final week in power, and on their final day tried to scrap employment projects. They left us about £1½ million in the kitty, so we had an immediate problem of prioritisation in order to restore the direct service cuts which they had made in this round, never mind the last four years of slashing away at the budget. Some comrades, anxious to restore cuts, jumped the gun and produced special pleas at the first meeting of the Policy Committee, even before the Group had discussed cuts. That will not recur, and the whole Group and the Party will be involved in debate on a review of the budget in July.



"Labour Women Make Policies Not Tea" Islington women members minus Kathy Bundred

We face a massive battle with Heseltine next year, as we have pledged to freeze Council house rents until 1984, and our Rate Support Grant will be cut still further. Islington receives abour 35% RSG at the moment, and the full effects of changes as a result of the 1981 Census will be felt in 1983/4. Our population has gone down about 20,000 in the last ten years, and our RSG will be cut accordingly. So, it looks as though we face the Crunch sooner rather than later. We hope by then that the Party, through meetings, community groups, our own paper "Islington Voice", will have prepared the people of the Borough. It means that we are fighting a perpetual political education battle, and cannot afford to be complacent. We have got to involve Council workers, some of whom were looking forward to "stabilisation" (or a quiet life).

Money for Homes

We must get the money from central government to deal with our massive housing crisis. We have over 9,000 empty houses (about 1,000 council-owned) with over 15,000 people waiting for new or improved housing. 80-100 homeless families register every month. There are over 5,000 disabled waiting for specialist housing. Over 40% of our waiting list are single people whose needs have been ignored in the past. Families with children are still being marooned high up in tower blocks. "Moderation" has meant that the first item to be cut every year has been the housing maintenance budget. Two years ago the SDP turned down £10m of loan sanction which would have dealt with most of the rehab programme.

The reason that our housing problem will be so expensive to cure is that of our total revenue budget of £79m this year, over £56m will go in Debt Charges, to repay the banks. Our Housing Investment Programme allocation will be £37m, compared to the £80m bid. This figure is about a third, in today's prices, of what we spent in 1978/9. And we all know who started cutting public spending on housing. It was Healey, not Heseltine. And it is Healey who condemns us for wanting to provide decent housing for people in need. The demand for a dry, warm home which isn't overcrowded has become mindless militancy. Still, we can't all escape to farms in Sussex at the weekend to forget about city life.

The personal is political

So, at the end of the first month of responsibility without much power, how do we feel? Shattered. One of the reasons for this article's wooliness is because it's being typed at 3am following a 5½ hour meeting of an adjourned Housing Committtee.

Much of our time is taken up convincing officers that we mean what we say, and then dealing with the appalled reaction when they realise that we do mean business. It's a shock for chief officers to be pulled up when they indulge themselves in sexist remarks and make statements full of prejudice against working class people. Officers still trot out crap about people from African/Caribbean ethnic groups being "happy go lucky" and Asians being "good businessmen". Many chief officers haven't got used to the knowledge that the strange-looking people sitting in the members room are running the Council, and don't want to face the fact that this will be a *member*-led administration.

There has been a temptation to get drawn into the internal power struggles and empire-building which is a feature of any new Council, but most of us have resisted it. Open government is the style we want to pursue, and that doesn't leave much room for nod-and-wink decisions or unseen rule by the Freemasons.

We are taking a correct political step, in removing all the power from a central administration and taking some to the community. A third of all our committee places will be filled by people who represent the consumers of the Town Hall service, and that measure of democracy will be multiplied throughout the Borough.

We look to our comrades in London's left for political support. That doesn't mean total agreement at all times, but sometimes a willingness to actually take the time to argue out an issue, instead of a "resolutionary" approach. The elitism of expertise has gone in Islington, we are all determined to approach our difficulties collectively. Comrades who want to help us, who have advice to offer, who want to see what we are attempting, are welcome to get in touch. Meanwhile, *lotta continua!*

WALTHAM FOREST-Labour must respond to local needs and demands

THE Tories are in power in Waltham Forest. The May election resulted in 26 Labour, 25 Tories and 6 Liberals being elected. The first act of the Liberals, who hold the balance of power, was to vote in a Tory mayor and Tory chairs and vice-chairs of committees.

Labour should not have lost. Although not being in the lead in the propaganda war with Heseltine and the Tory government (that role being shared by the GLC, Lambeth and Lothian) the previous Labour-controlled council in Waltham Forest probably had as good a record as any for keeping its services. It refused to make cuts despite Heseltine's penalties, and was one of the boroughs to be successful against him in the courts. (Heseltine has still not repaid that particular 'illegal' penalty).

The Tory vote was bolstered by Falklands jingoism in the press, masking the government's appalling record of cuts in living standards for working people and mass unemployment. And yet even without the Falklands, there would still have been too many Tory votes because of the rates issue. Labour, both nationally and locally, has failed to pin the blame where it belongs, on Mrs Thatcher's government, but even worse it has failed to lead a co-ordinated and effective fight-back against high rates which have eroded working class living standards.

But Labour should still have won in Waltham Forest. The council was lost in two Labour 'strongholds' in Leyton, where the Liberals mounted an effective 'community politics' campaign based on a regular newssheet emphasising matters like loose paving stones and 'when did you last see your Labour councillor?'

Labour's campaign was 'patchy', reflecting the current state of the Party in the borough. Some branches ran effective, well organised campaigns explaining and discussing on the doorstep and in their own newsletters the real issues, relating local problems to their national causes, and how the Tories and Liberals with their policies of cuts would only exacerbate these problems. Other branches started too late and if they did get out a newsletter tended to answer the Liberals, thereby drawing more attention to their own phoney politics.

Since the election some Party members in the defeated branches have said that their areas are 'run-down' and local people did not feel Labour had been doing anything for them. It is true that the areas are run-down. Housing schemes have been slowed virtually to a halt by direct government cuts and in one of the areas a vitally-needed school improvement has been held up in the Department of Environment for over a year. But Labour activists should be undertaking real community politics as a campaigning force with the working class in matters such as these. Recent campaigns to keep Leyton Baths open and to improve local maternity services have been significant successes, but the Party needs to extend its campaigns into the housing estates and other declining areas.

Leyton Labour Party has not yet come out of the doldrums of having Magee (an SDP defector) as their MP. The Party will soon be choosing a new Parliamentary candidate who, in the future, will need to be both our representative in Parliament and importantly, an active campaigner at grass-roots level.

The election has shown up serious weaknesses in the links between the Party's councillors, the Party itself and the community whose interests it must fight for. These weaknesses must be tackled to effectively fight the Tories.

The new Tory council's first act, apart from placing the Queen's portrait in the council chamber, has been to review the budget. This means cuts in services are on the way. Also, the District Auditor, in his political role, has complained because Labour had kept the borough's council house rents the lowest in London. The Tories and Liberals will see to it that massive rent rises come about. They seem set to scrap the vitally-needed school improvement plan referred to earlier and the local Asian Centre which the Asian community and Labour have fought so hard to obtain. It seems likely they will extend racism to the grave, by either scrapping Muslim burials in the borough's cemetary on weekends, and/or massively increasing the charges.

Labour councillors must, of course, resist these moves, but it is a mistake to just 'protect what we've got' as some of the 'old guard' seem to think. Labour must also be innovative in recognising and responding to local needs and demands as they arise, and voicing these in the council chamber as socialist demands for better services.

Harry Cohen
Waltham Forest councillor

Organising through the Women's

Sarah Roelofs (St Pancras N CLP) WRRC – A Feminist Library, Wom

'We actually, finally, have something we can use for women. It may not be perfect, but it gives us opportunities we've never had before.'

Thus spoke one woman at the first open meeting of the new GLC Women's Committee. In one sense she was summing up many women's mixed – but very excited – feelings. The meeting was attended by over 100 women covering nearly 60 organisations. Though somewhat chaotic, it was comparatively very successful with 16 sub-groups being set up, another more widely advertised open meeting called, a Women's Committee Bulletin agreed and many other proposals put forward.

FAIR DEAL

The idea of a GLC Women's Committee came from a group of women councillors meeting and feeling strongly that the GLC was not giving London women a fair deal. The idea received interested, if qualified, support at a January meeting of women's groups who were involved in receiving grants from the GLC. The doubts and questions came up again at the open meeting. Would the GLC having a Women's Committee mean that anything and everything to do with women would be hived off and ghettoised? Would it let Ken Livingstone off the feminist hook? Would all grants to women's groups and organisations now have to come from the money allocated to the Women's Committee? How much real power would the Committee have? What would be its relationship to the Women's Liberation Movement? Was the GLC going to set its own house in order vis a vis its own women employees? And most importantly what should be the Committee's priorities – what should it be doing over the next few months?

Though some confusion and doubts remained many of our questions were answered. No – women's issues would not be ghettoised in the Committee, if only because we, from the outside, and the Committee's GLC members from the inside, could fight to ensure that no one was let off the feminist hook. The Women's Movement could play a key role in this by acting as a watchdog. Grants for women's groups would definitely not all be coming from the Women's Committee – groups could specify which GLC Committee they thought their grant should best come from – housing, arts, employment, ethnic minorities etc. One function of the Women's Committee would be to monitor other committee's policies and activities in relation to women, including the GLC itself as an employer. Answers to other questions would be shown in the committee's practice. On what the new Committee's priorities should be one important proposal was that it should be involved in women's campaigns and struggles. Initial steps were for the Women's Committee to actively support the women's right to work campaign and women's fightback against male violence. The 16 sub-groups were our answer to the plethora of other ideas. These are on Employment inside and outside the GLC, Child Care, Transport, Education, Media, Violence, Lesbians, Planning, Housing,

Inside Hackney Labour Group

Briefing readers are entitled to a less distorted account of developments in Hackney than they received from your 'Inside Reporter' in the June issue (p.3). Whilst many on the left would share the regret that there was not a more Left-wing candidate for the Leadership than Tony Kendall, the suggestion that the decision to back him rather than John Kotz was solely a product of the personal ambition of certain Left Councllors is insulting. The decision rather reflected an awareness that implementation of manifesto policies, particularly the commitment to decentralisation, was not possible under a person who had been a key part of the Right-wing Hackney leadership for 20 years. And whilst it is certainly true that on issues like the 'three Noes' only a handful of the Labour Group could be characterised as 'Hard Left', to call the Kendall/Kahn/Weller leadership 'Centre/Right' shows an extraordinary perception of the current political balance in the Labour Party.

Your 'Inside Reporter' is correct, though, to speak of the need for external party pressures on the Labour Group, and here there are encouraging signs that the new Local Government Committee is set to play a far more positive role than it has in the past. At its May AGM a resolution calling for elections for the Labour leadership on the Council to be opened out to the Party as a whole from 1983 was overwhelmingly carried, and a Working Group is now drawing up options on how to achieve this for discussion with the Labour Group and the CLPs. Working Groups of the Local Government Cttee. on major areas of Manifesto policy are to be set up, and talks are under way with the Labour Group on how to achieve much greater involvement of the LGC and the Party generally in Group discussions. So although the Left still undoubtedly has a long way to go in Hackney, the situation hardly warrants the jaundiced view of your 'Inside Reporter'.

Finally is it a new policy for London Labour Briefing to give space to anonymous contributions? *Briefing* is a socialist journal covering the debates on the Left of the Labour Party in London, and we are surely entitled to know the sources of the views expressed. 'Inside Reporters' have no more place than the anonymous gossip columnists of the gutter press.

Hugh Flinn
Chairperson, Hackney Local Government Committee (in a personal capacity)

Hackney's Liberal Threat

The main shock of the recent Council elections in Hackney lay in the loss to the Liberals of seven out of eighteen Council seats in the Hackney South & Shoreditch constituency. On this basis, Labour might expect to win the parliamentary election by a margin of perhaps 1,000 votes. When we go into greater depth, the threat appears more serious: the Liberal advance took place in four wards, three of which are 80-90% Council properties. Our traditional bulwarks have slipped away from us.

What brought about this dramatic reversal of half a century of Labour dominance? Central to the issue is the special role of the 'self-styled supremo' of local Liberalism, Cllr. Jeffrey Roberts, a prosperous city oil investment analyst, who has developed a peculiar twist to Liberal opportunism. In 1977 and 1978 elections the National Front did exceptionally well in Shoreditch. This time the NF vote transferred almost en bloc to the Liberals. Not surprisingly, in view of the special relationship between Roberts and fascism. Apart from sharing platforms occasionally with the NF, Roberts was suspended at one time by the London Liberal executive for racist views and not permitted to hold office for two years. On Hackney Council he has jibed at Labour members 'always going on about white men having two votes in South Africa' (?). Cllr. Sylvia Venables of the Liberals boasted to a Labour Party activist on election day that her son was active in the National Front. The Falkland Islands crisis worked in the Liberals' favour, as they have an exaggerated nationalist-Shoreditch parochialist ('independence for Shoreditch') image. The Tory vote split, almost half transferring to the Liberals.

There are other important factors: a poor housing repair performance by the Council and calculated sabotage by local housing officials connected with the Liberals or sympathetic to the NF made things worse. The wards that went Liberal have one other disturbing feature: they are compact, adjoin one another, and adjoin the block of wards in Tower Hamlets that have moved Liberal. The Liberal plague spreads from Council estate to adjacent Council estate, carried by the effective medium of 'Liberal Focus', a regular broadsheet given to lies, distortions and preposterous Liberal claims. But these are believed. The Labour Party so far has found no effective reply.

Ron Heisler

Committee

Fare Fight Group, (in a personal capacity)

Health, Black Women, Anti-nuclear, Arts, Young Women, and Women with Disabilities.

BROAD SPECTRUM

To have had such a broad spectrum of feminist opinion all together in one room discussing, arguing and making demands and suggestions was exciting in and of itself. That we achieved what we did, given the innovative nature of the meeting, was a real success. Despite over 12 years of the Women's Liberation Movement, Women's Committees as active fighting groups in local councils are only just being set up. There are only 4 already in existence, including the GLC one. The others are in Camden, Islington and – the only one outside of London – Merseyside. But, as the woman quoted at the beginning was saying the potential is enormous – the setting up of the GLC's Women Committee presents us with many opportunities which we must take full advantage of to further our fight for our liberation.

Defeat the witch-hunt

The parliamentary and NEC right-wing now seem confident of carrying through the expulsion from the Party of a number of MILITANT tendency comrades following a vote in their favour on the NEC. BRIEFING wishes to make it clear that no grounds exist for discriminating between ourselves and MILITANT in respect of politics or the way in which we organize: if expulsions are in order for MILITANT, they should apply to us, too. We are setting up a defence campaign involving all similarly-threatened left groups within the Party to support the MILITANT comrades in this struggle, and will be glad to conduct this campaign under the guidance of the MILITANT comrades themselves. Comrades in London should flood the NEC with protest resolutions as a matter of urgency.

**Contact Jeremy Corbyn,
Provisional Convenor,
DEFEAT THE WITCH-HUNT
Campaign,
28 Lausanne Rd., N.8.**

LAMBETH–Back to the Streets

**Graham Norwood,
Labour Councillor
Angell Ward, Lambeth**

THE main political fight for control of Lambeth council must now move outside of the committee room and the council chamber, and into the tenants' associations, the town hall unions and the local Labour Parties. With the 27 Tories and five Alliance councillors combining with the help of the Mayoral casting vote to defeat the 32 Labour members, the work for socialism has to be done in the streets – telling people what the rent rises will be, what the cuts will mean, how many people will lose their jobs.



PHOTOGRAPH CATH TATE

Johnny Johnson -- Deserter.

Ironically the responsibility for this Tory-Alliance council lies not with the people of Lambeth – who voted in more Labour councillors than members of any other party – but with the outgoing Mayor, Johnny Johnson.

In a rough and acrimonious meeting to decide his successor, he effectively flicked a political V-sign at the Labour movement which in recent years had carried him as he enjoyed all the perks of being Mayor without any accountability to the political activists he deserted. He chose a Tory to succeed him – and a Tory who had amongst his main achievements a long history of service to the sea-scouts!

This farcical decision has its tragic consequences. Early information from the Tories suggests swingeing attacks on working class living standards will be the order of the day.

This is what the Tory-Alliance council wants to do:

Rents: Tories want a £3.50 weekly rise, with the Alliance wanting £2.50.

Staff: Compulsory redeployment may be considered, after cursory negotiation with NALGO, complemented by a form of "open-ended" early retirement to help trim the staffing levels.

Rates: Lambeth Tories have promised a £50 rate rebate – equivalent to the supplementary rate imposed in 1981 by Labour. This is technically illegal, unless the Government amends the law. Lambeth Tories could get around this by giving a reduction in the spring '83 annual rate demand.

Services: Around £9 million cuts may be needed, although the Tory-Alliance council has made no official statement so far. Certain to go are parts of the consumer advice centres and part of the council's publicity work; but this will be mere chicken feed as a proportion of the £9 millions, which will inevitably mean smashing services.

Council house sales: Like virtually all Labour councils, Lambeth sold its houses in the hope that obstruction and delay would effectively reduce demand. That will no longer be the case, as it is likely that the Tories and Alliance administration will bring in outside solicitors to do the work of selling the houses.

Privatisation: No firm move is on the cards, but it is likely that in the field of direct labour the Tory-Alliance council will make it very much more difficult for the council DLO to compete with private tenders.

Make no mistake – relying on the casting vote of the Tory mayor is not going to put the Tory-Alliance council off making vicious inroads into the social provisions of Lambeth. Such cuts are, after all, in the interests of the new rulers of the borough.

One of the leading Tory councillors is a director of five companies; another is a "test case" right to buy fanatic who was involved in legal proceedings with Lambeth Council over council house sales; one of the new SDP councillors is a merchant banker.

A cursory glance at the interests of Lambeth councillors shows that the new administration will act completely in its own interests, with cuts, job losses and higher charges.

But let us be completely honest – Labour is not free of sin in Lambeth. The last administration, after a strident record of defiance of Government dictation and support for working class interests, slipped badly near the end of its run: the Tory-Alliance council inherited a huge vacancy rate, plus the ten per cent cuts and increased charges introduced in the last year and a half, by the old Labour council.

Let us hope that our new struggle – which must be carried out as from now – will be a sincere and honest one, where we say what we mean and do what we promise.

The struggle has to have four dimensions. Firstly, work for the Labour councillors must include tactical actions to exploit the closeness of the parties' strengths. We must make life difficult for the new leaders, make them stay up all night if necessary to preserve their precarious majority. We must rigorously question the SDP-Liberal members – what are their own policies and why do they support the Tories?

Secondly, the Labour Party has to do work in and out of the meeting room. Inside, we have to develop new policies – perhaps using the Local Government Committee to create "shadow" working parties, developing ideas and ensuring that Labour is prepared to do in office what it can now oh-so-easily say in opposition. Outside of the meeting room, we in the Party have to talk with tenants' associations, black groups, women's organisations and the community groups who rely on Labour councils and councillors who are prepared to listen and help; these people must be kept informed about what the Tories are doing, and how the Alliance is helping them do the dirty work.

Thirdly we have to support the town hall unions who will be involved with the grind of hitting back against their political bosses. Part of that fight has already started, with one of the district housing offices being closed by strike action for a day, less than a week after the Tories took over.

Fourthly we all – Labour Party members, councillors, community groups, and trade unionists – have to go public with our distrust of the Tory-Alliance council. We have to lobby, march and if necessary bring our vocal opposition into the council chamber to show that the new council is not wanted, no matter how hard the Tories and the Alliance try to fudge their policies to stay together in a majority.

That is the way that, next time, Labour can have real links with the outside community and can fulfil its promises to the people of Lambeth.

SECRET REPORTS — REVEALED

UXBRIDGE
Parliamentary Selection

H: made probably the worst speech I have heard for some time now, with the main theme, that gas, coal, electricity, phones, transport should be free of charge to everyone. My thoughts were that he must have known what he was talking about but I certainly did not.

H: sat through his presentation. Gave a mediocre speech with nothing too contentious. Spoke of his own political background and family background and his main political and private interests. Stated he was not particularly interested in entering the House of Commons, but was very keen on the campaign and fighting the Tories.

M: M. is, as far as I know, a member of the Militant Tendency, he fought Uxbridge for the GLC last May and fought that election completely on the programmes of the Militant. All his literature was printed by the Cambridge Heath Press. His speech was what you would expect, 'crisis of capitalism' was now coming to a head and everything would be solved by the 'socialist transformation of society'.

He answered the questions in the way that one would expect

Janice Muir
Assistant Regional Organiser

ROMFORD
Parliamentary Selection .

Commenced his speech by stating that he thought that the Organisation Sub Committee had started a 'thought police', that he was opposed to the non endorsement of Peter Tatchell and the enquiry into Militant. He also spoke about the alternative strategy, the National Health Service, he supported Public ownership of banks and Pension Funds. He felt that extra parliamentary action was necessary.

H: He answered 6 questions covering the public ownership of banks – with such a policy were we likely to be elected – his answer yes. A Comprehensive Transport Policy–would he agree that a free fare system should cover air travel within the UK – yes, also all public utilities, gas and electricity should be free.

G: He answered 10 questions, covering voluntary retirement (that this should be on the basis of full pay). Nuclear weapons support abolition but not withdrawal from NATO. Whether or not he would be willing to break the law as a sitting Council, in answer to one question he wouldn't, but in answer to a further question he compromised and stated in certain situations he would.

Kathleen Butler
Assistant Regional Organiser

ISLINGTON CENTRAL
Parliamentary Selection

The nuances that separate the way-out left, the left, the centre-left and the centre-centre are becoming harder to detect at selection conferences. All are opposed, to a lesser or greater degree, to the EEC, Nuclear arms, NATO, the last Labour Government, sexism, racism, the Law Lords, the SDP and sin generally. All are in favour of A.E.S., but with reservations (generally unstated). W, F, to the greater degree; P, H and S to a lesser degree – in that order.

F: Did nothing to enliven the passing hour. Possibly aware that, since W had been added to the shortlist, her doppelganger would pinch any votes that may have come her way. A weak, flat, monotonous delivery happily came to a close after 7½ mins.

Dear BRIEFING,
Last month's BRIEFING hit the nail on the head in the article about secret reports which the Labour Party's paid regional organising staff write for the NEC and head office. Under cover of secrecy these highly-paid organiser/bureaucrats put on official record things that they would never dare to say if they knew they would be revealed outside the circle of 'top' party people. The confidentiality of the reports gives them a licence to write whatever fanciful version of events most appeals to them.

I also do not understand why reports need to be written, anyway, of the political content of the speeches of candidates at parliamentary selections and re-selections.

I enclose copies of some such confidential parliamentary selection reports, and hope you will be able to publish them.

All good wishes,

Fraternally,
ANON.

W: Has progressed from reading – at nose level – the whole of her speech to the use of multiple idiot-cards. Her approach remains the same, that of the Head Girl addressing the Assembly. Gave us a nursery-eye view of what is right and wrong. Warned us (in Islington!) of the dangers of the SDP.

H: Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, in his own baliwick, covered the world in a 33rpm speech delivered at 45rpm speed. His knowledge allowed a discursion on when and how Islington Central can defeat its enemies. This, of course, went down well.

W.A.Jones
Deputy General Secretary

NORWOOD Parliamentary Selection

F spoke well, emphasising his local work and knowledge of the area. His experience of office shone through his speech and answers.

He takes a left wing position on accountability, unilateralism (although favours staying in NATO), laws to outlaw inequalities in sex and race, lowering age of consent for homosexuals, extending democracy, would re-nationalise with compensation only at the price originally paid, against an incomes policy, considers the Foot stance on Peter Tatchell misguided.

B: Spoke well. Favoured a more representative Parliament unlike present white, male dominated House. Generally Left wing position although without the experience of office shown by F.

Favours withdrawal from EEC, Nuclear disarmament, the Alternative Economic Strategy, nationalisation of the banks 'if necessary', united Ireland, abolish British Nationality Act, compulsory planning agreements. On accountability, he feels Conference policies are the supreme authority before CLP or PLP.

W: As with the other nominees is a member of Norwood Party. Felt reason for decline of the Labour Party was leadership's pursuance of consensus policies.

Generally harder left policies included: that he would resign and make way for someone more to the General Committees taste if they required; he would always act to their advice; would re-nationalise without compensation; would take British Nationality Act straight off statute book; firm declaration on withdrawal from Northern Ireland which would ensure a movement of minds; judiciary to be elected; favours proper availability of abortion facilities; Peter Tatchell right sort of candidate for Labour; unilateralist.

Terry Ashton
Assistant Regional Organiser

FULHAM
Parliamentary Selection

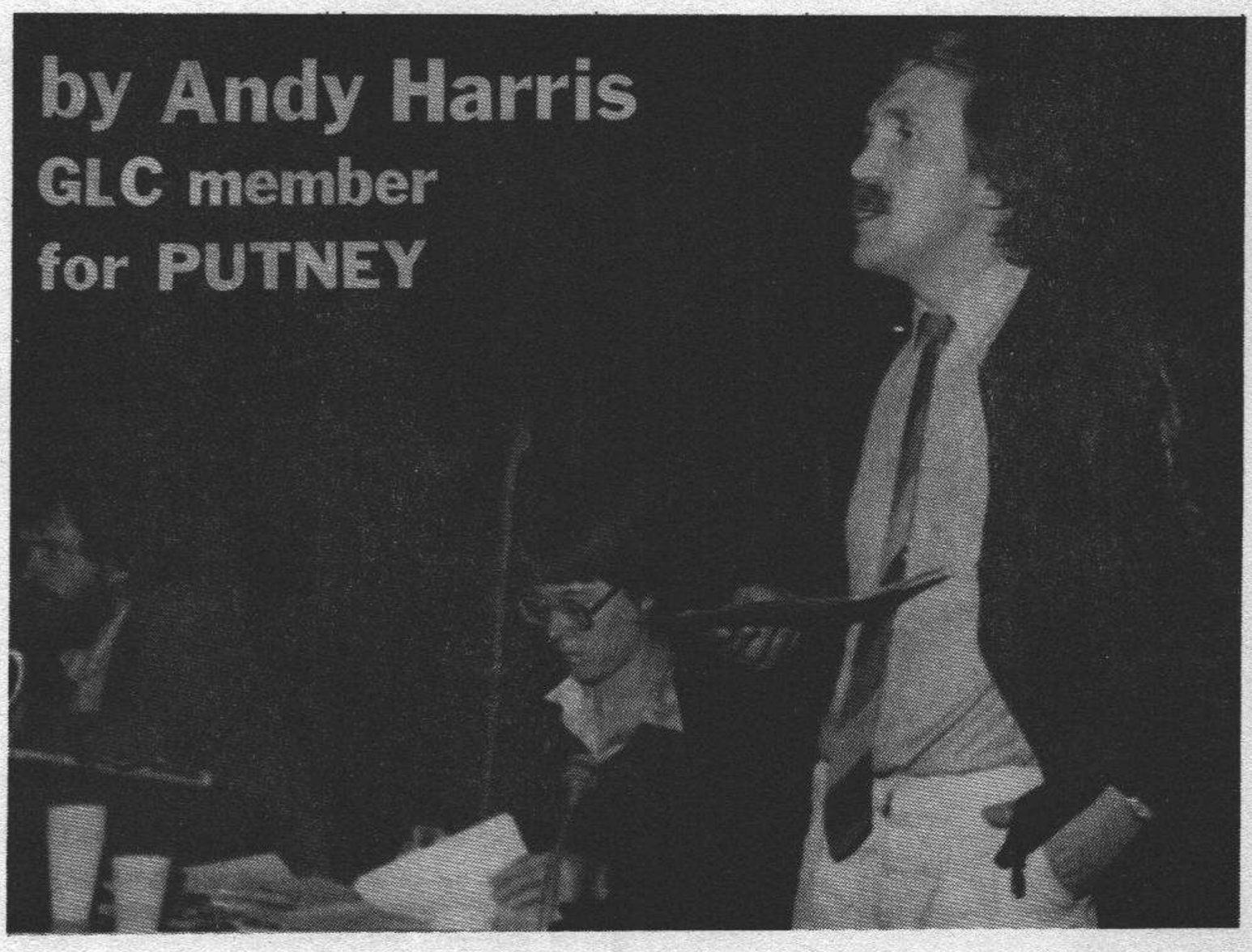
H: Lively; clarity of voice; knowledgeable; dishy. Spoiled her chances (a) in taking so long in answering questions only EIGHT were presented in that long period; (b) vouchsafed that her lack of local government experience mattered little since such experience was of no consequence to an MP!

R: Hampered by his extreme-moderate local history in trying to appear trendy-left. Spent the whole of his opening speech overdoing 'I am your only possible choice' bit. The phrase 'arrogant b--d' was softly, but audibly spoken. His lack of humility swung several votes away and lost him a carefully worked for nomination.

W.A.Jones
Deputy General Secretary

ILEA: HOW WE'RE STRUGGLING

THERE is a need for a coming together. The movement in London and the Regional Executive need to pay closer attention to the work of the Inner London Education Authority and its Labour Group. This stems partly from some of the exciting initiatives that the ILEA is getting off the ground on multi-ethnic education, equal opportunities, girls education and provision for 16-19 year olds. Feedback and cooperation is needed to ensure the steps being taken constitute a true realisation of the manifesto commitments and to help initiate future developments. A closer relationship and increased interest is also needed to make sure that the ILEA group stays on the rails. For the past year has rightly seen a healthy production of column inches everytime the GLC Labour Group took decisions on major considerations. Yet ILEA, with a larger budget, and far more influence over the lives of individuals and the class has received relatively scant attention.



The ILEA Labour Group is just emerging after a rather distressing period where the implications of accepting a budget maximum set by three lawyers have had to be resolved – and painfully at that. Having reluctantly accepted a budget that demanded that important new developments as already outlined were funded by savings and cuts in existing provision, the group found itself in the unenviable position of having to weigh much wanted developments against existing budget items that were put forward for small but nevertheless significant cuts.

When you've been elected on a no cuts platform and when committed to a reinstatement of the 4.2% cuts of the previous administration it is a shame to be at the end of year one when new cuts are being made and where so far no attempt has been possible to identify what is restorable of the 4.2% cuts of the 1980/1 budget.

There are always areas where genuine savings and efficiency measures can be made and as socialists we never want to be in a position where resources are wasted. Genuine savings are being made in such areas as telephones, insurance contracts and provision of transport but there are other areas where the word cut has to be used and cuts in advisory teacher posts, in-service training and block grants to Polytechnics must be recognised as such.

When the budget was set on February 9, it was subsequently agreed that each sub-committee group would identify its own cuts and savings to pay for new initiatives – what went by default was that the whole group and the regional executive should have been in a position of eventual detailed knowledge of what was being agreed on their behalf as regards cuts by each sub-committee. For unless you were actually on the particular sub-committee the only way you'd get to know the details of all the cuts is when a teacher or parent approached you at a GC or rang you up which would result in you lamely having to say that you'd find out what was going on in your name.

There was a revolt in the schools sub-committee on May 13 when on hearing the details of the proposed cuts in advisory teacher posts and in-service training for the first time, three Labour members and the two teacher representatives voted against implementation, forcing the ILEA leadership to rely on the two Tories to enable them to get their cuts through, whilst even the SDP Anne Sofer felt uneasy enough to abstain.

The cuts issue came to a head after that at two recent group meetings where it was voted that no cuts should be implemented before the whole group had details of what they were. (Even dedicated cutters owe it to themselves to at least know what they are cutting). And having won this vote the next group meeting set to with reasonably scanty information to decide which of the proposed savings were indeed cuts and thus shouldn't be agreed to.

Both meetings were rather bloody in that the leadership felt it had the right to expect those members of the group who had supported the Lawyer's Budget (all but four members of the group) to be with them, when urged to have courage in implementing the "unacceptable".

Mind you, seeing as the vast majority of the group had no idea what the "unacceptable" consisted of it was hardly surprising that they found "courage" in short supply. At the subsequent group meeting all the budget headings up for cuts were voted on and a rather motley collection of items were saved – six week in-service training courses, 23 nursery assistants posts and the Polys' block grants. Some were saved on Valerie Wise's casting vote as Vice-chairperson, whilst other items, like fifty advisory teachers posts, a whole range of other in-service provision and furniture and equipment cuts, were lost by majorities of ones and twos.

There are many lessons to be learnt by this sad episode which provided a chastening experience all round on how things shouldn't be done.

First of all the budget of the authority must be set with the voice of accountability being the Labour Party, not three lawyers and the threat of court proceedings. If you have a manifesto commitment that says you're going to restore previous cuts and over and above this, you restate this at a press conference, then at some point you actually have to get down to doing it. Thirdly the whole group and the regional executive must as of right be informed about the detail of proposed cuts. Any leadership that fails to recognise the significance of the whole cuts issue deserves a jolt. Perhaps a new badge is required "No cuts – except in the council I'm on". Fourthly the ILEA group has got to be more closely observed by the Party. The Gallery is often crowded for GLC groups but are always empty for ILEA groups. Finally the leadership must recognise early signs of malcontent and respond generously. Not in the take it or leave it fashion that was presented.

Revolts in public sub-committees are not lightly undertaken, even more so when the chief whip designate was one of those revolting. If the leadership depends on the votes of the Tories to carry the cuts then they really must expect trouble and amend their ways by not obstinately demanding that the group swallow whole mixtures of cuts and savings with gung-ho appeals to have courage even though the label of ingredients had never been pasted to the medicine bottle.

. . . And what of the future? Well the Authority is holding its breath in relation to education workers' pay settlements for low increases will get ILEA off the financial hook! And because we could not hold the number of teacher posts within the authority (again as a result of the budget decision) compulsory redeployment is throwing schools into agonies as some face the loss of up to ten members of staff whereas the original budget (before the lawyers interfered) would have given a greater degree of cushioning and support to schools with falling rolls to maintain staff numbers and significantly improve ratios.

Seen positively, we must not be in this same position in 12 months time for a start should have been made in implementing the more difficult areas of the manifesto and if necessary standing up against the lawyers in order to do so.

IMPROVING LONDON'S EDUCATION

THE education service for Inner London is continuing to improve, in direct defiance of the Government's wishes. The budget for the current year already makes provision for significant developments. The Labour Group is now poised to agree a further package of growth concentrating on our political priorities. Compared to last September, when many assumed the days of the Authority were numbered, this represents a considerable victory for London's Labour movement.

The task now before the Labour Group, not yet completed, is to agree a package of growth items while at the same time finding the money to pay for them. The second task is inevitably harder than the first, but, when the package is agreed it will enable the Authority to provide more and better courses in its schools, colleges and institutes and an increase in teaching and non-teaching employment over that originally budgeted. While proud of our achievements in defending a high standard of education, the Authority is not complacent. We are only too aware of the many areas where more needs to be done or to be done better.

The ILEA's Budget, agreed last February, had built into it in excess of £4m worth of new developments concentrated in the areas of nursery schools and further education for unemployed school leavers. The further consideration which is now being given is about how we can do even more to meet our manifesto commitments not only in nursery schools and the colleges but also to meet other top priorities. These include dealing with the problems of reorganised schools; extensions of special education; expanding the work of the AEI's and the youth service for young unemployed people; and supporting the important initiatives we are undertaking on ethnic minority education. These will cost in total over £3 million. At the time of writing no final decisions have been taken on how that growth package should be financed. It is likely, however, that a significant proportion can be covered by a slight easing of our financial position arising from the level of the rate product. The balance can be met from genuine savings arising from more careful use of the Authority's finances and by deferring one or two of the new initiatives until later in the year.

Any organisation is faced with new priorities and needs. For this reason, if no other, the services we provide in the Authority are bound to change and this must be reflected in our budget. But the Authority as a whole will continue to develop, will continue to provide an improved level of educational provision and continue to achieve our political priorities.

Bryn Davies
Leader, ILEA

SCHOOLS STRIKE - A personal response

Secondary teachers have been angered at the latest ILEA proposals to save money. Instead of appointing new staff, ILEA has decided to fill vacancies by transferring teachers round from school to school. The result is that teachers with 10-15 years experience are manoeuvred out of schools where they know the kids' names, where they run clubs and pastoral groups and where they have been taking the same class through to exam level. When they get to the new school they are first on the list for transfer again on the basis of 'last in first out'.

An air of anxiety descends on the staffroom as the names leak out. In some cases teachers have been told by an inspector in the middle of a lesson 'there's no job here for you next year'. In other cases the person concerned has been the last to find out. In most schools the inspectors call with about one day's notice and soften up teachers in individual interviews, then zoom out with a list of 'volunteers'.

Teachers in Southwark have reacted to this with a series of unofficial one day strikes, building to a London-wide strike on July 1st. But in the NUT strike action very often means taking your life in your hands. There have been several cases in London of union activists being suspended from the union and barred from office because their action was unofficial. In these latest strikes, when William Penn school decided to take action the union immediately rushed threatening letters *by taxi* to members trying to frighten them off. And leading figures in the NUT are often better apologists for the cuts than the ILEA themselves.

UNION IS CHANGING

However the union is changing. In London, a left executive member, Bernie Regan was elected. At annual conference a motion was passed to stop teaching extra classes when colleagues are absent – which would in turn force Local Authorities to employ more teachers to fill in. There was also a massive endorsement of the aims of CND – this in a union which has traditionally ruled out of order all so-called 'political' motions. The union leadership has already moved into action to block these gains – the president of the union even expropriated a whole page in the union newspaper to attack the CND decision. (Mysteriously he didn't have to pay the normal advertising fee of £750).

The union's executive is dominated by headmasters who *appoint* key posts such as the general secretary, rather than the membership electing them. The Rank and File/SWP grouping in the union do have a rather sterile and impractical position on this issue – calling for immediate expulsion of all headmasters from the NUT. This goes together with their 'universal motions' approach where their conference motions cram in so many demands that *everyone* can find something to disagree with. In fact Rank and File has proved so difficult to work within that Labour Party and IMG comrades have set up the Socialist Teachers Alliance to unite a broad left in the union (contact Dave Lister, 143A Ham Park Rd, E7).

On the other hand Rank and File do have a very clear understanding of the role of the local and the personal in promoting school-based action. Which brings me back to the Southwark strikes against transfer. Strikes like this that I have been involved in seem to follow a pattern – increasing demoralisation and atomisation of the workforce as they suffer job loss, declining standards, increased work pressure and a growing disenchantment with a union which "takes your money and does nothing for it".

Then a single issue comes up where people feel that their pride, their friends and their concern for the job are all being insulted. Management blunders, the union fumbles, and a critical point arrives where people are torn between giving up and standing firm. A flurry of meetings ends up in a determined walk out where the most surprising people cop out or join the fight.

TAKING CONTROL

The strike always demands far more energy, involvement and organisation than the ordinary, work day routine; but the very act of collective disobedience generates tremendous strength. People realise that they have the capacity within themselves to take a stand. They shrug off their everyday resignation and begin to get a clearer idea of their own needs and goals. It is the difference between being controlled and taking control. Close friendships are formed and people who may have been previously faint-hearted come to define themselves and their politics more clearly. A strike is the celebration of the personal.

Of course there is always the 'morning afterwards' feeling when you return to work and nothing seems to have changed. But if the strike is well organised and the objectives are generally shared and clearly understood, there is likely to be a spin off of new activists who are prepared to take the fight further up through the union – a thankless task requiring even greater support structures if you're going to avoid demoralisation, but then, that's another story.

Les Tate
(Lambeth Central CLP)

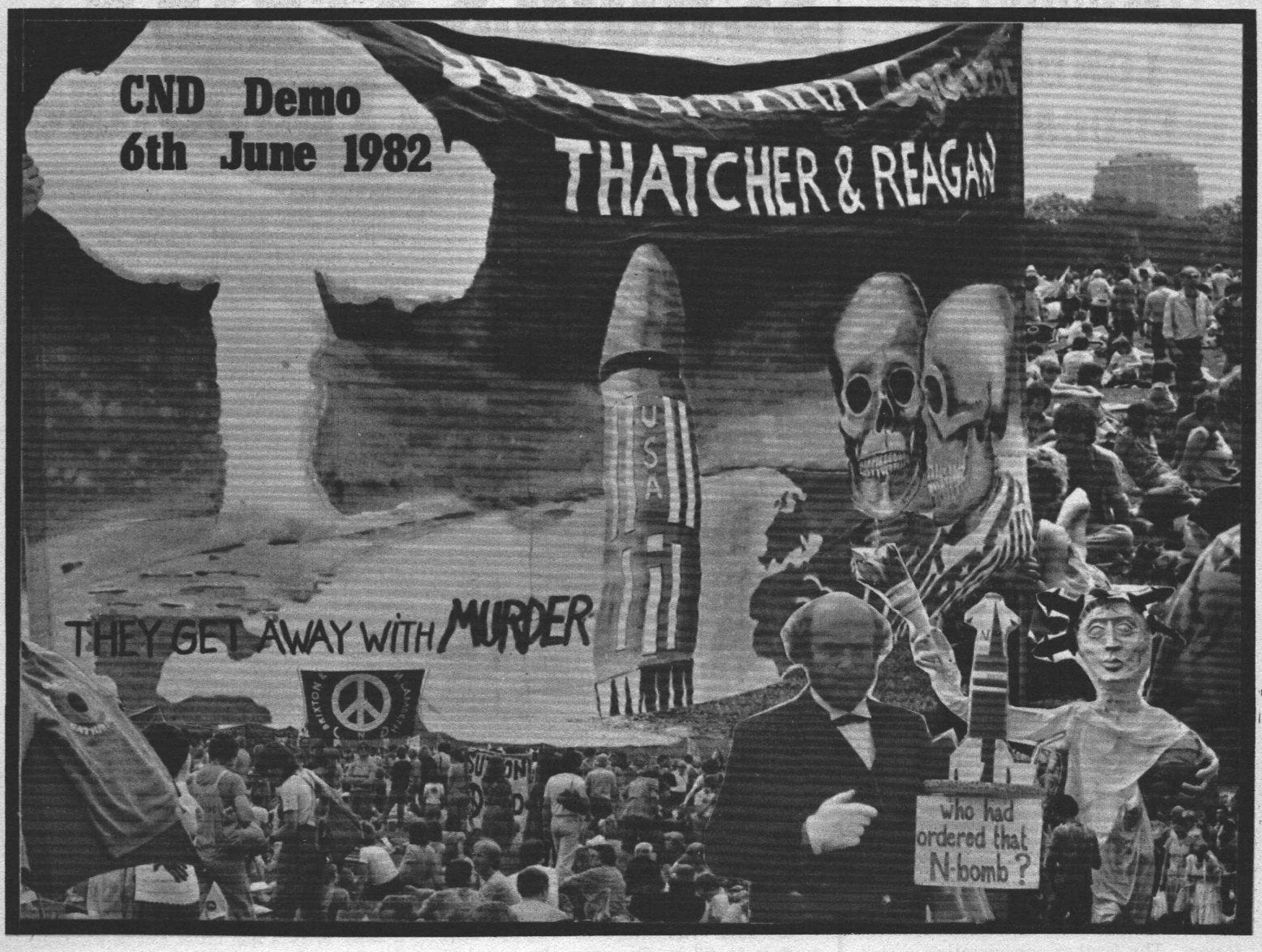
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by Cath Tate

Fighting cuts at the Poly

WORKERS at North East London Polytechnic (NELP) are once again faced with the prospect of large scale cuts and compulsory redundancies, and again the trade unions have joined forces to face the threat. Over the past three years the major source of Polytechnic funding, the Advanced Further Education pool, has been progressively cut back. As a result Polytechnic budgets have been gradually squeezed and NELP has been squeezed harder than most. Since this government came to power the non-teaching staff in the Poly have been cut by around 25% by various forms of 'natural wastage'.

"UNIT-FUNDING"

And now the DES has come up with a new way of cutting Polytechnic budgets even further in the form of 'unit funding' – a system of costs per student allocated uniformly to all Polytechnics regardless of size or educational aims. By this system NELP has been deemed to be somewhere in the region of £8 million over-funded and as a result the budget will be drastically reduced over the two years up to 1984 when the full effects of the new funding system will be felt in full.

Under pressure from Heseltine over rates, Barking, Newham and Waltham Forest, the three boroughs controlling the Poly, have refused to bolster up the Poly finances over this period.

The Polytechnic management's response to these cuts has been to produce a three-year plan detailing reorganisations and cuts in staffing. The plan was presented to the Polytechnic governors before any talks with the trade unions had taken place. Gerry Fowler, the new Director at NELP and ex-Labour MP and Minister of State in the DES, said in the plan that NELP was judged to be over-staffed by more than 300 people, and that he proposed to reduce staff by means of premature retirement, voluntary severance and compulsory redundancy.

The trade unions' reaction to this was immediate. Proposals were drawn up to block any reorganisations until the threat of redundancy had been lifted. A mass general meeting of members of all the trade unions in NELP (NALGO, NATFHE, ASTMS and GMWU) passed these proposals overwhelmingly. At the meeting Gerry Fowler made a crude attempt to split the union membership from their leaders by making a personal attack on some of the union negotiators. But this ploy failed miserably.

CLIMBED DOWN

The management has now climbed down over redundancies and is negotiating jointly with the trade unions over a demand for no redundancies to be presented to the employers for agreement.

The problem of government cuts in higher education remains however. Over the next few years the children of the mid-sixties baby-boom will reach their late teens, and the demand for higher education will increase dramatically. At the same time both mature students and school leavers are looking to higher education as an alternative to the dole queue. But with no thought for the future the government is cutting back both the universities and the polytechnics.

The Tories intend to preside over the demise of local authority higher education in its present form – and the next few years could see polytechnics reduced to a position from which they will never recover.

Martin Brown,
North East London Poly
Branch NALGO

SUMMER OF DISCONTENT

- Railworkers face Tory onslaught

It takes a lot to stop a train at full speed. At the time of writing British Rail is heading at full speed for a collision with the rail unions. Of course, with leaders like Sid Weighell, anything may happen but whatever the manoeuvrings by the union bureaucrats 1982 will be a make or break year for the rail industry. For the Tories have decided that now is the time to declare war on railworkers.

Both the Tories and the British Rail Board have one aim in mind: the selling off of all the profitable sections of the rail industry to their friends in the private sector and the deliberate running down of the 'service' that is left. They are pursuing this policy regardless of its effect on railworkers' lives and indeed on the lives of the thousands of rail users. It is the destruction of a service in the name of profit.

In 1982 total expenditure in real terms by BR will drop for the fourth year running – this when BR has the lowest level of investment per train kilometre of any country in Europe. Some 98 per cent of diesels and 60 per cent of electrics in BR's fleet are over 15 years old; just to replace them would require an increase of investment of 30 per cent over the next ten years. There are already too few locos – leading to widespread cancellations and the shortage of replacement rail means speed restriction and closures of tracks for safety reasons. In 1979 over £10 million of profit-making freight traffic had to be turned away because of lack of rolling stock. Instead of using the spare capacity at the BR engineering workshops to rebuild the rolling stock fleet, BR now plan to close down workshops at Horwich, Lancashire and Shildon, Co Durham. All demands for increased investment, including calls to maintain the electrification programme have fallen on deaf ears.

CRITICAL STAGE

However, the gradual rundown of BR has now reached a critical stage. Any further moves by the Tories will only be possible if the rail unions are seriously defeated. This was the meaning of the train drivers' recent dispute, and is the reason that BR is being so intransigent in this year's pay negotiations.

In last year's pay talks BR tried to tie up the pay settlement with a number of productivity strings. They succeeded with the NUR who were sold flexible rostering through the back door, but came up against an inflexible ASLEF. All in all the price that BR had to pay was rather high. Not only did they fail totally in their attempt to take on the drivers but they also set in motion events inside the NUR which threaten to change the balance of forces on the railways. Until now Sid Weighell has succeeded in selling his version of 'reasonable' trade unionism – 'if we are good boys and give a bit here and a bit there, then maybe the government will give a few crumbs.' The drivers' action provoked a response from NUR guards who said, 'Why can't we fight too?' At its high point guards from nearly 30 depots in and around London were taking co-ordinated action against both BR and Weighell. At the recent guards' national conference, delegates overwhelmingly passed resolutions condemning the flexible rostering deal. This change at grass roots level makes it considerably harder for Weighell and Co. to manoeuvre — and much more likely that some sort of showdown will take place.

CHOSEN THIS YEAR

British Rail understand all this which is why then have chosen this year to go for broke. Their reply to our pay claim, with a 5 per cent offer tied to more productivity strings than ever before, is a deliberate attempt to provoke a battle. What is at stake? BR have insisted that a precondition of any pay increase has to include immediate agreement over rostering from the ASLEF and a commitment from all the unions to the introduction of:

*the open station concept – that is the elimination of large numbers of station staff with more work given to guards;
*one person operation of trains – that is on some freight removing guards altogether, on passenger trains increasing the responsibilities of drivers for safety and making guards take on further responsibilities for collecting fares and dealing with the public;
*the trainman (sic) – whereby guards' and drivers' assistants' jobs will be merged making it easier to eliminate their jobs altogether.

CEASE TO EXIST

Alongside the planned closures of the engineering workshops, the reduction in the number of country services run and the sale of the hotel and ferry services, BR will cease to exist as we know it. So the fight around the pay claim will not just be a fight for a decent wage – but for the very survival of the industry.

Unfortunately the leadership we receive from NUR headquarters is not the most inspiring. This year more time and money has been spent on attacking the left for opposing flexible rostering than on anything else. Which is why it is vital for socialists both in and out of the industry to take up the cause of mobilising the labour movement in defence of railworkers.

Inside the rail unions this will mean rebuilding the action committees set up last winter. This must become a main priority of the rail Broad Left as it enters its second year of existence. Outside the industry activists must start to build solidarity action making sure the rail workers' case is heard in their trade union branches and in the Labour wards and GCs. All the indications are that BR are ready for a hard struggle if they cannot force the unions to retreat. They will not sit out a series of two day actions as happened last winter but are preparing to lock out all railworkers if any sector takes action. In that sort of situation the rapid backing of the broad labour movement is vital.

Greg Tucker,
NUR guard, Vauxhall CLP

We are now at last getting a fine response from many readers to our financial appeal. Thanks particularly to one splendid donation – of £90 from Bert Monks, a reader in Tonbridge, Kent – we are out of our immediate difficulties in paying for the June issue. Many thanks also to the local "Labour left" groups and Briefing groups (e.g. Lewisham, £15 just received) on whom we so much depend. If you think such money is well worth it, as we do, please help ensure our growth by completing the standing order mandate below and returning it to: Jon Pickering, Flat 10, Scoresdale, Beulah Hill, SE19.

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PUTTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

Ken Livingstone in his interview (June *London Labour Briefing*) when talking about the Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign stated:

'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.'

I wish to put the record straight. I have never said to anyone, publicly or privately, that the Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign was a mistake. I have not even thought it! I think Can't Pay, Won't Pay was an extremely useful tactic.

If we had not had the Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign there would not have been the media coverage there was on the fares going up. Most of the newspapers, television and radio reports covered the Can't Pay, Won't Pay initial activities, and it received a lot of sympathy and provided a focus which couldn't be provided by suggestions that people write to their MPs.



Fares Protest Outside Poplar Town Hall on 25th March.

FEARED OUR ACTION

For London Transport to take the unprecedented action of suspending the relevant rule showed how they feared our action. However in view of this it is hardly surprising that people were intimidated.

It is worth examining the arguments Ken Livingstone uses against the Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign. He states three times that it was against 'tradition' to have such a campaign. Does this mean Ken Livingstone thinks we have to dismiss all new forms of struggle because they have never been tried before! If this is the case then we would never have had work-ins or the Lucas Aerospace Workers' Plan. We will never advance our struggle in this country if we don't try out new forms of action to reinforce the old.

Ken Livingstone also goes on about it being against the tradition of 'this country'. Are fare increases in Paris so different from fare increases in London? Are French workers so different from British workers?

BACKWARD LOOKING

I hope Ken is not as backward looking and insular as this repeated remark implies.

Obviously the Can't Pay, Won't Pay tactic could not succeed without the support of the unions. No-one ever said it could. However I hope Ken Livingstone is wrong when he said:

'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.'

If this is the case as alleged by Ken Livingstone then this is a real betrayal by the trade unions. The fight over fares had to be a joint one by workers and passengers together. Both groups will suffer as a result of the Law Lords judgement.

Ken Livingstone castigates the Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign because it is an 'individual campaign rather than collective action'. I have combed Ken's article for suggestions as to collective action and found none except strike action. A strike may or may not be the right tool but it certainly has the danger of alienating the passengers. In contrast the Can't Pay, Won't Pay tactic tried to unite passengers and workers. It would appear that Ken Livingstone thinks that passengers should be passive or at best be content with writing to MPs etc.

Ken talks a lot about the unions and the labour movement. He says we didn't try and 'take the Party or the unions' with us. Is it up to a dozen or so GLC Members to 'take the unions' with them? Is it not legitimate to expect the unions to see for themselves the desirability of joint action between themselves and passengers? There was no secrecy about the Can't Pay, Won't Pay tactic. Everybody knew about it – it was in fact widely discussed. The labour movement also is wider than officials or even committees. However I know that my Party discussed Can't Pay, Won't Pay and at least one branch came out in support of it and also I know that Abbey District Bus Committee discussed it.

DIVIDING LINE

The dividing line between 'collective action' and 'individual action' is much finer than might be realised. The boycott of South African goods is an individual action but it is a direct response to collective need. Even the withholding of one's labour is to an extent an individual action. There is a difference of intensity felt by individuals according to their personal circumstances.

Another kind of 'strike' is the rent strike and again this is a very individual action and can result in individual tenants being picked off and victimised. Yet it is a 'tradition in this country'. When councillors decide to risk being surcharged in pursuit of their manifesto commitments this is an individual action which affects individuals to a different extent. Of course in these circumstances it is possible to make more formal collective decision than when the objective is to organise hundreds of thousands of passengers. There are no structures through which to formalise the common resolve. Mass action needs people deciding to do things even though they cannot always first be brought together to take a formal decision. Yet surely this doesn't mean we have to dismiss the idea of a passengers' fares strike. The point is that we often take an individual stand in response to a collective need. If enough people do something it becomes a collective action.

Ken Livingstone goes on to say in his interview that:

'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.'

As the person who went to a meeting and when calling for support for the lobby of Parliament said 'let's make it a "siege" of Parliament', I know that everybody present knew my use of the word 'siege' was a gesture of solidarity with the language Peter Tatchell used in his famous London Labour Briefing article. A similar gesture towards Peter's language is the fact that people now use the expression 'extra-parliamentary action' on every conceivable occasion. Ken Livingstone may think this is dishonest but most people clearly understood it.

Ken Livingstone said he was in favour of the Can't Pay, Won't Pay campaign 'if we can mobilise hundreds of thousands of Londoners'. We will never get hundreds of thousands of people supporting direct action unless a *real* lead is given. Ken, it would have been too late to give support to the campaign *after* we had mobilised hundreds of thousands of people.

Valerie Wise

GLC'S NEW ARTS POLICY

Tony Banks
Chair—GLC Arts and Recreation Committee
Tooting CLP

IN a Briefing article earlier this year I outlined the thinking behind the GLC's change of arts policy. In the same edition Vidya Anand, supporting the new policy, demanded that rhetoric should be followed by action. I hope our recent actions will have fulfilled expectations. The GLC's Arts budget for the current year 1982/83 has been increased overall by 35%. The greatest single element is the £1.3 million of new money for community and ethnic minority arts which together give rise to the 133% increase in our grants to smaller arts bodies.

The total of GLC grants to London's arts this year will be around £10 million. A lot of money perhaps, but still way short of the amount needed. My aim is to fulfill the objective of the 1948 Local Government Act which called for the spending of a 1d rate on the arts. In London that means £20 million, so we are only halfway there.

New Art Boards

To assist the Committee in its new policy, two advisory boards are being set up. The Community Arts Board and the Ethnic Minority Arts Board. Both bodies will be chaired by a Labour GLC member but will otherwise consist of those currently working in these two areas of London's arts. In the case of the ethnic minorities, a conference of representatives took place on 28 May from whose deliberations will emerge names and likely future policy directions. The recent appointment by the Council of an advisory officer for ethnic minority arts will also add further weight to an area of arts funding previously ignored by the GLC.

It is hoped that both boards will be functioning by July.

Community Arts Activities

Although much is made of the term, the definition is often imprecise and in a recent paper to the GLC Labour Group I attempted to correct this. Community arts activists consist of two separate but related concepts:

i) *Arts in the Community*, i.e. making the arts more accessible to people.

ii) *Community Arts*, i.e. the involvement of people in arts activities as a way of assisting them more fully to express themselves individually and collectively.

Arts in the Community.

There are a number of ways by means of which the arts can be made more accessible:

1. Education – assisting Local Education Authorities in London with schemes designed to give a greater understanding of the arts in schools. This does not simply mean convincing youngsters that they must appreciate "high culture" in order to succeed, but that they should be more acutely aware of the role of the arts in our society.

School visits to local and national arts centres and more visits by companies to schools are obvious ways of encouraging familiarity with different art forms.

2. The establishment of properly funded arts resources centres in areas of greatest deprivation.

3. The funding of visits by professional performers to factories, clubs and council estates.

4. Encouraging the national centres based in London to go out into the communities of our city.



Community Arts

This involves the funding of creative activities which embrace many kinds of events and a wide range of media. Traditional art forms are adapted to present-day needs and new art forms are developed, but in both cases there is a recognition that the arts can be used to enrich personal and collective experiences in a direct fashion, literally, by involving people in the artistic processes required from concept, to execution, to development.

This approach involves far more than simply asking people to sit in a seat and appreciate something because it is called art. It uses arts activities to identify and express needs and by doing so contributes in part to the process of political and social change.

Throughout London today there are a number of art centres seeking to involve local people in activities which generate self-confidence both amongst individuals and the community. Workshops using film, video, posters, street manuals, drama, dance, painting etc., are effectively putting the arts to work for the people. We must support them. By supporting them many art processes become demystified and people develop the confidence to express their own feelings and through this give voice to latent talent.

It is on these two elements of community arts activities the GLC will now base its new arts policy.

The Democratic Threat

In the discussions we have generated in London about the arts, the political nature of arts funding has been stressed, to the evident discomfort of those who try to preserve an unreal apolitical approach.

For the Labour GLC the concepts of "art for art's sake" or "few but roses" cannot be acceptable when we are faced with massive social problems engendered by unemployment, homelessness and public expenditure cuts, all emanating from a Tory Government unashamedly attacking the living standards of the working class.

If the arts cannot be related to these problems then there cannot be a rational basis for complaints about councils cutting the arts in order to defend other areas of expenditure.

In other words the arts should not simply be considered as the icing on the social cake, but rather as an essential ingredient of the cake itself, to be considered on a par with our provisions for housing, transport and education and if this approach is adopted, the arts must be seen to serve the community.

One of the arguments used by those opposed to the direct political approach to the arts is the possible threat it poses to arts activities favoured by a political party which loses a subsequent election. Personally, I believe this to be one of the risks we must accept since the only way to avoid such a possibility short of ending elections, is neither to change nor challenge anything and rely instead on a pattern of arts funding based on the established order. This has been the approach adopted by the GLC in the past which resulted in an "arts policy" without reference to any discernible policy objectives and naturally favouring the well-established art forms.

Obviously we will destroy this pattern of Party consensus, based on inertia by insisting the arts must serve the community, since this will demand positive discrimination towards those arts activities previously ignored or neglected by the GLC. Whether or not our new arts policy will survive our own political demise will be largely the responsibility of those towards whom the changes are directed. If we get our policy right and it has obvious merit then I believe it will be defended by those communities who will directly benefit.

For too long the GLC's provision of arts funding has been without any relationship to London's problems. We have been orthodox, establishment-minded, conservative and unimaginative. The Arts and Recreation Committee had until the recent election become a quiet backwater for Members and officers alike.

We now have an opportunity to change this in a radical and dramatic fashion.

IS LABOUR OUT OF TUNE?

"Radio London is proud of its commitment to community affairs" . . . LBC "will provide a unique form of programming for the Greater London area" . . . "Our definition of Capital Radio is as a catalyst enabling people to talk to each other."

These were and are the claims made for 'local' radio by London's three 'Local' stations, BBC Radio London, Capital and LBC. It is time that the Labour Party stopped to think carefully about just what is being broadcast in the name of 'local' radio, and in doing so try and develop a broadcasting policy from below – a policy which would help ordinary people use the airwaves as a facility to speak to each other. It is also vital that the London Labour Party think about what kind of local radio it wants now that it has the opportunity to press the IBA for a better service. The IBA is now considering new applications for the London News and Information franchise (presently held by LBC).

HOW LOCAL?

But how local are the London stations? With this in mind Local Radio Workshop recorded and analysed one week's output from the three stations between April 27 and May 3 1981. The analysis was conducted by LRW, Womens Airwaves, Black Womens Radio Group, Rest of the News, Paddington CLP, Trades Unionists, SWAPO and the ANC. The findings, which will form the basis for the GLC's submission to the IBA this summer are published in *Local Radio in London* (£2.44 inc. p&p from Local Radio Workshop, 12 Praed Mews, W2 1QY. tel: 402 7651).

Public discussion of local radio needs to proceed from a critical awareness of what is broadcast. 'Local Radio in London' is the first major attempt to do just this. The report documents the poverty of local sound broadcasting; highlights why this is so and argues that a greater public awareness of what local radio should and could be doing is a necessary preliminary to pressing the IBA and the BBC into altering their existing policies.

MONEY AT STAKE

The issues are serious. Money is at stake and time is short. In 1979/80 19 commercial radio stations made a pre-tax profit of £8.7 millions on a turnover of £49.5 millions. Capital's pre-tax profits were £2.7 million and LBC's £1.4 million. By 1990 commercial local radio stations will reach over 90 per cent of the population. The content of the programmes they broadcast cannot be left to go by default.

The recent appointment of the present managing director of Capital Radio as the next Director General of the IBA (the most senior officer) shows the way the IBA will take commercial radio unless challenged – down the road of Top 100 records and inane chatter that has made Capital Radio one of the most profitable business enterprises in Europe.

MUSIC

Programmes based on music were found by the report to form the basis of 90 per cent of Capital's output and just under half of BBC Radio London's. Commercial produced Top 100 records formed the core of this diet. Anything not in this category (folk, classical) was called 'specialist music' by the stations and broadcast in off peak hours. London's lively local music scene, easily identified by reading listings magazines, found no reflection in the material broadcast.

DJ programmes formed the basis of music shows. Attempts to involve listeners in the selection of the music content were found to be very limited. Both the BBC and Capital must share the responsibility for setting such a low standard of expectation from London's radio services. The poverty of this approach to 'local' music programming was evident even to the djs, one of whom opened his show with 'What have we got today? A load of nonsense of course'!

PHONE-INS

A major component of the output of LBC and BBC Radio London was phone-ins. Callers only had an average of one minute 45 seconds in which to speak – hardly time to develop arguments or make opinions sound like anything other than prejudices. Topics changed with bewildering rapidity and all three stations paraded a bevy of experts (health, current affairs etc) to lead discussions. In such reverence were 'experts' held by the stations that in a single one-hour programme calls were taken for three minutes five seconds – even the greyhound results got longer than that. If access to the airwaves for ordinary Londoners was delimited by the device of the phone in, it found no friend in the early morning and evening magazine programmes on the three stations. Twelve hours of broadcast material closely analysed were found to be dominated by the opinions of rock stars, celebrities and presenter 'personalities' and revealed only two minutes 36 seconds of the opinions of the woman/man in the street – and very little attention to London issues.

NEWS SERVICE

All three stations broadcast regular bulletins of news and LBC claimed to provide a continuous news service. In the regular hourly bulletins, news came in short unrelated bursts and was couched in dramatic language which mutilated the content and in doing so, destroyed the context in which the items were set. For example phrases like 'tension is rising', 'news just in', 'more bad news' seemed to be used to give the impression of urgency even though the news reported must often have seemed irrelevant to most London listeners (eg, a robbery at a railway station in Belgium by 'hooded men' on BBC Radio London). Such a 'fast food' approach to news coverage did little to assist understanding of the complex issues dominating the week's news – the death of Bobby Sands and the GLC elections.

LONDON ISSUES

None of the stations carried any sustained coverage of the myriad of local issues which surface day by day in the capital. We closely examined five hours of the programme LBC Reports (Monday to Friday 1-7pm) one hour from each day of the week and found only 16 London items out of 172 covered. Many of these London items were less the products of sustained investigative journalism than of a dogged persistence in phoning emergency services: fire, police, ambulance and so on. On the whole, London's stories covered were poorly researched, if graced by research at all, and LBC's so called 'London Interview' was really a profile of 'one of Britain's brightest young businessmen' who insisted that 'we have no need to be in London'.



INDUSTRIAL ISSUES

The coverage of industrial issues seemed coloured by assumptions which left much reporting *sounding* anti-union even when the

content of the report was not obviously so. For instance, the presenter on LBC's AM programme (29.4.81) summed up an item by talking of the ambulancemen's 'threatened strike' in which the dispute 'was as much to do with status as with money'. This association of unionism with 'threat' and the pat summary of the reasons behind the dispute were indicative of the attitudes underlying industrial reporting.

On the air traffic controllers' strike of that week our CPSA special contributor felt that 'the average listener would have learnt very little about the issues involved in the dispute'. A similar bias against understanding, if nothing else, was noted in the coverage of the GLC elections. At the end of a report from County Hall in BBC Radio London's Good Vote Guide the correspondent repeated a Tory assertion that 'if Labour gets in . . . there's going to be a Marxist takeover', to which the presenter replied 'And that's it from the Good Vote Guide'.

BLACK ISSUES

In a week dominated by the Brixton disturbances and the Deptford fire inquest, coverage of Black issues on all three stations was marred by the obvious absence of properly funded units specialising in Black affairs. Of 315 hours of programming recorded for the monitoring exercise, only eight hours of programmes was devoted to the interests of the Black communities. There was no proper coverage of Black affairs in other broadcasts either. Mainstream reporting here was characterised by a sensationalist concentration on peripheral issues: the coroner's threat to stop the Deptford inquest (BBC 24.5.81), the report on an irate witness's response to the questions of an insistent barrister (LBC 1.5.81).

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Failing to cover Black issues in any depth, local radio also fell down miserably where women's issues were concerned. Listening to the programmes there was no indication that any of the stations were aware of the activities of the women's movement in London. Sexism hung heavily in the air on all three stations. Male presenters dominated. On one station's morning magazine programme, of 23 voiced items only five were female.

Exclusion of women was expressed most tellingly in the language used. The words 'ambulanceman', 'spokesman' (when referring to a woman) 'pressmen' were used on LBC between 9-10am LBC on 29.4.81 implying that all ambulance staff and journalists were male and that a spokeswoman was a man! Such language revealed the pitiful lack of awareness of the range and depth of feminist argument and activity in London.

Why has local radio failed to live up to even its own standards? Why are these stations not local?

COMMERCIAL PRESSURES

Commercial pressures forcing stations to grab the largest possible audiences for their advertisers in the easiest possible way, are no doubt very strong. The need to return a profit (or in the case of the BBC stations, to command some kind of audience as justification for a licence fee) leads to understaffing and at best a half hearted attempt to grapple with the local nature of issues. The training of local radio journalists does nothing to help the situation. In the words of ex-students quoted in the report, training bred 'an instant expert mentality' so that 'it was OK if they didn't know what they were talking about as long as they sounded if they did'. Poor training compounded by lack of resources and an unwillingness to properly explore the locality explains much that is wrong with London's local radio stations.

The willingness of the IBA and the BBC to respond to the criticism of the services they supervise is open to question. In London, LBC's contract is now being readvertised by the IBA. LRW is using this opportunity to press the IBA to attach conditions to the new contract which it will award this autumn. The conditions would oblige the new contractor to provide a minimum number of hours per week of peak time broadcasts made by Londoners under their own editorial control. Stations must also provide the facilities to enable journalists to cover local affairs in depth.

THE LABOUR PARTY

LRW is also trying to get the Labour Party thinking about Local Radio. Part of the problem it has confronted so far is that people don't think of the airwaves as public property. They are. People don't realise that, with minor legislative changes, local radio could become a means whereby people could talk to each other about their problems, ideas and concerns – it could be an agent for a more democratic society. People need to think about the potential of local radio and how, under existing legislation, they can influence its quality. They shouldn't be content with the situation as it is, in other words as documented in *Local Radio in London*.

If the Labour Party is to have a realistic broadcasting policy for the 80's it must take on the issues raised in *Local Radio in London*. It must be prepared, on the basis of informed criticism of present hierarchical structures and impoverished output, to press for changes. A preliminary to all this is to debate and become aware of the issues. LRW would be interested to talk to Branches and CLP's about the issues and the report this summer.

by Local Radio Workshop

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THE RENEGADE MANI

After the last LGC meeting, Briefing supporters in Lewisham were intrigued to find thrust into their hands copies of the following appeal:

"Broad Left Alliance, Charles King, S. Mani and Richard Smock (Convenors) c/o 38 Forestholme Close, SE23. Tel: 01-699 7508.

Dear Comrade,

We are a group of rank and file members of the Labour Party in the London area who believe that there are very good reasons why democratic socialists should be on the offensive against so-called revolutionary socialists and their fellow travellers who are making a concerted effort to undermine the credibility of the Labour Party from both within and outside.

In the face of this threat we believe the leadership both at national and London level have not taken effective action. Since our opponents are highly organised, we believe we have to be organised as well . . .

If you . . . feel as we do that some drastic action is required, please come to a discussion meeting to launch a broad democratic socialist alliance, Saturday 12 June at 7pm, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1.

Look forward to seeing you.

Yours fraternally,

S. Mani,

on behalf of the convenors."

NOTE: On the above-mentioned Saturday evening, Chris Knight took off an hour from BRIEFING's paste-up session to see what was going on at Conway Hall.

He arrived late. To a massed assembly of 15 or so people, a platform speaker was explaining that most people whom he encountered were *in favour* of selling off council houses, so wasn't Labour's policy going to lose us votes? Ditto on the war fever, private schools, private medicine etc. etc. It was agreed by all present that things would be much better if we didn't have to keep taking responsibility for the likes of Ken Livingstone and Tony Benn.

Chris wasn't particularly surprised to see the figure of Lewis Herbert sitting not a million miles away from the room in which this meeting took place. The comrades seemed to be unhappy about the strength of London Labour Briefing in the London Labour Party, but unhappy also about the prospect of trying to expel us.

Consciousness of Strength!

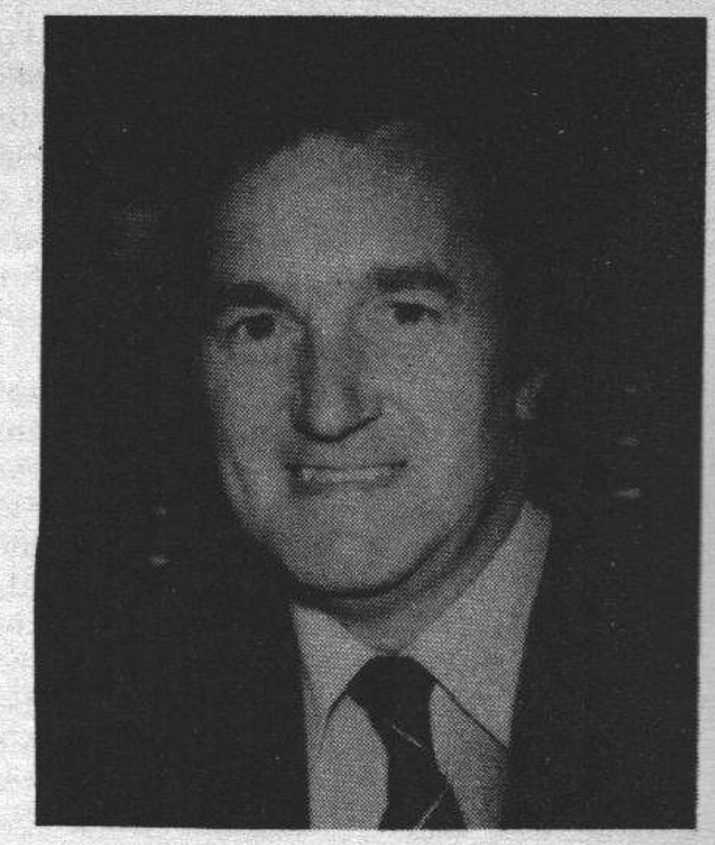
"WHAT IS REVOLUTIONARY CONSCIOUSNESS" by Chris Knight. 50p Published by the *Chartist* tendency (write to Graham Bash, 23. Leghorn Rd., London N.W.10).

Under the influence of feminism – particularly radical feminist writers such as Christine Delphy – Chris Knight presents a rigorously libertarian and materialist interpretation of the basic Marxist writings. If it is conditions alone which can determine consciousness – argues Knight – it is pointless to try to win people to socialism by giving them "alternative ideas". The oppressed need practical support and frameworks for unity first, *regardless of their or our differences over "ideas". Revolutionary consciousness is consciousness of strength. Before people feel the need for "socialist ideas", they must feel strong in their workplaces, ttheir homes, their neighbourhoods, their streets. Practice is primary at all stages in the struggle for sexual or class power, and it is only to the extent that we are collectively strong that our "consciousness" can be revolutionary at all.*

The process of discussion which accompanied the writing and publication of this document was central to the inauguration of the journal London Labour Briefing *as a unifier of the revolutionary left and its allies in London and beyond.* Briefing's *success has been due to a consistent emhasis on practice and the struggle for real power as the precondition for fruitful theoretical debate. The revolutionary left will not succeed in unifying its forces or embodying the strength of the working class until it learns to throw away its various competing ideological "party lines" in favour of a "line" which is open, flexible at times, jointly arrived at in full public view and expressive of the real strength of the organized labour movement as a whole. Such a "line" cannot be imposed on anyone by ideological hectoring or by those who believe that ideology itself is a material power. It can only emerge as we ourselves – all sections of the working class and the oppressed – discover our unity and combined strength.*

TED KNIGHT

is interviewed by Briefing



Lambeth Council, which stood alone at the head of the anti-cuts fight while BRIEFING was being established, is now Tory-controlled. Chris Knight interviewed the former Leader of Lambeth Council, Ted Knight, in Lambeth Town Hall on June 4th:

Chris: *Ted, why did you lose?*

Ted: Well of course Labour, in fact, didn't lose in Lambeth – it won, but victory was snatched away by the treacherous act of the previous Labour Mayor, who decided after 33 years of membership of the Labour Party that he would vote Tory. And so he gave his casting vote, as Labour had won 32 seats, the Tories 27 and the SDP Alliance 5, he gave his casting vote to the Tories. Therefore a Tory administration was formed. So the election results were actually reversed in Lambeth.

Chris: *So you're saying that apart from that it was a good result?*

Ted: I think that generally the result was quite good, yes, in the circumstances in which Lambeth had been fighting this Tory Government. In fact we've had a sustained campaign against us now for two and a half years, almost since May 1979, a very vicious campaign that was conducted by the press, television and the media generally, with a great deal of effort thrown in by the Tories and the SDP in order to snatch Lambeth away from Labour, and I think to have sustained that situation and actually come out of the election with the largest number of seats was a good result. Not as good as we would have wanted because we should have obviously hoped to have had overall control, but I think the result was reasonable.

Chris: *It has been said that by not only the rate rise policy but the policy of combining that with cuts – and there were cuts in Lambeth – you ended up with the worst of all worlds. I mean, you were bound to alienate the rate-payers' lobby, but by alienating trade unions and the consumers of services as well, you made concessions which were unnecessary. Didn't that affect the result?*

Ted: Well, I don't think we alienated the trade unions and we certainly didn't alienate the trade unions in this Town Hall, and Lambeth trade unions. The limited reductions in expenditure which we were forced to make in order to retain a rate-rise which the Labour Parties in Lambeth decided upon, didn't I don't think antagonize the trade unions and certainly didn't antagonize the people outside. Of course, nobody liked to pay rate rises, but the extent of social services in Lambeth are probably greater than in any other borough in London, and these were necessarily defended by the Labour Party. No, I don't think we got the worst of all worlds, I think we got in fact a major attack by the Tories and the SDP and the media against Lambeth which had stood firm and had alongside of boroughs such as Lothian been the one in the forefront of the fight against the Tory Government. You can't be in the forefront of the fight against the Tory Government without suffering some losses in that battle.

Chris: *But shouldn't you have dug your heels in and refused to make any cuts whatsoever?*

Ted: Then we would have had higher rate rises.

Chris: *Sure, but then this was what BRIEFING was arguing for... Paul Moore put it well in a front page article for BRIEFING, after the cuts were decided upon. He said that since you were going to offend the rate-payers' lobby anyway, a little more would be only a matter of degree, whereas to antagonize those dependent on services was a matter of choice, either or, and wasn't necessary . . .*

Ted: Well, I believe it was necessary. I think that rates had reached a level in Lambeth which were damaging to people's pockets and to the budgets of working class families. I think we'd reached that level and therefore we had to maintain that ceiling on rates. The extent of cuts in Lambeth was so small that this was not a factor. I mean, when we're talking about cuts, how do we explain for instance boroughs which were right-wing controlled, that had massive cuts, returning Labour majorities? Unless you have another factor in operation, and that must be the massive attack of the media against Lambeth.

Chris: *But now that you've been forced into opposition anyway, having to some degree compromised the Labour Party in Lambeth in the eyes of those who've been in the forefront of the anti-cuts campaign, mightn't you just as well have been forced into opposition, if need be, at an earlier stage, retaining credibility in the eyes of the entire labour movement, and maybe you'd have been able to come back in these elections with a thumping majority such as we've seen in Islington?*

Ted: Well, now, come off it! Who were we antagonizing in the forefront of the fight against the cuts? Lambeth was in the forefront of the fight against cuts! Others, who claimed to be there, were there, basically, purely in an advisory capacity. We were actually in the forefront, actually doing the job. So I don't know who we've antagonized, we certainly didn't antagonize the Labour Parties or the labour movement in Lambeth, because all the Labour Parties, through the medium of the local government committee, accepted the policies of this Borough Council and Labour Group. So we didn't antagonize them. I think that when people talk about Islington, they should explain to us how after four years of cuts in Islington, still Labour was returned. I think it was because people could identify the SDP and those who were renegades from the Labour Party, or who were moving away from the Labour Party, as those with the specific policies . . .

Chris: *But isn't that exactly it? Isn't it because the people of Islington identified very, very clearly who was making the cuts, namely those Labour traitors who had defected to the SDP, wasn't it that which gave those of us opposed to the SDP – the hard left – the credibility which to come extent has been missing in Lambeth?*

Ted: Well, only the fact that you had a right-wing administration which in Islington was making massive cuts. You didn't have a right-wing administration that was maintaining the biggest range of services in London and was continuing to do that. So there is no comparison at all between those two situations.

Chris: *So you accept no share of personal responsibility at all for the fact that we had here a Labour Council which was in the forefront of the fight against the cuts, whereas now we have a Tory Council in Lambeth?*

Ted: I accept no personal responsibility for that, of course not! And neither does the local Labour Party. Except responsibility for the fact that we are in a fight with the most vicious Tory Government. We can't be in that fight without suffering casualties.

Chris: *What will be the effect of this Tory Council on the people of Lambeth?*

Ted: I think the Tory Council, with the open and consistent and firm support of the SDP/Liberal rump, which is very right-wing, will start moving to reduce the services. How effectively they will do that is yet to be seen, but it looks as if they will begin to close down such services as consumer advice centres, it may be that

law centres will come under the axe, there certainly is going to be a reduction in manpower within the council which will affect all services, there will be a run-down of the direct labour organisation, both in the building side and possibly in the public services side, I don't think we're going to see the introduction of privatisation at the present moment, they have some difficulties on that, but they would certainly prepare for that. I think, by bringing in consultants to prepare the ground for privatisation . . . Certainly, their intention is at the moment to reduce the overall labour force by initially introducing some form of voluntary redundancy schemes. Certainly there will be a general run-down of services.

We will also face a very important struggle within the next two months on the question of rents in Lambeth. The Tories are pledged to a £3.50 a week rent increase, which is necessarily part of their overall strategy to reduce the rate in Lambeth. The SDP have hesitated and wavered about a £2.50 rent increase. The Labour Party and Labour Group in Lambeth will oppose that rent increase, whatever it is, but nevertheless I think that they will use the casting vote of the Mayor to push through a major rent increase. There will also be a run-down, we think, in the repair service to the council estates. Generally, what one would expect a Tory Council to do!

Chris: *Do you see this new situation as positive at least in helping to heal the wounds, the divisions within the left, which have been probably more apparent in Lambeth than in other Boroughs in London?*

Ted: Well, of course, I don't think the divisions within the left in Lambeth have been as exaggerated as you suggest. It has been a very small number of people on the left that have opposed the policies generally adopted by the Labour Parties in Lambeth. I think that those people, and also the right-wing in Lambeth, I think that we'll see some basic unity come about when they face up to real cuts from a Tory Council. So, yes, I think that we'll have a united Labour Group, which is quite wide in its spectrum, and the Labour Parties in Lambeth will, very importantly, start turning outwards.

"I call myself a Marxist . . . there has to be a revolutionary struggle to change society."

Chris: *From our standpoint within BRIEFING, the lack of a unified framework for left activity in Lambeth seems connected with the fact that BRIEFING doesn't get circulated very well here. In Brent, Islington, Camden, Southwark, Lewisham and other areas, the left – and it is quite a wide spectrum of currents within the left – is unified basically through the framework which BRIEFING groups provide, whereas in Lambeth there is a polarisation within the left which doesn't seem very constructive and BRIEFING has almost no real hold. How do you see your relationship to BRIEFING developing in the new situation?*

Ted: Well, I've never felt that my relationship, personally, with BRIEFING needed a resurgence in any form. I think that if the comrades running BRIEFING concentrate on unifying the left, then that is fine. I don't think necessarily that it always fulfils that purpose. But as long as it does then I will certainly give my support to it. I think other members of the left in Lambeth will. There's been no hesitation, generally, in supporting any publication of the left of the Party which people think is constructive. I hope all papers are sold, in fair numbers, in Lambeth.

Chris: *I'm trying to make a specific point about the BRIEFING position. I think part of it is that when concessions in the state, concessions to the Tories are being made which are necessary ones, because we simply haven't got the material forces to defeat the state or extract from it the resources to do otherwise, then it's difficult for those in the movement who really believe there must be an alternative to accept that. Some of those whom you have little patience for on the hard left really do believe that there is no answer but a fundamental change in the structure of society as a whole, and in BRIEFING we accept that even if we don't always see eye to eye with other groups . . . But it's difficult for revolutionary socialists to trust those who, like yourself, are in leadership positions in the Labour Party and are being forced to make concessions, it's difficult for them to be sure that you're not just like all the other well-intentioned Labour leaders who have said they were "forced" to make concessions in the past, and surely you have to earn that trust . . . How do people know what your aims are if we're not discussing and you don't make these things clear? It used to be that we'd give ourselves labels and we knew you defined yourself, when I first knew you, very definitely as a Marxist, a revolutionary, a Trotskyist and then it seemed quite important that the leader of Lambeth Council defined himself that way. And I would just like to ask you, Ted, whether you would still use these descriptions of yourself, because in a certain sense I think it is important, at least within the movement . . .*

Ted: Well, I think, first of all, before I answer that last point, that a few things have got to be understood. When you say that you "and others" are very concerned that leaders of the labour movement in whatever form – and certainly now we're talking at local government level – appear to make compromises, you've got to ask yourself what you think local government is about in this situation. Have we in actual fact established soviets in borough councils? We have not, and we have never pretended that we had a soviet in Lambeth. We've never pretended that we could possibly have "socialism in one borough". I think that's a very Stalinist approach to the situation and very idealistic. One which is quite out of keeping with a really serious and scientific understanding of the class struggle as it is at the present moment. No, we've said, as comrades have at the GLC, that there are limitations within the framework within which we're working. Our objective is to mobilize to the maximum and to use the positions we have to protect, to the maximum, the people that we represent, the working people we represent within specific geographical areas. But as we are not a soviet, as we don't control the state, as we are not in government, then we are not able to pursue policies which you would, obviously, do in circumstances in which you did control the state. So I'm not really impressed by people saying: "Oh, you're making compromises!", because normally, of course, such complaints come from people who are not able to do anything, people who are quite content to stand on the sidelines.

Do I call myself a Marxist? Well, of course, I call myself a Marxist in the sense that I think that there has to be a revolutionary struggle to change society. But I'm not prepared to commit myself further in the pages of your paper, which will then be read by all the witch-hunters in the country.

Chris: *O.K., Ted, I think we would answer in the same way. You must feel that this interview has been very one-sided, but if that's so it's because actually I think we in BRIEFING are serious about local government, we do understand the constraints and we are probably mostly on your side in all of this, so I wanted you to put your case as strongly as possible against the critics from the groups on the left. Exactly the point we're always making is that it's all too easy to criticize from the sidelines, when you're "calling" for things knowing that nobody will put you in positions of responsibility where you'll actually have to be tested in practice. Our basic guideline is: "Don't make demands of others if you're not prepared to assume power and carry out the demands yourself." I think most of us in BRIEFING are aware that if we'd been in your position over these past few years, we probably wouldn't have been able to do very much different from what you've done. It's quite true that if we lack the forces – the real, material, forces – to take on the state, to take the power, then you have to make difficult choices. You have to make choices, in this case, between almost equally unacceptable alternatives: rate rises which just could not be borne on the one hand, and on the other hand, cuts which whilst very minor compared with cuts made in other boroughs nevertheless had an impact in terms of morale. So what in BRIEFING I think most of us always emphasize is that comrades in your position, or Ken Livingstone's position can really do without criticism which isn't accompanied by the making available of real, organised material class forces to enable you to feel more strength behind you, so that more uncompromising alternatives are opened up as choices open to you to take. In this context, "criticism" becomes support, which was what I was hoping might come in part through this interview.*

Ted: Well, you can say that in the pages of your paper. But my reading of BRIEFING hasn't given me the impression that that has been your position. In actual fact you have continuously attacked the comrades in Lothian, the comrades in Lambeth, the comrades on the GLC, who have found themselves in those positions where they have tried to make those judgements. You don't associate yourselves with them, you dissociate yourselves from them, if not positively, then just by omission. You don't say: "If we were there, we would be doing this", or, alternatively, that "We are fully supporting your position – we see you have no alternative, so this is the course you should be taking." You never did that with Lambeth. I can't see you doing it with the GLC. And you certainly didn't do it with Lothian either. So, fine. Nice words. And I'm pleased to hear them. But I think you've got to actually be more positive and constructive in the approaches you make through the pages of your paper. I don't doubt your own sincerity and the sincerity of comrades who share that view. But they certainly don't go out of their way to let the labour movement know they have that position. And God help Islington! The first compromise they have to make – you'll destroy them!

"God help Islington! The first compromise they have to make – you'll destroy them!"

EEC IN CRISIS

Alf Lomas
MEP, London North East

The EEC is yet again in a state of crisis, due to the steam-rollering through of an 11% increase in farm prices by a majority vote in the Council of Ministers, despite the so-called 'Luxembourg compromise', which states that when a Member State considers a matter is of vital concern, a decision should be taken only by unanimous vote. This action has made a nonsense of all the firm promises given when we joined the EEC, that we could always stop any policies harmful to us by using the veto.

The Government is particularly embarrassed, since the Tories in the European Parliament voted in favour of ignoring the veto agreement. Although the other Member States will say that this does not mean that the veto is dead, it does mean that any time a majority of countries want to push something through, they can do so even if it is fundamentally against the interests of another Member. It is a dangerous step towards federalism and should be exposed and opposed as vigorously as possible.

Another current and seemingly never-ending problem is the size of Britain's contribution to the Budget. It has cost us £1 million per day net during the nine years since we joined and, after the recent temporary agreement for one year only, will cost us about £500 million this year.

These funds would have paid for an awful lot of schools, hospitals and homes, if we had used it for social developments here instead of it being used to subsidise wealthy European farmers.



FUTURE LABOUR GOVERNMENT

But, even if we resolved the problems of our budget payments and the CAP, the case for withdrawal would still be overwhelming. The Labour Party's case should be mainly concerned with the inability of a future Labour Government to implement a socialist economic strategy within the confines of the Rome Treaty.

Enshrined in the Treaty is the right of the free movement of capital and goods and also opposition to public financial intervention in the economy if this is seen to 'distort free competition'. All this is the antithesis of a socialist planned economy.

Of course, there are seductive arguments claiming that it is not necessary to withdraw from the EEC in order to carry out Labour's programme. It is argued that we should fight with our socialist colleagues for changes in the Treaties, or that the French Government is able to go ahead with its socialist programme and that so could we. There are serious flaws in these arguments. So far as support for fundamental changes is concerned, it just does not exist. I recently submitted a Motion to Parliament, calling on the Commission to propose to the Council of Ministers changes in the Treaties, particularly the clauses dealing with the free movement of capital and goods, 'so that those Member States who wished to do so could introduce socialist planning'.

It received the support of all 17 Labour MEPs and was tabled under a rule which invites other Members to sign it before it is considered. Only one other Member in the whole of the Parliament added his signature, and in the whole of the 23 years of the existence of the EEC, there has been no major reform of any kind. So much for support for fundamental change.

HOW FAR HAVE THE FRENCH GOT?

The second argument is that the French are implementing their socialist programme and so could we. But, how far have the French got. They proposed to extend public ownership to a number of national banks (it should be noted that no international banks are in danger) and a number of French companies, and to restructure other firms, including the provision of state financial aids. Already this programme is running into difficulties. Apart from the expected opposition from international bankers and multi-nationals, who have a stake in French industry, the EEC Commission has intervened in a number of ways.

Proposals to nationalise the French pharmaceutical firm, Roussel-Uclaf, has had to be dropped, because of the opposition of German financial interests. The French Government is having 'infringement proceedings' brought against it, because of aids it has given the steel industry, and will be brought before the European Court. Its proposed reform of the textile industry has been held up by the Commission, while it considers whether it can allow it to go ahead. If the Commission considers that the proposals will 'distort competition', then they will not allow it. All other proposals for nationalisation and public aids have to be approved by the Commission.

If France, with its fairly modest programme of change, is running into such difficulties, we can imagine what would happen to a Labour Government committed to a radical socialist programme.

The Party then is absolutely right when it says that withdrawal from the EEC is not some chauvinistic isolationist policy, but is an integral part of our alternative socialist economic strategy.

Report from Guyana

There are some interesting parallels we can draw with developments here in Britain and in the Caribbean, particularly in Guyana. Guyana gained independence under a leadership picked and trained by Britain and the United States to remain sympathetic to the needs of industry and commerce in the West.

This political leadership also had the backing of the trade union leadership. Many of these trade union leaders had been trained by the American Institute for Free Labour Development, who specialise in recommending that workers co-operate with management in the cause of national loyalty.

In the early '60's, the first democratically elected government, that of Cheddi Jagan's People's Progressive Party, was over-turned by a potent mixture of interference from the West and labor unrest, orchestrated by trade union leaders. Forbes Burnham came to power and has increasingly abused his position ever since.

His party, the Peoples National Congress, have held on to many key trade unions. They use tactics well known here. Bauxite workers, the most powerful industrial block, have been kept loyal by high wage levels. But, now that the economic condition of so many Guyanese has deteriorated to starvation level, these workers are beginning to realise both their own vulnerability and also some common cause with other sectors. The reaction of the trade union leadership has been organised and swift. Control of nomination and election has been tightened up, with transport arranged for supporters and nomination days announced at suitably convenient times (for some).

Continued next page

For A Socialist Foreign Policy

by Alan Freeman (Greenwich CLP)

The Falklands/Malvinas crisis has proved one thing: foreign policy is Labour's blind spot. The adventure has unpleasant lessons for the left; but we may yet emerge stronger if we take them to heart.

First I think it is time to question the myth that Labour's safest strategy is to concentrate on domestic issues like unemployment at the expense of 'cranky' foreign policy issues.

This unwritten canvasser's rule is deeply engraved in Labour thinking. Foreign policy is always an 'added extra' in the manifesto, made up of embarrassing moralistic commitments to be sacrificed to expediency as soon as possible.

The approach is anything but practical. Fifty per cent of British investment lies overseas. How can we fight Thatcher and her cronies without a socialist foreign policy, when their main strength lies abroad?

FOOT'S DISASTROUS PERFORMANCE

It isn't even electorally sound. Foot's disastrous performance has finally proved that you can't win votes by pretending the rest of the world doesn't exist. Voters are perhaps not as stupid as the front bench would have us think; they are certainly not as stupid as the front bench.

Socialist foreign policies are *not* vote losers. A majority of voters want the troops out of Ireland. Labour's most popular policies are unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC. And indeed, if the front bench *had* opposed Thatcher's military adventures, Labour's voting performance might now be in a lot better shape. After all, it couldn't be worse.

In short, foreign policy could be Labour's strong point – were it not for its leadership. The shadow cabinet – not the voters – oppose socialist foreign policies.

Why have Labour's leaders foisted this suicidal course on the party? A clue is provided by Bevan's argument for opposing unilateralism in 1957: he could not, he said, 'send a foreign secretary naked into the conference chambers of the world'. By this he meant that nuclear weapons were needed to preserve Britain's great power role.

Bevan had recognised the connection between this great power role and the domestic policies which built the welfare state: the one *financed* the other. Overseas income now makes up nearly a quarter of the profits of the British capitalist class. Lose this income – and you lose the welfare state.

The postwar consensus has an ugly face: bipartisanship on foreign policy – paying for social reform with the proceeds of foreign plunder. Michael Foot is clinging to this sordid arrangement even though it no longer delivers the goods.

THE CONNECTION

But this explains, also, the connection between Thatcher's adventures abroad and her ferocious attacks at home. The empire, and Britain's great power status, are crumbling. With it goes the postwar consensus. The Labour right's policy is thus crumbling because its foundation – the empire – is crumbling. Our socialism needs a new foundation: a socialist foreign policy.

33 MPs have made a promising start by voting to oppose the government's war effort. Foot's final treachery has obscured an important fact, which is that the so-called 'hard left' have actually gained from their stand. What other issue could have split the front bench and sent Andrew Faulds into the voting lobby with Tony Benn? Constituency feeling – and substantial union support – is with those who opposed the front bench.

The left's best course is therefore to take the war to the heart of the debate in the party. Conference should settle accounts with the front bench and endorse the actions of those MPs who opposed them – in conference resolutions and in voting for NEC and leadership positions.

POSITIVE POLICIES

But what *positive* policies should replace the present ones? The front bench's stand does have a foundation in present party policy. I want to argue for a new policy: complete withdrawal from the South Atlantic, renunciation of any British interest in the Falklands and full backing for the Argentinian opposition in its fight against Galtieri.

There is a basic flaw in the whole idea that socialists can promote their aims by deploying capitalist armed forces abroad. The alternative is not pacifism but a *socialist* fight against the dictators, through an alliance with the people they oppress.

The Tory pretence that 'our boys' are out there protecting the free is a shallow one, not supported by the record. In Malaysia, for example, a twenty-year anti-guerrilla war has entrenched a vicious government now trying to hang 64 people for alleged terrorism, drawing protests from 154 British MPs, the French and Dutch socialist parties and the Belgian government.

The vital clause justifying Malaysia's emergency legislation, under which its atrocities are committed, attacks any who endanger 'the government, property or foreign investment'. And this is what the anti-guerrilla war was really about – defending a vicious dictatorship in order to guarantee the safety of British foreign investors. In short the dictators are *created* – not overthrown – by the holy alliance of overseas investors and overseas forces.

But this doesn't happen everywhere, we are told. In Belize 'our boys' might have to protect a small country against vicious dictators like the Guatemalans. But who is fighting the dictators now? The Nicaraguan, Cuban and Grenadan dictators were overthrown by freedom fighters; the Salvadorean and Guatemalan dictators are next in line.

'Our boys' aren't exactly weighing in behind the guerrillas. In the last two months they have been engaged in naval exercises with the USA which involved 40 ships, 80 aircraft, a mock invasion of Grenada and a landing on Cuba. If Thatcher establishes a precedent by intervening successfully in the Malvinas, Reagan will have a green light to go into El Salvador – with Thatcher's blessing and the backing of 'our boys' in Belize.

The alternative is more cost-effective, and it works: bring the boys home and give their guns to the guerrillas.

But the same principles apply in Argentina. It is not only preposterous when the Tories say they will station 10,000 troops in the South Atlantic to oppose dictatorship: it is a lie. The Argentinian people will revolt against Galtieri; in the streets they shout 'Malvinas, yes: junta, no'. But they won't find the British troops on their side; nor will they win support from American, West German or United Nations troops. Such forces will obstruct socialism in Argentina; and thereby obstruct the road to the only *really* free future for the Falkland islanders, which is to live with – and associate with – a free, socialist Argentina.

The alternative is very simple: get Britain out of the islands now, and start giving real internationalist assistance to those who *can* get rid of Galtieri – the Argentinian working class.

Activists are victimised by threat of redundancy and withdrawal of incentive. And this economic terror is a powerful weapon in Guyana, where there is no unemployment benefit and where education and health care may be free, but books and medicine are not. Militant workers also face harassment from Burnham's paramilitary forces at home and at road blocks. Before one recent sugar workers union conference, the police successfully prevented many workers attending by detaining them along the route. Despite all this, workers are becoming increasingly politicised and are drawing links between industrial and community struggles. The 'broad left' of the Bauxite workers are emphasising the lack of adequate health and safety standards with antiquated mechanical equipment and wide use of toxic chemicals. They have realised that a high wage does not compensate for ill-health and poor services.

A new opposition party, the Working Peoples Alliance (of which Walter Rodney used to be a member) are organising a series of All Purpose Committees to unite activitists – both trade union and community – to set up alternative structures and appeal for international aid.

Unfortunately, the familiar accusation of trade unions acting for political ends is being used against them. As in Britain a strike for pay is seen as more respectable. In 1979, when the sugar union was out on a 135 day strike and was joined by other workers in solidarity, the WPA tried to widen the argument. They raised issues such as the lack of conomic planning and development of the necessary infrastructure. This interference in political matters threatened a range of interests.

More recently, a large march in 1981 for a living wage and in solidarity with Angola was attacked by government forces and even children and young women brutalised. More subtly, Burnham has continued to tighten the screws by laying off thousands of workers and with the PNC now in charge of 80% of the national economy, workers are understandably threatened.

The threat of marginalisation is used there as in Britain to control the workers. There have also been moves to militarise production as a fall back position. Much in the same way as National Service is proposed here.

And as in Britain, there is a middle position. In Guyana, this is adopted by Cheddi Jagan's PPP. They try and draw a spurious distinction between trade union struggle and political action. A difference talked of by trade union officials here too, when they criticise health workers for highlighting the plight of the National Health Service as a whole by direct action.

June 13th will be the Third Anniversary of the Assassination of Walter Rodney. Despite much evidence of security force involvement, the Guyanese government recently found his brother guilty of his murder. (Donald was sitting next to him in the car and passed him the package which exploded.)

As the situation in the country becomes worse each day with food lines all day for staples such as bread and rice, the WPA has been appealing for delegations from trade unions and socialist parties abroad to visit Guyana themselves and see what is happening in the Co-operative Republic.

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE REPORT

Pete Willsman's article in the last issue of BRIEFING raised some important points regarding the Regional Executive. It is hoped that at the next meeting of the Regional Executive a number of Resolutions will be carried to put into effect some of the points raised. Nevertheless, the main point is that an active and campaigning Regional Executive must also of necessity be an Open and Accountable one. Certainly on the present Regional Executive there does appear to be a clear left majority. In the next year at least, one of the major tasks facing the Regional Executive will be to defend any CLP's and individuals in the London Labour Party who are victimised by witch-hunts.

MARK FEENY
(London Region Executive).

Going beyond this though, are a number of problems which need to be faced up to now. Firstly, there is a lack of money. Obviously, this is a problem which faces the Party at all levels, but if we are to take a lead in initiating and co-ordinating campaigns, then we desperately need some resources. A corollary of this is that some of those resources which we do have (namely the staff and resources of the Regional Office) are not: a) directly under our control – they are employed by the NEC and consider themselves accountable to the National Agent and: b) do not seem to be in sympathy with the aims and objectives of the majority on the Regional Executive.

GEORGE PAGE'S DOSSIER

For example, the only Press report which I can remember recently that has concerned in any way the London Labour Party has been George Page's famous secret dossier on the Hornsey CLP. Yet, in the past few months the Regional Executive has taken clear positions on the PTA on the breakdown of some crime statistics on racial grounds, and on the Falkland Islands. It does seem to me that it is important for us to use the Press in any way that we can. One answer might be for Members of the Executive elected by the CLP's to hold regular Press conferences for the local papers within their area. Certainly, reports in the local press of the Regional Executive would be one way of keeping in touch both with the Party membership and also with individuals active in other community groups and associations.

One issue raised by Pete Willsman, that of communication between members of the Executive and the CLP's which elected them does seem to present certain organisational problems. Certainly, the sending out of the minutes of the Regional Executive to all CLP's would help in keeping CLP's informed of some of what is going on at the Regional Executive, but the real problem is for Executive members to find out the views of the various CLP's within their area. CLP Secretaries could send their minutes to members of the Executive, but perhaps LGC's could be used much more as a way of channelling views between the CLP's and the Regional Executive.

What has happened so far this year is that there has been a reorganisation of the Executive which now has Four Major sub-committees. F & GP (chair Jeremy Corbyn) Campaigns and Organisation (chair Harry Barker of NUPE) Publicity and Propaganda (chair Eddie McParland) and Policy (chair Ted Knight) So far, each of these has met once and the Regional Executive twice.

MAJOR POLITICAL DEBATE

The major political debate which has taken place has been on the Falklands where a resolution calling for the withdrawal of the Taskforce was passed with little dissent. An alternative from Bob Labi arguing that the only answer to end the war was the overthrow of Capitalism in Britain, Argentina and the Falklands, was heavily defeated. Of the sub-committees, it appears that F & G P and Policy are the major ones. At the last full Executive meeting a report from the 1982 London Women's Conference was referred to the Policy committee to make proposals on the implementation of Resolutions passed by the Conference.

At the AGM a resolution from Richard Balfe that an international sub-committee be set up whose prime function would be to establish links with international pressure groups based in London was passed and referred to the Policy committee for action. However, there has since been letters from the National Agent and the General Secretary, stating that this sub-committee would not be able to operate in the way intended because of National Rules. It was decided to continue to set up this organisation but obviously it looks as though it will have considerable problems in functioning as intended.

In conclusion, the Labour Party in London is the one most heavily influenced and controlled by the Left. We therefore have a responsibility to the left in other parts of the country to give a clear lead. One aspect of this must be that the Regional Executive plays a much more prominent role in politics in London.

The GLC's investments in South Africa

Over a year ago, the GLC Labour Group decided *nem con* to disinvest monies from RTZ, BAT, Barclays Bank, Nat West Band – the companies which are engaged in giving succour to the policies of apartheid of the racist government of South Africa.

One year later, nothing has happened. The GLC continues to back companies with a despicable record of violation of international law and trade union rights in Namibia and Australia. Needless to say that calls by those fighting for a just society in South Africa and Australia, the leaders of Aborigines – have failed to convince the Leader of the GLC to take action on a resolution of its own Group. We ask why?

With a Left administration at the helm – for the first time at County Hall, the Labour movement would have expected some action. But this was not the case. Only a few comrades led by Charlie Rossi have again and again tried unsuccessfully to get the leadership to back its rhetoric with action.

The huge sums of GLC money still locked up in the companies engaged in exploiting the oppressed in South Africa and other parts include:

Two and a half million pounds in Rio Tinto Zinc;

£6.2 million in BAT (British American Tobacco);

£3.8 million in Barclays Bank;

£2.6 million in National Westminster Bank.

A resolution in the following terms has been submitted to the forthcoming meeting of the EC of the GLRC:

"The Executive Committee of the Greater London Labour Party calls upon the GLC Labour Group to implement immediately its resolution of a year ago calling for the disinvestment of its monies from RTZ, Barclays Bank, BAT, Nat West Bank – the comapanies which are engaged in giving succour to the policies of the racist government of South Africa."

I call upon all comrades to join the campaign to extricate the LABOUR GLC from the quagmire of apartheid.

Vidya Anand
Member of Regional Executive of the GLRC
(in personal capacity)

Brent Briefing/Socialist Challenge discussion
'Revolutionaries and the Labour Party'
Speakers: Graham Bash, editor of London Labour Briefing and from Socialist Challenge
Wednesday 7 July 7.30pm
Anson Hall, Anson Road
London NW2
All Welcome

WORKERS MARCH AGAINST RACISM: BRICK LANE TO BRIXTON TO T.U.C. CONFERENCE IN BRIGHTON:
4-8 SEPTEMBER
Sponsors include: Jayaben Desai, Anwar Ditta, Nasira Begum, Tony Benn, Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone, Paul Boateng, Arthur Scargill.
Full details from
WAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8. Or phone 01-274 3951.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

OUR SISTERS IN IRELAND

This report of the International Women's Day in Ireland was written by Angela Birtill and Alison Court. Angela Birtill is a Camden Councillor. Alison Court has long been active in the Troops Out Movement. With 30 to 40 other women they travelled from London to Ireland, where they joined women from all over the world.

THE delegation to Belfast and Armagh Women's Gaol included women from all over the world, and we were conscious from the outset why we were taking part in the delegation. We wanted to come together as women, to celebrate our strength and our unity as women, and to commemorate International Women's Day in a country where women are doubly oppressed. They are not only oppressed by the sexism and capitalism which dominates Western Europe, they are also oppressed by the full weight of British imperialism and all the chauvinistic and masculine values which that imperialism embodies.

Our initial reaction to the border was one of horror. We approached it from the South, and the beauty of the landscape was wrenched into perspective by the line of Saracens and the heavily fortified tower. The border defines the reality of Northern Ireland, not only for the women and men who are actively involved in the armed struggle, but for everyone who lives in the Six Counties or travels into them like ourselves. The Britz recognise this, and it is forbidden to take photographs of the Army and their 'defences'. A photograph would have shown the Saracens, the tower, and the Brit pointing a rifle at us.

Our impressions of the border were still vivid when we entered Belfast. It is a small city and reminded us of many working class towns that we have seen in the North of England. There are two basic differences.

The poverty is stark and uncompromising. The narrow streets and the rows of terraced houses evoke images of the Thirties. The open spaces are derelict and the paving stones, cracked and uneven. It is worth remembering that Northern Ireland has the highest rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom. It is also worth remembering that this Kingdom is far from united.

The second difference is the Army of occupation. There can be no doubt that it is an Army of occupation. The Britz are alienated and isolated from the rest of the





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.... The Women's Army is marching,

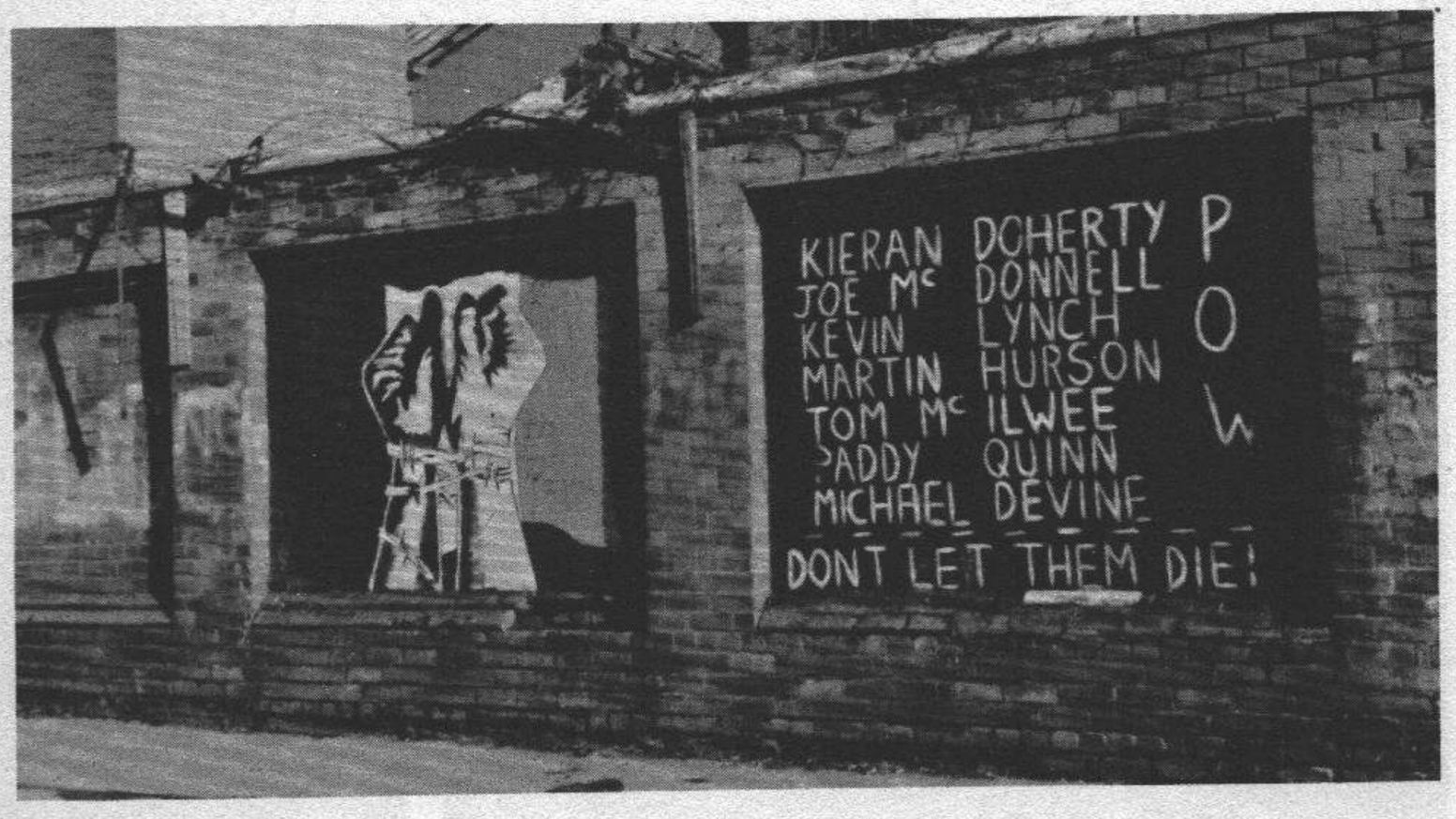
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community. They patrol it like a minefield, and their weak footprints are an indelible stain on the consciousness of the population.

Our coach meandered through the streets until we arrived at the Pass N Grove Community Centre in Beechmount. As we climbed down from the coach, men and women rushed out from the Community Centre with cups of tea and sandwiches. It was an incredibly warm welcome, and it was in brilliant contrast to our early experience at the border.

We were taken from Pass N Grove to the Sinn Fein Centre on Falls Road. The welcomes continued and we were told that a mural had been painted to celebrate our visit. The walls and gable-ends in the Republican area of West Belfast are covered with the most intricate and colourful paintings. The artists are youths, who attempt to defend their handiwork from the Britz. Within days of our visit the mural will have been ruined.

The Britz pick up the youths for questioning. The youths are questioning the right of the Britz to occupy their country. In their absence, the mural will be bombed with acid. Initially, the Britz used paint, but the youths began to glaze the murals, making it easier to get rid of the paint. Acid burns through the glazing.



The Army of Occupation

It was made clear to us, that although we would learn a great deal from talking to the Loyalists, we were also likely to get our throats cut. We would not be attacked because of our political differences with the Loyalists, but because we were different. The Loyalist community is insular and paranoid, and the descriptions reminded us of the Afrikaaners in South Africa. It constantly surprised us that the Republicans we spoke to went to great lengths to stress that they harboured no personal differences against the Loyalists. The reality of Loyalist supremacy, as practiced by their working class supporters, was seen as something that was worthy of mourning and pity rather than hatred.

Our hosts, Janice and Joe Austin, reiterated this final point when we arrived at their house, a minute, terraced home, where they lived with their five children and Janice's brother. It amazed us that Janice had agreed to put us up for the weekend, but the warmth and sense of purpose that motivated the household soon made it apparent that our fears were unjustified. We were welcomed into their home without reservation, and we were cared for in the same way that they cared for the rest of their family.

In a sense, we were like children, and the reality of the War was both difficult and dangerous for us to grow accustomed to. We were grateful that Janice and Joe, and the entire Republican community, were protective towards us. It wasn't that they doubted our strength, but we recognised that we needed help and support to become acclimatised to West Belfast.

Initially, it was difficult and almost unreal for us to adapt to the Army of occupation. To see the Britz darting from street corner to street corner on their patrols, to see Saracens cruising the streets with all the arrogance of male punters in Soho, to see the squaddies leering at the women and spitting their contempt at the children and the youths.

Black Squaddies at the Rear

We were told that the black squaddies are always made to sit in the rear of the Saracens, and to bring up the rear of a street patrol, as these are the positions where a soldier is more likely to be shot. Our own observations confirmed this monstrous absurdity. The oppression is piled thick, layer upon layer, like an obscene sandwich of hatred and self-loathing.

The reality of Brit oppression also borders on the ridiculous. To enable two RUC men to walk into a Republican area, at least six Brit soldiers are needed as chaperons, surrounding and protecting the RUC from the community that they are supposed to police. Perhaps the Tories could get Scarman to write a report about it, although Jardine and Anderton would probably see it as a perfect model for policing on the 'mainland'.

It is worth noting that not only Republicans are at risk from the Britz. Youths have been beaten up for wearing the wrong colour of football scarf, women have been assaulted for being alone, six children have been killed by plastic bullets. The Britz also shoot dogs, and Janice and Joe were quick to bring their dog into the house whenever the Britz were in the vicinity.

It was frightening for our delegation to experience at first hand the intimidation used by the RUC and the Britz. The RUC met our coach both going into and out of Belfast, our bags were searched and the posters that we had bought were confiscated. We emerged from a Community Centre at night to suddenly find a rifle literally, under our noses. The street lamps are especially subdued to facilitate the Brit patrols, and we could just make out the squaddies' grin as we recoiled from his gun in horror. It should be remembered that we were not the specific objects of their oppression. They had been told to be polite with us, and to treat us to the delights of male imperialism 'gently'.

Violence Ever Present

Talking to Irish women and men, living in their houses and taking part in their community brought home to us the sheer horror of the oppression that is levelled at them.

On the Saturday night alone, 37 people were picked up for questioning under the Special Security Laws. Almost every person that we talked to had either been inside the Brit Gaols themselves or had close friends or relatives who had been imprisoned. A man who stayed with us overnight, had never been out of gaol for more than three months at a time over the past eight years. It was accepted as fact, that the RUC and the Britz would fabricate evidence, lie and torture, to extract the maximum punishment from the non-jury courts. He, along with the Blanketmen who stayed at Janice's house on the Saturday night, was humble, unassuming and friendly, reluctant to condemn and genuinely compassionate in his view of the world.

Every time that someone knocked at Janice's door, their identity had to be verified before they were admitted. The door itself was reinforced with locks and bolts, with the dog keeping guard constantly. The adults didn't mention the names of activists or discuss political business when the children were present, to protect them from harassment and intimidation from the Britz.

Violence, and the threat of violence, was ever present. It pervaded everything, even the jokes and the stories that we shared, it awoke with us in the morning and it slept next to us at night. It was a measure of Janice's and Joe's warmth that we slept well.

Joe had been close to death himself on many occasions. A close friend had been murdered by Loyalists when the two of them had been walking down the road. Both Janice and her husband recognised that their lives were always at risk. A neighbour had just been released from Gaol. A young woman, who had not even been involved in the War, had been murdered and her breasts had been cut off. Yet another neighbour had been shot and killed. Each of these people had lived in the same street as Janice and Joe. Their specific horror was not untypical. Each street has its own obscene and violent history.

Dividing Tiny Streets

And across this history, the Brit and RUC barracks straddle like monstrous insects, enlarged and deformed and sucking at the life about their wire and metal legs. They are implanted onto the community, dividing tiny streets and commanding acres of derelict and wasted space. Their fortifications are hymns to bondage and oppression. They not only impose their reality on the community, they sanctify a fascist dogma with the red, white and very, very blue stamp of imperialism, capitalism and sexism.

Hey, Sister, don't you weep!

The Spirit of Resistance in the Republican areas of West Belfast was unbelievable. You can almost taste it in the oxygen, and the intricate murals depict this spirit with a power and beauty that is impossible to deny. Yeats termed this beauty 'terrible', but the terror belongs to the Britz. They have patented it, and they sell it in the form of plastic bullets and Diplock Courts.

We were told that the community had always been strong, and that the people had always been warm and caring. The War had solidified this strength, and the struggle has brought people closer together.

It would be wrong to say that there are no heroines or heros in West Belfast. The Sisters who organised our delegation and protected us are revered within their community, but every person's contribution is valued and treated with respect.

When Bernadette McAliskey spoke to us outside the Women's Gaol in Armagh, she stated that women are playing the 'most important part' in the War of Liberation. The importance of women, and the recognition of this importance by their Sisters and Brothers, was evident throughout our stay.

Obviously, women are still oppressed in the North of Ireland, just as they are oppressed elsewhere. But they have achieved a status within the Republican community that we were proud to share.



Strong and Powerful by Necessity

Our Sisters in the North of Ireland are strong and powerful by necessity. The War does not allow them the luxury of ignorance, and neither does it allow their male comrades the luxury of chuavinism and sexism. The War has equalised women and men because they are actively involved in the Resistance against a more brutal oppression.

We bathed in the strength of our Sisters, and their power strengthened us. We were proud of them, and united with them, not only in their struggle against imperialism, but in the war against capitalism and male domination.

On the Saturday afternoon, there was an exhibition of 'Women in Ireland' at the St. James' Community Centre in Andersonstown. The exhibition demonstrated the extent to which women have been involved in the War, and the appreciation that is felt for this commitment and involvement by the entire community.

Films and video tapes were shown, and we heard women from Armagh Prison speaking about their hardship and their struggle. They described the suffering that they had gone through in the prison, the pain that they had experienced when their Sisters and Brothers had been tortured and murdered by the Britz, the horror and shock of internment and imprisonment, and their own fears and beliefs for their country and their comrades.

Not only women from the delegation attended the exhibition. Throughout the day, women and men from the surrounding area came into the community centre to show their support for their Sisters. There were cries of recognition when a close friend or a neighbour's face appeared on the film, and they told us about the role that the imprisoned women had played within the community.

Images of Women by Women

Around the hall, there was a display of photographs which illustrated 'Women in Ireland'. These were not the lying images of the BBC and ITV television companies, these were not the distorted and pornographic images of Fleet Street, but images of women by women, truthful and clear beside the Brit and male version of history and reality.

They showed the variety of the Women's Liberation struggle in Ireland. The tenants' and community groups, controlled and dominated by women activists. The campaigns for better housing and nursery provision, did not involve the well-trod deputations to the Town Hall and the poorly attended public meetings. They involved occupying houses and premises, creating road blocks and stopping traffic.

There were photographs of women who had been murdered and attacked by the Britz and the Loyalists. Marie Drumm, Miriam Daly, Bernadette, and numerous other Sisters who had been barbarically killed or attacked for demanding justice and equality.

In the evening, there was a social for the women who had come across to Ireland on the delegation. We were joined by scores of women and men from the surrounding community, and we sang our songs and performed our plays.

Non-Sexist

The men who attended the social were polite, well-mannered and non-sexist. It was wonderful to be able to drink and sing and cheer in the company of men without being sexually approached or molested. It was accepted that women had a right to determine their own enjoyment and entertainment. The men recognised our power and our strength, and they celebrated this alongside us.

It was immensely moving to be in the company of women who were so actively involved in the fight against oppression, and the generosity and the warmth of their feeling towards us is something that we will never forget. It was a deeply personal experience, but it was also something that was shared and collective.

The most powerful moment of the evening, was when the Provisionals appeared from the rear of the hall. They were armed, masked, and wearing their uniforms. They marched to the stage, and then three of them spoke to the audience.

Biggest Shock

The biggest shock was when the three Provisionals began speaking. They were women! It was a measure of our own sexist conditioning that we had not expected this, even though the evidence of women's involvement in the war had been around us since we had arrived in Republican Belfast.

We had seen photographs and talked to Sisters who had been active in the Relatives' Action Committee, supporting the five demands for political status, and demonstrating at the murder of the hunger strikers. We had heard and seen the community's support for the Provisionals, and we had recognised that this support was primarily from women.

The women spoke about the armed struggle, and about the oppression of women. They told us of the need to unite, of the need to educate our Sisters in our home countries, of the need to take home with us the full horror of British imperialism.

When they had finished speaking, the Provisionals presented a bouquet of flowers to a woman who was celebrating her eightieth birthday. She had been involved in the Republican movement since she was fourteen We cheered, long and loud, and the Provisionals acknowledged our support and left. The climax to the delegation was to come the following day.

We were delayed from reaching Armagh Prison by both the Britz and the RUC. They searched our coach, our bags and our luggage. We were now strong enough not to feel intimidated by their sneers and their rifles, but we were not foolish enough to attempt to stop them from confiscating our posters.

We assembled outside the Prison gates, and our Sisters on the delegation spoke to the crowd. There were speeches and solidarity greetings from our Sisters in the South of Ireland, from Germany and America, from SWAPO and the Troops Out Movement, from Hackney, Harlow, Kilburn, Brent East, Liverpool and London, Manchester and Tameside.

We called out the names of our Sisters who were inside the Prison. We sang to them, our voices echoing through the tiny streets and the barbed wire that separated us. Our solidarity with them was absolute.

Women in the North of Ireland are our Sisters. Their strength and their warmth, their compassion and their commitment, is our strength, our warmth, our compassion and our commitment.

They are oppressed not only by the capitalism and sexism that oppresses all of us, but also by the full chauvinistic power of British imperialism. And yet they continue to fight.

They fight not only for the liberation of their country, but for our liberation as women. They have been arrested, interned, tortured and murdered. They have been abused, villified and ridiculed. And yet they continue to fight.

They will win because their collective power is greater than the obscenity that opposes them. And their victory will be our victory.

Janice and Joe Austin, and their five children, who cared for and protected us over that weekend will one day be free, and their freedom will be our freedom. The Women's Army is marching. It is marching in the North of Ireland. And it is deserving of our support, our compassion and our commitment.

Ending The Curfew On Women ~

"It's dark outside" is the thought that occurs to most women as we think of leaving the (relative) safety of home. And, having made the decision to go out at night we then arrange lifts home or plan routes which we hope will be safe. When men go out they simply put on their jackets and go; rarely does the thought of their personal safety determine whether they go out or not.

Although women stand a greater chance of being hit by a car than attacked by a man we do feel we are taking a risk being out alone at night. I noticed I was not going out half as much when I didn't have a car and for that reason alone I bought myself a second-hand car.

OUR FEAR IS REAL

This dreadful fear, which some men think of as over-reaction means that instead of relationships between women and men being relaxed and friendly they are strained and suspicious. For example, recently I got on a tube at Westminster about 9 o'clock at night. There were a couple of women and a man in the carriage. The women got out at St James Park which left me and the man alone. The man was fiddling around in a bag and sorting out his pockets. I started wondering what he was looking for and began getting nervous and the train seemed to be crawling along. At last we reached Victoria and I leapt up and through the doors into the safety of the next carriage with more people. I then started to feel bad. Recognising that I had probably done that man a great injustice and that all he was probably looking for was his keys. But my fear was real. I was afraid and I, a woman, cannot afford to take a risk.

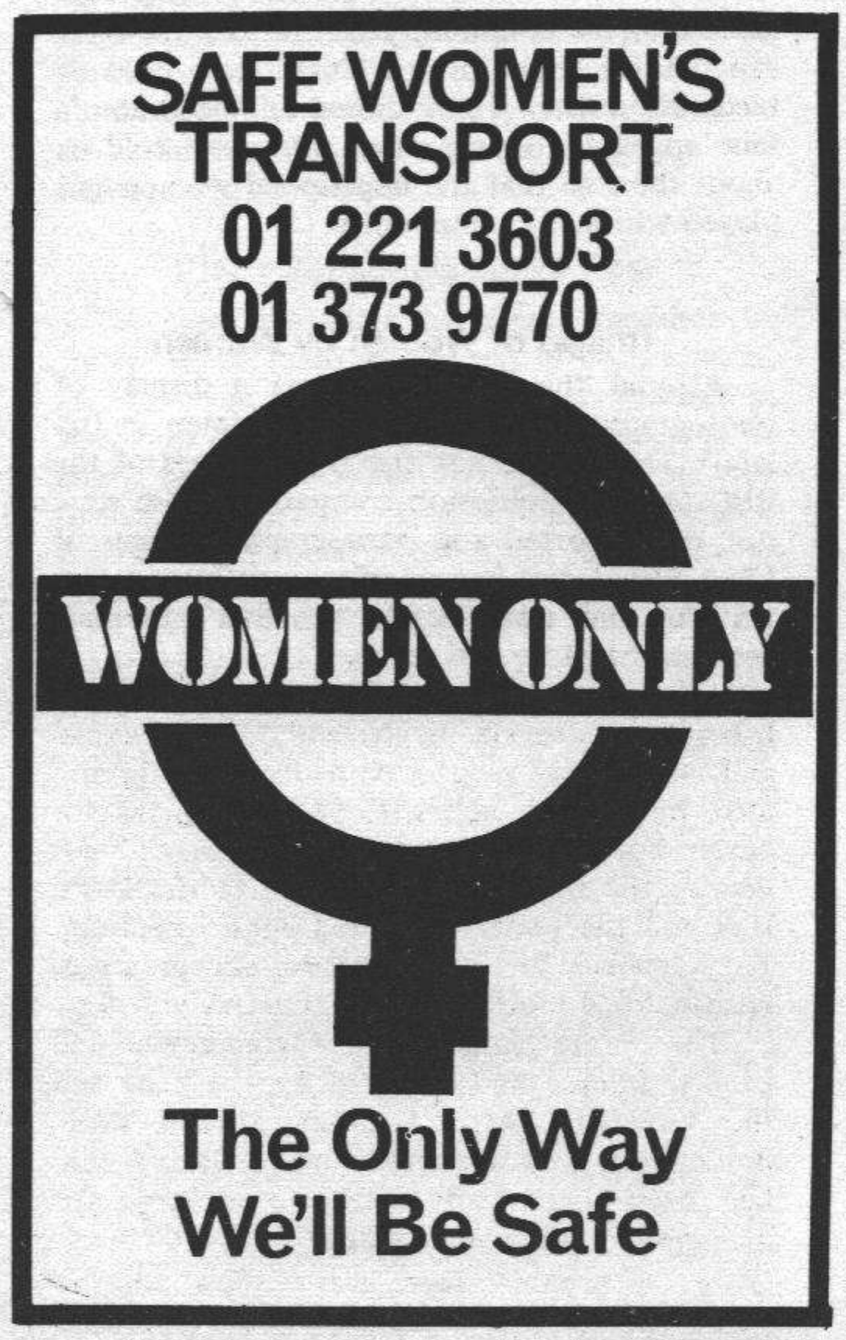
DISPENSABLE

One woman, Sally Shepherd took a risk two and half years ago when she went to visit friends and caught the late night bus home to Peckham. As she walked from the bus stop to her home she was raped and murdered. (The man or men responsible are still at large.) I knew Sally Shepherd vaguely because she worked in the wine bar where I often have lunch. A group of my friends and I were shocked by her murder. All of us knew what dangers women face but the fact that we knew her personally and she had DIED brought it all to the fore and our anger was further compounded when the wine bar opened after just one day and there was no notice or mention of her death, everyone returned to their delicious food and drink. It was as though she had left or gone on holiday, not that she had been murdered. Her life, a woman's life, was that unimportant. She was that dispensable.

WE WERE ANGRY

As we were discussing it we realised that 5 out of the 6 of us had had some bad experience ourselves – from the 'trivial' "hello darling, want a good time" to the more serious indecent assault and attacks. The sixth woman, though she had not experienced anything personally, said she never went out alone at night. We started to talk about our experiences and then started looking for solutions. Harsher punishments, separatism, vigilante groups were all considered (and rejected) – we were that angry.

Then the idea of a door to door, women's only bus service came up and we all thought it was fantastic and we laughed and then dismissed the idea – "We'll never get that" – until 18 months later when I saw an advert from the GLC inviting Community Groups to put in applications for grants.



Knowing nothing about transport, with no figures to back us up, we decided to call ourselves SAFE WOMEN'S TRANSPORT, said women were living under curfew, afraid to go out because of fear of violence from men, and asked for £350,000 to provide a mini bus in each of the ILEA boroughs and one to cover all points inside the Circle Line including County Hall and Waterloo. We were keener to sell the GLC the political idea than to actually run the scheme ourselves.

We knew we had to get some status if we were to be considered at all and after just one phone call to Thames TV the media have not stopped being interested. We have given interviews as far afield as Australia, Middle East, America and Canada as well as to all the national newspapers here, many local papers, radio and TV. SWT obviously caught folks imagination.

PILOT SCHEME

After informal discussions with the GLC Grants Panel Chair who suggested a pilot scheme (". . . but this *is* the pilot scheme", we said), we settled on Lewisham. Lewisham has no tube, has a high number of women attacked in the streets and we found excellent accommodation at The Albany, Deptford.

We decided we needed a Management Committee and invited people to join us. We tried to get the figures of women attacked. This took three months. (The police do not compile these – the sex of a victim is harder to establish than the colour of an attacker, it seems!) We found that Adult Education Institutes rolls were suffering. That traditionally women's classes were shutting, moving venue or changing to daytime due to women not attending, many said, because of fear. We found that as many women are attacked between 6pm and midnight as the other 18 hours of the day and that as with Sally Shepherd who got off a bus to walk home, women were at their most vulnerable then – getting from the bus stop, tube or railway station home.

We interviewed 250 women in Lewisham and found that 85% never go out alone at night. We reduced our application to £67,000 which will cover the cost of 4 full time workers (in fact there'll be 6 pro rata). £67,000 is a lot of money for just one mini-bus, but providing a mini bus is only part of the scheme. We shall be encouraging and co-ordinating women sharing their vehicles and travelling together – even walking is safer (and nicer) in twos.

We shall be doing research – because, as it became clear in the Fares Fair Campaign, the travelling habits, patterns and needs of women don't seem to be known even though 2 out of 3 public transport users are women.

OVERWHELMING SUPPORT

It seems a long time since our original application but it is a new idea and we have had over-whelming support; women have gathered petitions, written in to the GLC in support and many are now acting as stringers, sending us cuttings from newspapers etc. to help build our case. To my knowledge there have only been 2 doubts expressed (both by the same person) and both of which SWT take seriously: (i) that the streets belong to women and SWT should not take women off the streets. We agree the streets belong to women but disagree that SWT will be taking them off the streets because SWT is aimed specifically to help women who are not going on the streets at all. We are therefore not taking women off the streets – but the exact opposite. And, exactly as Third World countries must not be dependent on hand outs from the west, in the meantime the Oxfam

Safe Women's Transport

food parcels can, and do, save peoples' lives. (ii) that by providing women's only transport we are inviting the charge that "she asked for it" every time a woman not using the bus is attacked and then the bus becomes a form of purdah. Our answer to this is that there will always be some people trying to blame women for men's crimes and we must therefore from the very beginning make it clear to everyone that this is a service that is *available* for women, *not compulsory*.

LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP

We held a joint public meeting with the GLC in Lewisham which was well attended and it was lovely to see women from 76 to 16 coming together with a common aim. From that meeting we got unanimous support for SWT and formed the basis of a local support group. Our next step is to go through the application together with the GLC and it is expected to be presented to Labour Group in July, then the Council and then the money passed on to us and the bus on the road by September – a full year later.

Obviously one mini-bus will not be enough for one borough – but this is a pilot scheme and the object is to prove its usefulness and the demand for it so that we can ask for more. There are distinct disadvantages of a mini-bus; it is not as flexible as a mini-cab, but then it is cheaper and better ecologically and will not be isolating women. Also, we think that a 15 seater bus is exactly the right size – more flexible than a London bus, less flexible but cheaper than a cab.

POLITICAL ISSUE

Given the amount of interest and support that SWT has generated we are confident that we can raise funds from trusts and industry. But we think that it is essential to have public money and be publicly and politically accountable. Violence against women is a political issue. We therefore think that SWT must be linked into the political machine. We do not want a few hundred pounds to go and buy a second hand bus and run the scheme on a voluntary basis. That, to us, seems about the same as Local Authorities giving mother and toddler groups five hundred quid to run their scheme – and then using that as an excuse not to fund nurseries. SWT is going to work efficiently and professionally so that it can be used as a blue print for other areas. We want similar schemes to be run (and funded by) every Local Authority. Already women in Southwark are interested in starting something and are talking to us, and in Islington and Liverpool, and we shall offer any help and support we can to any groups thinking about starting up.

As soon as the bus is on the road and things are running smoothly we shall be looking for funds to finance a Central Office in which all research, statistics etc can be based. We think SWT should be run on the lines of the National Women's Aid Federation where local schemes are run and operate autonomously but are affiliated to the Federation.

FLEXIBILITY

Naturally, being an entirely new idea there will need to be flexibility about how SWT will work and we intend to use the first 3 months as a trial and error period until we get exactly what suits Lewisham women. Different areas will have different needs and each scheme will have to be worked out locally. But, having said that, to start with we intend running the bus something like this: The bus will operate between 6.30pm and 12.30am 7 nights a week. The service will be door to door and it will be advance booking. Each night will be set aside for a special thing, e.g. Monday – Bingo, Tuesday – Night School, Wednesday – Swimming, Thursday – Dancing, Friday – Clubs, Saturday – Disco, Sunday – Church. (These are all flexible). Say Tuesday, Night School: we collect women from their homes and take them to the AEI (this may be booked by the AEI) this will take between 6.30and 7.15. Whilst those women are at night school we have 2¼ hours to carry individual women to the pub, visit friends, a meeting etc before returning at 9.30 to collect the women from night school. From 9.30 to 10.15 we deliver those women home and then from 10.15 until 12.30 when we close we shall be free for individual use, perhaps meeting women from late buses and trains (women siaid they would go further afield if they could rely on being met at the other end). If we have spaces as we go along bus routes we shall offer women waiting at bus stops a lift. We estimate carrying 100 women a night and will charge 50p a journey – we do not want to undercut London Transport. This service is to complement, not compete with LT. All money will be ploughed back into SWT. SWT is for women only and all the staff will be women too. It will be run as a non-hierarchical collective which will report to the Support Group/Management Committee.

WOMEN'S ONLY CARRIAGES

The Management Committee expect to hand over the entire Lewisham scheme to the local support group within six months of operating, and then to concentrate on the job of establishing the national office and advising other groups getting off the ground and to get on with the second part of our campaign – women's only carriages, first on the tubes and then later on trains.

We want the last carriage on the tube to be for women only after 7pm. The last carriage is the one with the guard inside and when there is no guard in the carriage s/he can see from her/his compartment at the back of the train. SWT think this will be easy to enforce. Most people are law-abiding and if men do mistakenly get in our carriage they will soon realise their error Enforcing women's only lavatories is not a problem and women have our own waiting rooms at main line stations without any problem. We think the only real problem is if a group of rowdy men insist on getting in, but then the problem is easily solved: the guard doesn't start the train and if necessary the police are called. But as I said, we do not anticipate great problems – men out to frighten women look for easy prey, not a carriage load of women. Women's only carriages will give us the freedom to relax and travel in comfort without the predatory eyes of men seemingly forever on us, and could be introduced immediately – it will cost nothing. I wonder what excuses are in store for us as I bet we don't get them without a fight!

We know that SWT is not going to solve the problem of male violence against women. It is ONLY a contribution. But this contribution will mean freedom to some women imprisoned at the moment and for that reason ALONE it's got to happen. Roll on September!

Mary Evans **Kensington CLP**

Male Violence ♀

Women as Victims of Violence

On 18 May a crowd of anxious and angry women and five men filled the local Labour Party rooms at Pimlico to hear an extremely lively debate on violence against women. The meeting had been organised by the Women's Section of the City of London and Westminster South Labour Party in response to the result of a survey among a random sample of local women in which they had been asked to fill in a questionnaire indicating which of six issues was the most important to them. The issues were more facilities for children, coping with officialdom, more help for the elderly, women as victims of violence, problems with the health service and more help in securing jobs and training. Overwhelmingly the subject of most concern was violence against women. This meeting was the result.

The speakers were Madge Cavalla of Women's Aid, recently elected to Westminster City Council, Inspector Chamberlain, deputy community liaison officer for Westminster and WPC Crooke from Westminster.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

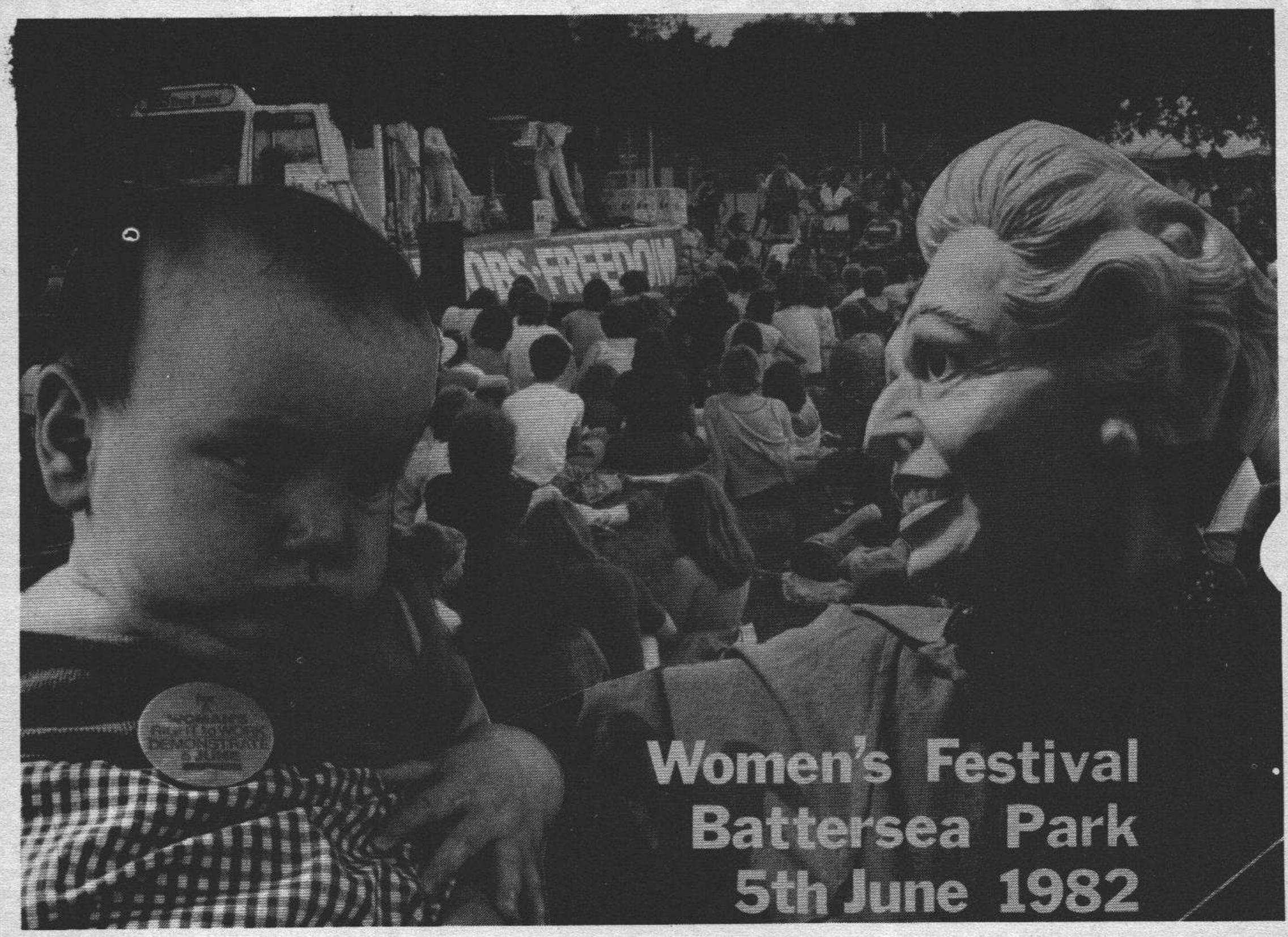
The first part of the debate was devoted to domestic violence, both inside and outside the home. Here the most lively exchanges concerned allegations of police reluctance to intervene in such cases or to use their powers of arrest. Some of the women present spoke bitterly of the unsympathetic attitude of police officers towards the plight of battered wives unless they could exhibit serious injuries such as smashed limbs and broken ribs and the inability or unwillingness of the police to divulge details about the local Women's Aid refuges for battered wives. This last point was stressed by Madge Cavalla, who said that in all her years experience with Women's Aid no battered woman had ever been referred to them by the police. Inspector Chamberlain's assertion that police powers were frequently inadequate to deal with such cases produced a storm of protest from the floor, as speaker after speaker protested that it was police indifference, not their lack of powers, which was the cause of the trouble. A claim to some extent verified, when Inspector Chamberlain admitted that a call for burglary would probably receive priority over a call concerning domestic violence.

On a more positive note there was general agreement on the need for better information among police about the Women's Aid refuges for battered wives. Many policemen are apparently ignorant of the existence and whereabouts of these refuges. Instead of referring battered wives to Women's Aid, they recommend the victims of assault to seek an injunction from a magistrate's court or to get advice from a solicitor. Obviously, without further help, many of these women, ignorant that they are entitled to legal aid, and frightened of courts and solicitors, simply return home to a further battering.

MATRIMONIAL OFFENCES ACT

Inspector Chamberlain received a much more sympathetic hearing when he suggested that the Matrimonial Offences Act, which covers such cases, should be brought into line with the Offences against the Person Act, so that in future any attack on a woman could be treated as assault without taking into account the extent of her injuries. At present the police can only take action against a male aggressor if a woman has suffered severe injuries.

Continued next page



PHOTOGRAPHS BY CATH TATE

Male violence (Continued from previous page)

The discussion then moved on to consider the rising level of street crime to which women are particularly vulnerable. Inspector Chamberlain suggested that the only effective way of successfully combating crime in the streets and on public transport was to increase the police establishment so that many more men and women were available to patrol the streets and to police the underground and the buses. Otherwise the only advice he and WPC Crooke could give to women was to learn self-defence, to keep, where possible, to well lighted streets and to be continuously vigilent.

CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

On the underlying causes of the growth in violence against women Inspector Chamberlain blamed the lenience of the courts, the lack of discipline in the school and the home and the lenient and permissive attitudes in society generally. Many on the floor considered a more important cause was the deep seated male attitude to women as victims, servants, sex-objects, holy virgins or prostitutes rather than as sentient beings in their own right and that this attitude was itself the product of the exploitive ethic of a capitalist society, based on greed, aggression and competitiveness.

On the question of pornography and the treatment of violence in films, plays, books and TV, Inspector Chamberlain argued that the police could not act as censors and were not responsible for policy. This last point was challenged from the floor, when it was pointed out that at higher levels the police have a process of continuous consultation with the Home Office and the recent delay in removing the Sus laws, for instance, had been largely due to opposition from the police.

A USEFUL EXERCISE

Despite considerable differences of opinion on many matters most of those concerned considered the meeting had been a useful exercise which should be repeated and extended. More contact between the local community and the police is clearly desirable and there have already been some useful developments in that Inspector Chamberlain invited Madge Cavalla to speak to the police probationers on Women's Aid, an invitation immediately accepted, and WPC Crooke agreed to meet the children in the local refuge, many of whom are frightened of the police.

In future when any such meeting is being organised women's groups should press the police to send along at least one high ranking officer, as well as representatives of the local force. Inspector Chamberlain and WPC Crooke are clearly the acceptable face of the police – reasonable and caring officers trying to carry out their job to the best of their ability, but they are not at the level at which policy is made. It would be helpful, both to the public and the police, if in future at least one speaker came from the higher echelons where policy is decided.

Ultimately all sections of the women's movement must recognise that the problems of violence against women can only be solved by society as a whole. Violence and crime are but reflections of the capitalist ethic of greed, fear and opportunism. Only when this has been replaced by a socialist society based on co-operation and caring will women cease to be the terrified victims of male violence.

P. Watson,
City of London and
Westminster South CLP.

Against Sexism, Against Patriarchy (ASAP)

ASAP is a newsletter which has recently developed out of the Creches Against Sexism (London) bulletin. Its contributors and subscribers are predominantly men, and it hopes to act as a means of exchanging information and ideas between people in London struggling against sexism and patriarchy. Whilst its ideas and perspective are still developing, it hopes to be able to concentrate on the positive ways in which men can respond to feminists' challenges to male power.

The format and content of the newsletter is discussed at monthly public meetings organised under the aegis of Creches Against Sexism (London). Details of the next meeting, together with information about ASAP and details of subscriptions can be obtained from: **ASAP Collective (David Michael and Graham Hale), Unit 265, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AT. Telephone 673-6569 or 272 9916.**

Below are details of two forthcoming meetings for which volunteers are required to help with creches:–

Fri. July 2nd. Women's Festival and Conference. Clissold Park School. Contact Mike Mulvaney 254 4158.

Sat. July 10th. Haringey Women's Employment Conference. 10am-4pm. T.U. Centre, Brabont Rd, Wood Green. Contact Joan Neary 889 6599 (W), 808 0900 (H).

A male critique of 'The Personal is Political'

OUR SEX LIVES – OUR STRENGTH
Ann Bliss: Women & Labour Collective; A Socialist Critique by Tony Greenstein, Queens Park Ward, Brighton Kemp Town.

INTRODUCTION

This review, originally written for Brighton Labour Briefing, has been substantially re-written. I am conscious that the criticism outweighs the praise – this is not intentional. It takes a lot of courage to write publicly about one's personal life in the way Ann has. Why should a man write about a feminist pamphlet? Should white people write about racism? As long as men have an interest in the domination of women, so long will they support a society that also oppresses them. Unconditional support by socialist men both in theory and in practise, for an autonomous women's movement and the campaigns centred around it does not mean uncritical support. It is far better to be honest about one's disagreements than to suppress discussion.

Ann's pamphlet is 1 of 2 by members of London Labour Briefing describing their personal/sexual relationships. Its excellent (at times) insights into how women come to be oppressed suffers, however, from a tendency to generalise from the particulars of a specific relationship into an attempt to reconcile Radical and Socialist Feminism.

Despite the divisions within each tendency between revolutionaries and reformists (ignoring the 'Revolutionary' Feminists) and the common ground between the reformist wings, there are fundamental differences politically between each. Socialist Feminism sees women's oppression rooted in the class nature of society whereas Radical Feminism sees it rooted in men per se with Patriarchy not Capitalism being primary. In holding a view which in essence is biologically determinist, radical feminists reflect the very ideology which justifies the family/reproductive role of women as natural. They invert Eysenck.

Ann is reconciling the irreconcileable:

'radical feminists..have stressed that the root of the oppression which women experience is SEXUAL oppression – an oppression felt in the very act of fucking itself.'

But is this true? Are not some relationships sexually satisfying for both? What is the relationship between economic & sexual oppression? None? Does this therefore mean that some women can therefore escape their sisters' other burdens? Sex can also be one of the most meaningful ways of expressing one's feelings for someone as well as being both enjoyable and exhausting. The warmth of intimate sexual, personal relationships contrasts with the harsh and cold world outside. But whether sex is a burden or a joy it is certainly not the cause of a society which in a hundred different ways pushes people into monogamous nuclear family units, which in crisis are used as shock absorbers for the cuts and as mental coshes, and even at the best of times atomise women from each other and reinforce their servicing roles. And as Ann said:

'It's quite amazing how a person's psychology becomes stereotyped the moment he or she becomes relatively dependent or powerless in the home'

referring to when she worked and Chris stayed at home looking after the kids. That is, it's our socio-economic roles not our physical make up which determines whether we are passive/dominant:

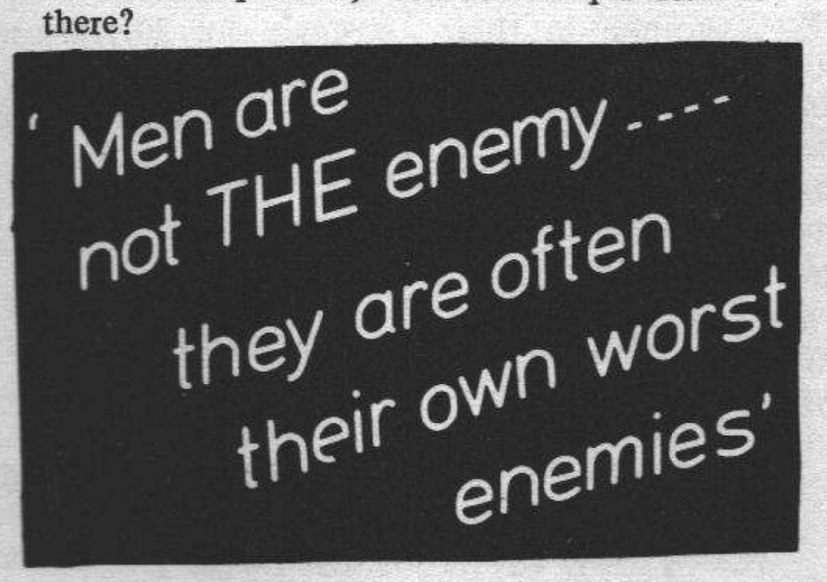
'Masculine and feminine stereotypes have nothing to do with biology. Having no power makes you feel the way women feel psychologically.'

SEX AND CLASS

And yet Ann can say:

'I think the similarities between sexual roles and class roles are very close.'

Do men behave as a class? Men certainly benefit psychologically and even to some extent materially from their position of dominance, but do they have so much to lose – like the ruling class – that a violent revolution is necessary? A ruling class comprising 50% (to say nothing if the 'revolutionary' feminists are correct of women 'collaborators') is insuperable. I agree with Sheila Rowbotham when she says that one can change one's class but not one's sex and that whilst socialists wish to abolish the capitalist class most feminists do not seek to abolish men as a category, just their roles and habits. But to pose sex and class as being equal can in the end only lead to confusion. Maybe sex is even more important than class. If so why don't the Thatchers/Gill Knights of this world ever show some loyalty to their sex? Indeed why do black women identify with black men before white women? Why do Israeli women identify with Israeli men (& this includes feminists) before Palestinian women, and the same goes for Loyalist women? How many ruling class women have ever broken ranks to join their working class sisters as opposed to using them? If class and race is unimportant, what other explanation is there?



'I agree (up to a point) with the radical feminists who say that all of us women have the same interests, regardless of economic class. I think the radical feminists are right – we do have the same sexual interests.'

Presumably if all women regardless of class share the same sexual interests, they also share the same primary oppression. Such a formulation can only lead to white feminists justifying turning their backs on the class/racial oppression of working class/black women, which is what has happened. Problems in sexual relationships are seen as the cause and not a SYMPTOM of oppression.

'We are still a class in a sort of economic sense..our different economic interests tend to divide us from other women..or we refuse to let this happen and cut ourselves off from the middle class..our class solidarity and our sexual solidarity conflict and we must choose which is the most important to us. I think we should all put sex first.'

Which is precisely what radical feminists do, with the resulting divorce of the women's movement from black & working class women. And this is the history of feminism as the suffragettes demonstrated. Ann is arguing for the Women's Movement to retread the same path, to make the same mistakes and for working class women to divorce themselves from their social and economic roots. In practise it means failing to attack the causes of working class/black women's oppression for fear of alienating ruling class women – just as radical/liberal feminists won't support the Women in Armagh for fear of alienating Loyalist women. And yet the fear of feminism by the moral right shows that it COULD provide a powerful challenge to all that the Thatchers of this world hold so dear. The defeat of the women's movement in the USA, dominated by the radical feminists, should hold some lessons for us here. As Bernadette MacAliskey (*Spare Rib* 111) put it:

'The people who are more conscious of their oppression as women are the people who are less oppressed for other reasons...that's not a problem if in struggling for your own corner you become aware of the contradictions and your own contradictions. The women in the feminist movement who can take that on board and cope with it will grow and those who can't cope with it end up taking reactionary positions.'

The oppression of black and working class women AS WOMEN is also greater than that which ruling class women experience. If the attitude of the police to white rape victims is hostile it takes little imagination to realise their attitude to black rape victims.

'Women's isolation...is a direct result of men's sexual rivalries and jealousies...it is at the point of sexuality that our isolation has its roots.'

So the nuclear family, family wage, biological parenthood, sexual division of labour are all products of men's rivalries. Cause and effect are buried in a sea of symptoms. Why are men jealous, why is this true of even the most liberated? Is a fear of loneliness that society rewards the old and sick with, a cause? To say nothing of a society based on the individual ownership of property.

ARE MEN THE ENEMY?

'its not the state as such, or the police, or the law..which "police" us and isolate us..it's individual men, they are the "enemy".

Yes, men can be violent, nasty, cruel possessive, (though women in positions of power are not all that different) and violent men should be confronted where necessary, and yes men are the immediate agents of a sexist society. And NO man is free from sexist attitudes. But like the troops in Ireland we have to ask who put them there.

'In the Women's Movement we've accepted for too long the split between sexual politics and the class struggle, between radical feminists and socialist feminists.'

But how do you reconcile them? By accepting the analysis of radical feminism which REJECTS class analysis or by seeing ruling class (and in S Africa, Israel, white & zionist) women as also the enemy? Of course we should reject those like Militant who attack Thatcher as a woman with semi-pornographic posters. One has to have a class analysis that recognises the need for and supports women's autonomy – which rejects notions of a Men's Movement (Men Against Sexism) but which can involve men both personally and politically in the fight against sexism and male oppression. If only as Marx put it because a nation that oppresses another nation cannot itself be free. And that is what has to be emphasised – that men are not THE enemy, but that men are often their very own worst enemies. But for all that, Ann's pamphlet is thought provoking and refreshing.

Tony Greenstein

SEXISM IN BRIEFING

I have always considered myself to be on the socialist feminist side of the split in the women's movement over the role men can play in helping us to liberate ourselves.

I have rejected the separatist views of radical feminists, because I believe that only by challenging men can we really change society. By ignoring that men exist, we may build for ourselves a more comfortable existence, but we will remain powerless. I had also thought that those men who have recognised their sexism and the need to overthrow patriarchy as well as capitalism, could join together with women and play an active role in the struggle for women's liberation.

PERSONAL POLITICS AND BRIEFING

However, following a recent incident within Briefing I have had cause to question some of my views. Those of you who have read previous issues of Briefing will know that in the March issue a decision was made to begin to include articles on family and personal relationships in Briefing. This decision was made by a Briefing Editorial Board meeting at the request of a small number of comrades (mainly, but not all women). The main aim was to attempt to bring feminism and personal politics onto the Labour movement agenda, and to change the assumption, reproduced in its entirety up until then in the pages of Briefing, that 'real politics' means class politics and the struggle against capitalism. At this Editorial Board meeting, the male majority recognised that it would not be legitimate for them to assume editorial control and that there would need to be a woman editor (the Left has at least learnt that much!). And so I became editor of the Briefing 'Street Life Supplement'!

OVERWHELMED

I have quickly learnt, however, that names and titles do not equal power and responsibility. The 'Street Life Supplement' has until now been produced within the existing male-dominated structures of Briefing. In all the stages – writing, editing, laying out and pasting up, women are a minority. A vicious circle has operated in which women, being generally inexperienced in these areas, have been made to feel that they have had little to offer and have therefore never gained the experience. So it was that at the production sessions for the last issue of Briefing, apart from support from one or two sisters, I found myself in male company. It has been traditional in Briefing that at the production sessions, final decisions as to content and layout are made. Before I knew what was happening, decisions on the content and layout of the Street Life Supplement had all been made – but not by me. I felt completely overwhelmed by men's 'expertise and experience, and could not summon the strength to assert any authority. I was a token woman.

Of course the decisions were not made by those male comrades who are easily identifiable as sexist – they don't consider it worth their effort to get involved with the Supplement. It was the comrades who *have* recognised the importance of feminism and personal politics, and who might be termed 'non-sexist', who made me feel so powerless.

POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES

It was a painful experience, but the consequences have been very positive. We cannot accept that correct lines and good intentions make non-sexist men. Many men have realised that they have a lot to gain from feminism. They can take shelter from the competitive, aggressive world of men and gain love and emotional support from women. But if we allow it, all we are doing in nurturing these men is making them stronger and more able to compete in the male world i.e. we are giving them the best of both worlds. I now think that men can only *support* women in their struggle for liberation because they are incapable of *relinquishing* power. As it says on the bottom of this page, women have to *take* power.

OUR POWER

All of this seems to support those feminists who say that trying to work within the existing Labour movement is a waste of effort. I still believe, however, that if we are serious about changing society, we have to challenge men where they are powerful, and confront them with our power. As a result of all this, myself and some other sisters have got together and are discussing alternative ways of producing the Street Life Supplement, whilst remaining within Briefing. We have decided to hold separate editorial meetings, but there are still many questions to be answered. Should we allow men to participate in the editorial meetings? Should we do the laying out and pasting up of the Supplement separately from the rest of Briefing? In taking control, how can we ensure that men do not feel let off the hook, and that they can leave it all to women and again concentrate their energies on 'real politics'?

We have a lot to learn and may well make mistakes to begin with. But we can't afford to fail. If we do, we not only fail as individuals, but in men's eyes we fail as women!

Jane Stockton
St. Pancras Nth CLP

Letter

Dear Comrades,
Like the other women I have spoken to who read it, I was both saddened and angered that you chose to publish the dreadful article 'Socialism begins at home', in the June *Briefing*.

I think I understand what *Briefing* and the writer were trying to do. However it won't help the struggle to bring personal life into the political arena if people associate that struggle with the idea of humiliating yourself and embarrassing others by exposing intimate details of you and your loved ones' lives before the entire, hyper-critical readership of *Briefing*. The article read like the most savage parody. Like parody it holds up the ideas it promotes to contempt and ridicule. It will put people right off.

The writer can be praised for her courage. Those who chose to publish it, however, have demonstrated once again that despite all that has happened to us, collectively and individually, over the years, the Left still has about as much idea of sensitivity and other ordinary human qualities in personal relationships as Piet Botha has of anti-racism. If we could allow ourselves to despair, I would despair.

In sisterhood,
Alison Macnair

Editorial reply:
We are sorry you feel so strongly that we should not have published the article 'Socialism begins at home'. We disagree, however, with your view that we should not expose the 'hyper-critical' readership of Briefing to details of our personal lives. It is the privatisation of our personal lives and our isolation in relationships with individual men that allows men to continue oppressing us. This is especially true of men on the Left who mouth anti-sexist statements at political meetings and then go home and oppress the women they live with. It is only through sharing our experiences that we can confront and challenge men. Far from feeling humiliated, the writer feels relieved and strengthened by the publication of her article. Men will surely have to give more consideration to their personal lives if their behaviour can be revealed to Briefing readers.

As for showing sensitivity in personal relationships, one of the writer's main points is that women's role has always been to show men sensitivity and give them emotional support. But men have not shown sensivity to us. Perhaps they will only turn their attention to their personal lives and learn to show these 'human qualities' when they can no longer rely on unconditional support from women.

Two feminist kittens require good home urgently. Phone Ann at 961 3803.

The feature on disablement will now appear in the next issue of 'Street Life Supplement'. All articles plus letters and comments on the Supplement should be sent to:

Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1.

WOMEN—TAKE THE POWER!

MOBILISING AGAINST TEBBIT'S BILL

The Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights (MCDTUR) is a joint London Labour Briefing/Socialist Organiser initiative to campaign for action against Tebbit's Employment Bill. Here Mick O'Sullivan of Tottenham Labour Party, who is secretary of the London Mobilising Committee, explains what the campaign is doing and how you can join it.

Most Briefing readers will be aware of the many-pronged attack on trade union rights posed by Tebbit's new law (see April Briefing for details).

But the rhetoric and verbal vituperation of the trade union leadership is matched in its intensity only by its unwillingness to call any industrial action or even a token protest demonstration against the Bill. Hiding behind the relatively poor response to their May 1980 Day of Action against Prior's Employment Act, the TUC is shamefully so far limiting its protest to a day of leafletting on 10 June.

Angered by the failure of the TUC and LCDTU to display any inclination to lead rank-and-file action against the Bill, the London Labour Briefing/Socialist Organiser conference held in April in Birmingham established the Mobilising Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights.

The Mobilising Committee has set itself several immediate tasks:

*to alert rank-and-file trade union and Labour Party members to the implications of Tebbit's attack;

*to campaign for strike action, focussing initially on 10 June – 'Union Day' – and afterwards at every opportunity, building for all-out action when the Bill becomes law;

*to call on the TUC and the unions to break off all contact, talks and joint work with government agencies such as the NEDC.

The Mobilising Committee has already attracted a great deal of support up and down the country. Its initial sponsors include prominent Labour Party activists such as Reg Race, Peter Tatchell and Jeremy Corbyn, as well as trade unionists such as Ray Davies (ISTC) and Alan Thornett (TGWU BL Cowley).

Propaganda work so far has involved:

– production of a Fact Sheet, 50,000 copies of which have been distributed, including 10,000 to Hull Trades Council for their recent day of action against Tebbit. London union branches such as Camden NUPE and Lambeth NUT have each distributed 500 copies;

– meetings to publicise the campaign. Two public meetings, in Camden and Southwark, have so far been held in London, and many London Labour Party and union branches have asked for speakers;

– lobbying and leafletting the special Wembly TUC conference of executives in April.

Bearing in mind that Labour councils will be faced **as employers** with the clauses outlawing union-only labour in sub-contracts, the Mobilising Committee has drawn up a councillors' statement, committing them to refuse to implement the new law and to organise together with their employees to fight it (see box). This statement is currently being circulated to left Labour councillors. Copies are available from the address below.

The list of sponsoring/supporting organisations so far is:

London: Cryoplants JSSC, Edmonton; Chaucer Ward, Southwark-Bermondsey CLP; Barnet NALGO, Camden NUPE; CPSA British Library; ASLEF King's Cross; ILEA NUPE.

Elsewhere: Oxford Trades Council, Hull Trades Council; Hull Teachers' Association; Myton Ward (Central Hull CLP), Marfleet Ward (East Hull CLP); AUEW 13, Hull; TGWU/ACTSS 5/833 Branch; POEU External Branch, Edinburgh, UCW Basingstoke; Plasnewydd Labour Party, Cardiff.

Personal sponsors include: Jeremy Corbyn, Reg Race MP, Peter Tatchell, Alan Thornett (BL Cowley TGWU), Ray Davies (ISTC), Bernard Connolly (craft convenor, BSC Rotherham), Geoff Williams (NUPE University Hospital, Cardiff), Jonathan Hammond (President, NUJ), Rachel Lever (Secretary, Women's Fightback), Steve Longshawe (Laurence Scotts), (all in a personal capacity).

More affiliations and donations are urgently needed to co-ordinate the widest possible campaign. **No-one else is acting** – it is up to us to take the initiative. The Falklands war may be overshadowing events – but this will only make it easier for the Tories to try to slip the Bill quietly onto the statute book in the next few weeks.

Get a speaker along to your meetings and get your branch to affiliate! It costs only £5 – less if you're really broke.

Leaflets, factsheets and full details are available from: MCDTUR, c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Mick O'Sullivan,
Tottenham Labour Party
Secretary, London Mobilizing Committee

PRESS RELEASE

Members of Balham CND Direct Action Group and other peace groups staged an unofficial reception for Margaret Thatcher and President Reagan, who paid an unexpected visit to Balham on Saturday 5th June. They were greeted by Alf Dubs, the local MP, and Valerie Wise, the local GLC councillor, whom they presented with Cruise missiles. Accompanied by security men and a band, they then went on a walkabout round the shopping centre, mixing with the crowd and handing out "nuclear" mushrooms. They were then picked up by an open Mercedes, escorted by motorcycle outriders and a jeep carrying a Cruise missile and dead bodies. The motorcade then proceeded to Clapham Junction and the Arndale Centre, Wandsworth, where the same thing took place, then continued on to the Women's Festival at Battersea Park for a final walkabout.

The aim of the demonstration was to show that all President Reagan has to offer us is death and destruction – in the form of Cruise missiles, to be stationed in this country from next year. For this we are paying millions – money which could be spent on houses, hospitals, creation of new jobs and all the other things which are so much needed.





Dear Comrades,

Your attempt to explain the wide variations in the local election results in terms of the left/right cleavage within the Labour Party is too facile. Surely you do not expect your readers to accept so simplistic an analysis.

You cite in evidence for your theory the victories of 'left' Labour candidates in various boroughs yet you ignore the fact that non 'left' candidates were equally successful in the same areas. To prove my point, ponder the following examples:

In Camden the erstwhile Labour leader Roy Shaw, a 'right-winger', topped the poll in his Grafton ward with an *increased* majority, thus obtaining as good a result as any of the 'left-wingers' mentioned in your articles. In Haringey a 'left' candidate was defeated in the South Tottenham ward – a ward hitherto so 'safe' for Labour that it was retained by Labour even in the Tory landslide year of 1968. In the Hornsey constituency results were indeed generally better than those in the rest of Haringey – nonetheless you omitted the fact that three 'Briefing' supporters, one of whom is a regular contributor to your journal, were beaten into third place by the SDP/Liberal alliance in the Muswell Hill ward of Hornsey. (Yes, I know that it is a 'safe' Tory ward but we have always held onto a reasonable second place in the past).

Three 'right-wing' candidates for the Crouch End ward (including Max Morris) achieved one of the best results for Labour in the whole of London. (The ward is adjacent to Muswell Hill ward). In Brent the Chairman of the Public Works Committee – whom I know personally to be a sincere and committed socialist but who is regarded by many on the 'left' to be a 'right-winger' – was re-elected with a hugely increased majority in Roundwood ward. Nearby in Cricklewood ward your very own Alf Filer went down on a 10% swing to the Tories, thus costing Labour outright control of the council. Need I go on?

The factors affecting any election result are almost as numerous as the number of factions within our party! Certainly in the case of the local elections the "Falkalnds factor" was predominant, but of almost equal importance were local issues, the level of party organisation, voters' perception of all three major parties and last but not least, the level of activity of the local parties and their degree of identification with the needs of the voters. On the last point I must point out that it was not only 'Briefing' supporters who worked hard during the local elections.

I was a Labour candidate in the recent local elections (for the Bayswater ward of Westminster) and one of the most common complaints made by voters was *not* that the party is too 'left-wing' or that the party's leadership is too 'right wing'. No, the most common complaint was that the Labour Party is divided and that we are so pre-occupied with our own internal battles that we have ceased to care about our traditional supporters. Many Labour voters are sick to death of the internecine strife that beleaguers our party. It is my contention that continual attacks on members of our own party are counter-productive in that they serve to strengthen our public image of being a divided party and so make it less likely that we will ever be able to implement our socialist policies. The use of the terms 'left' and 'right' as terms of abuse are in themselves divisive. We should be prepared to accept as comrades all who believe in our general principles and are prepared to work for the implementation of Labour's policies as decided by party conference.

We should not deride those whose differences with the 'left' are essentially differences in emphasis. Of course it is right to demand the expulsion of Mellish and any others who seek to damage our party by publicly attacking its members or its policies. However it is doing a great disservice to the party to question the socialist commitment or political integrity of anyone and everyone who refuses to accept every dot and comma of the gospel according to St. Tony Benn (Is it true that Holland Park is to be made a place of pilgrimage?).

Finally, may I say that I agree with most of the policies propounded by 'Briefing'. However I object to cheap abuse as a substitute for political debate and I resent the authoritarian and intolerant strain in your thinking. On this last point, perhaps you will prove me wrong by publishing this admittedly lengthy missive!

Yours for socialism,
Richard Cotton
(Member of Paddington CLP)

P.S. Can the retention of Tower Hamlets truly be described as a victory?

Dear Sir,

I read with a good deal of interest the article 'Beware of Labour's Atlanticists' in issue No. 20 and a similar article in the issue before.

I have been very suspicious of the Labour Party for a long time because of the strange links so many of its top people have and really consider it the worst in the English-speaking world outside of Jamaica and Gibraltar.

Last year I came across an article by a writer named Richard Fletcher 'How Money Took the Teeth Out of British Socialism' in a book 'Dirty Work: The CIA in Western Europe', Lyle Stuart, New York, 1978, edited by Philip Agee & Louise Wolf. I think Fletcher's article may have appeared first in Time Out.

I do not know who Richard Fletcher is, but you or your contacts may know who he is (it is possible that it is a pen name). I would suggest that he be contacted with a view to bringing the article up to date particularly because of the central role William Rodgers played in the Campaign for Democratic Socialism. It seems that this time he has had to form a separate political party, the SDP. The parallel with what happened 20 years ago with the CDS and the SDP now is quite striking and explains a lot about current British politics. I suspect that Rodgers is being funded by the same people who funded the Campaign for Democratic Socialism.

On another note I enjoyed your expanded No. 20 issue which was a darned sight more interesting than the other Labour publications.

Sincerely,
Leo Chapman

Dear Comrades,

I note with interest Helen Penn's *cri de coeur* in your June issue re: the inflated salaries for top posts like the senior equal opportunity adviser at the GLC. While I completely identify with her egalitarian outlook, I think this has to be seen in the context of local government grading structures generally, not just a few well-publicised individual cases. Sixteen grand is actually fairly modest for a GLC senior officer, their pay ranges from approximately £15,000 to £35,000 or thereabouts for our Director-General, Sir James Swaffield – some would justify this on the grounds that the annual budget of the council is larger than many independent countries, let alone big industrial firms.

Other authorities nationwide on the so-called 'Purple Book' conditions have similar pyramidical hierarchies, from a tiny apex of overpaid types at the top down to menial C.O.s on maybe one-tenth of their salaries (incidentally, the differential from top to bottom is much less than say 70 or 80 years ago!)

This is, of course, no different to most large organisations in the public and private sectors. The attitude of the unions (usually NALGO) has in the past been to *defend* the existing structures on the grounds of providing a 'career structure' (in practice for men only in most cases) and of paying 'the rate for the job' to get high-calibre personnel for posts of great responsibility. Only recently, with more lowly (and bolshie) staff getting active, has the call for flat-rate redistributive pay claims been raised.

At County Hall, I understand it was the GLCSA who insisted Herman Ouseley's job as Senior Race Relations Adviser should be upped from 16 to 22 grand to maintain comparability. What we need to be discussing is a wholesale shake-up of the grading system involving drastic compression of differentials along with the devolution of decision-making on a day-to-day basis to lower levels instead of a chosen elite giving orders to thousands of minions.

But let's not be hypocritical about this: trade unions have always been bound up with defending privileges and differentials of all kinds, often against the low paid/women/youth/unemployed. The Left cheered its collective head off when the Leyland toolmakers went on strike to restore their differentials in 1976. Most working people see nothing wrong with better skilled or educated or businesslike blokes getting a high income: 'equality' is not the flavour of the month just now. The TUC usually opposes calls for a legal minimum wage (let alone a maximum one!) on the grounds this would interfere with the glories of free collective bargaining and be a form of 'incomes policy'. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, o.k.?

Yours fraternally,
Martin Cook

Dear Comrades,

As most Briefing readers will know, I have now joined the staff of Tribune as a journalist. This will inevitably mean that I shall be unable to make the kind of contribution to Briefing which it has been my pleasure to make in the past.

However, may I take this opportunity of saying that I shall continue to support Briefing and will do what I can to assist the work it is doing?

For I believe that the left press is now in a healtheir position (politically, although certainly not financially!) than it has been for many years, with New Socialist, Tribune and Briefing leading the field. Nor do I believe we are in competition, but that we are all complementary and must encourage and support each other.

Therefore, I hope that Briefing readers will also support the newly-liberated Tribune and the efforts of the new editorial team to transform it into a vigorous, campaigning newspaper of the kind it once was in the 1950s.

Best wishes for Briefing's continued success.

Yours for socialism,
Nigel Williamson

OUT ON THE PICKET LINES!

The Health Service pay campaign has been kept off the front pages by the war fever of the media; it is now clear that it is an issue that they will not be able to ignore for much longer.

It is the most serious challenge to the Tory Pay Policy yet mounted and, unlike the other disputes since 1979 there is tremendous sympathy action and secondary picketting.

On June 8th, the third day of national action declared by the eleven Unions fighting for the 12% claim, action took place throughout the country. In Yorkshire 45,000 miners took strike action in sympathy and at rallies and demonstrations speakers from private sector unions have pledged support.

The Tories are obviously determined to push through the advantage gained through their war in the South Atlantic in order to defeat and divide the Health Unions. They are trying to push the Tebbitt anti-union legislation through at the same time. Our leaders in the Labour Party have been remarkably quiet on this issue, perhaps because of the close involvement of many of them in attacks on NUPE and other public sector unions in 1979. All Parties should now be demanding that the NEC demonstrate full support for the strikes.

The claim itself is for a 12% increase for all Health workers. The Tories have offered 6.4% for nurses and 4% for the rest in a deliberate attempt to divide the workforce. All the unions representing ancillary grades rejected the 4% offer, in the case of NUPE by 99%, and on June 4th the Royal College of Nurses rejected the 6.4% offer by a two to one manority.

The current weekly basic pay for Grade 1 ancillary workers (catering assistant, cleaner, domestic) is £59.05. A rise of 4% would give a net increase of 79p per week. Under the offer a qualified Ambulance worker on a basic of £82.54 would get £1.12 net.

Earnings of workers in the Health Service have fallen well behind since the Tories came to power. Average Industrial Earnings are £149 but health workers come nowhere near this figure. Grade 1 ancillaries get £86 and skilled technicians £72.46.

So far the dispute has been restricted to one day actions and maintaining emergency services. NUPE national Conference voted for all out action but this has not, so far, got the support of other unions. The next one day action is planned for June 23rd, when there will be a 24 hour strike of all health workers.

It is now important that all activists actually do something to support the campaign by joining the picket lines and distributing publicity in support of the claim. The support already gained from members of unions outside the Health Service shows the determination that is there. If the action is not escalated to national action and the full might of the Trade Union movement used to fight for the claim the Government will be able to get away with a tawdry offer designed to divide the unions of the Health Service.

JEREMY CORBYN

TROOPS OUT

The Troops Out Movement is organising a delegation to Northern Ireland on August 7th-9th. This is a weekend that has special meaning to the nationalist communities (whose who want to live in an Ireland free from British rule). 13 years ago in August the British Army moved in 'to keep the peace' – a sick joke now with a mounting death toll, daily acts of brutality against young and old alike and the cells of Long Kesh and Armagh Jail filled with prisoners of war. Also 11 years ago on August 9th the British Government introduced internment: in dawn raids the Army broke into homes and arrested 342 men – the Government was later found guilty of inhuman treatment by the European Commission of Human Rights for the torture methods used against some of these first internees. Hundreds more people were seized in the following years and imprisoned without trial or sentence.

These events are remembered each year in the nationalist communities. On the delegation you will see for yourself the spirit of resistance against the military occupation and witness what is being done in 'your' name by 'your' army.

In addition the TOM will be organising its own protest demonstration to the army forts. We need to show British soldiers that they do *not* have the support of everyone in Britain for their role in Ireland. The deaths they are responsible for cannot be justified by patriotic duty and the sooner they get out, the better.

The delegation leaves on Friday evening, travels overnight and assembles in Belfast on Saturday morning when there will be a chance to talk to local people. On Saturday afternoon it will go to Crossmaglen to picket the army fort, and there will be a social event back in Belfast in the evening. On Sunday there will be discussion groups, e.g. on women, youth, trade unions. In the afternoon the delegation will take part in the internment march held in West Belfast (which will also be commemorating the death of hunger striker Thomas McElwee last year), and then travel to Derry. There, on Monday morning there will be the bonfires and bin-lid protests marking the anniversary of internment; later there will be time for more discussions before returning to Britain, arriving back early Tuesday morning.

The delegation is open to anyone interested in joining it. We welcome you as an individual or as a delegate from your trade union or organisation. If you are interested, fill in the slip below or write to us at PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

I am interested in the TOM delegation in August 1982. Please send me details (I enclose a stamped addressed envelope).

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Send to PO Box 353, London NW5 4NH.

Letters continued

Dear Comrades,

I felt it was imperative I should congratulate Oliver MacDonald regarding his article on Poland.

I congratulate him because he has done something I have always aimed at but never achieved. He has managed to line himself up with all the 'best' characters of our time . . . Mrs. Thatcher, the Pope, Reagan (President) and the whole gamut of reactionary set-up all over the world. That surely puts him in very good company indeed?

The one thing above all others I have always cherished was to be like Lech Walesa, to be kissed and mauled by the Pope. May we now look forward to the Archbishop of Canterbury bestowing his blessing upon Arthur Scargill and mass being performed at our TUC conference?

VERY WELL DONE INDEED? INDEED? INDEED.

Sincerely,
A. F. Farr

Dear *Briefing*,

Bob Mellish's departure from the Party may be utterly desirable and necessary but Comrade Nick Murrary is being either naive or plum ignorant if he thinks the expulsion is inevitable because Mellish supported candidates other than the official Labour candidates. After all we still have in the Party members who actually stood against the official Labour candidates in recent local elections at the same time that they were themselves open and unashamed members of the Party.

Yours fraternally,
H. Kelly

Dear *Labour Briefing*,

As a member of the Labour Party for 50 years, I write to protest about a contribution in your issue of June 1982 'Palestine – the Forgotten Issue' and the misleading and gruesome illustrations to it. We lived under the Palestine Mandate for 5 years and joined the Histadrut in 1933. The farrago of nonsense and sheer ignorance which you print is an insult to those of us who were engaged in the struggle to introduce 'democracy' into an area of the Middle East neglected and under-populated for many centuries. Rather than allow Arab labourers to work on the groves for the lowest possible wages, the Histadrut decreed on equal pay for all – is that considered an unworthy goal by your writer in his unwisdom?

When the PLO, dedicated to the destruction of the State of Israel, mass their troops on the Lebanese border and infiltrate terrorists to massacre children in their beds, as at Kiryat Shmona, is Israel not allowed to follow article 51 of the UN Constitution and defend itself. I thank the Almighty, as a traditional Jewess, that as a loyal activist in the South Westminster Labour Party, I am not a subscriber to *Briefing* because it would be impossible for us to remain members of our local Labour Party.

Rosella Welan

Dear *London Labour Briefing*,

Re Piers Corbyn on the "Fares Fair" issue: What a great pity he did not give the GLC the benefit of his superior strategy BEFORE the matter became a legal issue. As it is I am bound to point out that there is a glut of generals who lead from behind – with hindsight.

Yours faithfully
K. Hoyland

The Battle for the Executive



THE build-up to the 1982 Labour Party Annual Conference is under way. Already battle has been engaged over Labour's Programme '82 as members of the shadow cabinet have attempted to interfere with the democratically-decided policies of Conference.

On July 4, members of the Parliamentary Labour Partyand the National Executive are meeting again with Trade Unions for Labour Victory, in an attempt to recreate the myth of Bishop Stortford. This meeting only shows that our leaders have still not learnt the lesson that the future of Labour cannot and will not be determined by a 'summit'-type meeting that deliberately excludes the rank and file. Annual Conference, and the NEC elected by and accountable to it, must remain the sovereign decision-making bodies of the party.

And that is why, as ever, one of the most important tasks at this year's Conference, will be to elect a new National Executive. Last year a number of good comrades were lost. Norman Atkinson, Margaret Beckett, Bernard Dix and Charlie Kelly were all removed from the Executive following a 'hit-list' circulated by the extremist right-wing APEX leader, Roy Grantham. Already this year we are certain to lose a further seat in the 'socialist societies' section. Due to a decision by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society not to increase its affiliation, Les Huckfield cannot now secure re-election in this section, and victory is certain to go to Michael Foot's Parliamentary Private Secretary, John Evans.

ORGANISATION

Therefore, it is essential that discipline and organisation ensure that in the constituency and women's sections, at least, we return candidates who will fight for party policy, who will oppose witch-hunts and purges and, perhaps most important of all who will not be diverted from the path of socialist advance into supporting imperialist wars.

That is why we print here the slate of candidates for the NEC which has been agreed by a wide range of organisations on the left of the party, and will continue to print it in every issue of Briefing between now and Annual Conference.

It will be noticed that the names of Neil Kinnock and Joan Lestor are absent from the constituency list. This will come as little surprise to anyone who has followed their voting records over the past year, not just in the deputy-leadership election but on a whole range of issues. What support Joan Lestor retained on the left evaporated a few weeks ago when she was one of a group of Labour MPs who tabled a motion attacking Tony Benn over the Falklands crisis. Tory MPs flocked to add their names to the motion in one of the most infantile yet damaging of Labour's self-inflicted wounds yet. Neil Kinnock's attacks upon the left are becoming increasingly indistinguishable from those of Messrs. Hattersley and Shore.

Briefing will be campaigning to replace both of them with Norman Atkinson and Audrey Wise, two candidates not only with a consistent record of support for socialist policies, but with a realistic chance of winning. It is hoped that all other left candidates will withdraw in their favour, and Martin Flannery, Stuart Holland and Reg Race have already indicated their intention of doing so. Regrettably, the two Militant candidates, Ray Apps and Pat Wall have short-sightedly refused to make this small sacrifice in the interests of left unity.

With Norman Atkinson now standing in the constituency section, Michael Meacher becomes the left candidate for the treasurership. All Briefing supporters are urged to get their constituency parties to nominate him for this position.

WOMEN

In the women's section, voting is extremely tight, with only Judith Hart being certain of election. However, it is important to support her not only for her principled stand on the Falklands war, but to take votes away from right-wing candidates, thus maximising the chances of Margaret Beckett, Barbara Switzer and, above all, Joan Maynard.

As we have already said, Briefing will be printing this slate in every issue between now and September's Annual Conference. THE STAKES THIS YEAR ARE HIGHER THAN EVER BEFORE. WE CANNOT AFFORD ANY SLIP-UPS OR ERRORS.

Constituency Section.
FRANK ALLAUN
NORMAN ATKINSON
TONY BENN
ERIC HEFFER
JO RICHARDSON
DENNIS SKINNER
AUDREY WISE

Women's Section
MARGARET BECKETT
JUDITH HART
JOAN MAYNARD
BARBARA SWITZER
FRANCES MORRELL

Treasurer
MICHAEL MEACHER

Conference Arrangements (constituency representative)
PETER WILLSMAN

NEXT TARGET '82 MEETING
Monday July 5th 7.30pm
COUNTY HALL

Deadline for articles for next issue:
MONDAY 5th JULY.

Published by London Labour Briefing, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.

Typeset by Bread 'n Roses (TU), 30 Camden Road, NW1. and by Folrose Ltd (TU).

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd (TU), Forster Road, London N17.