LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 22 AUGUST 1982

AS RIGHT WAGE PRE-ELECTION WAR ON 'MILITANT' AND LABOUR LEFT:

GIVE PEACE A CHANCE!

With possibly only months to go before the Tories call a general election, and with the entire rank and file of the Labour Party yearning for a leadership which will transcend past divisions and unite us all in the battles ahead, Labour's right have chosen THIS MOMENT to put their factional interests above all else by demanding that we start EXPELLING ONE ANOTHER from the Party instead of fighting the all-too-real enemies we face.

NO PLEASURE

BRIEFING takes no pleasure whatsoever in having to lead on this infuriating issue on our front page — our activists and councillors throughout London have got far too many real problems to cope with without having this kind of thing thrust on us at this of all times. But there it is. With thousands of socialists up and down the country, we are resisting the temptation to despair. The Labour Party *can* be saved for sanity, and must be. We are going to fight back.

THREAT TO 'BRIEFING'

Any attempt to expel *Militant* poses a direct challenge to the very existence of BRIEFING as such. Does anyone seriously think we can run this paper without organising for it, too? No less than *Militant* we ask our readers to make out cash donations and bankers' order forms to us becuase without a regular subsidy, we couldn't survive. Our information-gathering, our layout work, our distribution system — all of this requires organisation and discipline (sometimes 'centralised'!) or the paper just wouldn't appear. That we *have* been so successful is a testimony to the tremendous popular support we have received. But in addition to backing from ordinary Party members, BRIEFING has been increasingly supported — particulary over the past year — by other tendencies in the party: supporters of *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Challenge* now help us considerably each month with articles and technical support, as well as with sales, distribution etc. etc. We are a joint enterprise dependent on numerous organisations and groups. If these groups were to be expelled (the only logical conclusion if *Militant* were to be expelled), we probably couldn't survive.

G.L.C. members oppose the witch-hunt

We the undersigned Members of the Greater London Council totally oppose the proposal that groups in the Labour Party register with the NEC. We also oppose the threatened expulsion of supporters of the newspaper "Militant".

Valerie Wise	**Lesley Hammond**
Andy Harris	**Dave Wetzel**
Alex Mackay	**Charlie Rossi**
George Nicholson	**Ed Gouge**
John McDonnell	**Steve Bundred**
Ken Livingstone	**Bryn Davies**
Deirdre Wood	**Peter Pitt**
Tony Hart	**Peter Dawe**
Paul Boateng	**Tony Banks**
Frances Morrell	**Simon Turney**
Harvey Hinds	**Neil Davies**
Illtyd Harrington	**Michael Ward**
Paul Moore	

WE WON'T REGISTER

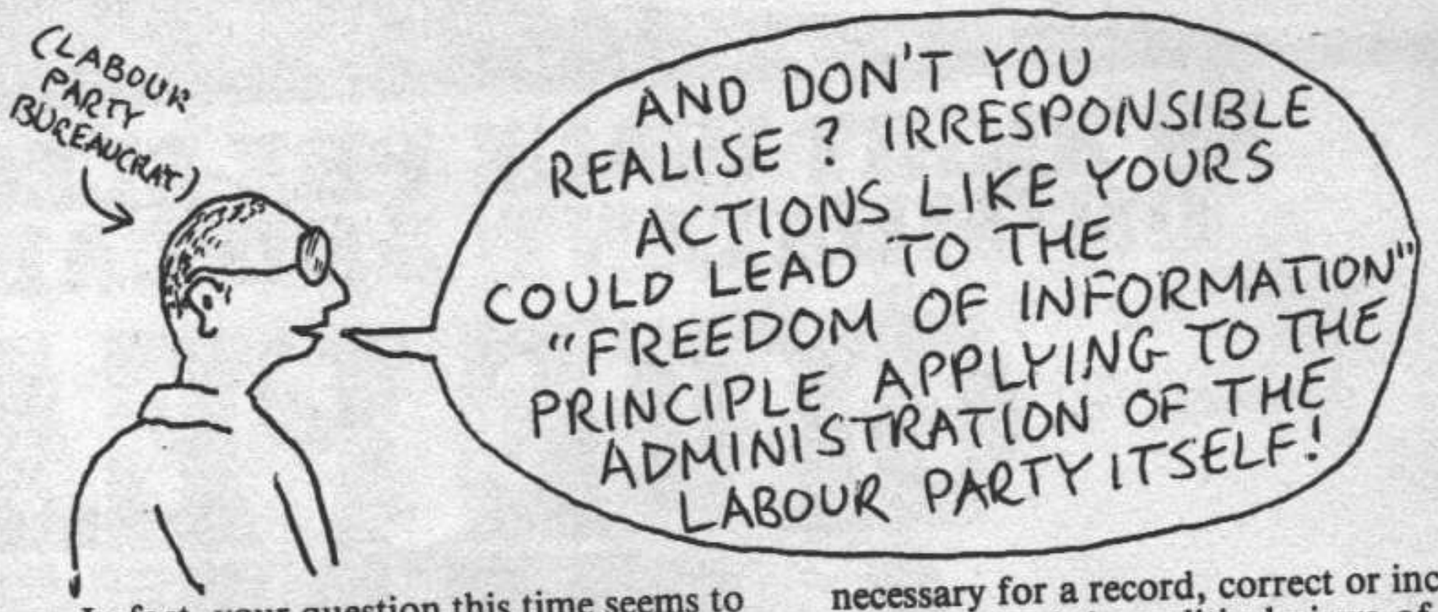
BRIEFING is not going to comply with the proposed 'register of groups' because to do so would be for us to betray other socialists in the Labour Party. The sole aim of the register is to use it to secure the expulsion, now of *Militant,* next of the rest of us on the left. We are resisting this now because we have no choice. Hopefully, if enough of us unite to call a halt to this factionally-blinded criminal wrecking activity now, our leaders can be made to see sense and draw back from the brink of a total disaster which would set back our Party for years. BRIEFING will *not* register: we can state that categorically, now. We are instead setting up an alliance of similarly threatened organisations and groups. We call on London activists and CLP's to support us in this, and to refuse either to supply information or to expel supporters of *Militant*. We urge the maximum possible left unity behind the NEC slate which we print again in this issue: all of these candidates are pledged to fight the attempted witch-hunt and expulsion campaign. Finally, we say to Michael Foot and the rest of our leaders with all the force we can command: GET ON WITH FIGHTING THE REAL ENEMY — OR MAKE WAY FOR THOSE WHO WILL!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

SECRET REPORTS:
WALWORTH ROAD CLAMPDOWN?

Following the publication in last month's BRIEFING of confidential reports by London regional organising staff on the speeches of candidates at parliamentary selections, the party head office at Walworth Road made attempts to find out who had leaked the documents.

A BRIEFING supporter who works at Walworth Road was questioned extensively, but charges that she was involved in the leaking now seem to have been dropped. Instead, the new General Secretary, Jim Mortimer, has asked her to answer in writing four general questions on the matter. As the issue has political significance, we print below the questions and her answers.



Question 1: *That you assisted in the unauthorised publication of reports which you had reason to believe had been taken or copied from the files at the Head Office of the Labour Party.*

Answer: Firstly, I note that the charge is "assisted in unauthorised publication" and not of "taken or copied". I also assume from this question that the authenticity of the reports is not being denied.

The question therefore is about assisting in the "unauthorised publication" of the reports, and I would like to point out that, to my knowledge, extracts have also been published in "Tribune" and "Militant" at the very least, following the BRIEFING publication. So a number of other people working in a paid or unpaid capacity for left publications are, presumably, "guilty" of assisting in publishing reports which they had reason to believe had been taken or copied from the files at the Head Office of the Labour Party. I would imagine that they would insist that they had a right to publish, and it seems to me that the issue raises important questions about freedom of information, party accountability and democratic procedures. There seem to be no reasons, according to my present terms of employment, to believe that in my spare time activities I am in a different category from any other ordinary party member, but I will deal with this more fully under question 4.

Secondly, my personal position on this question is that I assisted in the publication of the reports to the extent that I did the lay-out and paste-up for that page of the July BRIEFING in my spare-time weekend at the BRIEFING production session at 28 Middle Lane, N8. The material was handed to me already typeset. BRIEFING does not have a fixed "editorial board" which makes publication decisions. Decisions on what should be included in a particular issue are made by the "editorial board" of the day, that is to say, whichever individual supporters turn up to help at the production stage. As it happens, I arrived a few hours after the decision had been taken to include the reports in that issue. The page referred to was one of a number that I was asked to put together that weekend.

Question 2: *At the previous interview you described as "courageous" the act of disclosing the information in the reports which have been published. Is this still your view?*

Answer: In the previous interview I stated that I did not know who had removed the information from either the London Labour Party or head office files, but that I would imagine that he/she had done this as a matter of political principle, and that I therefore saw this as a courageous act. That is still my view. The principle relates to the party's policy on Freedom of Information, passed overwhelmingly at the 1981 Annual Conference.

In fact, your question this time seems to relate the word "courageous" to the act of "disclosing" the information. If this is meant to include publishing it, I hope that the time never comes when there are such penalties within the party for members who disclose this kind of information by publishing it that it requires an act of courage to do so.

Question 3: *Do you regret the assistance you gave in the unauthorised publication of the reports?*

Answer: This question goes to the heart of the principles involved in this issue, and I am glad that it has been asked. As I am dealing under Question 4 with my personal position as an employee of the Labour Party, I am replying to this question as an ordinary party member, and as one of the 3,000 or more BRIEFING readers who could have turned up to assist at the production of that issue.

At the 1981 Annual Party Conference, composite 6 on Freedom of Information was passed overwhelmingly. This expressed deep concern at the erosion of the right to information and freedom of speech, and the insidious curtailment of our civil liberties by successive governments and the judiciary. It seems to me most inappropriate, if not hypocritical, that as a party we should seem to propose one rule for the government and judiciary and another for our internal party affairs.

Composite 6 went on to call for a Freedom of Information Act which would give individuals the right of access to information concerning themselves, a right of appeal to the courts should access be refused, in order to ascertain the accuracy of personal information held, and the establishment of a means of monitoring such information.

The confidential parliamentary selection reports published in the last issue of BRIEFING obviously offend these principles. They contain personal and derogatory comments on a number of candidates, and also list (with who knows how many inaccuracies?) the supposed political views of a number of candidates.

As an ordinary party member I would like to know the following: (a) To echo the question of the anonymous contributor who sent the reports to BRIEFING — why is it necessary for a record, correct or incorrect, to be kept of the political views of parliamentary selection candidates? While the views of major political figures are well-documented publicly, lesser-known candidates are in a different position, and I find it disturbing that attempted political "pen-pictures" of anyone who aspires to a parliamentary candidature are stored in the party files. (b) The role of regional organising staff at selections is surely organisational and procedural? In what way is it imagined that random and subjective jottings on candidates can seriously assist any organisational or procedural problems that may arise? (c) A great deal of fuss has been made about the leaking of the reports. Has any attempt been made to deal with the much more serious issue of staff actually *producing* reports of this nature? (d) Do selection candidates have the right to see the reports and correct any inaccuracies, and if not, why not?

The writing and keeping of reports such as those published in BRIEFING offends basic principles about the storing of information. Personal information that may be inaccurate or irrelevant, or that has been collected or stored for no readily apparent or justifiable purpose, needs, in accordance with party policy, relation to the necessity for keeping it.

As an ordinary party member I hope that, following the principled exposure in the left press of these grievous practices, serious and prompt steps will be taken to bring party practice in these matters into line with party policy.

I hope also that the reaction at head office and regional office will not be a politically-blind concern with protection of information (and of the gatherers and storers of it) at all costs, a hasty tightening of security, a refusal to acknowledge the principles involved, and a clamp-down on any suggestions that the party practice has been wrong in these matters and ought to be changed.

As you will have gathered by now, my answer to question 3 is: no, I do not regret the assistance I gave at the BRIEFING production session in doing the lay-out and paste-up of these reports.



Pickets Outside St. Marys Hospital Paddington

SUPPORT THE HOSPITAL WORKERS!

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL ACTION: July 19th, 20th, 21st

19th July

- LONDON MARCH: S.E.Region TUC 1pm. Gower Place, WC1, to march to County Hall for rally with Len Murray.
- HARINGEY. Demonstration/picket at Civic Centre, N22, 7.30pm.
- HARROW Civic Centre, 12 noon to march to Northwick Park for Rally at 1pm.

20th July

- March: Assemble at ST.MARY'S HOSPITAL, HARROW ROAD, W9, 11am, to Regional Health Authority offices, Eastbourne Terrace, W2 for Rally 12-2pm.
- Leafletting: BRIXTON HIGH STREET. Assemble South Western Hospital, Landor Road, 12.15pm.
- Public Meeting: HARINGEY Trade Union Centre, Brabant Road, 7.30pm with Reg Race.

Public Meeting
DEPTFORD Labour Party
New Cross Town Hall
New Cross Road at 8.00pm
Labour Party and NUPE speakers

21st July

- March: Assemble ISLINGTON Town Hall, N1, 12 noon to march to Royal Northern Hospital for Rally at 2pm with Tony Benn in Whittington Park.
- March: Assemble LONDON FIELDS, E8, 10am. March to Hackney Hospital and Victoria Park for rally.
- Vigil of DHSS: ELEPHANT AND CASTLE, 8am to 6pm. Bring Banners.
- March: Assemble 11.30am Queens Hospital, CROYDON for march to May Day and Croydon General Hospitals and rally at Fairfield Halls.
- March: Assemble BROOK HOSPITAL to Greenwich General and Queen Mary's Hospital to Sutcliffe Park, Kidbrooke, for rally at 2.00pm.

Bring your banners, join the march, show your solidarity with the fight of the health workers to break the pay policy.

Question 4: *Would you act the same way again in similar circumstances?*

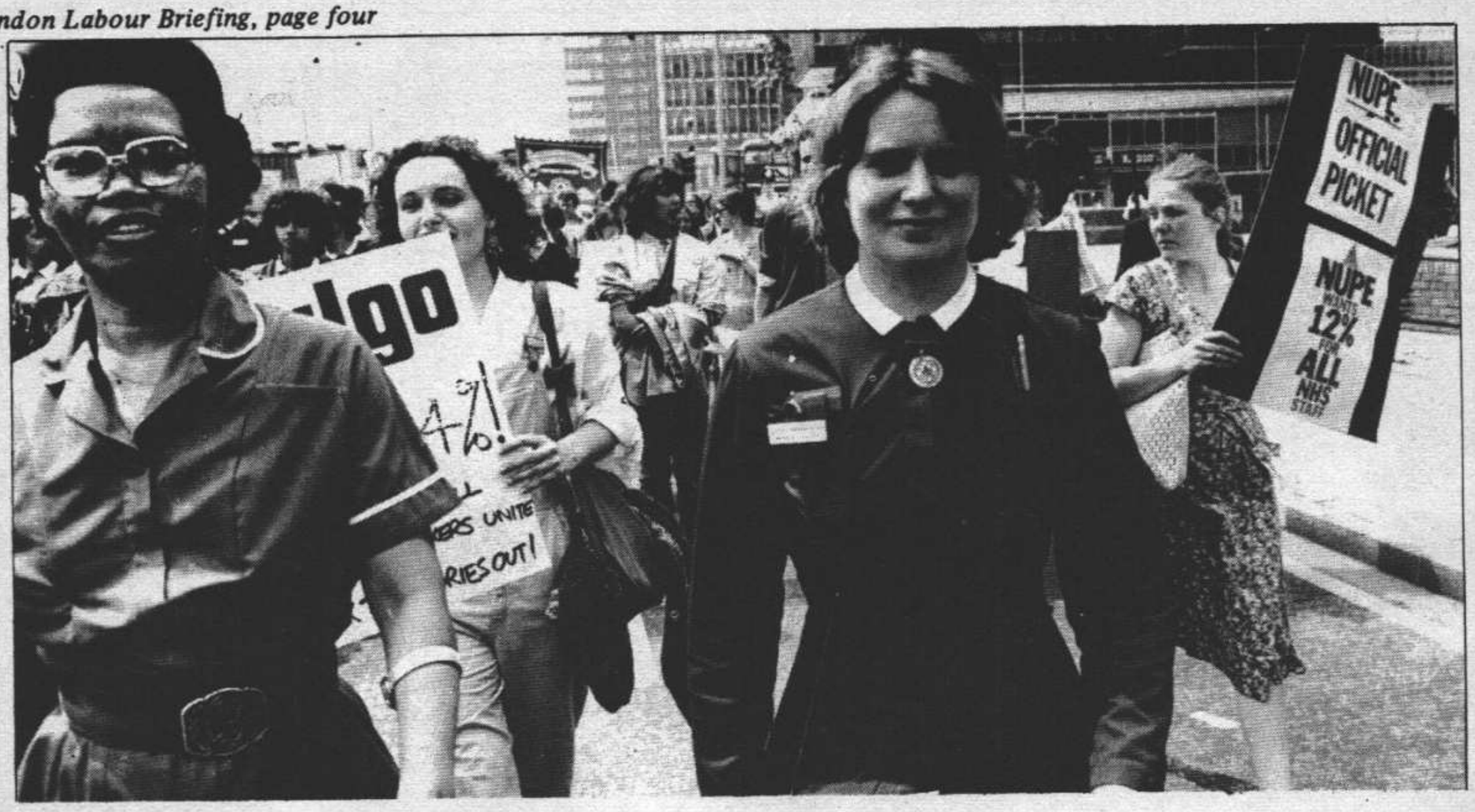
Answer: According to my understanding of my personal position as an employee of the party, the only requirement in political terms is that, in common with all other employees, I should be a member of the Labour Party. I am told that at least one of the officers in the National Agent's Department is specifically prohibited from associating publicly, in speeches or writing, with any "fringe group" in the party, and I understand that the other officers in this department and in the regional offices observe generally this restriction too. However, this rule, official or informal, does not, I gather, apply to any of the other departments, and certainly it has never to my knowledge been stated that it applies to the secretarial staff in the National Agent's Department.

There must be few people in the party who would not agree that one should always with great reluctance comtemplate any restrictions on a person's freedom of political expression. In the case of the organising staff referred to above, who deal direct with party members and sometimes with party disputes, one can see that there are some reasons for their not being publicly associated exclusively with one particular political group within the party. But if there is a suggestion implicit in this question that this restriction should be more widely extended among party employees, and that it should even include secretaries who work exclusively within the office, there are, I think the strongest grounds for protest. I am sure it is to the benefit of the party to employ people with a genuine commitment to and involvement in the party and its widespread official and unofficial activities.

My answer to the question is that, given my understanding of my terms of employment, I was entitled to participate in the production session of the July issue of BRIEFING, and that as a secretary in the National Agent's Department I had never been given to understand that I had any responsibility for protecting confidential party documents outside my working hours (even if I had been able to at that stage). I therefore would feel justified in acting in the same way in similar circumstances.

Further, it would, in my view, be a sad day for the Labour Party if people who are employed by the party had to choose (as others, in a different context, have had to choose in the past and may well have to do so again in the near future) between either complying with unreasonably restrictive rules in order to continue to play a part, paid or unpaid, in the vital tasks that face the Labour Party, or deciding that more is lost than is gained by complying with such rules.

I hope the day never comes when the party changes its practice or its rules so that I, or any others, have to make that choice.



HEALTH WORKERS FIGHT BACK

Andrea Campbell
COHSE

AS the railways grind to a halt, health service workers have been preparing for the three day strike scheduled to begin on July 19th by asking for support from all other sections of workers and by mobilising members in hospitals throughout the country to come out and stay out to win the 12%.

The Tories are now facing the most serious threat to their government since they came to office. They intended to enforce their 4% pay norms on what they thought was a weak and demoralised section of workers. They have been proved wrong.

The history of low pay in the NHS needs no explanation, but there has not been a major campaign on pay since the bitter winter of discontent in 1979. That year the ancillary workers led the fight and were left on their own to battle for a decent settlement. This year we were much better organised. For the first time there is a common settlement date (April 1) and a common core claim (12%) for all grades of health workers.

We have seen an increasing attack on health provision through cuts and closures. However, not content to decimate the NHS by cuts, the Tory strategy is to make wages so unattractive that recruitment of staff is impossible and the service is unable to run. Coupled with a parliamentary attack on trade unions through Prior and Tebbit and a series of sell-outs of other struggles by trade union leaders the Government viewed the Health Service as fair game.

A concerted effort by rank and file members who have been campaigning in their unions since January for a fightback has paid off with the most widespread support ever seen in the NHS for a series of strikes.

The Support of Other Workers

However, just as important as the support in the hospitals has been the support of other workers in defiance of Prior's laws on picketing. Miners, in the forefront of class struggles, and keenly aware of the importance of a strong National Health Service, were the first to give support. Faced with nurses picketing, some for the first time, collieries came out in strength and solidarity for the 12% claim.

Since then other key sections of workers have been on the picket lines giving health workers an incredible boost to our morale and increasing our resolve that we can win this claim. The last one day strike was on June 23rd – the day after Fowler announced a 1½% increase for nurses and a 2% increase for others. We showed our contempt by the strongest action yet. In Warwickshire, 5,000 miners came out. In South Wales miners had come out on the 16th and also supported pickets along with seamen on the 23rd. In Manchester 14,000 miners and over 700 gas workers were out. In London NALGO, CPSA, NUT and UCW joined local marches and picketed with health workers. In the build-up to the 19th, Central Stores at Guys and CSSD at St. Thomas's came out. Approximately 40% of hospitals in London have taken action since the start of the dispute.

This is the kind of action no government can ignore. But the trade union leaders tried to defuse the action by delaying any further strikes until July 19th. This left a gap of three weeks between strike days. Rank and file members know that the only way to win is to step the dispute up by calling indefinite strikes with emergency cover controlled by the workers. The TUC, fearful of the effects, are backing off as they have done in every other battle with the Tories.

How to Fight and Win

But, the mass action that has already been taken has shown a million workers how to fight and how to win. Some NHS union leaders tried to stop any strike action on the 19th by saying it will be unofficial. This has to be seen as a blatant attempt to prevent us taking the Tories on and getting a wage increase that is only slightly above the present rate of inflation. We can't and won't accept anything less than the 12%. Health workers will be out in force from the 19th striking until we win, but we need the continued support of other workers and we need the support of the Labour Party.

In the long term, the only way to save the NHS is through the return of a Labour government committed to socialist policies, committed to wiping out all private medicine and prepared to invest large sums for the expansion of the NHS.

Since April a rank and file organisation called Health Workers for the Full Claim has been meeting. Several bulletins have been produced and local groups have been set up. A new bulletin is now available. Contact: C. Sarell, 18 Walnut St., Leicester. 0533-552314. OR A. Campbell, 12 Shiplake House, Calvert Ave., E2.



Photo: Roger Anderson

Paddington Station Deserted During ASLEF Strike

MANAGEMENT BLOODLUST ON B.R.

The industrial turmoil on British Rail is a direct result of a form of managerial bloodlust that has little to do with economics or productivity. Flexible rostering from ASLEF and one staff trains from the NUR are both totally against the union policies laid down at their respective conferences. Each, if accepted by the Unions, would represent a major defeat and humiliation and would also make further major concessions almost inevitable.

Public Mugging

More to the point., the Management hope that such a public mugging of the railway unions would produce a grateful and generous response from the stony hearts of 'bovver boys'', Tebbitt and Thatcher. This pious hope is as unlikely an eventuality as actually finding a heart in either of these two misanthropes. However, just as many servicemen's lives have been snuffed in the vain hope of peace in the South Atlantic, Parker is willing to sacrifice his industry and its workforce in pursuit of a similar chimera.

Manoeuvred

There are elements at the top of the NUR who have successfully manoeuvred that the same stout class conscious delegates to the AGM, which terminated the NUR strike within 18 hours of its commencement — will now purely coincidentally, be considering whether or not the NUR retains its policy of opposition to one staff trains. This, at the same time as they consider the report from arbitration and whether or not to bring back into effect the allegedly 'suspended' strike.

If events were to continue in the way that they have so far been plotted, then it is entirely possible that the hitherto unacceptable idea of guards off trains, would appear to these people as infinitely more acceptable than another strike.

ASLEF fights for survival

Meanwhile, back on the footplate, ASLEF fights for its survival. Unfortunately, it made a fatal mistake when its members crossed NUR picket lines the previous week. This has meant that many NUR drivers have expressed their resentment in turn by providing B.R. with the bulk of its skeleton service.

Despite that, it is in the interest of all trade unionists on the railwaythat ASLEF survive and are not defeated in their present struggle. There is no doubt also that knockout of the bogey of the commuter-belt, ASLEF, would be for Thatcher the home equivalent of the sinking of the Belgrano. Certainly every trade unionist — like all the coach and truck drivers now working overtime to take railway traffic — would be well advised to consider the longterm implications of their actions for their own jobs.

Certainly, every guard on B.R. would be more secure in his job if ASLEF wins — as will all other rail workers. It is doubtless in recognition of this that many NUR branches are asking their members to donate strike pay owed from the NUR to ASLEF strike funds.

Ian Williams

Ian Williams is a member of the NUR executive. He writes here in a personal capacity.

BOROUGH BRIEFING

LAMBETH under the Tories

Lambeth's new Tory council are finding it a harder job than they've ever done in their life before. When the late unlamented Mayor Johnson voted in a Tory successor at the first council meeting there were scores of young black kids from the Front Line picketing the Town Hall for Labour. And the visitors' gallery was crammed with disabled people supporting the Labour nomination for mayor, who is also disabled.

Since then the Tories have been struggling. They wanted to close down two consumer advice centres but the Labour councillors packed the meeting and ran rings round the inexperienced Tory chair. They ended up extracting an apology from a Tory for an alleged racist insult. Finally the Tories gave up in chaos at 6.15 in the morning. The consumer advice workers and local Labour activists are using this month's breathing space they have gained to collect petitions, write letters and raise public awareness of the value of the service.

The Tories also waded in to remove our borough governors from primary schools. But the ILEA promptly renominated whoever they took off, and now the Tories at County Hall are pleading with the Tories in Lambeth to restore the status quo, because the ILEA is threatening to retaliate by imposing an equally favourable ratio of Labour governors across the whole of London. Let's hope our comrades at County Hall stick to their guns.

Our friendly Lambeth Tories also indulged in a bit of permitted vote rigging at the first council meeting. With the help of the SDP they awarded themselves big majorities on council committees and arranged it so that important decisions need not be ratified by the full council.

Unfortunately for them the Tory chairs of committees have proved so incompetent, and the Labour councillors so adept at fillibustering, that they are having to take the decisions on consumer advice centres and on rents to the full council meeting. There will be a picket, and local Labour Parties are planning leaflets to expose the big cuts when they begin.

In the meantime the Tories have closed down 'Lambeth Local' (the council newspaper) and removed tenants representatives from the housing committee. There is a big rent rise in the pipeline – probably £3.83 – but the amount depends on the SDP vote. Labour is putting forward a partial rent freeze, which will put the SDP on the spot.

Hungry Tory councillors have been spotted stalking the Town Hall corridors hunting for cuts, but so far it's a case of 'stay hungry'. Their first attempt, a demand that Social Services should chop £1 million in a fortnight was frustrated by the officers who replied that anything more than £250,000 would require compulsory redundancies – which, of course, all cost money!

The Tories have an election pledge of a £50 rebate to every ratepayer to fulfil but so far they ve been completely silent about that – which might be something to do with the fact that it would be illegal. Rumour has it that they're planning a 10% recruitment freeze on top of the unfilled vacancy rate inherited from the outgoing Labour Group. When the services collapse, the rumour goes on, they intend to close selected ones down.

In all this the Labour Group's style has been erratic. During the interval before the first council meeting where Johnny (where's my knighthood?) Johnson put us down, the local Labour Parties met and selected the committee chairs they wanted to see. Several councillors then promptly went and voted against their mandate in favour of right-wingers. Since then the group has not met to discuss tactics and policies, and an attempt by Lambeth Central to get that done through an LGC committee was voted down by members of Labour's 'establishment' in Lambeth. Several councillors are complaining that the fillibustering of committees has a limited life span and that the group should meet, especially as some community groups find that they can't get a word in edgeways while we are fillibustering. It must be said, however, that the black community are looking for all out opposition to the Tories in the Town Hall.

Les Tate
Lambeth Central

THE WITCH-HUNT – NEWS FROM LAMBETH

Three of the four CLPs in Lambeth have now rejected the introduction of a register of organisations in the party. The fourth is expected to face a similar request for rejection from its women's section, following the LARC decision to oppose the register.

Vauxhall and Lambeth Central both called for the right of CLPs to decide on the eligibility of members and rejected the witch-hunt of newly selected candidates and 'groups' within the party.

Opposition to the register was particularly strong in Norwood, which experienced its own witch-hunt in the party some years ago, resulting in well over 100 comrades including Ted Knight, being expelled for supporting the paper Socialist Outlook. It was a long and hard fight to reverse this situation. Consequently Norwood comrades know what an important fight we have on our hands, which is why a resolution to refuse to co-operate in any way with the register was passed with *no* dissenting votes.

A rally is planned for September 20th.

Vanessa Wiseman
Norwood CLP

BRENT ENQUIRY CONFUSION

In the present atmosphere inside the Labour Party fostered by the continual attacks on the left from both within the party and from the media, the prospect of an enquiry into a Borough Party and the Constituencies is a worrying thing.

Such an enquiry has now been launched in Brent. The strange (and disturbing) feature about the Brent enquiry is the fact that it has not been asked for by any official part or organ of the party in Brent. In fact, no one is quite sure WHO has asked for this enquiry to be carried out.

The second disturbing aspect of the situation is that no one within Brent (except presumably the complainants) knows WHAT complaints, if any, are to be levied against the Brent Party. The NEC, who agreed to have this enquiry, have indicated that the enquiry is to be held into 'aspects of reselection' and 'membership problems' within Brent. No further details have been given, although they have been asked for by the constituencies in Brent.

Another worrying thing is that it has not been made clear by the NEC who can or cannot attend the actual hearing (two nights have been set aside without consulting the secretaries or chairs of the LGC or constituencies as to whether they can attend).

Individual party members are being encouraged to attend the hearing; whether this will be allowed by the NEC is not clear.

In fact so much is unclear about this enquiry, and previous experience in Brent of a London Region enquiry seems to suggest that no national rules or guidelines exist for the handling of such enquiries. The procedures are at the whim of the National Agent or Regional Officials who tend to make up rules and procedures as they go along.

In fact TWO aspects of the enquiry situation seem to me to be paramount in future policy making. IF enquiries into parties have to be held at all (and I wish parties could be left in peace to run their own affairs) then:

1. **They should ONLY be held as a result of a complaint from a bona fide party branch or affiliated organisation (i.e. NOT from a bunch of disgruntled ex-councillors or other group of aggrieved but unrepresentative individuals).**
2. **Clear guidelines for their conduct must be laid down, in fairness to ALL parties involved.**

Ron Anderson, Secretary,
Brent East CLP

Newham North-West: Reselection Delayed

In September 1981 the Newham North West Party embarked on its parliamentary re-selection procedure in the expectation that a candidate would have been selected by the end of January 1982. At the time of writing we are no further forward than we were last year and we still don't know when or even if we will be allowed to complete the process.

Nominations opened in September last year and by the closing date (24th December) five candidates had received a total of 16 nominations; 9 for Alf Lomas, 4 for Russell Profitt, and one each for Mandy Moore, Conor McAuley and Arthur Lewis, the sitting MP. However on 17 December the National Agent informed the Party that the NEC wished to reconsider the position of MEPs contesting re-selections against sitting Westminster MPs. We were then delayed for six weeks until the NEC decided to urge MEPs not to contest such re-selections. Alf Lomas considered his position and decided, with the support of the Party, to remain as a candidate.

The constituency Executive Committee proceeded in March to shortlist all the nominated candidates. On the day before the GMC was due to approve the shortlist, a list of 10 complaints was received from Arthur Lewis.

The GMC considered the 'complaints' and rejected them all. Indeed some of them were statements of fact and not complaints as such; others, as the Regional Organiser pointed out, were factually incorrect and the rest were too ludicrous to be true. Nevertheless, the re-selection was halted again to allow the Regional Organiser to inquire into them on behalf of the NEC. The National Agent received the Organiser's report on 26 March – and nothing happened.

TWO COURSES

There were two obvious courses which could then have followed. If the allegations were unfounded, the Party should have been permitted to proceed on the basis of the existing shortlist. If on the other hand, some or all of them had been proven, the re-selection should have been stopped and the Party instructed to start again *and* somebody should have been disciplined or at least blamed for the irregularities.

Neither of these things happened. To date and despite repeated requests, the Party has not been told the result of the Regional Organiser's inquiry. In May we heard through the local press that we were to re-commence the proceedings. We then received a letter from the Regional Organiser stating that we would have to meet to agree a *completely* new timetable. At this point Alf Lomas withdrew from the re-selection. This disappointed many members who regarded him as the certain winner.

The Regional Organiser then wrote to all the nominating branches and affiliates asking them to re-nominate their previous nominees or to explain their reasons for not doing so. This was done without reference to the Party and it was clear that the Regional Organiser was unaware that Alf Lomas had withdrawn. It also appeared that those branches and affiliates who, for whatever reason had failed to submit nominations last year, were being excluded from the new procedure – that is if we were operating a 'completely' new timetable.

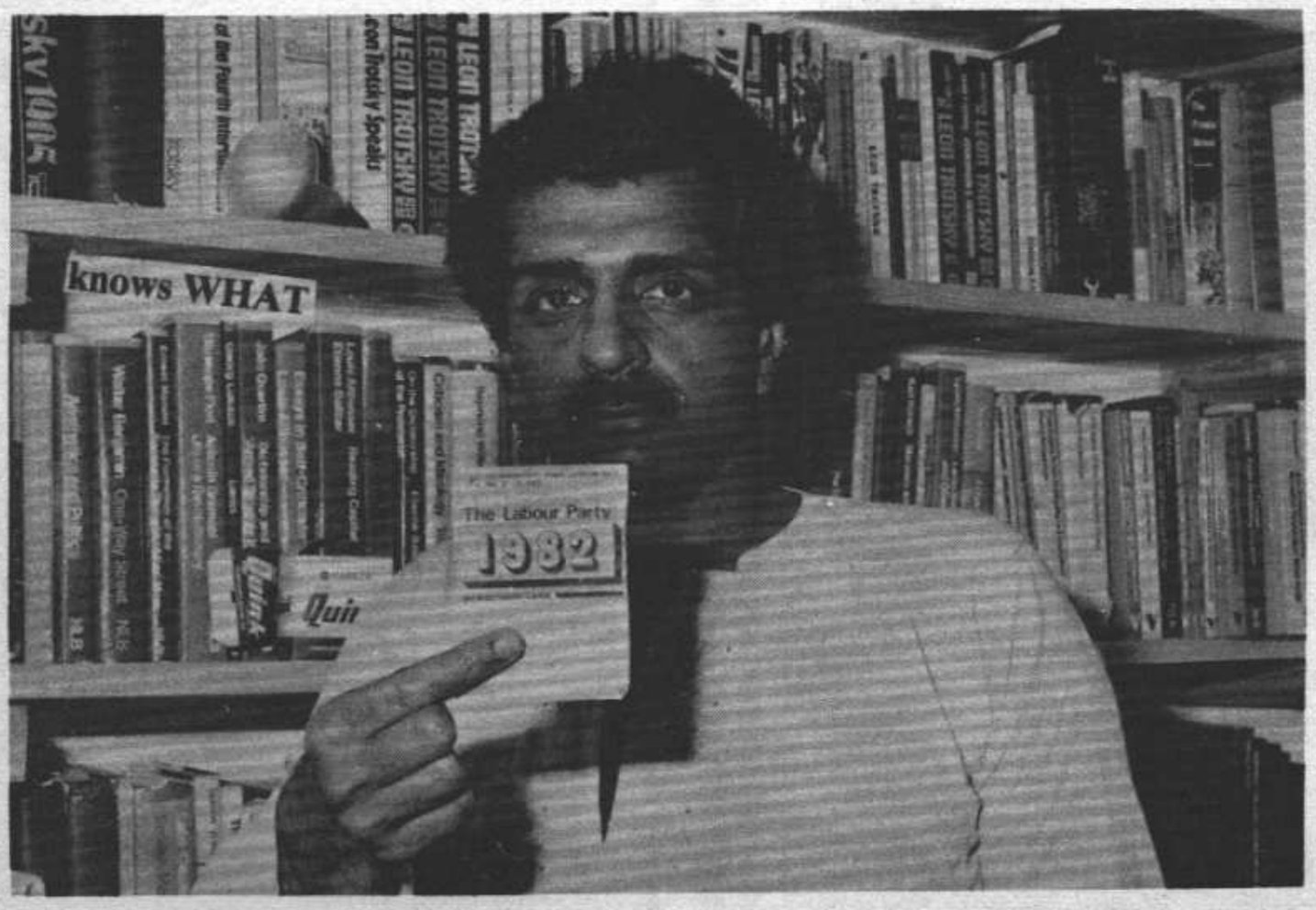
QUITE CLEAR

The Party's position is quite clear. Having been halted twice by the NEC, through no fault of our own, we wish to start again, from the beginning and to proceed with all speed to select a candidate bearing in mind the prospect of an early General Election. Originally we did not like the idea of starting again as it could have been interpreted as an admission that Arthur Lewis' allegations were justified. However the withdrawal of Alf Lomas and the 10 month delay since we started have led us to believe that it would be only fair to all concerned – members and candidates alike – to start again.

It would appear that we are now being told to continue the re-selection on the basis of our 1980 membership as 'frozen' last September. Regular readers of *Briefing* will be aware of our problems with Plashet Ward where we discovered that there was a large number of 'ghost' members. Since last year as many of 80 'members' have been removed from the membership list. Needless to say this was the one complaint that Arthur Lewis did not make – last year Plashet Ward supported him for the re-selection.

It would be a nonsense if we proceeded on this basis.

Peter Pendle, Asst. Secretary
Newham North West CLP



Tariq Ali... with membership card at last.

Dear Colleague,

NEWHAM NORTH WEST APPEAL

At the end of March .two Labour members of Newham Council went to the High Court to seek an injunction to prevent the members of the Plashet Branch of the Newham N.W. Labour Party from holding a council selection meeting. The councillors concerned (Bill Watts and Peter Billups) both represented Plashet Ward on Newham Council and their names *were* included on the shortlist for the selection meeting.

After consultation with the National Agent and the Regional Organiser, the officers of the constituency attempted to negotiate a solution of the problem with the two members concerned – but they refused to co-operate. They also failed to take their 'complaints' to either the GLRC or the NEC.

The High Court refused to grant them their injunction and the selection meeting went ahead. Neither of them attended the meeting. Instead they announced their intention to contest the election as independent 'Labour Councillors'. This they did but the official Labour Party candidates won.

Had Messrs Watts and Billups been successful in the High Court, it would have been necessary for the Labour Party to re-write part of the rule book and the rules for the selection of candidates in local elections.

The court action cost the Newham North West Party in excess of £650. The judge made no order for costs and our legal advisers have indicated that we could easily double our bill and still receive nothing if we went back to court to seek our costs.

This court case came at the worst possible time for us as we needed what little money we had to fight the May elections.

I have been asked to launch an appeal for funds both within Newham and on a wider basis throughout London.

I would be grateful if you could circulate this letter to party branches and members who you think may be sympathetic to our cause.

I hope that our comrades can do what they can to help us.

Any donations should be sent to the Newham North West Appeal c/o 306 High Street, Stratford, London E15. Cheques should be made payable to Newham North West CLP

Yours fraternally,
Conor McAuley, Secretary,
Newham North West CLP

Problems in TOWER HAMLETS

Terry Connolly
Tower Hamlets Labour Party

Progress continues in Tower Hamlets with the left consolidating its position in the party. But severe lessons are being learnt about the need for coordinated and united action by the left.

Recent GMCs have witnessed the left uncoordinated and strategyless – a position exploited by the right. In council committees and sub-committees left councillors are in the forefront of opposition to cuts and other neo-Tory measures. One of the most serious is the piecemeal selling of public land to private speculators with the prospect of no vacant public land being available in the near future for urgent public works, particularly housing.

Despite a more sensitive and campaigning Party, the Labour Council continues to heap anti-socialist policies on the people. Recently the right-wing dominated Social Services Committee increased the cost of pensioners' meals by ten pence per meal whilst at the same time the same right-wing leadership ratified the purchase of a new £13,000 car for the Mayor. The contradictions at a time of Tory attacks on the living standards of ordinary people and on local government couldn't be more apparent.

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Positive developments are taking place. Party members and left councillors were on the recent NHS picket lines, supporting the health workers in their dispute. And for the first time in years the Party banner was seen at hospital picket lines at the London Hospital and Bethnal Green Hospital.

Whatever support and solidarity was shown to the health workers by the Labour left it was severely undermined by the actions of the Right. The Chairman *(sic)* of the Works Committee (and a UCATT member) refused using chairperson's action to allow health workers the use of public space (Bethnal Green gardens) to organise a rally. However much embittered union members were at this, the work, solidarity and drive of the left is encouraging many more trade unionists to join the party as active members.

At grassroots the left branches are continuing to recruit members and build active campaigning organisations, whereas the right wing continue to see the devastating results of the election as a success.

Linking up with the branches and rank and file membership action attempts are well under way to set up a Tower Hamlets *Briefing* caucus. (The marsh mallows are going limp at the prospect.) The last GMC approved a motion urging the Labour Group to revoke a market stall licence to a National Front sympathiser. But despite this and pressure from the left councillors our party comrades on the right refuse to revoke the licence. Consequently the heart of the Asian community – Brick Lane – is faced with vulgar racist and fascist material openly traded.

A rise in racist attacks on Asians throughout the Borough has caused alarm but the left councillors and party members are for once in the forefront of combating it. Anger raged recently within the party when an Asian family were assaulted and barricaded from entering their new GLC home by white residents on an almost all-white estate in Shadwell. Left councillors spoke angrily of the actions of the GLC housing office.

RACIST

The incident confirmed the racist nature of the GLC housing policy as it operates. White tenants via the Tenants Association were informed in advance of the arrival of an Asian family, and housing officers clearly gave in to racist pressure by requesting the family to consider another dwelling after the family had been allocated and accepted their new home.

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The Labour Abortion Rights Campaign passed the following resolution unanimously at its Annual General Meeting on Saturday 26 June 1982:

'This Annual General Meeting of the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign notes with concern the decision of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee to register organisations operating within the Labour Party.

'*We believe that LARC cannot register except by rendering itself ineffective as a campaign*, because registration will require us to open our meetings to anybody, whether they agree with us or not; to alter our Constitution to admit people who do not agree with our aims; and would provide any given NEC with unacceptable arbitrary powers to decide on the eligibility of LARC to register.

'Since non-registration may have serious implications for people's membership of the Party, we therefore agree to ballot for the views of the membership and affiliated organisations not present at this AGM. The Executive Committee of LARC will act upon the majority decision of the membership, which may require holding a special conference.'

Steps are now being taken to ballot the whole of our individual and affiliated membership. We will know their views before Annual Labour Party Conference.

For further information pleace contact Jeannette Gould (470 0355) or Joan Twelves (582 2955).

SUPPORT THE LEFT SLATE

Following my non-endorsement as PPC for Bermondsey last December, many comrades suggested that I should be nominated for election to the NEC constituency section.

After careful consideration and consultation with local Party members, I have decided *not* to stand for the NEC. Those comrades who wished to support my candidature for the NEC as a gesture of solidarity will no doubt be disappointed. However, I hope they will understand that Left unity is imperative at this year's Annual Conference if we are to defeat the right-wing 'hit-list' and win a socialist NEC.

What is most important is that we elect seven good socialists to the constituency section — who they happen to be is only a secondary issue.

I have every confidence that the comrades on the Left slate will fight wholeheartedly for the principle at stake — the right of CLPs to choose their own parliamentary candidates.

I therefore urge all comrades and Party organistaions to give their full backing to the Left slate to ensure a socialist victory.

PETER TATCHELL

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

A Witch-hunters' Charter

PUTNEY CLP has in the past had some thing of a left-wing reputation. How far this will be maintained is questionable in the light of the resolution it is submitting for annual conference. This argues, along the lines of the open letter circulated by the Labour Coordinating Committee, for a 'New Deal'. This could more accurately be described as a 'Witch-hunters Charter'. The fact that it could be chosen from among eight other resolutions before the GMC, on the first ballot, shows the alarming degree of confusion among comrades who do not support a witch-hunt. This could prove disastrous if repeated at Annual Conference.

'Divisive'

Under the guise of achieving Party unity 'as number one priority', it demands that 'Divisive actions and speeches must cease to be acceptable throughout the Party.' This can only mean the suspension of all democratic debate and accountability, if carried through.

'Left groups will cease to press for constitutional change' – magnanimously amended to exclude women and ethnic minorities from this ban, in a cynical attempt at vote-scooping. How sincere this commitment to equality is can be gauged from the fact that there was a motion before the meeting from Putney Women's Section arguing for constitutional changes, which the supporters of the LCC motion, including Putney's PPC Peter Hain, chose not to prioritise.

But perhaps the most alarming clause is the following: 'Witch-hunts, slates, hit lists and other attempts to manipulate the Party's electoral and policy making machinery for sectional gain, will cease'. The mover made it clear that the 'witch-hunts' referred not to the Party leadership's attempted purge of organised tendencies, such as Militant (and after them, London Labour Briefing, Socialist Organiser, CLPD, etc) but to NEC members, sitting MPs and the like. In other words, we can retain the formal mechanisms of elections and re-selection, but these are not to be used to further democracy and accountability.

Sinister

The idea of a party of the size and breadth of the Labour Party holding elections without slates would be laughable were it not so sinister. Clearly what would result is that those who have control of the apparatus, who have money, or who have the backing of the mass media, would still be able to canvass for their policies and candidates. It would be the ordinary rank-and-file members who would be denied an effective voice.

And Militant? The register? These are not mentioned because, to quote the mover, 'that will all be sorted out by September'. The left must unite and organise to make sure that it isn't 'sorted out' that easily.

Gerry Byrne, Annie Pike, Kathy Pick, Jason Rolfe, Penny Jones, Steve Collins, Dave Packham, Ken Shilling, Tom Cashman, Bob Shepherd.

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Black People and the Labour Party

The same firm resolve, which characterises our determination to fight against the barbaric policies of the Tories, and against 'reformism' in the ranks of the Labour Party, must now be vigorously applied to removing all elements of racism inside the Party, and advancing the need for progressive policies and practices on race, over the next few years. Clearly, the Party's present position on race and racism is grim. However, I would contend, it is not entirely hopeless, providing certain essential changes are made.

Russell Profitt, Chairperson
Lewisham East CLP



To begin with, the record of previous Labour Governments on immigration and race is, frankly, absolutely appalling. The unprincipled actions of leaders such as Callaghan, Wilson and Rees, on the issue (and let it not be forgotten, the actions of those, such as Jenkins and Williams, now in the SDP) make disgraceful reading. This dismal record, which involved colluding with 'racism' (usually in response to the zealous promptings of Enoch Powell) must now be put right.

CLEAR AND FIRM COMMITMENT

Labour must approach the next election with a clear and firm commitment to:
a) Repeal existing 'racist' British Nationality legislation;
b) To remove all traces of racism from existing immigration procedures and practices; and
c) To support positive action to deal effectively with racial discrimination – wherever it is found.

A number of other most serious doubts remain. But only action can lead to real belief, and to positive support for Labour from Black people. Such changes as are required must be made at national and at local level.

Nationally, Party spokespersons again and again make pathetic statements, or adopt positions on issues which appear totally ridiculous to most Black people. For example, throughout the explosions of last summer, one sought in vain to find any national Party statements drawing out either the racial dimensions of those struggles, or the history of police oppression and racism, which gave rise to them in the first place. Then, just to add injury to insult, once the grossly inadequate Scarman Report was published, Party leaders failed to subject it to a most searching series of questions about its fundamentally wrong assumption, i.e. that there is no institutional racism in British society. Instead Hattersley, the Party spokesperson on race, gleefully accepted the report as though it was the long lost Ark of the Covenant, which ought to be speedily acted upon. And yet, as most black people know only too well, even if all Scarman's better recommendations were implemented, we would still only be scratching away at the surface of this issue, and not really getting to grips with its deeper manifestations.

PATHETIC

In truth, to most black people, Labour's statements and the comments of most Party leaders, are merely typical of what one expects from most white institutions, situated within a racist society. This, surely, must be a truly pathetic position for a party committed to fighting the struggles of the disadvantaged, and the discriminated against, or the powerless, to find itself in. Unfortunately, however, that will remain the case so long as those involved in fighting the struggles, at every level, remain exclusively white.

At the local level, the position is, more or less, the same. Incredibly, some twenty or more years after the last major wave of Black immigration to Britain, it is still possible to attend Party branch meetings, even in areas where large numbers of black people live, and there find few – if indeed any – black Party members present, participating fully in branch discussions. Worse still very few, if any, are elected to serve on General Committees, or other elected positions within the Party. Sadly though, where black members are present, a most disturbing tale is often told. Instead of finding the existence of a genuine dialogue in which all members seek socialist strategies for creating social, economic and racial justice, black comrades constantly find themselves, and more importantly, the issues they wish to discuss, either totally ignored, or worse, discover that they have to be constantly on the defensive, particularly when issues such as 'noisy parties', 'youth affairs', 'crime statistics' or even 'roller skating on public footpaths' are being discussed. This position must change.

ANOTHER DISTURBING FACTOR

Another disturbing factor is that most white people find it difficult to accept that black people actually are experts at knowing what racism is. Even though, from the colour of our skins, we see and experience it all the time, Party members refuse to believe we know what we are talking about, when we describe people as 'racists'. Party members, quite rightly, accept that the term 'sexist' can be used to describe the statements or actions of some, as a way of calling attention to something that gives offence, and therefore asking for change. Most white people though, take great offence if a black person uses the term 'racist' in relation to their actions. Understanding of this issue must now be developed.

Recently, for example, my own use of the term 'racist' in relation to the actions of a trade unionist, resulted in him getting his union NUPE to sue me for libel and and slander. I now find that, ludicrously, in an effort to help a black trade unionist, I now have to defend this libel action, in a racist institution, i.e. the Law Courts, at great personal cost. Meanwhile, NUPE picks up all the bills of the person whose actions caused the doubts and suspicions in the first place. Clearly, situations such as these cause deep despair in the hearts of black activists, and complete and utter distrust of the Labour Party so far as most black people are concerned. Hopefully, NUPE, a union with a good national position on race, will see sense on this matter. Otherwise, a great deal of harm will be done to the labour movement generally, when this issue reaches the Courts.

Finally, it also needs to be recognised that black peoples' struggles for liberation, in a number of respects, are very similar to the struggles of working class people for justice, and the struggles of women for equality. In all these cases, as history shows, the oppressor will either seek to constantly dictate the timing of any concessions (note how it is always too soon for things to happen) or, through the shrewd use of power, try to manipulate the terms and conditions in which the debate is conducted.

BLOCKING MECHANISM

Now, whether white colleagues know this or not, this is precisely what is now happening in the Labour Party to the campaign for racial justice. Particularly at selection times, it always seems that those with power, constantly seek ways of keeping it for themselves, and not sharing it with black colleagues. Of course, working class people and women know of this blocking mechanism, and have known it for some time. Black people, however, from bitter experience, are now beginning to learn it day by day. This is why more and more of us are now speaking out against the way our struggles are being ignored by the Party, or persistently misrepresented in the policies and positions the Party adopts.

Let us be clear. What we, as Black people, are now saying is that we wish to involve ourselves directly in the struggle to create a better future. However, we wish to do so in a way which takes us directly into the mainstream of public affairs, rather than be left forever along the 'margins'. The challenge to all colleagues in the Labour movement, over the next few years, is to enable this to happen. In short, what we are saying to white colleagues, especially those dedicated to shifting radically the power relations in this society, in favour of the powerless, is that the time for change is now long overdue. Qualitative changes in terms of attitudes are now required, as well as quantitative change in terms of action on policies and practices. Those concerned to help can do so by listening to our arguments, supporting our demands, and by encouraging our efforts. We, on the other hand, will continue to wage our struggles, in our own ways. White colleagues must remember, as the saying goes: 'If you are not a part of the solution, you are a part of the problem'.



VICTORY! The Bradford 12 Celebrate Their Acquittal **Photo: Roger Anderson**

SELF DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE!

Stunning acquittal of the Bradford 12

"Self-defence is no offence!" That's the meaning of the verdict of the Leeds jury who acquitted every one of the Bradford 12 on all charges. To acquit, the jury had to be convinced that the defendants had filled those bottles with petrol (they had admitted doing that) not ". . . with intent to endanger life (the police) or damage property" (big Bradford stores) but to defend the black community from impending fascist attack that very evening of July 11, 1981.

Only eight days before, Southall Asians had repulsed just that kind of invasion. Tarlochan Gata-Aura heard about midday that Saturday that the skinheads were coming up the motorway from London. "Under normal circumstances we would have to mobilise the whole community . . . but we didn't have the time and I suggested (to my comrades in the United Black Youth League) that we make these petrol devices . . . to erect a shield of fire to deter any attackers from coming into black areas."

Perhaps the best defence witnesses were Detective Inspectors Sidebottom, Windle and other officers who displayed total ignorance of the day-to-day racist attacks by Asians in Bradford. Possibly, even better than Tarlochan, than Tariq Ali who defended himself, and the generally excellent counsel, they explained why Asians could not turn to them for protection.

Would an all-white jury have appreciated the defence case? The original panel of 75 had only one potential black juror. Fierce pressure by defence counsel persuaded Judge Beaumont to extend the panel to 150 persons from which a more representative jury of 7 whites and 5 blacks (7 women and 5 men) was picked.

The jury also had to be convinced that petrol 'bombs' are not "explosive substances" and therefore not illegal under the 1883 Explosives Act under which they were charged. They are, of course, incendiary, but don't explode in the open air. This is no mere technicality. Self defence is with weapons proportional to those likely to be used against you. Fascist violence in Britain has not yet escalated to that extent.

There are two things that you in the Labour Party and unions can do.

1) *SEND MONEY!* How about £10 per CLP and £50 per union branch to settle the substantial debts still left! Cheques payable to Bradford 12 Campaign, c/o 59 Cookridge St, Leeds 2.

2) Carry on the fight against state racism – police frame-ups and deportations that the Bradford 12 had been waging. Support the CARL conference on October 23 (see adjoining article).

How did the campaign contribute to the victory? Despite public meetings that were sometimes poorly attended and leaflets that sometimes could have been put together better, we still got the message about the importance of this trial to black people, to feminists and even to the Labour Party and many trade union branches.

Have you ever heard of a trial where the defenders admitted to potentially violent acts but were still acquitted? Let's say it again, this was an absolutely stupendous verdict and your job is to make sure everyone knows it!

Bernard Misrahi

Waseem Family Appeal

On 23 February 1980 Mohammed Waseem drugged his wife, Seema, and two teenage daughters, Sameena and Rubeena. Then, during the night he abducted the two youngest children in the family, Khalid then aged 12 and Shahina aged only 1, and took them to Pakistan.

He had planned the abduction, unbeknown to the rest of the family, for some time. In the preceding month he had talked them into moving from their comfortable home in Enfield to a run-down house in Wood Green; his reason for this, he told them, was to release the capital tied up in the house so that he could set up in business on his own and leave his job with the Civil Service. However, his real intention was to steal the money amounting to £26,000, leaving his wife and daughters with a massive mortgage of £20,000 and no means of support.

TRAGIC

Since this incident, Seema Waseem's life has been tragic. She has had to fight for Supplementary Benefit to live, she has had to fight to keep her home, and worst of all, she has had to fight, and is still fighting, for the return of her two children.

Khalid and Shahina are both British citizens and have been made wards of court. However, Seema Waseem has had to go to Pakistan to fight for their return. She left Britain in the summer of 1981, almost a year ago, and is still not back. Court proceedings have been long and drawn out, not least because at one stage her husband bribed the Clerk of the Court to hold things up.

Being on Supplementary Benefit, Seema Waseem obviously had no means of paying to get to Pakistan, so the money for air tickets had to be borrowed. Neither is there any support to pay for legal costs in Pakistan. No legal aid is available for court cases conducted abroad to recover abducted children.

Before leaving for Pakistan, Seema approached a number of Pakistani and Muslim organisations in Britain for financial assistance. She was told that if her husband had left her and taken her two young children, he must have had a good reason and she can't have been a good mother. It was also suggested that as she had two of her children left with her then surely that was enough, and as she had no means of supporting them it was unreasonable for her to try and get the other two back.

Seema Waseem, therefore, left for Pakistan with no financial support and knowing that in fighting for the return of her children she would incur huge debts. Not only that, she had to leave behind her her two teenage daughters, both at college, to fend for themselves and to cope with the bills and problems of their dilapidated house.

After nearly a year, it looks as if Seema Waseem will win custody of her children in Pakistan. She hasn't seen them since their disappearance; she doesn't know where they are – or who is looking after them. But she will fight on for as long as it takes to get them back.

SUPPORT

She cannot do this, however, without support. The money for her air fares has to be found and for her legal costs. Consequently, her Member of Parliament, Reg Race, MP for Wood Green, who has been fighting her case for two years, and the Mayor of Haringey, have set up an appeal fund to raise this money. Seema Waseem has had to face a plethora of problems because she is a woman, and not least because she is a Pakistani woman.

Please make cheques payable to the WASEEM FAMILY APPEAL FUND, and send them to Reg Race MP, House of Commons, London SW1.

Please raise this in your Trade Unions, CLPs, branches, and Women's Sections.

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NO PASSPORT CHECKS!

NO DEPORTATIONS!

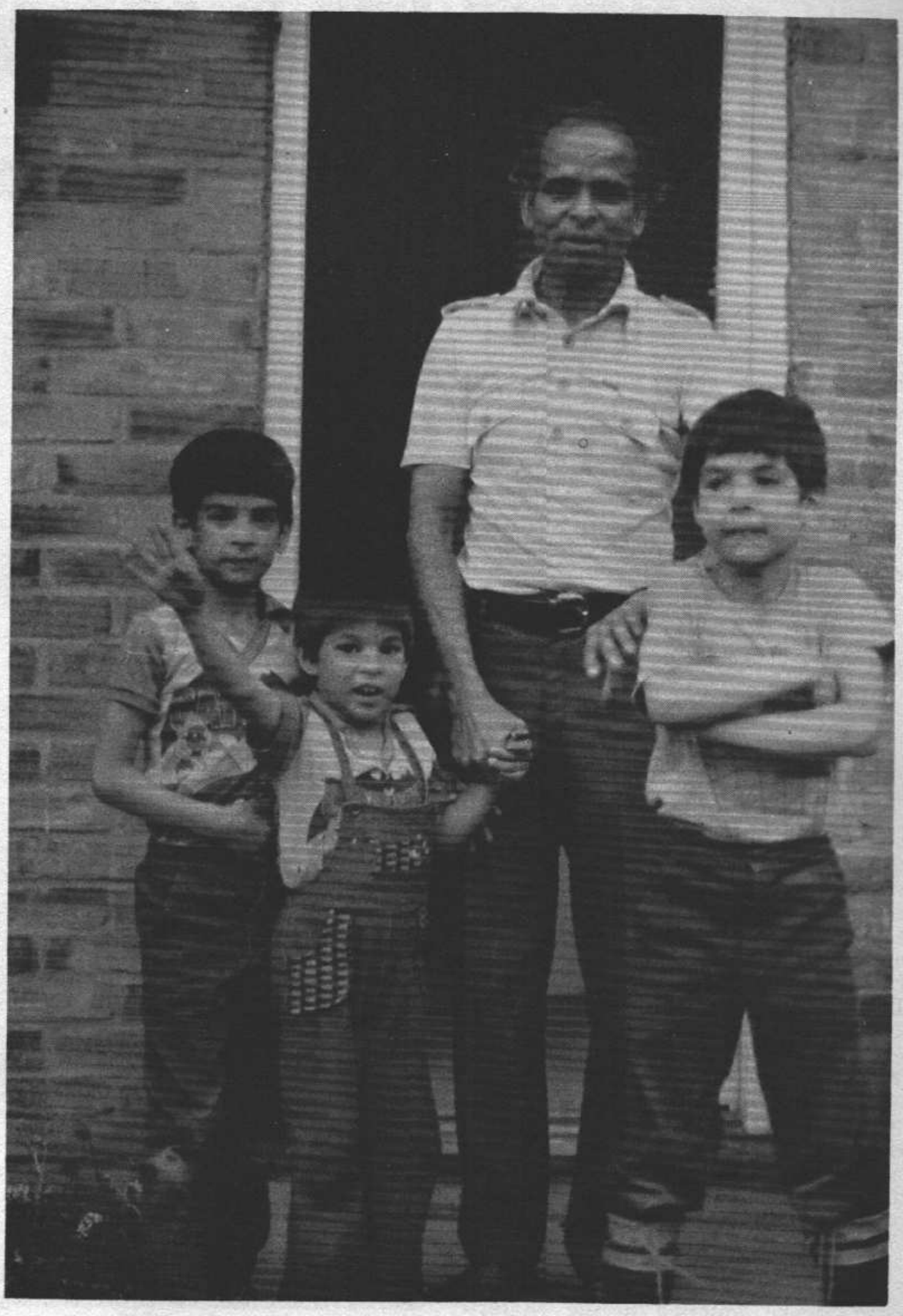
NO BAN ON FOREIGN HUSBANDS!

It is appropriate that just as the Bradford 12 were acquitted that the Campaign Against Racist Laws should be organising a conference to highlight three particular questions which are becoming more important.

* Complete opposition to passport checks in hospitals, social security offices and elsewhere.

*A stop to all deportations. Philipino workers are still being deported. Asian women who are, for whatever reasons, separated from their husbands, are still threatened with removal. Reggie Yates, a black 'patrial' from Ghana faces removal because the magistrate in the Immigration Tribunal said that although Reggie's grandfather was British, such relationships between white settlers and African women were only for sexual gratification and not serious enough to confer rights of patriality.

* End the waiting list and then ban on foreign husbands. Believe it or not, some black people do have the right to settle here. The Immigration Offices does its best to prevent them from exercising these rights. United Kingdom Passport Holders in India have to wait for years for a voucher to come to Britain because of the tiny quota imposed. Wives and children of those already settled here are kept waiting for years – possibly in the hope that the Immigration Office can find some way of denying their entitlement. And women who have British nationality but were not born in Britain cannot bring their husbands over here.



Mr Nayor Ali and his three children — they were confronted by a mob of white racists when they tried to move into their new GLC council house on Glamis Estate in Tower Hamlets. EAST LONDON WORKERS AGAINST RACISM made sure they could move in safely and have since been rallying support for the family on the estate.

CARL

Conference

County Hall

October 23

This conference is also to help support the many locally-based campaigns on behalf of individuals threatened by racist laws. You may have heard of the successful ones, of Anwar Ditta, Nasreen Akhtar, Cynthia Gordon, Shirley Graham, Mumtaz Kiani and others. These groups are campaigning in their locality and are getting together. Maybe the Conference can put them in direct touch with militants in the labour movement, say, who have heard what is going on but not yet found a way to get involved.

The Conference should launch some campaigning initiatives. A demonstration (of course!) but other events as well. We want to broaden support for the message of CARL. Active support, that is. It is usually quite easy now to pass resolutions against racist outrages in GMCs or union meetings. But where were all these CLPs and unions on the last two CARL demos?

Your CLP, and, hopefully, every other group you belong to, will shortly be circulated with all the details. If you want to offer help contact Dave Cook, (Acting Secretary CARLO c/o 56 Edithna Street, London SW9

Bernard Misrahi

Do you live or work in Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Newham, Waltham Forest? Want to do something to stop the racist attacks in the area and build solidarity with the local black community? ELWAR needs more volunteers to

- **regularly patrol streets and estates where racist attacks are taking place**
- **sit in with families under attack**
- **help with legal defence of black people harassed by the police**
- **organise in the community to spread the anti-racist message**

Contact Keith Tompson on 01-274 3951 (24 hrs) if you can help. Or write to ELWAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 for more details.

HOW DEMOCRACY WAS DISPENSED WITH IN DOCKLANDS

Nick Murray
Bermondsey CLP

THE property correspondent of The Times is very pleased about what has been happening in Docklands. Last month he wrote excitedly about the "delightful warehouse conversions" at prices in excess of £100,000 in places like St. John's Wharf in Wapping High Street or the old river police station on the Isle of Dogs now converted into maisonettes, each a snip at £70,000 to £135,000. Docklands chic is clearly in business in a big way.

But for the people who have lived and worked all their lives in the Docklands boroughs this "breathing life back into the Docklands" is a very doubtful benefit. A meeting organised by the Campaign to Restore Democracy in Docklands last month gave an opportunity to review the first six months of Heseltine's London Docklands Development Corporation which has elbowed aside local political control of Docklands in order to turn the area over to private enterprise unshackled by proper planning control and pursuing aims directly opposed to those of local people and the labour movement organisations locally.

Bitter Experience

Speakers described their bitter experience of the LDDC and the damage it was doing to the fabric of the local community. Brian Nicholson of the TGWU and one of the dwindling number of working dockers left in the area told delegates that the central issue was what we want to see London become: "It is about property and the lives of people; *our* property and *our* people." He pointed out the dangers of private enterprise free-for-alls like the LDDC and "enterprise zones" which experience abroad had shown to be connected with anti-union attitudes, low wages and long hours. He ended by calling for three priorities: unity amongst all the local groups fighting for democracy in Docklands, a firm commitment from the Labour Party to dismantle the LDDC, and more power and resources for local community control of planning decisions.

'Unfortunate' Record

Alan Davis, the new leader of Southwark Council, referred to the "unfortunate" record of the previous Council on Docklands and the fact that the previous leader, John O'Grady, had actually agreed to sit on this totally undemocratic body. Southwark had effectively had 142 acres removed from its political control by the draconian powers of the LDDC. Housing plans had had to be scrapped as well as industrial building to make way for marinas and luxury hotels. Alan Davis issued a clear declaration that the new Southwark Council would refuse to recognise the LDDC and would organise resistance to it as it was "against the interests of local working class communities". He had instructed Southwark council officers to no longer meet with LDDC officers on a regular basis and had withdrawn officers seconded to it by the previous administration. He declared that "our whole approach is to oppose the LDDC and to press for the plans *we* want." He would be working with the GLC and called on a future Labour Government to abolish the LDDC. He promised that Southwark would put its resources at the disposal of the Campaign.



Hays Dock Bermondsey **Photo: George Nicholson**

George Nicholson, GLC member for Bermondsey, and vice-chair of the GLC planning committee, told delegates that when he was elected he found himself effectively disenfranchised from half the area he represented. The LDDC had negated the working of local democracy in Docklands. He said that the GLC's liaison monitoring committee on Docklands would be starting work in July and that the Greater London Enterprise Board as well as the industry and planning committees would be working for positive developments in Docklands. Like Alan Davis he called for the Labour Party to commit itself to abolishing the LDDC.

Peter Shore

All this paved the way for Peter Shore who disappointed many delegates by failing to offer a sufficiently forthright assurance that a future Labour government would abolish the LDDC. He did say that it was "an outrage" that so many acres should be taken out of the democratic control and a form of "direct rule" substituted but in the end offered only a circumlocutory assurance that he was "not opposed to the abolition of the LDDC".

Delegates were obviously looking for a clearer and bolder initiative to annihilate this undemocratic body.

As a footnote to this it is interesting that the meeting to which Peter Shore announced that he had to go and which necessitated him leaving the conference at 12.00 was a Labour Solidarity rally at which his elaborate qualifications and cautious language on the LDDC were thrown to the winds and the trenchancy delegates had hoped he would display to them was miraculously summoned up for – you guessed it – bashing the left. To the delight of the waiting media he delivered an onslaught – duly reported as the main page two lead in the posh Sundays next day – on the party, which he said was "sick" and that as a result it was necessary "to act decisively against the conspiracy" revealed by the report on Militant. He also accused the party of "a lack of seriousness in facing major problems". Like the LDDC perhaps?

Excellent Report

The Joint Docklands Action Group has produced an excellent report on the damage that has been done by the first six months of the LDDC and the issues involved. *Heseltine's Docklands: the first six months* is available from JDAG, 2 Cable Street., E1 (480-5324) price 80p. The Campaign to Restore Democracy in Docklands is keen to get affiliations and support from local groups and organisations. They can be contacted at the same address as JDAG.

Association of Socialist Councillors formed

The *Briefing* Conference held on June 19th at County Hall attracted Party members including Councillors from most London Boroughs; a determination to fight the Tory Government in a unified way was demonstrated by all contributors to the Conference.

This determination was aptly explained by the new deputy leader of Islington, Valerie Veness, who stated that the maxim for all Labour-controlled Councils should be 'an injury to one is an injury to all'. The isolation of Lambeth and Lothian in the past, by Labour councillors and by the leadership of the whole movement, had to be changed.

Many of the speakers at the Conference, and in the workshops, gave their views on how the Labour Party needed to become more of a campaigning party to build support outside the Council chamber, and to recognise that the primary aim of the Tories was to make Labour councils the vehicles for implementing their anti-working class policies.

Frank Hansen, a new councillor in Brent, pointed out the need for Labour councils to immediately improve housing repairs and make housing services more accountable to tenants, to declare their Boroughs Nuclear Free Zones and establish Police and Women's Committees as a step towards a different form of council administration.

Workshops were held on various aspects of the struggle through local councils to improve living standards and to fight against the Tories: Facing up to the Law and Surcharge; Police, Racial and Sexual Violence; Lessons of Lambeth and Lothian; Decentralisation. The exchange of views in the workshops demonstrated the need for a better forum for socialists in each Borough to exchange views and to coordinate the demands for greater resources for inner city areas.

Since 1979 the Tories have taken over £500,000,000 from London Boroughs in Government grant, and the lack of an effective fight back from Labour authorities has meant great suspicion and disillusionment by Labour voters. The main local authority associations, the London Boroughs Association and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, seem to be powerless to act in the face of the Tory onslaught. Indeed, both Roy Shaw and Arthur Capelin, officers of the Labour Group on the London Boroughs Association for some years, seem to imagine that the issue is one of 'local Government', not one of class attack by the Tories. Our job is to ensure that an effective Association is formed that aims to unite Labour councils and Parties in an attack on the Tory Government, and to expose the spineless leadership of the Parliamentary spokespersons and Local Authority Associations of the Labour Party.

The Conference decided, without dissent, to form the Association of Socialist Councillors, and ten people agreed to meet and prepare the ground for circulation to all Councillors, Parties and Local Government Committees of the aims of the Association.

Jeremy Corbyn

Court finds 'Suffragettes' guilty

Four women took part in a 'Can't pay Won't pay' women only protest on 2 April when, dressed as suffragettes, they boarded a 49 bus in Wandsworth, refused to pay the 100% increased fare, and chained themselves to their seats.

The protest was a symbolic reference to their suffragette sisters who fought both inside parliament and outside for women to have the vote. But their struggle seems to have been of little value — half a million women voted for cheap fares but their vote was simply ignored by five unelected men.

Despite a strong political defence, they were found guilty on the three charges: of refusing to pay the fare although CPWP deferred payment slips were offered; guilty of obstruction although they did nothing but sit passively in their seats talking to supportive passengers; guilty of disorderly conduct which, according to the police, involved the "wearing of brightly-coloured clothes and large hats". Why' then, was not the whole of Ascot royal enclosure arrested? The magistrate's statement — that anyone participating in a political demonstration has to expect to pay for the consequences — has enormous political ramifications for the Left. The decision affects us all.

The suffragettes were fined £200 in all and would welcome any donations. Please send PO's, cheques etc to: Fare Fight, 6a Compayne Gardens, London NW6

Naomi Landau
Fare Fight

Rowntree-Mackintosh: ACTION NOW!

The Labour Movement has the moral obligation to extricate Britain from its many South African entanglements whenever and wherever the opportunity arises. We are in a powerful position to create such opportunities through Labour-controlled local authorities, trade unions, co-ops and pension funds withdrawing all investment in companies aiding and abetting Apartheid.

The anti-Apartheid movement is at the moment campaigning against the trade union policies adopted by Rowntree Mackintosh in South Africa towards its black employees. Support has come from the TUC and all sections of the Labour Party national leadership.

CAMDEN COUNCIL

However, the campaign has so far been characterised by rhetoric rather than action. Camden Council is a notable exception — it has banned Rowntree products from the ten outlets under its control. The National Union of Students, too, has launched "Think Before you Eat" — drawing its membership's attention to the plight of some 500 mainly black Rowntree employees in South Africa who went on strike in protest against the dismissal of their union colleagues more than a year ago. Rowntrees has presistently refused to re-employ the dismissed workers or recognise the South African Allied Workers Union.

It is vital that these — largely symbolic — protests lead to a much fuller mobilisation against the parent company here in Britain in order to help our victimised and oppressed comrades in South Africa as yet powerless to achieve the very basic trade union and human rights.

We know that we can expect no support from the British government or City institutions, so it is imperative to bring pressure to bear on Labour-controlled councils to follow up the initiatives of Camden and the NUS.

NO ACTION BY ILEA

The issue has already been raised with the Labour leadership of ILEA, requesting them to sever all links with Rowntree Mackintosh. To date no action has been taken by them. Or even contemplated.

When it is our own comrades who are trading with the enemy, can we really presume a moral superiority over those, like Rowntree Mackintosh, who openly connive with the policies of the racist regime in South Africa.

I therefore call on all comrades to do their utmost to influence their own local comrades who have the obligations of power to match deeds to words, and to take steps NOW to withdraw all facilities, investments and support to Rowntree Mackintosh.

Vidya Anand
Member Regional Executive GLRC

JUNE 19th CONFERENCE WORKSHOP REPORTS

ORGANISING SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

The general discussion was very positive, reflecting the dimension that was rather missing from the main sessions, the active involvement of the trade unions and the recognition that at present the main fight against goverment policies was coming from Health and Rail workers and we should be in there, councillors and all, organising support.

The Lambeth 'experience' was seen as one from which we should not merely recriminate against each other but learn very positive lessons, in order that we understand how newly elected 'progressive councils' such as Islington can act. Councillors should still be prepared to make a stand on issues such as Cuts, Rates, Rents but we had to recognise *Mass* action was needed to defeat the government. Councillors needed to get out to the unions at every *level* to discuss and campaign for their policies, which sometimes meant taking up very contentious issues with no guarantee of automatic support. We also have to support trade union demands and not for example expect workers to do extra jobs for no overtime, just because we now have a socialist council! Can't Pay Won't Pay was cited as an example where in the end, you had to listen to the union voice.

There were a lot of positive suggestions which are listed below:

- ★ Using council premises and councillors themselves as resources for workers taking action.
- ★ Councillors and CLPs getting along to picket lines, building support.
- ★ Bulletins on policy to TUs, local groups etc. – as part of accountability and opening out to TUs/tenants orgs/community groups.
- ★ Need for active involvement of black people, not just to be seen as voting fodder, but involved and campaigned with all the time.
- ★ Need to take council struggles to unions outside the town hall for support.
- ★ Active involvement in manifesto, drawing it up, etc.
- ★ Privatisation – need to be involved in union campaign.
- ★ Active, mass campaigning on issues throughout the year not just elections.
- ★ Where differences exist between party policy and unions perhaps on racism, sexism etc. need to spend time explaining and go out and win active support from unions.
- ★ Need to relate our words through bodies similar to GLC women's committee.

These are just some of the points made. The main consensus seemed to be that we were there not just to win people to socialist councils but to socialism, therefore the councillors have to also take on discussion of Tebbit as well as Heseltine, of the Malvinas as well as rents – and be an active, strong and supportive part of struggles taking place rather than just seeing the council chamber as a focus for *all* struggle.

Vanessa Wiseman
Norwood CLP

Broadly speaking there were two points of view depending on whether speakers lived in Labour-controlled or Tory-controlled boroughs. In Tory areas councillors were more busy outside the council chamber, working with activists to stir up opposition to the Tories. A councillor from Westminster described how the local party was running a campaign on council rents. This involved knocking on doors with petitions, street meetings, films and social evenings aimed at the estates. It also involved weekly street stalls at markets, regular membership drives and public meetings. All this meant bypassing tenants' associations and town hall unions which he characterised as holding back the party from speaking directly to people.

A comrade from Wandsworth felt that Labour had failed to regain control of the borough partly because the local Labour leadership had failed to back up the dustmen's strike strongly enough. Several people thought that rents and privatisation were going to be the main campaigning issues in the near future.

Sue Carlyle, who introduced the discussion, spoke of the Labour Party's fight against the closure of local nurseries in Tower Hamlets. They had built links with public sector workers as a result. The party was now going to have to fight its own right wing council to prevent rent rises and privatisation of council services. Vanessa Wiseman, who also introduced the meeting, pointed out that in Camden the previous council had taken the kind of decision that any campaigning socialist council should take when they paid their workers the full increase during the 1979 dirty jobs strike. The councillors' subsequent court victory had vindicated them and made it quite clear in public that they were fighting for the rights of the poorly-paid.

Speakers from Labour controlled areas were agreed that it was impossible for one council to go it alone and become a local 'soviet'. The movement should avoid placing the same inflated expectations on Islington as they had placed on Lambeth or Lothian. That was why an association of socialist councillors and a coordinated fightback was required. Several boroughs reported the success of setting up a council women's committee to campaign around. The importance of Lambeth's committee to monitor racial equality and the council's public commitment to black issues was mentioned

The discussion ended on a strange note. John Wakeham from the chair summed up the experience in Camden where the loss of Caversham to the SDP had galvanised the party into campaigning. This had been part of the reason for the excellent local election result. He pointed out that party policy could be frustrated by council officers, and that there could be conflicts of interest between council workers and the people receiving council services.

Then, "in confidence", he suggested to the meeting that there was a group on Camden council planning to have the Direct Labour Organisation monitored by tenants, and that it might be necessary to sack some of the workers who were blocking party policy. At that point the meeting had to adjourn, but several of us felt that such an important issue cannot be swept under the carpet, which is why I have no hesitation in betraying this 'confidence' now. No doubt the Camden comrades will want to debate it out.

Les Tate,
(Lambeth Central CLP)

REPORT BACK FROM WORKSHOP ON SEXUAL AND RACIAL VIOLENCE

The emphasis of our workshop was on practical solutions offered by two organisations to violence against women and black people. Although the organisations are quite different in form — and this was reflected in the way the lead-offs were given — the solution they provided were premised on the same analysis of the State and particularly its reaction to the issues of law and order. That is, that the Police do not act in the interest of women and black people (and the working class in general) and thus we must provide support and protection for ourselves.

Fran Eden spoke for East London Workers' Against Racism. She described the attacks of fascists on black families in the East End. The fact that the State supports the oppression — e.g. by demanding black people produce their passports to prove their "rights" to medical treatment — was elaborated upon. The poverty and ghettoisation of black people by both Tory and Labour Parties has resulted in divisions between black and white working class people.

In order to change this tide, ELWAR have offered direct support in the form of self-defence groups. But they have also gone further by linking together anti-fascist white tenants with black tenants to provide 24 hour protection to those families who are particularly harassed. The phrase that made an impact on us was "isolate the fascists to make them illegitimate."

Mary Evans spoke for the group Safe Women's Transport. They are organising a bus which will transport women in the evening safely from meetings, entertainment (bingo) etc. The GLC has been persuaded to fund the project which was a direct response to the rape and murder of a woman acquaintance of Mary's. But Mary pointed out that violence towards women is a lot more than rape, one of its cruellest and humiliating forms. "Violence starts when men look at women ... women cannot walk the streets safely. It is at the discretion of men." We are sure that all the women present could remember similar experiences to those that Mary recounted about herself. Men assume that they can treat women as objects of abuse. The nighttime is worse. Figures from a sample of 200 women in Lewisham showed the 80% never went out at night. The sexual oppression of women, therefore, prevent many of us from being involved in politics, much of which happens at night. How frequently do male comrades check that women do not walk home alone from meetings? Most sexual violence towards women occurs when waiting for a bus, walking home from the bus and walking through the estates.

Unless women can be offered alternatives we are forced to depend on the Police when sexually attacked, but our experience of this shows that the Police do not act in our interests. The central consideration of Safe Women's Transport is to make women safe.

Most of the discussion centred around the issues raised by a black comrade who criticised ELWAR for asking a white speaker to talk on behalf of ELWAR rather than a black person, which she said perpetuated the "imperialism" of the Left. Accepting this point, the issue of self-defence needs to be taken up in a much broader political way especially by the Labour Party and trade unions. Not to begin to do so is to allow the ruling class to continue to divide us along racial and sexual lines.

Wendy Whitaker
and Ann Bliss
Lewisham East CLP

Breaking Up the Local State

Across London, newly-elected Labour councils are facing up to the implementation of what was probably, in electoral terms, one of their most popular pledges — to decentralise council services.

How are they doing it, and what are the implications? *Briefing*'s June conference, 'Running London Our Way', tackled the issue in a large working-group led by Bob Crossman, Deputy Chief Whip on Islington Council. Bob put the point that extension of local decision-making and local control over services mattered 'if we believe in socialism for all, and not just for a politically aware minority'.

The political hopes, and fears, that comrades on the left have about decentralisation to local community level are challenging:

- the *fear* that we might, in some areas, hand over political control to middle-class interest groups; that the reality of community activity is that it has a territorial as opposed to a class basis; that it encourages us to think of ourselves as 'consumers', which is an economically and politically weak position.
- the *hope* that by giving 'power to the people', with extensive party involvement, we will move forward collectively in a socialist direction. Central to this conception is the understanding that significant struggle takes place not only in the workplace. As Cynthia Cockburn put it in *The Local State*, the inseparable nature of capitalist production and capitalist reproduction (of the workforce, its servicing, etc.) means that struggles which take place around housing, benefits, education etc. are economic as well as political. One of our hopes for decentralisation of council services should be that it will help develop a political awareness among more people that the struggles of council workers and 'the community' over cuts in jobs and services are a common anti-capitalist struggle against economic oppression.

The *Briefing* conference working-group brought out a number of other issues in implementing decentralisation.

– It is essential to start formal consultations with unions early because people's jobs are concerned.

– Vital initial consultations need to be held very early between the community at large, council workers at grass roots level, and officers. (In Islington, council officers apparently got together within two weeks of Labour winning control, to hold their own 'working group'!) The Islington pattern was to seek a 'brief' from these initial consultations, which was put to the party, which then formulated a 'blue-print'.

– Fighting the officer bureaucracy. It was pointed out that 'chief officers are an organised conspiracy, and their chief aim is to make sure that *you* don't know what's going on; they're there all the time, we're only part-time.' Middle management concern to protect their own interests is another source of sabotage.

– Just setting up a portakabin isn't decentralisation.

– The question of whether decentralisation should be carried out in relation to ward boundaries, shopping areas, housing areas, etc.

– The question of whether some obstructive Chief Officers should be sacked, and problems in this respect with the staff code; techniques for undermining them instead.

– A warning against too much bureaucrat-bashing, which could obscure the fact that some workers could play a valuable and committed role in decentralisation. Political appointments vs. the gravy-train syndrome, and the need for there to be always member (i.e. councillor) control.

– The crucial role of party branches, GMCs, LGCs.

– The need to alert other boroughs when freemason officers move to other areas.

– The role that political education could play in schools in preparing young people to participate in a decentralised situation.

The interest shown in the conference working-group was such that it will be reconvened for a series of meetings under the title 'Breaking Up the Local State? The Politics of Decentralisation'. Come along on Friday 17 September, 7.30pm, to County Hall, or contact Bob Crossman, 47 Hillrise Mansions, Warltersville Road, N19.

Pauline Ashbridge, Hornsey CLP

BREAKING UP THE LOCAL STATE?
(THE POLITICS OF DECENTRALISATION)
A London Labour Briefing working group
FIRST MEETING: FRIDAY 17 SEPTEMBER, 7.30 pm, COUNTY HALL
or contact Bob Crossman
47 Hillrise Mansions, Warltersville Road, N.19.

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WOMEN'S CONFERENCE '82

Reports of the Labour Party Women's Conference have appeared in most of the Left papers. However although this issue of *Briefing* is appearing some time after the conference I think it is vitally important to keep the events of that conference ell in our minds when preparing for Annual Conference in Blackpool.

The Women's Conference was a perfect example of the Right in action. Obviously they had realised prior to the conference by the resolutions which were being submitted – some were actually against Party policy! – what the mood of the conference would be. It was quite clear to me that prior to the conference a rumour campaign that would have made McCarthy proud had begun. Delegates had hardly taken their seats when some were being accused of being infiltrators come to wreck the Party.

The platform successfully managed to split the conference – unions versus CLPs – just like at National Conference. I must say here that they were supported in this by the 'Militant' sisters at the conference.

RIFT

However what I think saddened me most was that there was a rift formed between the so-called 'older' and so-called 'younger' delegates. Perhaps I am being uncharitable but I refuse to believe that rift was there naturally. It was put there deliberately.

I know there were problems with the creche which took up valuable conference time but had these been handled with something approaching tact and seriousness by the platform they could have been overcome. As could the problems which arose with the stewarding of the Rally on the Sunday evening. Did we really have to have so many aggressive men stewarding a meeting at women's conference? Women were angered to discover that there is no official record kept of decisions taken at the conference. Also the overbearing and, for many inexperienced delegates, quite frightening attitude of the Chair was unnecessary. All these things and more caused frustrations and bad feelings. This was made worse when after the moving of the resolutions on women's organisations the Chair announced she was only going to take speakers against.

I am taking time to give this background so that it can be understood that there was a background to some of the 'incidents' reported to have happened at conference.

WOMEN IN ADVANCE

There were many good decisions taken at the conference which show the women in the Party to be far in advance of the Party generally on national issues and I list some below.

- Immediate and total unilateral withdrawal from NATO, unilateral disarmament, and declare the UK a non-aligned country.
- Transfer research and development funds from nuclear energy to alternative and renewable energy technology with a view to phasing out nuclear power.
- Unequivocal commitment to abolish low pay and introduction of legislation providing for a statutory minimum wage based on two-thirds national average earnings.
- Amend Equal Pay Act to include part-time workers.
- A shorter working day of 6 hours.
- Leader of the Party to ensure that future defence spokespersons are publicly committed to Conference policy on defence and do not propagate opposing views via the mass media.
- Changes to legal definition of rape and revision of police procedures in investigating rape.
- Rape reflects the unequal power relationship between men and women and this relationship is reinforced by violent pornography and sexism in the media, including advertising. We must campaign actively against the gratuitous portrayal of violence against women in films, television and the media.
- Election of Women's Section of the NEC by Women's Conference.
- Right of Women's Conference to table 5 policy resolutions to Annual Conference.
- Appointment of a full-time National Women's Officer and a full-time Women's Research Assistant.
- Appointment of only women as Regional Women's Organisers.
- Mandatory inclusion of at least one woman on every Parliamentary shortlist.

EVERY DIRTY TRICK

So I came away from the conference feeling it had been a success. Only to find that, as I really should have known, the Right are not good losers. If they are beaten democratically they will try every dirty trick in the book to discredit us.

Within two days of conference finishing the PLP was alive with 'did you hear Women's Conference was dominated by a load of lesbians from London in dungarees?', nudge, nudge. What a disgraceful bunch of dirty old men some of them must be. I also understand that a report on the conference was given to some of our 'elder statesmen' saying that one woman delegate was sexually accosted by another. I wonder if reports are compiled on the times women delegates at Party Conference experience this form of harassment from men – I doubt if there would be the facilities or the time for such a mammoth task!

I have written in this way as a warning. If the Right are using these methods because of the success of Women's Conference which at the present time has no power, how hard will they be working to ensure that we are never fully represented or heard?

The pressure must be kept up to ensure that the constitutional changes agreed at Women's Conference are passed at National Conference. We will win. But whether we win or lose we are going to get some stick. But I want to make it clear right from the start – we can take it!

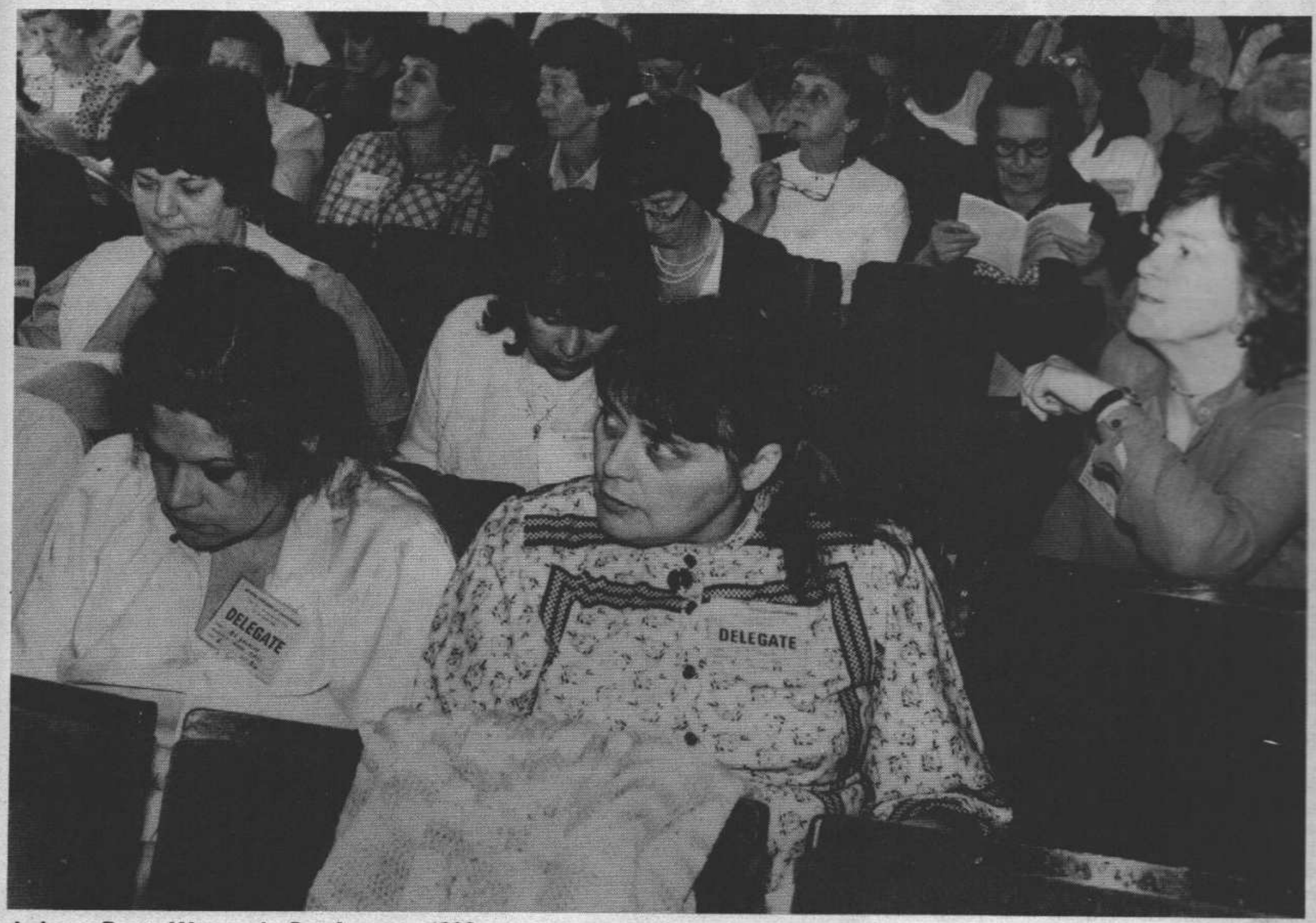
Janet Pickering
Croydon N.W. CLP
Women's Section delegate

FOR AN ELECTI

Labour Women won three significant victories at their National Conference this year — victories which if carried through the 1982 Annual Conference will at last give women easier access to the Parliamentary Labour Party. But, perhaps more importantly, the Women's Conference demands, if carried by Annual Conference will finally give women's organisations within the movement the power and status they have lacked since those campaiging and genuinely reforming days of the Women's Labour League, prior to its merger with the Party in 1918.

But while we seem to be winning the argument for the more democratic and accountable representation of women within the powerful policy-making bodies of the Party, we lost at the Women's Conference (on a show of hands) the demand that the Women's Conference *itself* be guided by an accountable and an answerable executive.

Until this year, the Women's Conference was forcefully steered by an executive elected by secret postal ballot (we think) in the different regions. The women's sections involved in these secret ballots came from most areas — covering more than forty constituencies in the case of the London region. As a consequence very few electors



Labour Party Women's Conference 1982
Photo: Denis Doran

ED, REPRESENTATIVE, ACCOUNTABLE E.C.!

had any knowledge of the candidate, her policies or record. From next year however, the National Committee will be elected by regional women's conferences — a proposal put forward last year by Militant women from Rochdale and supported by the current National Women's Committee.

HARDLY REPRESENTATIVE

Regional women's conferences can hardly as yet be described as representative of women in the movement. For a start they exclude a full and proper role for trade union women organised regionally. But more importantly regional women's conferences will not be able to hold their elected representatives to any real account. The women they elect will, once a year, in a distant and different place, play a powerful role in determining policy-making for Labour women. Their role in the process will go unrecorded, as there is no verbatim report of Women's Conference. News of their recommendations to Women's Conference and of their work during the year at national level will have to trickle down to rank and file women through the many unreliable channels the movement depends on.

Furthermore, delegates to Women's Conference, elected and mandated by their sections, Women's Councils or CLP's, will invariably find themselves in conflict with an executive which will have little regard for their wishes of a national delegate conference, to whom they own no allegiance and who play no part in their re-election.

We are therefore urging women's sections and councils to give support to candidates in the coming elections for the National Women's Committee who endorse and uphold our demands for an accountable national committee of Labour women, elected by the Women's Conference to act as an executive of that Conference. Without such an accountable executive there will be no way of ensuring that policy proposals put forward by the Women's Conference will be advanced and advocated by the National Women's Committee at the annual conference or in the movement as a whole.

Furthermore we urge candidates standing for election to the National Women's Committee to state openly in written manifestos their commitment both to the policies carried at Women's Conference this year and to a democratically elected, representative and accountable executive. Only with such an open clear commitment from candidates will we be able to go ahead and win for the Women's Conference the accountability we seek from the Women's Section of the Annual Conference.

For further details of the campaign to elect London women committed to our demands for the greater accountability of the National Women's Committee, please contact:

Ann Pettifor
39 Caldervale Road
London SW4 (622 3983)

WOMEN TAKE THE POWER!

The CLPD and Briefing have both decided on a women-only platform at their respective fringe meetings on Sunday 26 September at this year's Annual Conference at Blackpool. Now the fight must be on to defend these decisions.

LONDON TRANSPORT - CAMPAIGNING TO WIN

Piers Mostyn
TGWU, buses

In their articles in June Briefing, Jan Wallcraft and Piers Corbyn suggest that Fair Fight and Can't Pay Won't Pay could have succeeded, as campaigns against the attack on London Transport, if the numbers participating had been greater. To say "at least we've won the argument", isn't good enough. There was mass support for cheap fares as the one million increase in passengers proved. The point is how to use this and why did the campaigns fail to do so.

Defenders of the campaigns suggest that potential success was sabotaged by lack of union support, a media blackout and Ken Livingstone's betrayal in opposing the campaign of refusing to pay the new fares. Implicitly, the Labour Party is also blamed for indifference, hostility and a lack of resolve.

KEN DID COP OUT

True, Ken did cop out; active union support was not forthcoming and media coverage was hostile. But no successful mass campaign has ever relied on the media. Ken's opposition to CPWP was irrelevant compared to the fact that the GLC voted for cuts in LT and he (and others) didn't provide the lead for a Labour movement defence campaign. The problem wasn't lack of union support for the campaigns, but the opposite, their inability or refusal to build for union action.

In both campaigns, the following argument tended to guide strategy. The GLC was seen as doing little to defend its policy. This was interpreted as implying that the Labour Party refused to or was incapable of defending itself. Therefore an *independent* "grass roots" campaign, *perhaps* involving industrial action, was needed.

Consequently, at worst (CPWP), we had "mass" protest action by isolated individuals, that divided passengers from LT workers. That LT so readily exploited the situation, is hardly surprising. At best (a few FF groups) we had an orientation to workers that involved leafletting working class districts and one or two LT workplaces. This reliance on propaganda failed to mobilise mass support on the streets and reflected the isolation of the campaign from the organised structures of the working class — the Labour Party and the Trade Unions. Few steps were taken to remedy this.

Undoubtedly the propaganda had a limited impact, but LT workers were only really aroused when they came face to face with job losses, overtime losses etc. The industrial action that resulted was responsible for the *only gains* made to date. Thus cuts in services have been delayed for 4 months and the threat of several hundred compulsory redundancies among bus mechanics has been withdrawn. How can cheap fares, jobs and services on LT be successfully defended? Firstly the role of the Labour Party (and hence the GLC) is central. No campaign in defence of GLC policy has any chance of winning active support unless the *Labour Party* is seen to be defending itself and leading the campaign. It is the Labour Party that a million Londoners voted for and that implemented the policy. But also the Labour Party is in the strongest position to build for action because of its relationship with the unions and role of political leadership in the working class.

THE FIGHT FOR JOBS

Secondly, despite the attack the fare increase represents, the question of job and service cuts are even more important for building the campaign. The fight for jobs is the main focus of working class demands and Labour Movement struggles, for obvious reasons. Any campaign against the attack on LT would have the best chance of success if it were centrally linked to this fight. Also, because industrial action, not protest action, is the most effective means of forcing the hand of the Tories, the central orientation of a campaign must be towards LT workers and the Trade Unions in general. And the best way to politically organise for this, on a mass basis, is through the Labour Party. The "sincerity" and "courage" of individual campaigners cannot substitute for this, and on their own are of little benefit.

Livingstone understands this. But it's not good enough for him simply to *hope* that LT unions will take action. He and other Labour leaders should lead the way. This doesn't mean a campaign of press ads, writing to MPs and internal council battles, that organises no one. It means calling on local CLP's to link up with LT union branches, organising joint public meetings, producing propaganda and calling for action. Votes at LT union delegate conferences show that the rank and file leadership is prepared to take action, and this has been borne out since. Ten times as many would follow such a call from LP's and TU's than they would from CPWP or FF.



GLC Councillors campaigning against the Fares increase. Hay's Dock, Bermondsey

THE DESIRE TO FIGHT IS THERE

Such a strategy would be fraught with obstacles, especially TU disunity and LP inertia. However industrial action this summer in hospitals, mines, railways and on LT has shown that the desire to fight is there. And the March 10th 1 day strike on LT showed ordinary workers that they aren't isolated and unity is possible.

The problem of a divided Labour GLC voting for cuts, is not just due to a lack of resolve or the betrayal of certain individuals. And it won't be solved simply by more reselection and internal battles in the council. If the fight is taken out to the organised Labour Movement as a priority, and action developed, there will be *real* pressure on right wing Labour councillors and the best guarantee of a commitment to fight from the left. We can't wait for a far left GLC.

Ignoring the organised strength of the Labour Movement, means bypassing the only real weapon that the mass of working people look to. At least the independent development of militancy within the LT unions still provides the basis for a campaign that can win. To make this possible, the Labour Party — from the wards up to the GLC — must link up now with LT unions and build active support for industrial action.

RESISTING THE NEW TIMETABLES

Andrew Rossing

THE June rail strike on London's underground prevented the immediate introduction of rail timetables which cut the peak service on most lines by up to 25%. Union leaders and LT management are now engaged in talks to find alternative ways of saving the money. These seem bound to fail and LT rail workers could find themselves on strike again by the second week of August. The peace deal signed by two of the three union executives, ASLEF and the white-collar TSSA, included the condition that should the talks fail, the unions will allow LT to bring in the new timetables. The NUR executive rejected the deal because of this catch. Whether the peace cobbled together at the NUR Conference included this commitment is unclear. What is clear is that implementation will depend on the LT workers' willingness to resist.

London bus workers and passengers face 15% cuts in their timetables in July. LT has postponed these for five weeks for fear of provoking joing action by bus and rail workers. The June action was marked by the beginnings of joint action between bus and rail workers, with a number of bus garages coming out on one-day strike. There is the prospect of further joint action. Repeated action by one or other group is highly likely for the forseeable future.

LT workers are being asked to pay the price of the Denning judgement in money, jobs and conditions of work. The all-out strike on March 10th (round 1) and the recent victory, albeit temporary and partial (round 2) shows that they have the will to fight and possibly the strength to win.

Labour Parties have perhaps forgotten that the Denning judgement destroyed the main plank of the Labour GLC's manifesto. Perhaps also Party and trade union branches didn't know (weren't told?) that in making these cuts, London Transport is doing no more than implement its 1982 budget, approved by the GLC.

Broke the Silence

The May issue of Briefing broke the Labour Party silence on what is happening at LT. It included a skilful interview by Ken Livingstone who rightly criticised the campaign 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' for failing to take their proposals for action to labour movement branches.

Briefing should invite Livingstone and other GLC councillors to detail their approaches to labour movement branches, particularly LT union branches, back in January and February. No doubt they reported the consequences of the Denning judgement. No doubt they set out the actions which the unions and the Labour Party could take. And no doubt they emphasised that branches must submit proposals for action through their respective democratic structures. Above all, councillors must surely have explained that had branches voted to fight, then they, the GLC Labour Group, would pledge to lead that fight and in particular refuse to pass the LT budget. After all, they must have said, if this fight is lost then the Government will take LT away from GLC control.

It is to be hoped that the next Briefing meeting will devote some considerable time to the LT workers' fight to rescue what they can from the wreckage of our manifesto. Labour Party members in the LT unions should be invited to address the meeting. Labour Party members are involved in 'Unity in Action', a growing group of LT workers who are trying to build links between different workplaces and unions at LT. Most important of all, the Briefing meeting should discuss how London Labour Parties should be mobilised to support future action on LT and how the GLC can be forced to join the fight on the workers' side.

The last Briefing meeting heard the good news that Livingstone is opposed to the witch-hunt. Speakers rightly emphasised the importance of bringing the union rank and file/broad lefts into this struggle. Had Livingstone and his ilk gone to trade union branches in January arguing for labour movement mobilisation to defend Fares Fair and to defeat the cuts, Livingstone would have been well-placed to mobilise those same trade unionists in defence of the Left's politics, its right to organise and against the witch-hunt.

The witch-hunt is the price of the London left's failure to mobilise trade union action in support of the GLC manifesto.

Youthworkers and the ILEA

Several months ago a local youth officer ruled that ILEA youthworkers in his area would not be permitted to attend meetings of the South London Women Working with Young People Group during working hours. Since then, the youthworkers section of GLC/ILEA NALGO, which disputed the ruling, has attempted to discuss the conflict with Labour members of the Authority but with little response. On March 31 over fifty youthworkers lobbied a meeting of the ILEA Further and Higher Education Sub-committee in support of the right of youthworkers to continue to meet with each other during working hours. The statement issued by youthworkers in NALGO on that day is printed below.

After the lobby, the Authority as represented on the local Joint Consultative Committee began to alter its position. A set of criteria defining the right of youthworkers to meet each other on professional business during work time was drawn up and is now being tested in practice. There can be little question that the demonstration of youthworker solidarity at County Hall was the immediate cause of this shift on the part of the Authority.

Many questions on this issue and others remain outstanding. The ILEA youth service as a whole is governed by a bureaucracy frequently insensitive to the rights of the workers it employs and the communities it is supposed to serve. Youthworkers who had hoped that after the 1981 GLC election results a new attitude would be shown by the ILEA towards its own staff have been disappointed. Along with workers in other GLC unions some of us have found ourselves all too often in dispute with a council which as Labour Party members or supporters we helped to elect. When will the GLC/ILEA realise that it must begin to build popular support for its policies first and foremost within the ranks of its own workforce?

THE YOUTHWORKERS' STATEMENT

Unlike teachers, youthworkers almost always work in isolation. Workers in clubs become immersed in the day-to-day running of their own units, and often find it difficult to communicate with other units, even in the same area. Project-based and detached workers work singly, or in pairs, and often have to cope alone with the challenges of new, flexibly defined, and sometimes dangerous work.

Only by meeting with each other, as dictated by special issues and interests, as well as within geographically defined areas, can youthworkers adequately exchange information, pool their ideas and resources, identify the needs of young people (including particular groups such as girls, the unemployed, black youth), and develop new kinds of work in response to those needs. Such tasks have to be undertaken collaboratively. After these meetings youthworkers return to their own patch more fully informed, more enthusiastic about new kinds of work, and more aware of the resources available to them. Therefore they have regarded attendance as an important part of their work.

Our contracts and conditions of service are appropriate to working situations which are much less structured than those in the teaching service generally. We have always enjoyed essential discretion in our use of work time.

Recently, however, our right to organise and attend meetings has been threatened. Wandsworth members of the South London Women Working with Young People Group have been instructed by their youth officer not to attend meetings in work time. There have been similar cases in other boroughs, in spite of the fact that no clear directive has been issued by County Hall. This trend would represent a major change in working conditions, and one effected without consultation with either youthworkers or members of the Authority.

We urge the Further and Higher Education Committee to make clear its support for our right to meet in work time, and in particular that of the South London Women Working with Young People Group. If youthworkers are to respond effectively and flexibly to the social crisis which increasingly affects London's young people, their right to organise meetings during work time must be defended.

WHAT HOUSING CHOICE FOR THE SINGLE AND CHILDLESS?

The problem of homelessness for single and childless people in Camden has become a major issue for the newly elected Labour Group on Camden Council. This follows the Group's decision to go ahead with this year's housing development programme, which includes the rehabilitation and redevelopment of a large number of council-owned properties which are currently licensed to short-life groups or squatted.

Jane Stockton
St Pancras North CLP

The policy of licensing properties to short-life groups was a result of the acquisition by the council of a large number of properties from the private sector in the 1970's. The severe restrictions on capital expenditure imposed by the government meant that there was little money to rehabilitate or redevelop them until now, so instead of them being left empty, short-life groups have occupied and maintained these properties. Now about 2,000 single and childless people are housed by Camden on short-life licenses, and up to 1,000 of these could be affected by the Group's decision.

UNEXPECTED H.I.P. ALLOCATION

The main reason that the situation has developed so suddenly is because of the unexpectedly large Housing Investment Programme (H.I.P.) allocation that Camden has received for 1982/83 (another spin-off from last year's summer riots?). That it was unexpected, is shown by the fact that very few schemes or plans on which to spend the money were in preparation by council officers. All schemes that are ready have therefore been put into this year's development programme in an attempt not to underspend and risk losing part of next year's H.I.P. allocation. The consequence is that the properties which are programmed for redevelopment or rehabilitation are not necessarily those in the worst condition – many of them have had large amounts of mini-HAG (housing association grant) money spent on them – and short-life licensees, many of whom still have up to 3 years of their licenses still to run, have been told with very little notice (the council only has to give 28 days) that their licenses are to be terminated.

Some Group members who argued for a more phased programme of rehabilitation and development, and for the money to be spent instead on extending the repairs and estates modernisation programmes to improve existing council properties, were defeated by a majority who thought that, with 600 families in bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation, the priority should be to increase the council's housing stock.

Inevitably the choice for the Group was that of family homelessness versus single people's homelessness, and once again the single person was found to have the lowest priority.

LOSS OF CONFIDENCE

Unfortunately, at this early stage in the Council's lifetime, this decision will mean that a large number of people in the Borough will have already lost confidence in the determination of the Council to represent their interests. For the thousands of single and childless people on the Council waiting list the decision will signal to them that this is yet another Council who intends to do little to help with their housing needs. For the residents around Castle Road who have fought council plans to redevelop the street for over three years, the Group's decision to go ahead with the redevelopment will mean that they too will have little confidence in the new Council. It is vital therefore that this problem is never allowed to happen again, and there must be a thorough look at the whole Council housing policy as well as the running of the Housing Department.

COMMITMENT TO LICENSEES

In the short term, the Labour Group have made a commitment to try and rehouse all those displaced from short-life property in its current development programme, mainly through extensions of the Camden and GLC flat-share schemes. In the longer term, the Group must recognise that its present policies are totally inadequate to meet the housing needs of the Borough.

The myth that the majority of people live in nuclear families with 2-4 children must be exposed. The 1981 census figures for Camden show that only 20% of households contain children. Single and childless people have been forced into accepting short-life accommodation not out of choice, but because their options on other forms of housing in the Borough are virtually non-existent. The private rented sector has shrunk from 50,000 households in 1971 to 22,000 in 1981.

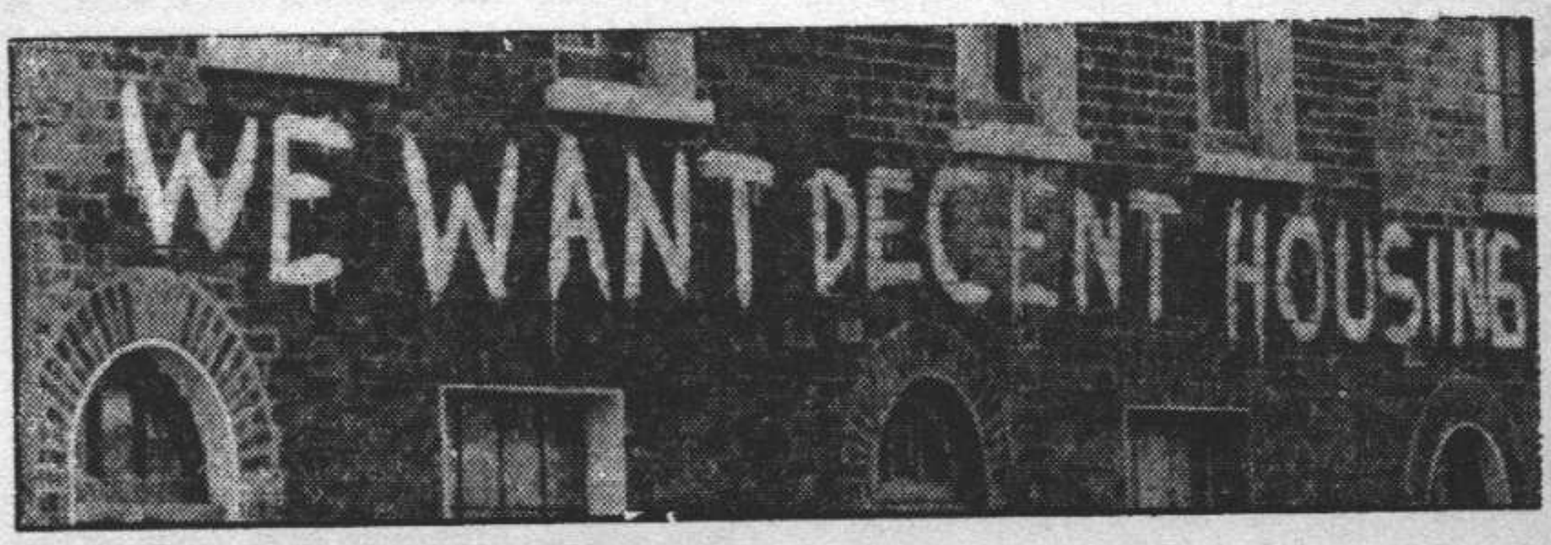
Buying is out of the question for most single people with average flat prices in Camden of £42,000, and only those single people who have special medical grounds stand any chance of being housed by the council. 83% of households on Camden Council's waiting list are childless, and 53% are single people. Yet 63% of Camden's housing stock contains 2 or more bedrooms. The points system, the lettings policy and the type of housing stock all need to be changed to reflect more accurately the needs of childless and single people in the Borough.

MASSIVE RESOURCES

Of course, if we are ever to get away from playing off one group of homeless people against another and really solve the problem of homelessness, we need a massive input of resources into public sector housing. It is ironic that at the present time, far from increasing its housing stock Camden is being forced by the government into selling off some of its better properties to council tenants.

It is about time we stopped being defensive about Labour Party policy on council house sales. We are in danger of ourselves reinforcing the view that public sector housing is second class and only fit for sick and inadequate members of society. Only the public sector can ensure that there are homes for everyone, and government expenditure in the form of mortgage subsidies is an extremely wasteful form of housing expenditure.

We must expose the myth that the Tories are the party of choice in housing. What choice is there at present for single people, especially women, to resist the marriage trap and remain financially independent, *and* have decent housing? What choice is there for women not to have children, *and* to have decent housing? We must make sure that we are providing these choices!



COUNCIL HOUSE SALES:
Heseltine's Powers

THE Right to Buy provisions of the Housing Act 1980 whereby council tenants can buy their flats at discounts ranging from 33 to 50% have now been in force since 3rd October 1980. Since that time hundreds of thousands of Council properties have been lost to the public sector at the cost of those on council waiting lists and of the quality of the public housing stock as the more desirable properties are bought up.

The Labour Party has failed to mount an effective campaign of opposition. Unfortunately, the draconian powers given to Heseltine under the Act are such as to ensure that if a council were to adopt a policy of defiance, the end result would likely be that more rather than less properties were sold.

Entitled to Intervene

By section 23, Heseltine is entitled to intervene if it appears that tenants are having difficulty in exercising their right to buy effectively and expeditiously. If Heseltine intervenes, he can take over sales himself and charge the cost to the local authority. There is no provision giving any protection to the local authority, and Heseltine is authorised to retain the purchase moneys without even paying interest. If Heseltine does intervene, he could go to the extent of appointing Estate Agents who could actively persuade tenants to purchase. Were any authority to refuse to process applications to buy, there is no doubt but that Heseltine would immediately intervene.

Last December Heseltine made an order under this section intervening in Norwich. Sales were being processed, but his reasons were that they were not progressing at the rate of other authorities, that the council were making abnormally high valuations, and they were imposing unreasonable covenants in conveyances. His decision was challenged unsuccessfully in the courts, the courts emphasising the far reaching powers conferred on Heseltine. The determining factor was the view of Heseltine as to whether tenants were experiencing difficulties, and the circumstances in which the courts could intervene were extremely limited.

It is understood that Heseltine has not taken over completely in Norwich, but that he has an office closely monitoring their sales and has obtained firm undertakings from the Council that they will comply with the legislation. He is monitoring the sales of all authorities, but has a 'hit list' in London headed by Greenwich, Lewisham, Southwark and Hackney where intervention is daily threatened. Camden, where only 62 properties have been sold, is for once well down the list.

Few Properties Sold

Relatively few properties have in fact been sold in London. If the purchase price is not a sufficient disincentive, services charges worked out in accordance with a schedule of the Act, but still amounting to £600-£700 probably are. Further problems have arisen on estates due for structural modernisation, and where an application to buy could bring the whole scheme to a halt.

There is clearly a borderline between authorities mounting passive resistance as opposed to a lack of enthusiasm. The Norwich decision would suggest that Heseltine was only justified in intervening in the former. Many authorities seek to show applicants the disadvantages of home ownership and the effects of sales on Council waiting lists. These tactics would seem to be perfectly proper. Where authorities fail to allocate sufficient staff, fix unduly high prices without consulting the District Valuer, or delay applications, Heseltine could seek to intervene. The borderline is a very fine one.

Robert Latham,
Holborn & St. Pancras South CLP

DEFENDING THE CO-OP FOR SOCIALISM

Recently elections were held for the Regional Committee members of London Region Co-op Retail Services. Out of 780,000 members of the Co-op in this area, only 677 voted.

Since the London Co-operative Society merged with CRS at the beginning of last year there has been an extensive pruning of the Co-op retail outlets in London. Management regard this as the only way to save the Co-op in London after a number of years of mismanagement.

These closures may explain some of the low turnout in the elections, and poor publicity might also have contributed. But the Co-op is a fundamental part of the Labour Movement. It should, and can, provide an alternative for working people to the capitalist retail system. It also has an important role to play in supporting USDAW in its campaigning for decent hours and pay for shop staff.

The lack of interest expressed by members, and the large number of Labour Party activists who are not members of either CRS or the Co-op Party, has encouraged management to think that we are not interested in the Co-op contributing to a Socialist Programme. At the May members meetings the Regional General Manager readily declared himself a Socialist but added that as Manager he cannot afford to wear his Socialist or Co-operator hat until he has made London Region CRS profitable! The cuts in shops and in staff along with other measures is the way he wants to achieve this profitability.

The Regional Committee and Political Committee work hard to ensure that Co-op principles are maintained in London Region CRS. But to be successful the involvement of all Labour Party activists is needed. Likewise, in the same way as it is accepted that Borough Councils should use unionised labour, so we should ensure that the GLC and individual Labour Councils buy their supplies wherever possible from the Co-op.

The Co-op should be a practical demonstration of how as Socialists we can successfully run major enterprises in accordance with Clause IV of the Labour Party Constitution. Through active committed members, Regional, District and Political Committees, we can ensure that this aim is realised.

Jerry Hughes,
Political Assistant,
London Co-op Political Committee
(in a personal capacity)

WORKERS' MARCH AGAINST RACISM.

London Labour Briefing is sponsoring ELWAR's London-Brighton march against racism on Sat 4 - Wed 8 September this year. Other sponsors include Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Ted Knight, Arthur Scargill, Anwar Ditta, Paul Boateng and Russell Profitt. The march is to demand action from the TUC on race: 1. Direct action against fascists at work and on the streets; 2. Trade union solidarity with black youth against police harassment; 3. industrial action against deportations; 4. An end to racist hiring, firing and promotion practices.For full details phone 01-274-3951.

Labour-Poland Solidarity Fund: This fund has now reached £380. It is being closed at the end of August. Can we reach £500 by then? Send final donations to: Labour-Poland Solidarity Fund, Account No. 501-99770, Co-op Bank, 110 Leman St., E. 1.

Israel's achievements:
10,000 DEAD
16,000 INJURED
600,000 HOMELESS

Holocaust in Lebanon

Tony Greenstein
— Brighton Kemptown Labour Party

'Kristallnacht' in November 1938 marked the end of an uneasy truce between German Jewry and the Nazis. In any orgy of destruction, thousands of Jewish shops and homes were attacked and had their windows smashed and worse. The action of these SS thugs was sparked off by the assassination of Fomrath, a Nazi diplomat at the French embassy. The parallels between 'Kristallnacht' (so-called because of the thousands of windows that were smashed) and the Holocaust now being visited on the Palestinians is all too clear. The attempted killing of Shlomo Argov, the ultra-reactionary Isralie ambassador to Britain, provided the excuse for the Israelis to launch a murderous attack on the Palestinians in Lebanon.

But there is a difference-less than 40 Jews were killed in 1938 and this shocked thousands into fleeing from what would have been almost certain death, whilst even by the most conservative estimates, 10,000 have died in Lebanon and according to Israeli figures 90% are civilians. Begin, Sharon (Defence Minister), and Eitan (Chief of Staff), realise better than most that there is no simple differentiation between the Palestinians and their political representatives, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. Taking this to its logical conclusion they are quite prepared to wipe out whole Palestinian communities in Lebanon.

The Zionists portray the Palestinians, driven from one country to another, as responsible for the plight of the Lebanese among whom they live, just as the Nazis portrayed the Jews as bringing trouble to those nations they lived among. In the famous words of the German historian, Treitschke "The Jews are our misfortune". The victims are blamed for their own tragedy as the logic of military might and geo-political engineering gains momentum. But we have to go beyond the immediate.

NOT A NEW SITUATION

First it is essential to understand that we are not facing a new situation. From the beginning of the 2nd aliyah (immigration) of Zionist colonists at the beginning of the century, the Palestinians have been driven off their land. At first land was simply bought from absentee landlords and the peasants evicted. Between 1947 and 1949 the Palestinians were systematically put to flight by the Zionist terror groups — Hagannah and Irgun. Begin commanded the latter, which butchered over 250 Palestinians at Dir Yassin, a peaceful village just off the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem road. Even David Shaltiel, Jerusalem commander of Hagannah agreed that Dir Yassin was a peaceful village which had expelled the Fedayeen. This massacre which was compared by the Red Cross representative, Jacques de Raynier to the activities of the SS in Athens (children killed with knives, women raped and mutilated), was justified by Begin in his book 'The Revolt' because it led to a mass stampede of Palestinians.

Since 1967 thousands of Palestinians have either been physically deported or through lack of work and repression been forced to leave the occupied territories. What is happening in South Lebanon is the continuation of Zionist expansion, or as the Nazis termed it, Lebensraum. The reasons for which lie not in the Argov shooting any more than the explanation of Kristallnacht lies in the execution of a Nazi diplomat, nor in the shelling of Israel's northern settlements, but in the Zionists' determination to eliminate any independent political Palestinian presence and their own inherent expansionism.

Secondly, short of a deliberate campaign of mass extermination, the Palestinians whatever defeats they suffer in the immediate, will live to fight again as yet more Palestinians come under Zionist occupation. The Palestinians are in many ways the Jews of the Middle East, residing as they do in every country. They have already come to haunt the Zionist state, which in the early days of the movement chose to ignore them. Theirs is a nationalism of the oppressed unlike Zionism which is an imperialist nationalism of the oppressor.

TURNED THEIR BACKS

Thirdly, and it is here that the political mistakes of the PLO majority have come home to roost, the Arab regimes, ALL the Arab regimes, have once again turned their backs on the Palestinians. Long on rhetoric and short on practical help, these regimes have never lost an opportunity to stab the Palestinians in the back. The PLO which grew out of Fatah and the Arab Nationalist Movement, came about because the Arab regimes were unable and unwilling to do anything to practically aid the fight of the Palestinians. They used their verbal support to try and bolster their own regimes by deflecting the anger of the Arab masses onto the Zionists (whilst at the same time having secret relationships with Israel). The Palestinians were discriminated against in the countries they fled to. The first PLO guerillas were killed not by the Zionists but by Arab bullets. In 1970 the Jordanians, aided by the Israelis, drove the PLO out in what was later known as Black September. The Iraquis looked on and the Syrians quickly withdrew the one token division they had sent in, with the conservative Assad taking over the reigns of power shortly after.

In 1976 the Syrians intervened in the Lebanese Civil War on the side of the Phalangists in their battle with the Lebanese National Movement and the Palestinians. The Arab regimes are loyal to their own class interests and their Western masters. This is as true for Assad of Syria and Sadam Hussein of Iraq, both of whom don't allow the PLO to operate freely in their countries, as for Hussein of Jordan and the Saudi royal clique.

The PLO constitutional clause of non-interference in the internal affairs of Arab states (ie regimes) ties their hands behind their backs. For one thing the Arab regimes have never hesitated to interfere in Palestinian affairs with both Syria and Iraq creating their own front organisations, Saiqa and the Arab Liberation Front, within the PLO. The differences between the Rejectionist and Accepting Arab regimes over the question of negotiations with Israel and having a West Bank state are in reality merely the differences between class regimes expressed at one stage removed. The Palestinians are used as the letter box for the petty squabbles of the Arab regimes.

What the Zionists seem likely to do is to set up a 'Christian' state dominated by the Phalangists, to act as a buffer state, just as the Assyrians did with Judah 2500 years ago. According to the June issue of the anti-fascist magazine, Searchlight, the Phalangists are providing weapons and

(CONTINUED)

training for the major European Nazi groups who use them to attack Jewish communities in Europe.

LABOUR COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE

For too long the case for the Palestinians has gone by default in the Labour Party and wider movement. On Wednesday June 30 40 people meeting in County Hall started on the road to rectifying that situation. Members of different Constituency Parties as far away as Bradford and from all sorts of different groups within the Labour Party met to form the Labour Committee on Palestine. First we had to exclude members of the Labour Friends of Israel who told us that they had come along because of their concern for the Palestinians! A statement of agreed aims and principles were agreed after a long and productive discussion and a series of activities were agreed upon.

There will be a picket of the Israeli airliner, El Al at 12.00 on Saturday 17 July, in Regent Street. We will be holding a major rally to launch the Committee on July 23rd, and we will be holding a meeting at the Labour Party conference in October. We intend to obtain as many signatories as possible for our statement of aims and to build for a national conference in November as a result of our activities.

Apart from CLPs, groups represented at the meeting included Socialist Organiser, London Labour Briefing, Brighton Labour Briefing, Socialist Challenge, Labour Herald, Jewish Socialist Group. We hope to be able to set up the LCP on a national basis as soon as possible and to provide a list of speakers. There were elections for the four officerships and a ten person steering committee was also elected. If you wish to join the LCP (individual membership £2, group affiliations £5 wards, £10 CLPs) contact Andrew Hornung, Secretary Labour Committee on Palestine, c/o 23 Leghorn Rd, NW10.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

But what can we do? For too long we have allowed the Zionists of Poale Zion and the Labour Friends of Israel to go unchallenged. For too long the claims of a 'Jewish' state have gone unchallenged (notwithstanding that Orthodox Jews opposed Zionism from its inception), whilst the Palestinians were ignored. At this very moment the Jewish Chronicle is running a campaign to assert that only 500 Palestinians have died in the war. Such claims remind me of those latter day nazis in the National Front who try to pretend, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary, that 'only' a few thousand Jews died in the Holocaust from illness etc. Zionism is very good at rewriting history, even if it does have to borrow its method from their Nazi mentors, though the editor of the Jewish Chronicle should remember that even the National Front had the decency to wait 25 years before setting out on a monstrous revision of history. It is incumbent on those of us who are socialists and members of Trade Unions and or the Labour party to help build the newly formed Labour Committee on Palestine. It is even more necessary for those of us who are Jewish to challenge and fight that which is being done in our name to the Palestinians. If fascism, racism and genocide are wrong, then they are wrong no matter who are the victims and no matter who are the perpetrators.

Committee for Withdrawal from the South Atlantic

The Labour Committee for Withdrawal from the South Atlantic was established at the beginning of June to campaign in the labour movement for a policy of complete military withdrawal by Britain from the South Atlantic. We oppose the stationing or maintenance by Britain of a military garrison in the Falklands. The committee is a broad based one and does not have any position on the thorny question of Argentine sovereignty or United Nations intervention. But it does forthrightly oppose Britain's claim to the islands and the support that the leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party has given to Thatcher's jingoism.

War is always a testing time for socialists. As supporters of the Labour Committee, we think the PLP has failed that test miserably. Many comrades on the left in the party have been confused, to say the least, on what position to take on the war in the South Atlantic. For some it is not a problem that Britain has no right whatsoever to be there.

The facts speak for themselves: There is no justification, geographical, historical or otherwise for the islands to be British. In 1969 the British government was negotiating to cede claims to sovereignty. Tory immigration laws prevent the right of Falklanders to enter Britain. The real problem facing many of these comrades is that Britain went to war against a *fascist* regime, Argentina. Surely we have to oppose these dictators, they ask. Yes, but not by supporting Thatcher. Thatcher and the Tories have never been known for their opposition to fascists like Galtieri. Quite the contrary. One of the first acts of the new government in 1979 was to close the door on the Argentinian refugees fleeing from these same dictators. They supported dictator Gairy in office until the Grenadian people overthrew him. Britain's navy, the third largest in the world, exists to back up regimes like Argentina and directly intervene if necessary to prop them up against internal opposition. Noting Thatcher has ever done in her life has aided the Argentinian workers one little bit. Supporting Thatcher's war in the South Atlantic was not opposing fascism, just the opposite.

NO RIGHT TO BE THERE

One it is agreed that Britain has no right to be there, that's an end to it. It doesn't matter what the nature of the regime Britain is at war with, our responsibility as socialists is to oppose Britain's role. To do otherwise is blatantly racist and paternalistic. What right do we have to say that British labour movement knows better than the Argentinian workers who have been struggling against the military junta since it came to power six years ago? We can't even get rid of Thatcher!

The best support we can give Argentinian workers is to support solidarity campaigns in this country, campaign against Tory and Labour government selling arms to this junta and call for Britain's withdrawal from the South Atlantic. British troops will never be used to defend Argentinian workers rising up in opposition to the junta. The leadershp of the PLP has played a treacherous role in backing Thatcher — treacherous to both British and Argentinian workers. Perhaps that is not so surprising when it is remembered that the last Labour cabinet was Argentina's biggest supplier and fitted out the Argentine navy. Hardly an indication that Labour seriously wanted to fight the junta.

But all these facts are known to most comrades. Why then is there so little support for a Labour Committee for Withdrawal from the South Atlantic? Because the British Labour Party and trade unions have always had a blind spot when it comes to foreign policy. We have to look no further than Northern Ireland and the bipartisanship between Tories and Labour to give an example too close to home for some.

EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED

Many comrades, while sympathising with the positions we hold demanding Britain's withdrawal from the South Atlantic do not really think it important enough to devote time and energy to such a campaign. But since that war, everything in Britain has changed. From being the most hated post war government, the Tories now have enormous popularity. Labour and its leader, Michael Foot has sunk to an all-time low. The left, by not organising massive opposition to the PLP leaders has been weakened, thus making it easier for a successful witchhunt. Health, rail and other workers, moving into struggle against the Tories are facing a triumphant, victorious Thatcher who has been supported by Foot and other Labour leaders all down the line. Why should these same workers now look to Labour to support them in their war against Thatcher?

This is why the Labour Committee for Withdrawal from the South Atlantic exists. We want to change Labour's policy on this and show workers in this country and throughout the world, including Argentina, that Labour is on their side, not the side of Thatcher and her kind.

For further information on Labour Committee for Withdrawal from the South Atlantic, write c/o 23 Leghorn Rd, London NW10.

Tessa van Gelderen
Brent South CLP

Civil Defence

John Plant,
Newham Councillor

BREAKING THE CONSPIRACY

THE recently elected Labour Councillors have not been in office very long, but probably long enough to begin to get an impression of the limits which Central Government, right wing Group leaderships and senior Council officers conspire to place on our political activity.

In organising to break through this conspiracy and push our political positions into the centre of local and national debates, we will naturally be looking for issues where there is local support for demands which can, if led and organised effectively, result in powerful campaigns. In this article I would like to suggest that the question of Local Authorities' involvement in 'Civil Defence' is one such issue which left Labour Councillors should take up.

The 'Civil Defence' question has been pushed back into the centre of attention by the Tory Government's study and White Paper on the 'Home Defence Review'. The whole of non-military 'civil defence' was effectively put into mothballs in the early 1960s, when the framework of thinking was being formed by people like the 'Spies for Peace' who found and made public several of the 'Regional Seats of Government', as well as propaganda based around the 'War Game'.

Central Government policy and planning was heavily influenced by the idea of a steady build up of international tension before any nuclear or other hostility, which would allow adequate time to get the machinery back in order if it were ever needed. As a result the old Civil Defence Corps were disbanded, and the issue vanished from local politics.

Behind the scenes the military, the police and senior administrators in the Civil Service however went on keeping their plans up to date, but there was no real change in the situation until the Thatcher Government came to power. By that time the international situation was different. The technology of both nuclear and 'conventional' war had advanced enormously, and planning had to take account of the possibility of things like anti-missile systems, and even satellite warfare.

Offensive

The Thatcher Government was also operating in a much more difficult international political situation. The post-war boom had been brought to an end, and the capitalist states were being forced to go onto the offensive both against the working class in the developed countries and client states, and also against the deformed and degenerated workers' states which remained to a large degree outside their market system. This then was the context of the increases in military spending which the Tories set out upon, and which the Home Defence Review was part of.

The Review found that plans in the local authorities, the nationalised industries and the health service were in pretty poor shape after many years of neglect, and needed a lot of work to bring them up to date. This process is still going on, and is the point on which socialists, particularly Councillors, but also on bodies like the Health Authorities can do a lot to uncover and expose.

The most important point to be brought out is the way in which the apparatus of local government can be integrated into the war machine. Preparations for this are well advanced. Senior officers in local government are well aware of the roles they would be expected to play in wartime, and central government goes to considerable trouble and expense to keep them involved.

The Chief Executive of every local authority attends courses at the Home Defence College at Easingwold, where he (or occasionally she) is trained in the special responsibility the Government imposes on them for making war preparations locally. Many second rank council officers, heads of departments, etc., also attend these courses. The Chief Executive is expected to build up a team of officers to take over the government in the event of wartime, and this team will be kept informed and trained.

Most of these preparations proceed very secretively, without the elected councillors being aware of them. The money spent on them is usually hidden behind obscure words in the annual budget, or merged in with legitimate emergency planning for things like the London flood risk, or the possibility of Flixborough-type industrial accidents. The secrecy is almost completely effective most of the time, which only serves to emphasise the problems which socialist councils face from senior officers whose views are very different.

'Figurehead' role

Occasionally, Conservative or right wing Labour councillors, usually long serving and established leaders, attend courses at Easingwold, presumably because they will be needed in a 'figurehead' role if a war emergency arises. This will be their only role because power will be effectively transferred into the hands of the Chief Executive, and his team, who will not have to report to the elected councils at all. They will work directly with the military and the police in keeping order both before the attack and in the devastated areas after the attack. A secret Home Office circular exposed by the New Statesman assured the Chief Executives that after the imaginary return to 'normal' government in the wake of a nuclear war, they need not be concerned about any unpleasant consequences of any of their actions, (executions or requisitioning of food and fuel supplies included). They can expect to conduct themselves in a completely dictatorial manner with total impunity. (So bear that in mind the next time you want to be abusive to your Chief Executive for his obstructive use of Council standing orders. If you are on his hit list you could be in big trouble).

I think that the Association of Socialist Councillors can do a great deal to break up war planning in London and expose it for what it is – a mixture of deception (hoping that we will believe that the plans are really to defend us) and conspiracy to maintain the capitalist government in power through and after the next war crisis. It is not an easy task. The GLC is under great pressure from its own officers and from the Government to press ahead with the London War Plan, and it may turn out to be illegal for them to refuse to do so.

Local support

We need to set up a working group to develop the most effective strategy for exposing the Government's war plans and their local implications, which are the key to winning local support. I hope that readers of this article will contact me to share ideas and information. In the interim let me propose certain courses of action that socialist councillors might begin to try.

Find out which of your Council's officers hold which posts in the Borough War Plan, what training they have had and where?

How much does your borough spend on 'Home Defence'? Get as much detail of this expenditure as you can. Find out which premises are included in the War Plan as borough and local control centres and how many people they will accommodate.

Try to have the War Plan made public through your library service. Islington and Lambeth have both made some progress this way.

A useful first step is to get your council to declare itself a nuclear free zone, and then to argue for the logical consequences, that the only way to put that decision into effect is to use the Council machinery to obsctruct the progression towards nuclear war.

Move resolutions to keep the military out of the schools, careers service advice and civic celebrations like borough carnivals. Although this is largely a token gesture it is very useful in flushing out the militarists who have infiltrated a large number of Labour Groups.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

Disablement ~

The following articles are all written by activists in the Labour movement. The other label that they all have in common is that they are disabled. In writing from their own personal experiences about the problems of disablement, they show very clearly that the problems are more often than not to do with the restrictions society imposes on them and its attitudes towards them, rather than with the disability itself. Their experiences show us that our search for alternative ways of organising our homes and our workplaces must consider the needs of everyone and not just the able-bodied.

You're the problem, NOT US!

For those of us who are handicapped, there is a very real problem posed by our reluctance to talk openly about the difficulties we experience. In a general hostile society, to expose our weaknesses is to increase our vulnerability. During a discussion with a number of comrades on "positive discrimination (in the context of ethnic minorities and women), there came to my mind the typically cruel taunt levelled at a visually handicapped Deptford youngster by contemporaries in the early fifties: "Boss-eyed Bill from Tanners Hill, never works and never will." This childish curse or prophesy seemed to me to epitomise the plight of being handicapped. I am visually handicapped, and in the last ten years have had to contend with long-term unemployment forced on me by a society which displays a total lack of understanding of the difficulties and needs which handicapped people face.

THE CHOICE

My inherited eye-condition is not in itself a serious handicap. In an otherwise normal eye, the iris (the coloured circle) is not complete, so that more light enters than the eye can tolerate. This in turn gives rise to high frequency nystagmus (a trembling movement of the eye), with the effect of reducing vision-sharpness. As I say, this in itself is not so serious as the fact that to be handicapped even slightly prompts a response among others of ignorance, indifference and discrimination which becomes the real handicap. We are pressed to succumb – if we make a point of our handicap at all – to society's expectation that we should fit conveniently into a pigeon-hole for the "disabled". So we have a choice: either we insist on being accepted as "normal" (whatever that may mean), out of our desire for independence and equality, in which case no-one will know what our real needs are; or we stress our handicap until people take notice, in which case the response may be a glazed look, a stifled yawn or the implication that we are expressing a plea for sympathy. We have placed ourselves in the



Bob Geis, Lewisham East CLP

category of the "disabled", with all that that will mean.

DISCUSSION TABOOS

Most of us avoid voicing our problems because of such fears. Having said that, the only way we can break this taboo and create a better understanding of our real needs is for *us* to overcome our reluctance to talk, and for those around us and in authority to be prepared to listen. So, when invited to write this article for the "street-life" supplement of *Briefing*, it took me some time to come to terms with the idea, and I really found it quite difficult to set about writing (one of the reasons why I began with the nasty little children's verse). I do hope some genuine discussion can be generated, instead of the "sympathy" and "agreement" we usually get. A recent bad experience was the way in which, in Lewisham, the Borough Local Government Committee, after much pressure from me, included a section in our election manifesto on "the handicapped". This section, submitted by myself, stated that whilst there is a great deal shared in common by ethnic minorities, women and the handicapped alike, "we have not even begun scratching the surface in relation to the inequality of the handicapped", and that "in many ways the situation they face is far more serious than that of other 'minority' groups"

FEATURE ON DISABLEMENT

You're the problem (continued)

The passage said that we aren't asking for sympathy or just for social services: we demand the right to know that our very real talents are going to be *understood* by society and *used*. While the whole passage's inclusion, verbatim, in the Manifesto was most welcome, the *way* the committee reached its decision was in itself an anti-climax and indicative in a sense of a hollow victory – for it generated no discussion at all! This was somewhat perplexing. Did the comrades consider the issue to be so totally non-controversial and/or uninteresting as to warrant no comment? Did they consider the subject to be a bit of a bore, to be dealt with as swiftly as possible? Or were they unwilling, too embarrassed or simply unable to discuss the taboo surrounding the handicapped – a subject they didn't have any clear understanding of?

THE REAL HANDICAP

In any event, the experience showed that the labour movement can be as non-comprehending as the employers or society in general. It is always assumed that we want charity, whereas what we really want is to be allowed to be ourselves, with all the talents and not just the disabilities taken note of. In connection with employment, the biggest mistake I ever made, perhaps, was to turn down the opportunity to go on to grammar school. For having done so, I entered the employment field as a visually-handicapped youth carrying a green card as proof of the fact that I was registered under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts. It soon became evident that this Green Card not only conferred no benefit – it was in itself an additional handicap! To disclose to an employer that one was registered almost certainly meant not getting the job. Most employers never filled the statutory 3 per cent under the quota system – they broke the law with impunity! Yet if you didn't declare that you were registered as disabled, you would be constantly vulnerable to the consequences of this being found out, particularly in the event of injury at work.

My basic point, though, is that to be categorised as "disabled" is to have one's real talents masked. All kinds of precautions are taken to "protect" you, and these are the real handicap you face. Apart from the fact that jobs through the Disabled Resettlement Officer (DRO) at the Employment Exchange were always restricted to low-paid, unpopular vacancies, the DRO's "assessment" as to what I was "fit" for narrowed down my choice even further. In general, we don't need such "protection" from self-injury in "normal" jobs. In my case, I was recommended that I ought not to work in a dusty atmosphere, or under fluorescent lighting, or near moving machinery! Yet I have been a cyclist for thirty years, and have spent the best part of seventeen years in the engineering trade working heavy machinery, lathes, mills etc. without injury attributable to my handicap. Most handicapped people, I suggest, are like me in being cautious and careful. We are only too well aware of our limitations – much more aware, I would suggest, than the average "normal" person – and we exercise far more caution in the things we do. Moreover, one's senses and reflexes are sharpened to compensate for the handicap. In my experience, we ourselves are better equipped than the professionals to judge for ourselves what jobs we are "fit" to do.

Also, I have become totally sick and tired of being told by the Department of Employment that I "fall between two stools", and that the "Acts do not provide for people in your position". An example is that my vision is considered "too good" for me to be eligible for training as for "the blind", yet whenever I applied for a course of training at the Government Training Centres (GTC) I was turned down on account of my poor vision. In 1971 I applied for a place on a pilot training-scheme for computer programming, and agreed to take an assessment course at Waddon Industrial Rehabilitation Unit (IRU) to prove my ability at maths – which I did. But the Department's regional manager, who said he sat on the interviewing panel for the computer course, told me that I was "not psychologically suited" for computers. An application for a course of commercial training at Princeton College, suggested by the DRO at the IRU, was rejected on the usual grounds of vision.

So in the end I approached our constituency MP, Roland Moyle, asking him to press for some form of bridging legislation to avoid this "two stools" trap and make training courses flexible enough to embrace the *partially* sighted. Instead of doing this he just wrote to the local DE and got a reply suggesting I had been rejected from training in the light of advice from the IRU at Waddon, who recommended instead 'routine clerical employment with a sympathetic employer' (in my experience the Department's term for an employer prepared to take on a handicapped person to do a woman's job for a woman's wage'). I replied to Roland Moyle that he had 'missed the point altogether' and that we 'do not require sympathy, but would appreciate a fighting chance on equal terms, with a measure of understanding of the problems partially sighted people face'. I pressed the need for bridging legislation once again, but received the answer that 'the DE. . . have all the legal powers they need. . . but in *their* judgement you would be better off acquiring (*sic.*) clerical skills . . . there is no scope for legislation as I see it.' It was ironically at this time (December 1971) that BBC TV's 'London This Week' programme stated categorically that the acquisition of training through the GTC was everyone's *right*, not a privilege (another media lie!). But the BBC weren't interested, and in a somewhat caustic reply to Roland Moyle I suggested that they, 'like yourself, seem to wish to maintain a conspiracy of silence regarding the uselessness of a training scheme which does not provide for those individuals most in need of it', but despite my repeated requests and the later publication in the *South London Press* of a letter pressing the point, Roland Moyle failed to respond in any way. At last year's Parliamentary Selection Conference, in reply to my question concerning equality and training for the visually handicapped, he said it was imply a matter for the Social Services Department!

MIDDLE-CLASS 'CLOSED SHOP'

All this explains why, over the last ten years, long-term unemployment has been yet another handicap to contend with. During this period I have been short-listed for interviews on many occasions, particularly for posts in the field of community work, on the basis of a strong CV, but without success. There seems to be virtually a 'closed shop' situation in this area – in the sense that it's dominated by an exclusive circle of middle-class 'professionals' who seemingly want to exclude working-class applicants and prefer fluent and flowery talkers. One problem for the visually handicapped during interviews concerns 'eye-contact': as in social life generally, normal-sighted people often misinterpret our vision activity and draw the wrong conclusions. Equally, comrades and acquaintances who pass unrecognized on the street may well get the wrong impression and assume that they are being deliberately ignored, unless they are aware of the vision difficulty. Even more offensive is the assumption in some quarters of public opinion that the physically handicapped must also be deficient mentally. My experience in seeking employment in the community work area has been that the professional quality of 'social awareness' has been conspicuous by its absence, and the fact emerges that those people who service the community, include local authorities, show no more understanding of, or tolerance or understanding towards, the needs of the handicapped than do the profit-motivated capitalist employers! This long succession of failed interviews has taken its toll, and has had a profound psychological 'shell-shocked' effect upon my ability to handle an interview situation. It seems difficult to be believed when we say that, while our actions or situations may not always seem 'normal', we who are handicapped have the same sensitivities, expectations and aspirations as anyone else, and – allowing for specific limitations – are just as intelligent, competent and capable.

Alternative Talking Newspapers Collective is a collective of blind and partially-sighted people who are working together to campaign for access to information. They produce two monthly talking magazines – Left Out (a digest of extracts taken from the socialist press ranging from the Leveller to Militant) and Women's Tape Over (a digest of articles from feminist magazines – organised by women). Both are available by subscription at £3 per year and provide one cassette per month on a returnable basis. Write to: A.T.N.C., Box 35, 136 Kingsland High St., E8 2NS.

* Spare Rib is also now available on cassette. For £3 per month you receive 2 cassettes (again on a returnable basis). For details write to: Spare Rib Collective, 27 Clerkenwell Close, EC1R 0AT.

Gay Blind Group has recently been formed by some gay blind men and women to share information and set up a cassette lending library. Meetings are held every 2 weeks in London. For details, write (in print) to Philip, 33 Crossley St., Holloway, N7. Gay, sighted helpers are also welcome.

S.A.D. FIGHTBACK

S.A.D. (Sisters Against Disablement) is a group of feminist women who got together to form a collective because we had had enough of being treated as second class citizens.

As feminists we wished to use the understanding that feminism has given women to explore their oppression. We see many parallels with our oppression that can be explored in this way. Just as the term racism has been coined to describe the way black people are oppressed, and sexism is the way women are oppressed, so we see our oppression in terms of handicapism.

HANDICAPISM

What is handicapism? We think it is obvious; it is the means by which we are oppressed and so we use the term in the same ways as racism or sexism. Disabled women are doubly disadvantaged in society; both by sexism and handicapism and we have to organise together to fight back. Handicapism is about social and economic oppression, segregation both in terms of access (buildings, places of entertainment, communication systems), condescending attitudes (even when masked as 'help') and being relegated to Christmas and the charity collection boxes.

It's about being used (and abused) by the medical profession/social work profession/the charity business and many more.

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

In Sisters Against Disablement we are concerned with taking the position of disablement out of the understanding of disability as individual tragedy and show it for what it really is, political, a social minority group like gays, ethnic minorities etc.

We are dis-abled by society the same as these other groups are and we link our oppression with theirs. We will no longer be seen as pathetic, helpless, second class and we demand our rights and an equal place in society. The Labour Party can assist us in our struggle. This of course will mean adopting a radical position regarding disablement and by passing policies that will strike a blow at handicapism, which is rife in this country.

CHARTER OF RIGHTS

As the women's movement has seven demands, similarly SAD has six demands for a charter of rights.

1. Compulsory legislation concerning access. All new buildings to be built accessibly. Old ones to be given grants for conversion.
2. Legislation for positive discrimination in the workplace.
3. Closing down of segregated schooling (special schools), segregated work places (sheltered workshops), and segregated residence institutions. Compulsory integration of schooling.
4. End of means test for Women's pension, comparable payments to be made with men.
5. Planning for and implementation of a fully accessible public transport system. Whilst this is in process all segregated transport (i.e. Dial-a-ride) to be run by and for disabled people.
6. State Benefits concerning disabled women paid directly to the disabled woman concerned to be used at her own discretion.

The adoption of these demands would go some way to crushing the handicapism that is rife in Britain today. We demand the support of the Labour Party, as a people's party, in making sure our rights are given full priority.

If any woman is interested in joining our struggle contact SAD at 54 Whitby Court, Parkhurst Road, London N7 0SU, or phone 01-607 3671. Subscription for membership and newsletter (quarterly) £2.50, payable to Sisters Against Disablement. We have regular meetings so come and join us. AB (able bodied) women welcome.



Catharine Tate

Sheltered housing or segregation ?

Epilepsy: Exposing the Myths

There are two sides to most illnesses or disabilities. There's what it does to you – how it feels, limits or extends you. And there's the way it affects people's ideas about you. I've long thought that with epilepsy, it's others' attitudes which are most disabling. It varies of course depending on the type and degree, but most people have absorbed the myths and none of them are helpful.

THE FIT AND AFTER

I started having epileptic fits in my early teens. The physical effects are no big deal. A few times a year, usually just after waking up I lost consciousness and twitched/thrashed about for 10-20 minutes. Then I came round. Until then it was a blank to me, but I'd wake up to people staring anxiously at me.

If they were strangers they'd have shoved something in my mouth. It's the one story everyone knows about epilepsy – that you'll swallow (or, depending on where you heard it, bite off) your tongue. It's actually very dangerous to the person having the fit to try and do this. If their mouth is open there's no problem anyway. If it's closed it may take considerable force to open it. People regularly get their necks broken this way. Cut tongues heal. broken necks kill. I never bit my tongue. So I'd lie looking around at strange people making unintelligible noises. There's an awful moaning and shrieking periodically, my head hurts and I feel very sick. I try and work out what's going on. Who are they, what are they doing and how did I get here? The more I think the more I realise I don't know. The questions get more basic until I find I don't know who I am. That's really frightening. Then things start getting clearer; words come back to me and some of their meanings; I realise the noise is me; I recognise the people; I'm sick and feel better; I take a couple of paracetamol and go to sleep. An hour later I'm fine – better than usual in fact because I'm very relaxed like after a particularly all encompassing orgasm. I'd probably be a couple of hours late for school or work.

THE CAUSES

Nobody seems to know why I have fits. In general they are caused by some kind of brain damage – maybe from high fever, a blow to the head or suffocation. During a fit the electrical impulses in the brain go off down the wrong pathways, rather like when bits of an electrical circuit touch that shouldn't, but without the fusebox to stop the flow of current. The more often it happens the more likely it is to happen again which is why it's important that children's febrile convulsions are treated.

I have grand mal. There are other kinds of which the commonest is petit mal. This is a very brief loss of consciousness. The two people I've known who had it were quite capable of picking themselves up straight after and carrying on as before.

In women epilepsy seems to be particularly linked to hormonal changes. (I don't know much about men and epilepsy and don't know if this is true for them.) Puberty seems to be a common time for it to start, but I've known associations with pregnancy, the Pill, and the menopause. My fits were usually just before my period was due which lends a whole new meaning to pre-menstrual tension. They started to tail off when I went on the Pill though I'm told there's no tie-up.



Other things affect it too – strobes for instance and other types of flashing lights. The Dr Who music makes me feel quite faint, and I can't smoke. I black out after a couple of drags, but I've never met anyone else who can't.

THE TREATMENT

There are lots of drugs to control it. I've run into two major side-effects, both with phenytoin (brand name Epanutin). Firstly it doesn't go with the Pill – it stops it working. This wouldn't be such a problem if more doctors knew about it. Neither my neurologist or my gynaecologist did, and both prescribed both at the same time. Later I found out it was known to increase considerably the chance of having a baby with spina bifida. I changed to a different drug only to find it listed in MIMS as 'Not to be given to women of childbearing age'. My present neurologist says almost all anti-convulsants are teratogenic – they cause deformities in the children of women taking them. I know of no way out of this, and it's something all women with epilepsy should be aware of if they want to have children.

I've been taking my pills for twenty years now. It causes lots of people great hilarity and feelings of moral superiority to find someone so unredeemed from taking the doctor's nasties which I find really sick. For nearly half that time now I haven't had a fit. I still need them. If they're a few hours late I start having difficulty opening my eyes, walking straight and talking normally. Otherwise life is completely normal. All my drugs, including those for unrelated illnesses, are free as I'm registered as being chronic sick.

That leaves me with other people's hangups.

THE MYTHS AND THE FEARS

In my home village people still believe it's the devil's touch and caused by someone sinning. It's better down here, but there's a common confusion of epilepsy with mental handicap (very common I find in people who've seen you have a fit), and mental illness – that you can't think logically, follow things through, cope with emotion. Challenged, they deny thinking like this, but they 'wouldn't want you to have too much stress'. It's very similar to the assumptions made about women and the result is the same. You become a doll, unable to act and very much the 'patient' with no say in treatment.

When I also had petit mal in my late teens my family were very over-protective, which did nothing to counteract the effect of the Disablement Officer who was telling me to be realistic, I'd never hold down a job. For escaping that I must largely thank the TGWU who got me a job, and Cambridge Co-op who said, 'Oh good, you'll make up our Disablement Quota.'

Such employers are rare. They produce the most amazing reasons why you couldn't do the work. For the last few years I've been able to lie to them and always do. Away from work I always tell people about it. The usual reaction is to say 'You don't look like one' (what do we look like?), and then quietly confess later to a sister with it. Or they back away in case you do it here and now. It's an attempt at some kind of education but very inadequate. But what else is going to get rid of the prejudices and the stupid, life-blighting discrimination?

Jan Morgan
St Pancras North CLP

HAPPY DAYS IN BEDSIT LAND

Linda Clarke
Wood Green CLP

There I was, sitting at my local railway station with a suitcase and an old frying pan that my mum had given me with a warning look in her eye (and it wasn't about the danger of eating too many fry-ups!). I had been booted out of the nest for having Friday/Saturday night fever — never wanting to stop dancing and always missing the last train home! I was about to start my new life in Bedsit land.

My sister had been living in her bedsit for about 7 years and her landlord owned half a street in Belsize Park. In the late 1960's there was always a room going spare and I was moving in to a room in the house next door to her. Various friends of my sister had moved into the street over the years and they were all very friendly. There was always something going on in our bedsit community.

A REAL COMMUNITY

There were 12 bedsits in each house, they weren't too bad as our landlord had repair men working for him so everything got fixed more or less straight away. We had a real community there. It wasn't long before I knew all the people in my house. Now and again someone in the street would have a party, sometimes I had one. John upstairs would have the drinks in his room, Christine downstairs would have the coats and I would have food and dancing. I would stick a notice up in the hall inviting everyone to come along and the people in the other houses would get to hear about it through the network. My sister had a garden flat and on many sunny Sundays we would all crowd in to her garden for a shared nosh-up. Many people who had seemed shy



and lonely when they first moved in would soon invite everyone round to their room for a get together. There was an old lady in my sister's house who wasn't able to walk outside; everyone kept an eye on her and popped in to see her. When one of the women in the house next door to me had a baby there was an instant network of support and baby-



sitting. I lived in that street for 4 years my sister stayed on for another 5. The bedsits are no longer there, the houses were all converted into private flats to be sold.

RUSHED TO HOSPITAL

The last bedsit I lived in was at Muswell Hill. Three weeks after I moved in I was rushed to hospital and diagnosed as having Multiple Sclerosis. I was worried about leaving hospital but at least the other tenants in the house seemed nice and friendly, and when I arrived home there was a 'welcome home' card on my table and a vase of flowers! There was always someone to help me if I couldn't manage to do something. After 1½ years the landlord asked us to leave, the house was converted into flats and sold.

ON MY OWN

I moved into a council flat, and for the first time in many years I felt very lonely, isolated and depressed. A few times after I moved in I would go and stay with friends because I couldn't bear to be there on my own. You see, I now had my own front door, my own bathroom and phone and outside, a long silent corridor. I missed hearing familiar voices and people popping in. I never saw my neighbours and I felt very vulnerable. Knocking on another bedsit door was always much easier for me than knocking on a front door in a block, as some of the barriers were already removed because we were sharing the house.

THE STREET WAS EVERYBODY'S

The only other time I experienced that feeling of 'community' was where I lived as a child and teenager. It was a small street and everybody knew each other. We felt the street was everybody's, and, as hardly anybody owned a car , it was very safe for us kids to play there. If someone was ill a neighbour would run in with some food. If anyone died everyone would chip in for some flowers! So I have found that living in a house in a street and living in a bedsit was much much better than my experiences of living in blocks of flats, although life in the block I live in has now changed for the better. I have made some new friends here from my LP Branch who have also experienced bedsit life and therefore it was really easy for us to open our homes to each other. (We've been working on the other flats!)

I realise that my own experiences have been very different from those of many other people. But I wanted to share my memories because I'm sure that in a socialist society, where we wouldn't be exploited by private landlords, and where everybody would feel stronger anyway bedsit life would be really great for anyone who didn't need much floor space! Probably even blocks of flats would be tolerable! In the meantime, if we *are* aware of the problems, we should try taking a deep breath and reaching out.

Liberation Network

Liberation Network for People with Disabilities was formed over 2 years ago by a group of people with disabilities. It was initially seen as a support group, but it has now also taken on a campaigning role. Small branches are now forming all over the country – Scotland, Birmingham, Bristol, Sheffield – and regular monthly meetings are held in London. Full membership is open to anyone with a disability. Able-bodied people can join as associate members. For further information, write to Mitcheline Mason, Flat 4, 188 Ramsden Road, Balham SW12.

Liberation Network for People with Disabilities produces a magazine called 'In from the Cold'. It is a triannual publication and is written by and for people with disabilities. It contains a mixture of letters, articles and features written mainly from a personal point of view, and also information, poems and drawings. Copies are 40p per issue or £1.20 for a yearly subscription, and cassette tape recordings are also available. Write to: Editor, In from the Cold, Flat 4, 188 Ramsden Road, Balham SW12. Cheques/P.Os should be made payable to 'In from the Cold'.

Students Disabilities Campaign: Any disabled students who would like details of this Campaign should contact: Students Disabilities Campaign, London Students Organisation, ULU, Malet St, WC1. 01-637-5892.

Gemma – an organisation of lesbians with disabilities can be contacted at BM Box 5700, London WC1N 3XX.

Supplement Editorial Meetings

The first meeting of the editorial board of the 'Street-Life Supplement' agreed that future meetings would be held on a monthly basis prior to the *Briefing* editorial board meetings. It was also agreed that the meetings will, at least for the time being, be open to women only. All editorial decisions relating to the Supplement will as far as possible be made at these meetings, although a report will be made to the *Briefing* editorial board. It was recognised however that, as is the case for the rest of *Briefing*, some decisions may have to be made during the layout and pasting up sessions.

Despite the criticisms that some sisters had of the fraught atmosphere and the oppressive behaviour of some of the men at the *Briefing* production sessions, it was decided to continue pasting up the Supplement at these sessions. For one thing, it is necessary in order to gain access to the equipment and facilities, but it is also important to make all of *Briefing*'s activities accessible and habitable for women and to ensure that we don't get hived off.

As for the content of future Supplements, it was decided to follow the format of this issue and to have a feature each month on a particular subject. In addition, space would be left for contributions and letters that may be sent in.

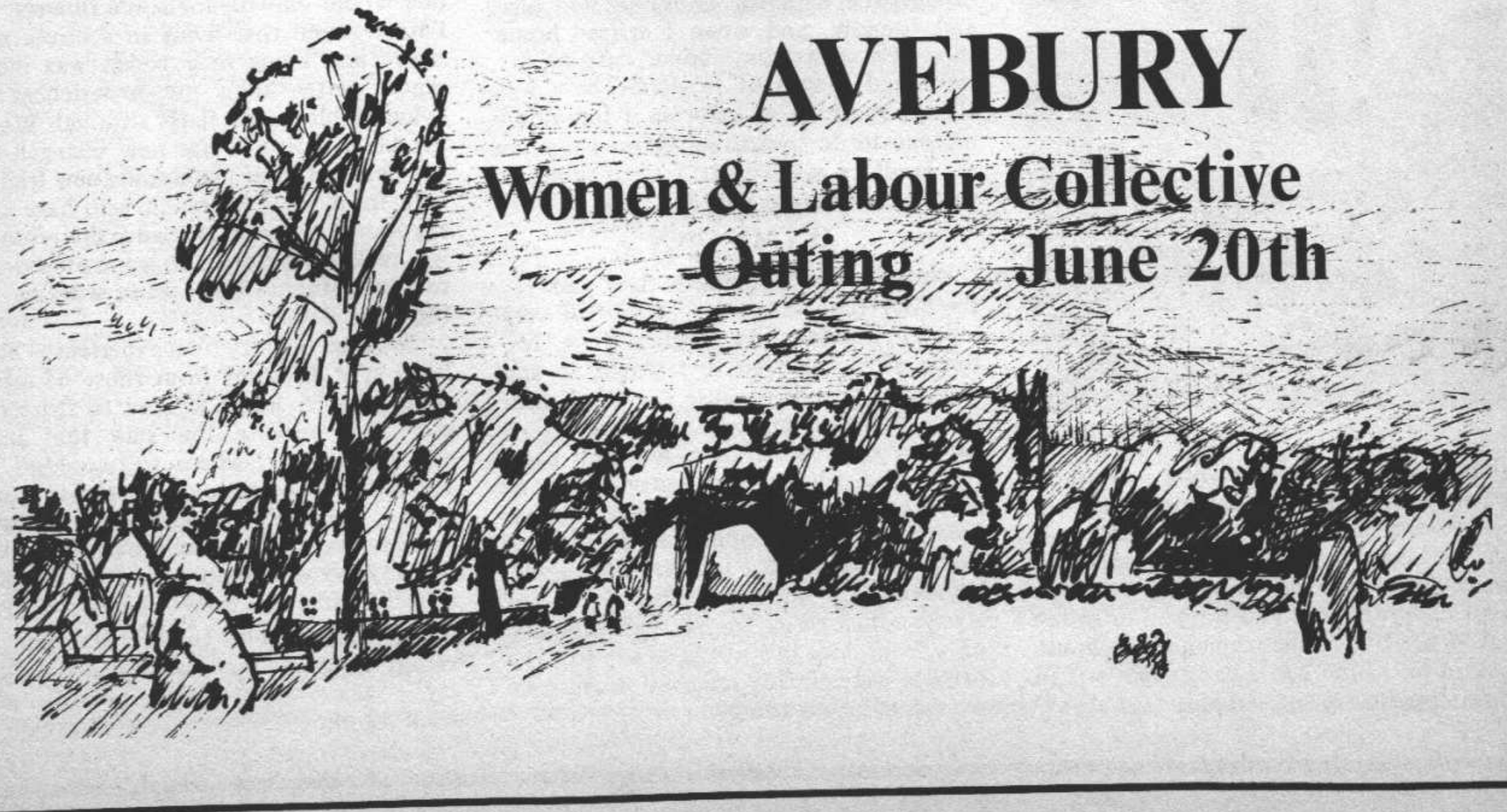
The NEXT SUPPLEMENT EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING will be held on WEDNESDAY 15th SEPTEMBER at 7.30pm at 110 AGAR GROVE, NW1.

"MY SEX-LIFE" by Chris Knight 50p.
"OUR SEX-LIVES – OUR STRENGTH" by Ann Bliss 10p
Published by the *Women and Labour* collective (write to: Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, N.W.1).

"Thoroughly recommended as a good read."
Simon Hoggart in* Punch *magazine.
"Romantic writing like this puts Barbara Cartland in her place."
***Editorial,* South London Press.**
"They have gone public and made a brave attempt to dig out the politic content of their intimate relations and the connection between their marriage and their public politics."
***Marshall Colman,* London Labour Briefing.**

"The personal is political." Feminists and socialists have made much of this slogan in recent years, but few activists have gone as far as have Ann Bliss and Chris Knight in putting it into practice. Their pamphlets represent a watershed in the political effort to achieve honesty and clear-headedness with respect to personal relationships within the left. They have also contributed much to changing the terms upon which anti-sexist and feminist politics have been approached within the labour movement, particularly in London. Members of the Women and Labour collective are responsible for producing the "Personal Politics Supplement" which appears regularly in* London Labour Briefing. *Ann Bliss is a Lewisham councillor; Chris Knight is production manager of* London Labour Briefing *and has written extensively on sexual relations and social anthropology.

Deadline for articles for next Supplement:
The next Supplement will contain a feature on homosexuality. Any contributions for the feature plus any other articles or letters should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, NW1 by September 4th.



SEXIST ADVERTISING — A CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION

**Diana Basterfield,
Fulham CLP Women's Section**

Women are, of course, aware of the effect of sexist advertising and how it impinges on their lives. If readers will suspend reality briefly, however, let's imagine the scenario if men for once were daily presented in advertisements in the degrading way women are. So, a day in the life of Citizen Smith — it could be any one of us.

7.00 am, wakes up and tunes into local commercial radio station for latest news. But first some advertising jingles. The sound of a doorbell is followed by two men talking:

A. Hello John, goodness ... new curtains?
B. No, I've had them cleaned at Bloggs, Bloggs & Company
A. Do give me their address, I must get ours done. Jane will be so pleased.

A second jingle — the Gas Board has reduced the price of gas cookers. Two women talking this time, crudely and lustily

A. I see they've got them down.
B. Then they've decided to drop them.
A. Now you can really get your boyfriend into hot water.

9.00 am. Just about to leave for the office, Citizen Smith experiences a violent pain in a tooth so consults telephone directory for dentists phone number. The colour section "Green Papers" in the middle of the directory briefly sidetracks the Citizen's attention. There are 24 photographs of people using different types of telephone and other post office services. There's a man in bed in flimsy pyjamas using Set A; there's another man in a fetching underwear set sitting on the floor next to a bed with Set B. For the bathroom there's Set C — a very fetching male illustates this one, draped in a smallish towel. There are two options suggested for the modern kitchen, a wall set or an extension arrangement with a plug and socket. Both are illustrated by young men. The Post Office has put a lot of thought into the need's of today's office users; pictures in office settings show thrusting, energetic female business executives, sometimes accompanied by admiring young male persons from the secretarial grades. Lastly, for those extra needs like radiopaging, a mid-30ish female stands with the Houses of Parliament in the background — an M.P. perhaps?

Back to the dentist. An appointment is made and Citizen Smith sets out by Underground. On the far side of the Piccadilly line platform, there is an advertisement for socks. A man with a provocative leer on his face lies on his back, one leg in the air, with his trousers rolled up to the thighs. In the waiting room at the dentist, Citizen Smith looks through some magazines. An old Sunday Times catches the eye first. What's this? How to get a new bathroom. The page is covered with lipstick kiss marks. Caption: "If you want a new bathroom smother her with kisses". Smack "Oh Darling, I just can't live with that old bathroom suite any longer". The Citizen flicks to another page — an advertisement for gold this time. The picture shows a suave, sophisticated woman-of-the-world and on her arm hangs an adolescent boy wearing gold jewellery. The caption says "You'll never forget who gave you gold". Interested in cars, Citizen Smith glances through "Custom Car". The front is emblazoned: "This magazine degrades men — official", and to prove it every page seems to be filled with semi-obscene pictures or articles which put down men. Filling done, back on the tube for Citizen Smith and off to the office. On the platform a new film is being advertised. A dishevelled man, clothes torn, a look of total fear in his eyes is trying to escape from a powerful brutal woman carrying an axe — "The most terrifying film ever to come out of Hollywood" the caption proclaims.

"SUCH A PRETTY REAR"

At the office the Citizen looks through a trade journal published by the National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors. There's an advertisement for a road tanker. Juxtaposed with a photograph of the vehicle is the rear of a man bending over — caption: "Such a pretty rear. It's sure to get pinched". The copy reads: "A good-looking body, curves in the right places, perfect shape, perfect performance ... that's the new (vehicle)." Further on: "Attracted to this model? (The vehicle!) Then contact us".

7.00 pm Back from the office Citizen Smith switches on the television. A jingle for beer. Several members of the same family in a pre-war setting, walk down the street. The young woman goes into a pub to meet her friends and have a drink. Several minutes later the men of the family come in then both husband and father-in-law tell her off at great length for going off on her own.

Flash to next ad. Those clever Moulinex people have produced a gadget that minces meat, beats eggs, prepared pastry but does not yet wash itself up. The scene is daytime. A paternal, loving young man tends the gadget most efficiently; he is surrounded by 2.1 healthy, hungry children who marvel at the speed at which Dad produces mouth-watering delicacies just for them.

And so to bed for Citizen Smith. A quick tune in to the radio to get a time check for the alarm clock. Yes, a last jingle — for an office drinks machine. The place is obviously a meeting of a Board of Directors — the characters are all women. "Let's have a break", says one. A superior, matronising voice calls out to the next room: "George, get us something from the drinks machine, will you?" "2 coffees, X teas, Y orange, Z hot chocolate". "Thank you, George".

SEX OBJECT

Back to reality. What does that bombardment of images say about women? Among other things it says that they are sex objects; they are only capable of doing lower grade jobs; they defer to men; they enjoy male violence and provoke it; they will sell sex to obtain products they cannot themselves afford and they see their role primarily as home-makers and mothers. Needless to say, women do not accept that these stereotypes represent their identities and they are angry about being degraded, trivialised and devalued.

The position of women in society as being in the power and service of men used to be enshrined in law. Now it is stereotyped attitudes which prevent women from developing to their full potential and these have to be changed.

The present code operated by the Advertising Standards Authority does not address itself at all to feminist critiques of the industry. The nearest relevant clause is Section II(2) which states that "advertisements should contain nothing which is likely in the light of generally prevailing standards of decency and propriety to cause grave or widespread offence." Yet even that clause seems to be widely disregarded. Now women have started to fight back. The Women's Media Action Group has started a dialogue with the Advertising Standards Authority, and a few months ago Labour women councillors from the GLC organised a meeting with the head of London Transport's Advertisement Department to put the feminist case to them.

Both the ASA and London Transport say they respond to complaints so that is a short-term tactic that can be adopted. For the long term there is no alternative to legislation — perhaps a strengthening of the Sex Discrimination Act. There must be a new code of practice and an independent body to operate it. In the meantime there should be a warning on advertisements: "Women: this advertisement can seriously damage your personal development."





Wrong

Dear comrades,

Bob Crossman has got his facts wrong regarding participation in Islington.

It was the newly-elected Labour Council in 1971 who promoted an ambitious programme of public consultation and participation and instituted an office with several staff in 1972 but there were several cuts and it was the SDP types who gave the office its death blow in 1979.

It was a major plank in the 1971 manifesto, itself quite a long document, and although much shorter than the 1982 manifesto the 1971 one was a good deal more detailed than the Labour Party had ever done in Islington before.

The Labour Group in 1982 at the close of the old Council was composed of 13 women and 11 men. The 1978 election was two (male) Tories, 50 Labour – 22 women and 28 men.

I trust Bob can check his facts a little better without having to type at three in the morning!

Yours fraternally,
Pat Haynes, Islington

Not with us

Dear Sir,

The front page of your July edition carried a statement from an organisation called A Labour Committee for Withdrawal from the South Atlantic. My name was given as one of the signatories and Tribune's telephone number was given as a source of further information.

I would like to make it clear that I did not sign the statement and I did not agree that my name should be used. Nor is Tribune connected in any way with the campaign.

For the record, I was against the war and I am in favour of the islands being handed over to some sort of United Nations trusteeship. Unlike the authors of the statement, I am not in favour of the Falklands being handed over to Argentina.

Yours fraternally,
Chris Mullin,
Editor of *Tribune*

Briefing Best

Dear Briefing,

Find enclosed £5 for my annual subscription to the magazine, 50p of which can be used to boost funds.

I am an active Marxist in Hitchin Labour Party Young Socialists and I see LLB as the best campaigning journal the left is producing at the moment. It is certainly streets ahead of the "so called marxist" paper, *Militant*, which unfortunately dominates the Y.S.

I am at the moment, trying hard to inject a degree of radicalism into my constituency, which is dominated by OAPs and people who are too right-wing to join the SDP.

Keep up the campaigning spirit....
Down with the Tories!
Down with Capitalism!
Forward to a Socialist Future!

Adrian Chapman

Mellish the Menace

Dear Comrades,

I was appalled when I learnt that the NEC intended to carry out their threat of a witchhunt against the Militant Tendency which despite its claim to be on grounds of organisation, is no more than attack on the Left of the Party and if unchecked will spread to incorporate party members who seek to put forward their own individual views.

In the Riverside Ward in Bermondsey, we have recently witnessed our own MP (Bob Mellish) publicly supporting three independent candidates against the Bermondsey Labour Party and being responsible for losing three Labour seats in the Borough Elections for the Labour Party and yet the NEC refuse to act against him either during the Election Campaign or even now some two months later.

The fact that the Militant Tendency do not oppose official Labour Party candidates demonstrates that the issue is not one of organisation but is part of a clearly identifiable struggle between the Right and Left which the NEC feel they will lose.

Alex Jarosy
Riverside Ward Secretary
Bermondsey Labour Party in personal capacity

Poetic Thoughts

Dear Comrade,

Some thoughts you might like to publish in your next issue which came to me during tonight's GMC Meeting.

Please don't make a bogey out of dear old
Tony Benn
Because he seems to have the right idea.
He doesn't want erosions
From big nuclear explosions
And he hates to think that folk should live in fear.

Please don't make a bogey out of people "on the Left"
Because we do not relish strife and war,
And for people all unheeding
Who prefer to see folk bleeding —
Well, they shouldn't say they're Labour any more.

Please don't make a bogey of the little Militants
Because they feel that they must try their best
To split the Labour Party
Which, of course, is very naughty,
But they follow their campaign with youthful zest.

Please don't make a bogey out of dear Michael Foot
Because he doesn't seem to be inclined
To split the Labour Party
But to keep it hale and hearty
So let's all be friends and keep an open mind.

Now, we really have got bogeys and they're
Thatcher and her Gang
For that is just exactly what they are.
They'll cripple our economy,
Give arms unto our enemy;
Let's get them out and then we might go far.

Joan S. Snow

What's sauce for t'goose

Dear Comrades,

You will recall that following the move for more democratic control in the party, through elections of Leader and Deputy Leader, there was a great deal of rhetoric concerning the trade unions and how an equal amount of effort will be put in to ensure elections of all General Secretaries, Officers etc.

Since then, nothing has happened and we have just witnessed the election of a new General Secretary of a union which is being described as left wing without a single vote being cast by the membership or branch.

The union in question is of course, NUPE and I am sure the new General Secretary will carry out his duties in a proper manner but the fact he will be in the job till the year 2005 makes nonsense of NUPE delegates calling for greater democracy in the Labour Party.

Unfortunately many comrades doing very valuable work in *Briefing*, also happen to be non-elected full time officers. Democracy, comrades, begins at home.

The fact that the majority of NUPE members are female and a large section of them are black, is not reflected at all in the hierarchy of the union. It is no good complaining about the unjust nature of the block vote system when many of our comrades in the trade union movement expound this view without themselves being elected in a democratic manner.

Yours fraternally,
Terry McCarthy,
Tower Hamlets CLP and NUPE Delegate
to London Labour Party

Info. Exchange

Dear Comrades,

I feel that one of the strengths of London Labour Briefing has been the fact that it has focused itself round a specific area, first the GLC elections, then the local council elections and without losing sight of wider issues, has not become an amorphous mass of totally predictable articles. Now that the local elections are over, Briefing must find itself a new focus.

Since its greatest support comes from constituency parties I would like to see local parties using it as an exchange of information about campaigns they are running and assessing how effective different methods of campaigning were. The fairly muted success of the Labour Party in the local elections in some parts of London underlines the fact that no one (not even Islington comrades!) can afford to take for granted electoral support for the Labour Party. There have been campaigns going on all over London though round issues such as fares, rents, effects of the cuts, etc., and I think we can all benefit from the experience others have gained. How effective has leafletting been, or door-to-door canvassing, or public meetings, or street meetings, or running a bookstall in a public place? What other methods of publicity and campaigning have Labour Parties used?

These would I feel be valuable bits of information for all Labour Party members, particularly those who tend to hack away at campaigns in a fairly unreflective way and who don't consider the cost effectiveness of the time and energy involved.

Having said all this of course it is also most important that Briefing does not lose sight of the battle for democracy within the Labour Party and local councils. Without that democracy effective campaigns would be a complete waste of time.

Yours,
Cath Tate,
Lambeth Central CLP

Praise

Dear Graham,

Thanks for forwarding the missing *Briefing* for June, and also the SDP pamphlet. July *Briefing* arrived this morning. Although I agree with very little of the contents I find *Briefing* compelling reading. Each issue is like a series of frontline battle communiques. It is also a well produced periodical.

Best wishes,
Harold Smith, Putney

Heterosexual Heffer

Dear Comrades,

I was most concerned to read that *London Labour Briefing* is supporting the re-election of Eric Heffer onto the NEC.

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights has been pressing for a manifesto commitment to an age of consent of 16 for male homosexuality. A resolution supporting this was defeated by 9 votes to 8 at a recent NEC meeting. Instead it was decided to support 18 as the age of consent. The significance of this is that a future Labour government would maintain discrimination against gays.

Leading opponents of equality with heterosexuals in this respect were Sam McCluskey and Eric Heffer.

It is also important to note that whilst three opposition spokespersons lost their jobs because they failed to support British imperialist aggression against Argentina, Eric Heffer remains comfortably perched on the front benches of the House of Commons.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew Conway, Croydon

No Trot

Dear Editor,

I enclose a copy of a statement issued by the Broad Left Alliance for publication in your paper.

As to being called a renegade (July issue), if you mean that I no longer subscribe to a Trotskyist view of society, you are quite right.

You have taken a long time to find that out. I ceased to be a Trotskyist 18 years ago.

I appreciate your kindness in publishing that fact.

Yours truly,
S. Mani

The badge all witches are wearing.....



Only 25p each! from: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.
Postage - 12½p for 10 or less. Orders over 10 post free.

LABOUR COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE

at County Hall
on Friday July 23rd at 7.30pm

Speakers: Ken Livingstone
Peter Tatchell
Nira Yuval Davies (Israeli Anti-Zionist)

Speakers from the Lebanese Students Union, the General Union of Palestinian Students, and from Palestine Solidarity.

HOLOCAUST 82
Genocide in the Lebanon

at Dulwich Baths, Small Hall
Crystal Palace Road (Goose Green End)
London SE22
Wednesday 21 July at 7.30pm
Organised by Labour Middle East Council in conjunction with Trade Union Friends of Palestine.

THERE will be no issue of Briefing next month. The next issue will be the 'October issue' and will be on sale from Friday 17 September. All articles to be in by Monday 6 September. The next Editorial Board meeting will be on Tuesday 27 July at County Hall at 7.00p.m.

ILEA DECIDES PLAY IS OUT

Hugh Tessier
NUPE ILEA District Committee Secretary

The Labour controlled Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) intends to implement the recommendations of a Working Party led by the Assistant Education Officer, Mr P Clyne, PROFESSIONALISING THE YOUTH SERVICE, lock, stock and barrel.

The Report means the abolition of the PLAY CENTRES and JUNIOR CLUBS – that the children of London have known and loved for over a generation.

SHOCKING

The shocking manifestation of manual part-time employees enjoying Burnham Scale (school) rates of pay, to run and organise children's leisure activities proved too strong an incentive for the professional careerist within County Hall's higher echelons.

With devastating panache these white collar bureaucrats grabbed their opportunity, under the guise of rationalisation, decentralisation and similar euphemisms to rip the heart out of PLAY. To quote from the report:

'A further point which is of concern is that the term "play centre" fails to indicate the educational nature of the activities which take place. Parents and staff can confuse the purpose of play centres run by the Authority with the childminding establishments – sometimes known as play centres – organised by the boroughs.' [Page 3, para 5.3]

Poor dumb parents and staff – 36 years of incomprehension, all this time suffering under the delusion that PLAYCENTRE meant PLAYCENTRE. The determination set by Mr Clyne to clean up and clear out twilight non-professional elements in our Playcentres and Junior Clubs by inaugurating the new PROFESSIONALISED YOUTH SERVICE was welcomed by the white-collar Greater London Council Staff Association (GLCSA) whose major contribution was to recommend redesignating Play Centre Organiser to Youth Officer and Area Youth Officer to Senior Youth Officer. This will undoubtedly go down in the annals of history as the Great Leap Forward, irradicating forever the dread bogy 'confusion' that beset London's parents and staff!

UNHELPFUL NUPE

A passing reference was made in the report to certain unhelpful attitudes displayed by the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and the General and Municipal Workers' Union (G&MWU), who represent through the Trade Union Joint Negotiation Committee (TUJNC) the non-teaching staff, that is the local people from the community. Faced by the prospect of their members being erased with the influx of qualified recruits, it is hardly surprising that their spokesman, TUJNC Secretary Jerry Corbyn, was unprepared to recommend certain annihilation.

This protest was quickly passed over in the Report, followed by a couple of pages of the usual arid jargon intoning the final demise of the amateur play-worker.

Great emphasis was lain on the supposed advantages that would flow from establishing senior lecturer status and pay for the full-time Tutor Wardens of Youth Centres. A timely intervention by the GLCSA bemoaning the erosion of differential between Tutor Warden and Youth Officer, was swept aside in the Reports' climax terminating with the prophesied upgrading for the chosen few.

The implications for the Labour Group at County Hall, are grave, for by approving the Reports' recommendations during a period of CUTS they will grant direction of scarce resources to a scheme whose benefits to the community are nil but costly to implement.

DELIBERATE DEMOLITION

Of greater concern to working people, and their Unions will be, in a period of high UNEMPLOYMENT any deliberate demolition of a traditional source of meaningful employment for hundreds of part-time workers. Simply because Play Centres and Junior Clubs don't conform to preconceived structural notions, this should not obscure their very real contribution to the capital's children.

Socialism should be about opportunity, equality and concern to ensure decent living and working standards for the whole of the population. It is not about privilege, exploitation and opportunism – the hallmarks of the Reports' proposals.

We call on the LABOUR COUNCILLORS to recognise their error and DO THE PEOPLE A FAVOUR AND SLING IT OUT, LOCK STOCK AND BARREL.

Privatisation and the National Theatre

Tony Banks — Tooting CLP
Chair Arts and Recreation Committee

It was in April that NATTKE was told by the National Theatre of its intention to dismiss the entire cleaning department and engage an outside contractor. The reasons given were the continued erosion of National Theatre grants by 2% per annum for the last three years and the need to look for economies. The sum to be saved from the use of contract cleaners has been estimated by the National Theatre at between £35 - 40,000 a year although this figure has been challenged by the union.

The theatre itself is funded by the Arts Council and the GLC with the Council owning both the site and the building. The GLC's annual contribution to the National Theatre running costs have steadily increased from £350,000 when it opened in1975/76 to £690,000 in the current financial year. It is this sum which is now under threat if the National Theatre Board persists with the proposal to privatisation the cleaning department.

GLC LABOUR GROUP UNITED

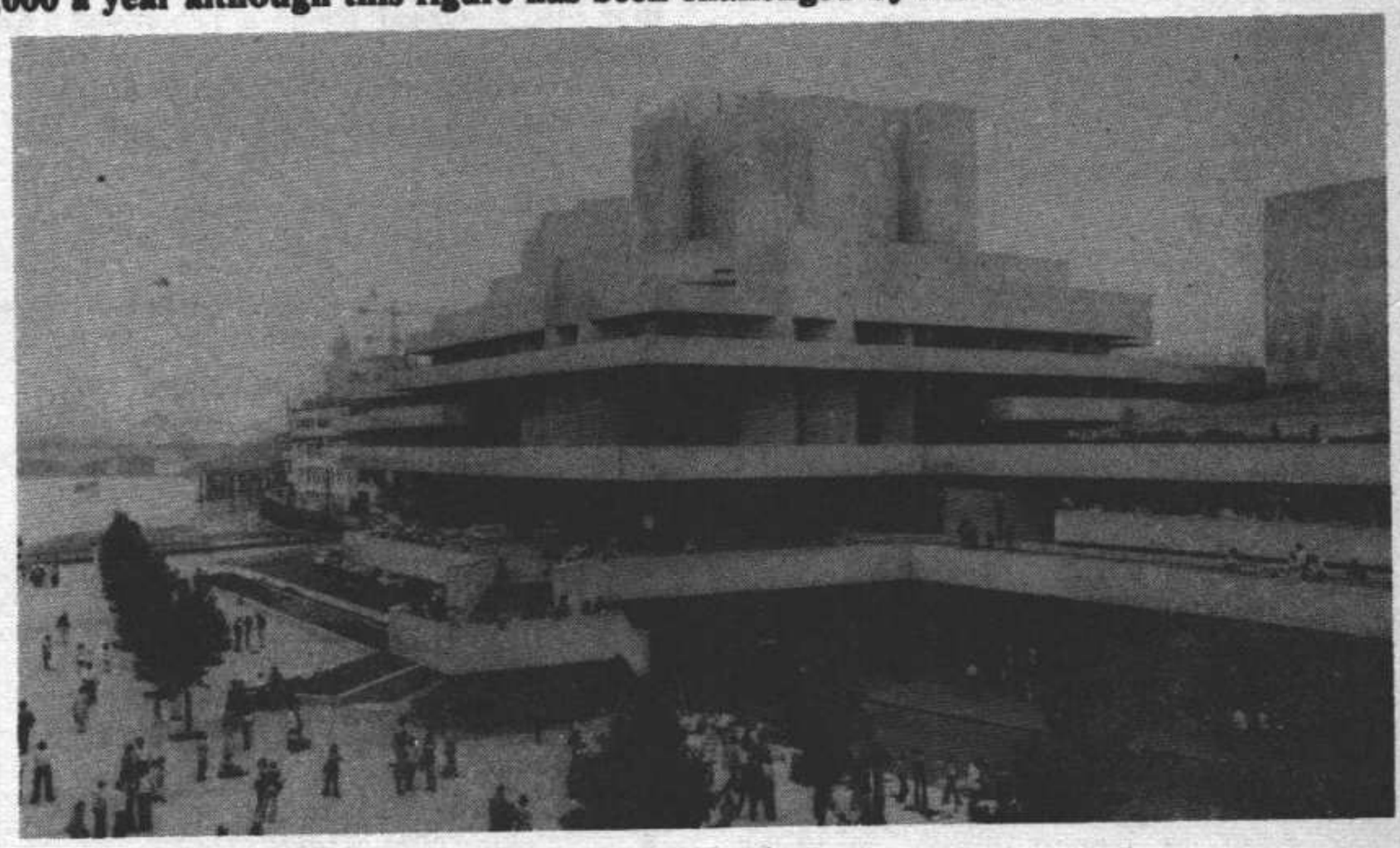
The GLC Labour Group is united in the support of the NATTKE members who through the union requested assistance from the Council in the campaign to fight privatisation. As Chairman of the Arts and Recreation Committee I warned the National Theatre via GLC officers that it would be entirely unacceptable for the theatre Management to try and force privatisation on a group of workers. Workers who are amongst its lowest paid and who have to undertake the worst jobs. If the National Theatre persist however, the only sanction possessed by the GLC is to deny funds and distressing though it would be to take such action, the issue is so clear-cut that the Labour Group did not hesitate to endorse the warning given to the theatre.

The attitude of the Labour Group has been variously described as 'blackmail' and 'censorship'. Naturally we reject both caricatures of our action particularly when it comes from County Hall Tories who, under Horace Cutler's leadership, cut the National Theatre's grant because of the radical nature of Howard Brenton's play "The Romans". It has never been a feature of the GLC's new arts policy to exercise censorship even though we have very positive thoughts about the type of arts activity we wish to fund. However, our entire arts policy is based on the belief that the arts must be related to wider social issues and it is sheer hypocrisy to suggest, as some do, that politics and the arts should not be mixed. They already are and anyone who believes that for the sake of art the Labour GLC should say, or do nothing about cleaners employed at the National Theatre is an idiot, or a hypocrite and possibly both.

If the GLC's arts policy is not reflective of working-class needs and problems then we have no right to be administrating it. "Arts for arts sake" has no place in a society confronted by massive social problems and when an arts body heavily founded by the GLC proposes sacking its cleaners and handing them over to a private contractor, it must expect us to react immediately.

LRD Publications* has recently issued a pamphlet making out the case against privatisation generally. An important section of the pamphlet is devoted to Southend Council and Exclusive Cleaning which is the same group to which the National Theatre intends handing over its cleaning department. Southend just like the National Theatre made claims about the large amount of money to be saved, but close examination shows this to be totally misleading.

Public or Private: the case against privatisation (70p) LRD Publications, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF.



The National Theatre On The Southbank

In October 1982 the Director of Technical Services at the independently controlled West Lindsey district council presented a detailed report (Financial Times 8.2.82.) to his council on the validity of Exclusive's claims, including the claim that it would save Southend ratepayers £500,000. He concluded:

*the widely quoted savings of £492,000 were exaggerated by at least a factor of 10;

*the true present savings were only £45,609 and this would be reduced next year by a further £18,500 because of pension payments.

*if the council had doubled their trade waste charges, as did Exclusive, then the direct labour would have been £700 a year cheaper than Exclusive!

Not surprisingly the West Lindsey report recommended the Council stay with direct labour.

Further more it was discovered in October 1981 that Exclusive had made a "slight" error in their tender. Instead of charges to the Council (i.e. ratepayers) for refuse collection to each new house built of £15 per 100 new properties, as stated in the tender, it was to be £15 per property. The cost of this "error" will be an estimated £6.073 per annum, or £30,365 over the five year contract. This is an example of the possible errors in private contractors tenders.

BETTER FOR THE WORKERS?

The National Theatre just like Southend Council and Wandsworth Council before made great play on the job continuity when transfering staff to private contractors. Reality has a different story to tell.

In Southend out of a total of 300 jobs, 87 have disappeared. From those who remained Exclusive demands:

"total and unfettered agreement from the individuals concerned that they will accept the working practices, terms and conditions upon which our proposals have been based". (Quoted in the District Auditor's report).

In the light of this unvarnished assertion of management's right to manage it is no surprise to discover that none of the union ex-shop stewards were taken on.

At first sight Exclusive seems to have increased wages. When the company took over it paid a loader on refuse collection a basic rate of £90 a week. The comparable local authority rate was £67.50. But Southend council's payments system was different. They operated a "task and finish" system and earnings were much higher than this basic level, with less hours being worked.

Looking at conditions and fringe benefits there is no doubt that with Exclusive they deteriorated. There is no union and so no grievance or disciplinary procedure. Holidays and sick pay are worse:

Exclusive also does not provide index linked pensions which are paid to Southend's directly employed workers.

The Labour GLC is determined to resist privatisation in any area of public enterprise where we have influence. To date privatisation has meant for the workers involved a loss of job security, an erosion of wages and conditions and higher unemployment. For the public it has meant a deterioration of services.

It is part of the Labour Party's responsibility to protect the interests of the lower paid and underprivileged in our society and no group of workers better fits such a description than those involved in cleaning up after the rest of us. If the National Theatre needs to make savings then let it discuss the matter with the unions and the public funding bodies. To proceed with a half-baked proposal to privatise its cleaning department will cost the National Theatre over £500,000 in grant loss from the GLC. Hardly an economic proposition for the theatre and no idle threat by Labour.

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