LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 26 FEBRUARY 1983

ALL OUT FOR BERMONDSEY!

by Peter Tatchell

Unlike existing Labour MPs, on Sunday 9th January, I was *re*-selected as the Labour PPC for Bermondsey without ever having sat in the House of Commons.

When I do take my seat on behalf of the local Party and community, I am pledged to work together with others to create a *new* style of MP and Labour politics which will break down the widespread public cynicism that 'politicians are all the same' and 'only in it for themselves'. Labour MPs *should* be *different* from the rest. But often they are *not*.

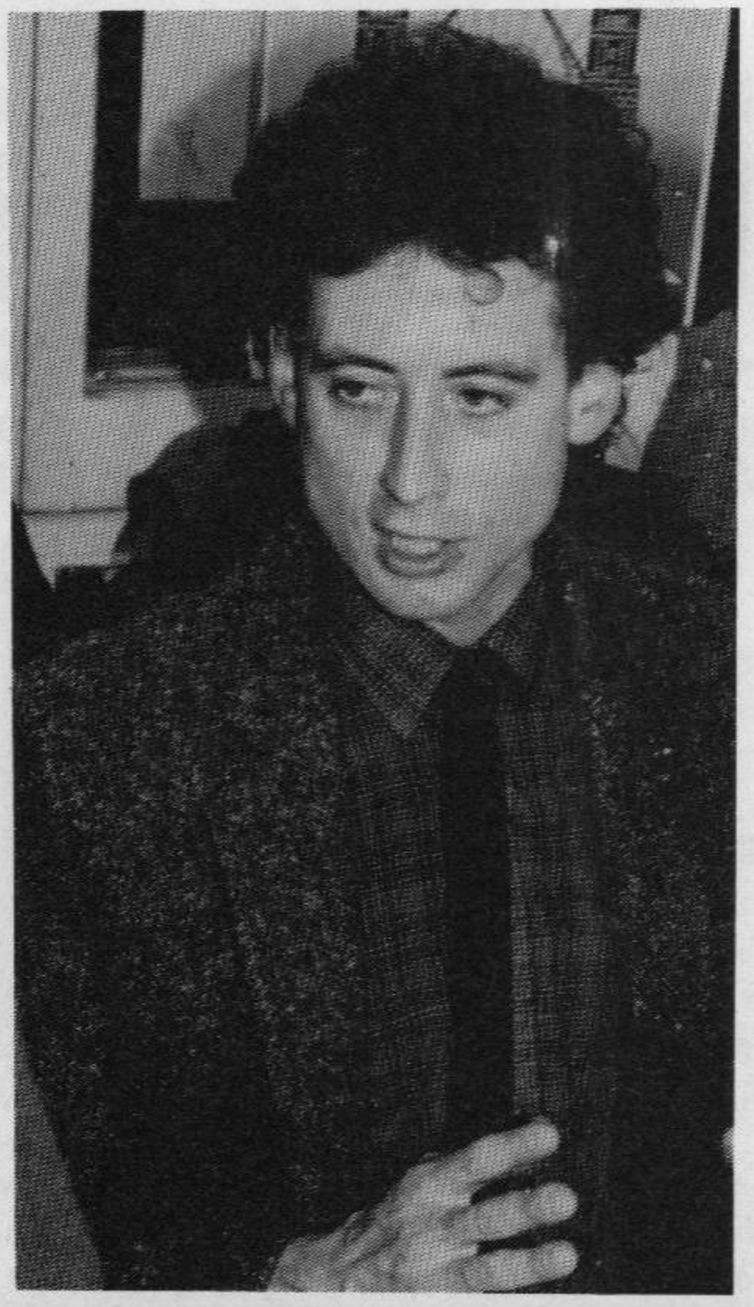
The electorate has witnessed the way MPs, even Labour ones, have made a comfortable career for themselves in Parliament and repeatedly failed to deliver their promises of a better deal for working class people. No wonder so many of them are cynical and disillusioned! No wonder they don't bother voting or in frustration and anger at the two main parties decide to 'give the SDP a try'.

That is why I will *not* join the cosy club. Instead, I am pledged to work together with others who are seeking to create a new and different style of MP:

FULL-TIME MP

I believe it is indefensible for so many MPs to have extra financial interests and jobs as company directors and barristers outside the House of Commons. Half the Tory cabinet are millionaires! Between them, 170 Tory MPs share nearly 500 company directorships! They are only part-time MPs. Some of them seem more concerned to look after big business than the needs of local people.

All these external interests create divided loyalities and detract from an MPs real job which is to represent their constituents.



I am committed to be a full-time MP without outside financial interests.

LOCAL COUNCIL FLAT

It is also deplorable that many MPs do not bother to live in their own constituencies. Too many of them live in big houses in well-to-do areas such as Chelsea and Pimlico, with farms in Sussex and country cottages by the sea. No wonder so many

Continued on next page

DON'T WAIT FOR THE BY-ELECTION
Bermondsey needs YOUR help NOW!

EVERY Tuesday 7pm 133 Lower Rd. SE16; Sunday 23 January 11am 156b Union St. SE1; Sunday 30 Jan. 11am 133 Lower Rd. SE16.

Don't depend on others to turn up. Bermondsey is depending on YOU.

Organise a group from your Ward/ YS/WS or union branch.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Bermondsey Labour backs Tatchell

Bermondsey's "unendorsed" prospective parliamentary candidate, Peter Tatchell was overwhelmingly selected at a reconvened selection conference in the constituency on 9 January.

Mopping up 52 of the 62 votes cast, he defeated Kent councillor, Jim Little, who had been nominated by several EETPU branches, and former MP for Billericay, Eric Moonman. The pair received two and eight votes respectively.

Immediately, ex-Southwark council leader and prominent right-winger John O'Grady announced that he would be standing against Labour if Peter Tatchell was endorsed by the NEC.

This impressive display of solidarity behind Peter came after a confident speech in which he declared that he hoped to carry his "new style of socialist politics" into the parliamentary arena while remaining rooted in the local area and accountable to the local constituency. He would continue to live in his council flat on the Rockingham Estate near the Elephant and Castle and would have no outside interests if elected.

He described the House of Commons as "a cosy club" and said there was a need "to get some real socialism into the PLP".

His local priorities would be to commit the next Labour government to a rent freeze; to continue the battle against the carve-up of the Bermondsey and North Southwark riverside by speculators by pressing for council houses with gardens rather than offices and luxury flats; to re-open St Olave's Hospital in Bermondsey; to abolish the London Docklands Development Corporation which had "stolen 264 acres of land from North Southwark and Bermondsey and taken 546 industrial jobs out of the Surrey Docks."

He saw the task of the Labour Party in Parliament as being "to reorganise the whole basis of society"; to take Britain out of the EEC; to nationalise the multinationals and in particular land and the construction industry; to bring about a real shift of wealth to working people involving tackling low pay; to treat unemployment as a major priority; to confront "the power of a strong, secretive, centralised state"; to abolish the House of Lords; and to press for freedom of information.

He also wanted to see more democratic control of the police; the break-up of the capitalist domination of the press; the abolition of vestiges of class privilege such as public schools and private medicine; commitment to positive discrimination, civil liberties and freedom; working for peace; and finally, he said he was committed to "peace with justice for the people of Ireland".

Peter declared that he was pledged to fight for the agreed policies of the Party locally and nationally as determined by annual conference, and he hoped that the Bermondsey bye-election would be remembered as the forerunner of a Labour victory in the country in 1983.

Bermondsey Party is now confident of winning the seat in spite of the challenges of the so-called "moderates" and already offers of help are pouring in from comrades throughout London.

A national opinion poll which appeared on the day of the selection conference in *The Mail* on Sunday showed that 47% of Bermondsey people preferred to back Peter against the "independents".

The Party is now united over its candidate and with the selection controversy behind them at last comrades are devoting all their energies to campaigning on the streets to ensure the support of local people in the forthcoming bye-election.

TATCHELL (continued)

I am pledged to remain living in my constituency in a council flat so I know and understand the problems faced by local people through my own direct personal experience. You can be sure that if more MPs lived in council flats they would fight a lot harder to get a rent freeze and put an end to the months (and even years) which council tenants have to wait to get repairs done.

REGULAR CONSULTATION

It is a commonplace view that 'we only see MPs when they want our votes'. Too often they disappear inside the House of Commons and are not seen again for another 5 years. I want to change all that.

Just as important as the accountability of our elected representatives to the Party, is the accountability of the Party to the wider electorate. For this reason, I am committed to spend a lot of time in the constituency consulting with local tenant's associations, trade unions, churches, youth clubs, pensioner's groups and women's and ethnic organisations. Not only do I want to explain Labour policies to *them*; I also want to listen and learn from *their* ideas!

I don't see myself as special or someone who knows it all. I simply want to speak out in Parliament against poverty and injustice as the voice of the local Party and community.

WORKER'S WAGE

It is hypocritical for MPs to vote themselves huge salary increases and then insist that ordinary workers only accept low wage rises. MPs now earn £14,000 a year, plus an £8,000 secretarian allowance and various 'perks' of office. Most of them enjoy an income and lifestyle miles apart from working class people.

If MPs lived on an average wage they would have a much better understanding of the hardships experienced by workers and their families. They would fight a lot harder to stop rent increases!

I will only accept an MPs salary equivalent to the average wage of a skilled worker, plus expenses. I will use the rest of the MPs salary for the benefit of the Labour Movement and the local community. That way, I will keep closer in touch with the interests of the people I represent.

Already a good number of Labour MPs are putting these ideas in practice. I want to join with them to destroy the public cynicism that 'Labour is just as bad as the rest – they are all on the make'. Labour MPs *should* be different. I intend to do my bit to ensure they *are*.

Peter Tatchell

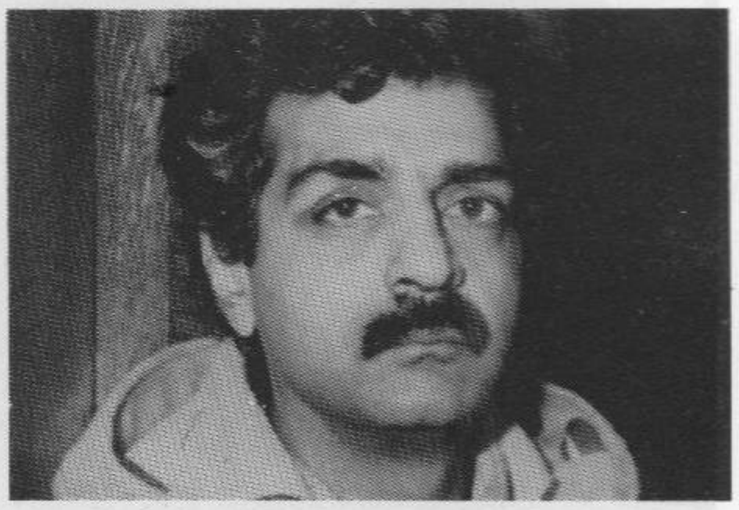
Hornsey Labour Party Stays OK

Diana Minns
Secretary, Hornsey Labour Party
(in a personal capacity)

Hornsey Labour Party has survived into 1983.

As reported previously, Hornsey had been given until 31st December 1982 to accept the NEC decision over Tariq Ali's membership (i.e. that he be not a member) or be disbanded and then reformed. Hornsey has taken the stand all along that the NEC had taken pre-emptive and arbitrary action in denying Tariq the right to membership. They have never given him a hearing and in all of their correspondence with Hornsey have never given acceptable and valid reasons for his not being admitted into the Party.

Hornsey had communicated all these sentiments and more once again to the NEC in November which as to consider the deadline recommended by the Organisation Committee. We had asked for a meeting, to put our case again, and this was finally set



for 21st December. However, on Monday 20th, we received a phone call from the National Agent, putting off the meeting. Panic — paranoia — a plot? No, apparently the December NEC meeting had decided to 'seek further advice about the legal position of the NEC in the acceptance of persons into the membership of the Labour Party'. In the meantime the deadline was suspended.

In the furore and fuss over the position of Militant, the temporary reprieve for Hornsey had not emerged or had not been announced. It was not, for the NEC, particularly newsworthy. In Hornsey we were doubly relieved. First, perhaps the NEC was at last seeing the justice and validity of our case. Second, we called off the special GMC which would have been sitting the night the bomb exploded. We are permanently grateful to the NEC for this. We are not, however, complacent that all is won. The suspension of the deadline is only temporary. There will be a report-back to a future NEC.

HORNSEY STILL NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT. PASS RESOLUTIONS WELCOMING THE SUSPENSION OF THE DEADLINE, AND CALL ON THE NEC TO REMOVE ITS THREAT PERMANENTLY.

TOWARDS A NATIONAL NETWORK

BRIEFING

COUNTY HALL FEB.5, 10.30-5.30

AGENDA

10.15am Registration

SESSION I: IS THERE A POLITICAL BASIS FOR UNITY BETWEEN BRIEFING GROUPS?

10.30am Introduction *Graham Bash (London)*
10.45am Reports from other Briefing Groups
11.15am Discussion

SESSION II: THE ROLE OF PERSONAL POLITICS IN BRIEFING

12.15pm Women's and men's caucus meetings
1.15pm LUNCH
2.00pm The London Streetlife Supplement. *Speaker from the Supplement Editorial Collective*
The role of a feminist councillor. *Ann Bliss (London)*
Personal politics and race. *Merle Amory (London)*
2.30pm Discussion

SESSION III: ORGANISING LOCALLY AND DEVELOPING BRIEFING GROUPS

3.15pm Introduction *Stuart Marshall Clarke (Merseyside)*
3.30pm Organising at local government level *Ken Livingstone (London)*
Organising in the community *Lesley Lee (Brighton/London)*
Organising in the trade unions *Jeremy Corbyn (London)*
Producing a local Briefing *Bryn Griffiths (Brighton)*
4.15pm Discussion
5.15pm SUMMARY *Jane Stockton (London)*

Credentials (£1) available from Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1. Please indicate if you are likely to need a creche.

Following the example set by London Labour Briefing, left activists in several other areas have taken the initiative in setting up their own local Briefings.

The motive forces have probably been similar everywhere. The left needs to co-ordinate its activities across the artificial boundaries imposed by Party structures. It is essential that we have an effective means of communicating amongst ourselves, and in our own words, about the struggles and campaigns taking place in our Wards, CLPs and trade union branches. Briefings also seem to reflect a determination to make accountability a reality (for which we have to be open ourselves), and a desire to see the left take seriously the power available to us at local government level.

The circulation figures of the various Briefings shows how useful they are. London Briefing now runs to 3,500 copies an issue. We are contemplating a print run of 1,000 for the third issue of Merseyside Briefing, 500 copies of the first issue having sold out within a week and 750 of the second being snapped up almost as quickly.

The rooting of Briefings in their local 'communities' is obviously important, they must reflect the *real* world. At the same time they ought to avoid the danger of parochialism. In London, with 90 CLPs and hundreds of assorted activists, this is perhaps a less serious problem than it is here on Merseyside and in other less populous areas. It is for this reason that I believe the time has come to translate the lessons we have learnt about communicating *within* our localities to establishing reliable and useful links *between* the local Briefing groups.

Before meaningful links can be made it will be necessary to establish to what extent the various groups which are producing Briefings really do share a similar political approach. I therefore welcome the idea of a Conference of Briefing Groups which should provide a forum in which we can discuss our politics and seek to forge the links. The Conference must give encouragement and practical advice for new groups who might want to produce a local Briefing but feel they lack the necessary 'expertise'.

In the past the left has often contributed to its own downfall because of its fragmented nature. A Briefing Network would be an important source of strength, and that has never been needed more than now.

Stuart Marshall-Clarke
Merseyside Labour Briefing

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

Reselection Saga

**Conor McAuley, Secretary,
Newham N.W. C.L.P.
(in a personal capacity)**

What takes 13 months, involves 5 delays, 3 enquiries and 2 shortlists? Answer, a Parliamentary Re-selection in the Newham North West Constituency. Even now, it is hard to believe that we have actually completed the process and selected a new candidate — Tony Banks.

It would be pointless to rehearse our earlier problems as most of these have been detailed in previous issues of Briefing but the events of the last three months do deserve some examination.

Selection Conference

On October 27th we held our selection conference with a shortlist of six, Arthur Lewis M.P., Tony Banks, Mandy Moore, Dave Wetzel, Ted Knight and Ken Palmer. Tony Banks won the nomination by a majority of 24 to 18 (over two other candidates, Wetzel & Palmer). Arthur Lewis was eliminated in a run off after the second ballot in which he polled a mere five votes.

This didn't stop Arthur Lewis from running out of the meeting to tell the press that the party had been taken over by the Militant left, consisting of Social Workers and (even worse) Polytechnic students! For the record (and not that it matters anyway) we have one social worker and one student on a G.M.C. of 73 members. But Arthur Lewis has never let the facts obscure a good argument.

When asked by the press if he had received a fair hearing and if he felt that the meeting had been conducted according to the rules, he said that it had. However on the day before the November N.E.C. meeting when Tony Banks was due to be endorsed, he submitted yet another list of complaints against the party accompanied by a note hinting that he might cause a bye-election. He asked for "natural justice" and an opportunity to put his case. An enquiry was convened on December 13th and Arthur Lewis sent his apologies.

The complaints consisted of some old complaints which had been found to be untrue and rejected at earlier stages of the reselection and others which were extremely libelous. He even complained about some of the press coverage he had received (didn't we all!).

Nevertheless the constituency officers met with Russell Tuck, Betty Boothroyd, Walter Brown and Bill Jones, the Regional Organiser, to answer the "charges". Bill Jones confirmed that he had carefully checked the delegations and the affiliations and that in his view everything was in order. He had even gone so far as to call on some delegates to confirm that they lived at the addresses stated (Arthur Lewis had earlier alleged that some did not).

The enquiry was something of an anti-climax — it might have been more lively if Arthur Lewis had turned up. In any event there were no grounds to refuse to endorse Tony Banks and the N.E.C. duly did so on 15th December. I read in the *Sunday Times* and *Observer* on 9 January that Arthur Lewis feels that he has been "treated shabbily" by the N.E.C. Such a comment might carry more weight if he had bothered to turn up for his own enquiry!

Finally, in November, the month following the re-selection, we received more applications to join the party than in any single month in the last three years and for the first year since I joined the Party in 1974, we have increased our membership over the previous year — thereby ending years of decline.

If Arthur Lewis had turned up to the enquiry, I would have told him this, but he might not have been interested.

Ban the Box!: M-Way Enquiry

One of the most powerful and entrenched extra-parliamentary caucuses is currently waging a campaign to revive the London motorway box scheme. The road lobby, which has bent both Tory and Labour governments to its will, is now preparing the most serious assault in the battle to destroy public transport and subject London to the tyranny of the road and the juggernaut.

Public transport in London has been attacked by the courts and the government. This has led to the loss of 'Fares Fair' and financial subsidies. A possible London lorry ban is similarly threatened by the judiciary. Now the road lobby is turning its attention to the serious business of building mile upon mile of motorway through London.

Road transport in this country provides the grossest example of the anti-social character of private industry. Whilst the benefits, profits, are privatized the costs of roads are socialised. We all pay for their construction, for the deaths and accidents and for the environmental damage they cause to our communities.

Finchley Labour Party has been at the forefront of opposition to plans for a six-lane super highway to be built through Finchley. Our campaign has led to the capture of three Tory council seats in the last local elections with a record turnout for the Labour Party. The opposition has overwhelmed the government and two Public Inquiries have already been abandoned. A new Public Inquiry is due to start on 25th January 1983 at the East Finchley Methodist Church, High Road, N2 at 10.30am. We are mobilising the Labour Party throughout London to support our campaign.

It is likely that this could be the last public opportunity to oppose the road lobby before a general election. It is crucial that the Labour Party is fully committed on a programme of support for public transport, traffic restraint and a ban on the heavy lorry. The Tories are already threatening to remove 'control' of transport from Londoners by setting up a new quango, the Metropolitan Transport Authority. This will be stuffed with Tory puppets.



Also, because of the fierce opposition encountered at road inquiries the Tories are threatening to abolish them. The road lobby has not slept since Labour won the GLC in 1973 and shelved the motorway box scheme: the road lobby and its activists throughout the state-machinery have ensured that the plans were only mothballed. Now the road lobby is preparing its revenge on Londoners.

We are urging every Labour authority and CLP to register as an objector to the scheme. Already Camden, Haringey, Islington and the GLC are lined up with us.

For more details write to: Laurence Spiegel (East Finchley/Barnet Councillor), Members Room, Town Hall, Hendon, NW4 4BG. **LAURENCE SPIEGEL**

STOP PRESS*STOP PRES

CPWP SHOW Jan 26

PRESS*STOP PRESS*STOF

YES! The CPWP 18 Road show is on again at Lavender Hill Magistrates Court. The "Animals" (dubbed Magistrate Cheesman) star from 1.30. Street fun with Law Lords & banners starts 1pm.

Join in!...All fares action helps the new Fare Fight which began with the GLC v LT case on Jan 18.

Information: Piers Corbyn: 701-5691. Contributions to Defence Costs & print bills to Fare Fight (CPWP Fund) c/o Ernest Rodker, 28 Wandle Rd, SW17. 672-9698.

AFTER THE GENERAL ELECTION
THE TASKS AHEAD
by Tony Banks

1983 looks like being General Election year and Mrs Thatcher despite her Government's appalling record, is certainly not heading for inevitable defeat. Few of the major promises made by the Tories in 1979 have been kept and some of them, such as the promise to reduce unemployment, have failed spectacularly. By any reasonable assessment the Tories deserve to be annihilated at the polls, but the likely outcome of the election will be to leave Labour as the largest party, but without an overall majority.



The Tories have used the Falklands issue as an effective means of diverting public attention from the crucial social and economic problems facing British capitalism, and a Prime Minister who is prepared to sacrifice lives for the survival of her Government is no easy opponent to defeat at the ballot-box. Ruling-class control of most of the media has enabled a wave of corrupting nationalism to influence broad sections of the working-class with a style and effect typically fascist. Indeed it could well be argued that generations of mind-dulling propaganda in the popular press has produced one of the most politically unsophisticated electorates in Europe. Certainly capitalism needs the gutter press to divide, confuse and distort, and Fleet Street performs the function very well.

PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP

At such a crucial time Labour's parliamentary leadership should be pulling out every stop to campaign for the Socialist alternative to the monetarist lunacies of Thatcher. Instead we have the unwholesome spectacle of some Labour Front-Benchers attempting to change Party policy, and the NEC involved in a criminally irrelevant witch-hunt against Militant that would be laughable if it were not so tragic for the rest of us.

During the forthcoming election campaign public attention will again be centred on crucial domestic issues and our task then, as now, must be to offer fundamental change rather than a jumble of half-baked expedients based on an estimate of our daily political fortunes as expressed in the deeply hostile editorials of Fleet Street.

We all know the next Labour Government will inherit an economy in deep crisis exacerbated by social tensions within our society, created by unemployment and cuts in public services which threaten conflict between conflicting groups of workers; blacks and whites; employed and unemployed. In such a situation the new Labour government will once again be faced with a clear choice.

PROP UP CAPITALISM?

Do we attempt to prop up capitalism by demanding useless sacrifices from working people as we have done so often in the past, or do we use the crisis to set our society firmly on the road to socialism? It will not be easy, for although British capitalism might be in a state of decay, it is an economic system with a survival record second-to-none and only a fool would underestimate the enormity of our task. However, we must reject totally the absurb notion that we can only have socialism after we have solved the problems of capitalism as if socialism were some kind of fringe benefit, or a reward to be bestowed upon us by a grateful ruling-class for guaranteeing their survival.

Labour cannot run capitalism more efficiently than the capitalists nor can there ever be a convenient time to introduce socialism within a capitalist society and those in our Party looking for excuses will always be able to find them in abundance. If there is a parliamentary road to socialism then it is about time we commenced the journey — since further delay could prove fatal for our party.

EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ACTION

It is self-evident that the struggle for fundamental change in society must involve far more than MP's alone. The British ruling-class is not simply going to stand aside and let us legislate capitalism out of existence because we happen to capture a working majority in Parliament. The extra-Parliamentary forces of the Tory Party includes the City, the IMF, Fleet Street, the multi-national companies, the Treaty of Rome and the Pentagon. Unless we are able to mobilise the entire strength of our Movement, both inside and outside Parliament against such centres of power we will be doomed to repeat the errors and failures of the past.

The election of a truly socialist Labour Government will itself require a degree of working-class political consciousness not yet evident within the country. However, even if we were able to secure such a commitment prior to an election it would need to be further developed to defend socialism since the British ruling-class will stop at nothing to destabilise a Labour government clearly set to change the structure of the economic system.

NAKED POWER OF THE STATE

The use of the media, the Courts, and the economic institutions will flow naturally. But always behind them if they fail to stop us will be the naked co-ercive power of the capitalist state in the form of the police and the armed services.

The only answer to the threat of destabilisation and possible use of armed force by the ruling-class will be the counter-vailing power of a working-class politically conscious and motivated by the Labour Movement to defend its own government.

Whether or not we can develop such a consciousness depends on the Labour Party showing itself capable of campaigning inside and outside Parliament to convince working people that we are a political party serving their interests and their interests alone.

Unless we can establish that clear identity, we will change nothing nor will we be in a position to do so.

Tony Banks
Prospective Parliamentary Candidate
Newham North-West

Now let's all build on:
The Greenham ring of confidence

by Deborah Law



Catharine Tate

When we were planning to 'embrace' the nine-mile perimeter of Greenham Common on 12th December and blockade the base on 13th December, we were hoping for 12,000 women. We had imagined that we would need scarves to fill in the gaps between women in the living chain. For once, police estimates for 30,000 women on the day were double the figure we expected. We also had no idea that 3,000 women would be willing to risk arrest and take non-violent direct action. On New Year's Day, 44 women entered the air base and climbed onto the silos where the cruise misiles are to be housed. Most of these women had only become involved with the peace camp since 12th December and were taking direct action for the first time. This confirmed for us the strength of feeling that exists and the determination to stop cruise missiles coming here.

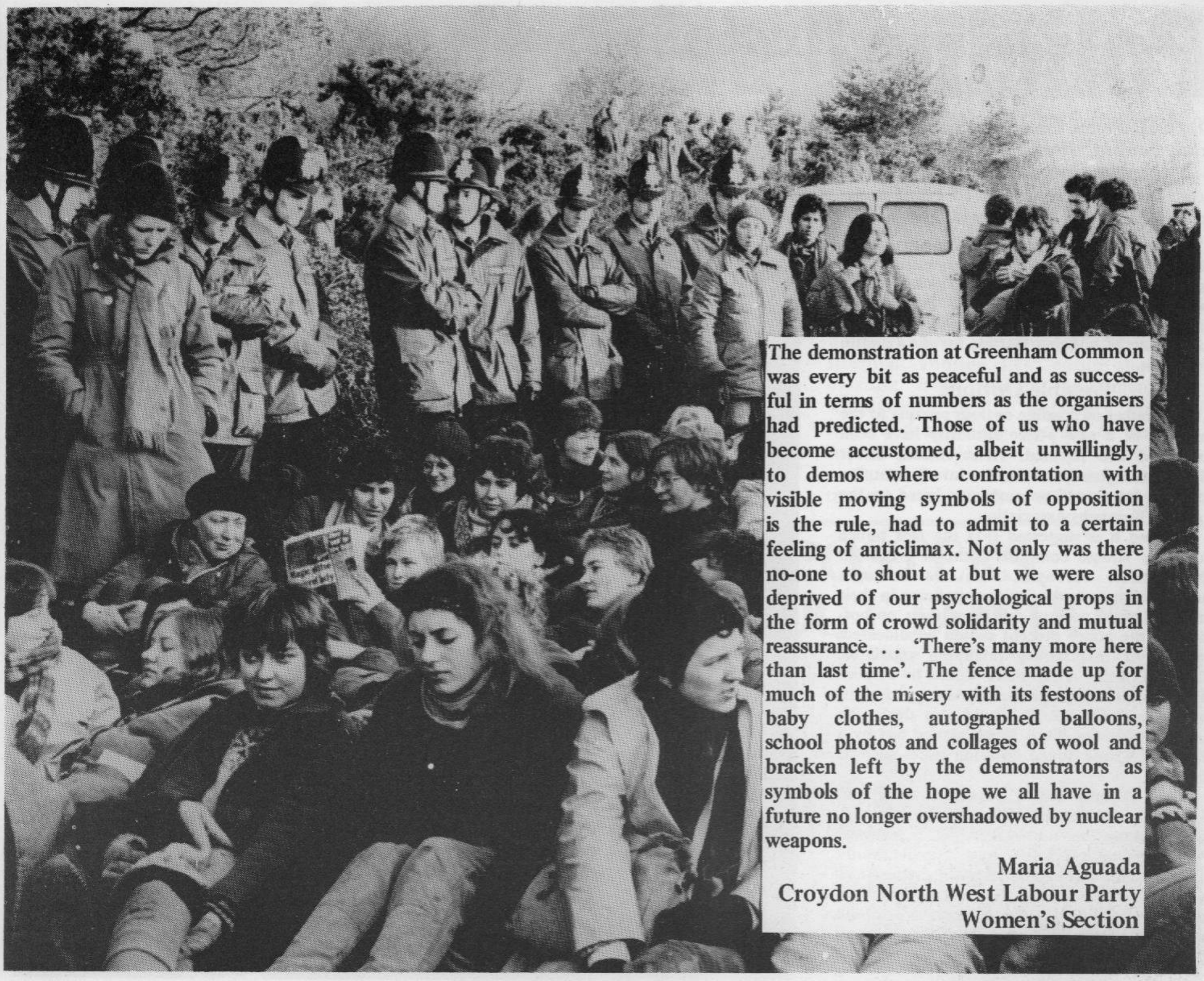
We believe that the authorities are going to try and slip the cruise missiles into this country by April so we are planning a continuing programme of actions. We are also challenging the new Minister of Defence, Michael Heseltine, to a public debate about the current nuclear defence policies — a challenge which his predecessor, John Nott, did not have the courage to accept.

On 15th February, at Newbury, we have another important court case concerning the 44 women arrested whilst drawing attention to the newly built silos at the USAF base. We welcome support for this, and were greatly encouraged by the withdrawal of a contract with Tarmac, by Labour-controlled Southwark council, who linked this firm's involvement with the building of silos at Greenham Common. We hope to see further initiatives taken by the trade union movement to curtail the work to prepare the base which is to house the weapons of mass destruction.

STRENGTHENING LINKS

We are working on strengthening our links with American and other European women. Recent visits abroad by Greenham Common women are leading up to a large demonstration in Brussels on 8th March, International Women's Day. Women from all over Europe will be showing their opposition to NATO policies by handing in petitions to the five nuclear powers. Supporting mirror demonstrations will be held at Greenham Common and at Comiso in Sicily, the proposed site of Southern European cruise missiles. A large party of US peace women are coming to Brussels with a million signatures opposing NATO policy.

We have very little time left in which to stop cruise, and cannot afford to relax the pressure we are putting on the government. Using our imagination and conviction all of us can increase that pressure and work quickly together to stop this madness. Greenham Common women are always willing to be invited to speak at Labour Party or Trade Union gatherings. To book speakers, and for further information, please write to: Deborah Law, 1 Crowland Terrace, London N1



The demonstration at Greenham Common was every bit as peaceful and as successful in terms of numbers as the organisers had predicted. Those of us who have become accustomed, albeit unwillingly, to demos where confrontation with visible moving symbols of opposition is the rule, had to admit to a certain feeling of anticlimax. Not only was there no-one to shout at but we were also deprived of our psychological props in the form of crowd solidarity and mutual reassurance. . . 'There's many more here than last time'. The fence made up for much of the misery with its festoons of baby clothes, autographed balloons, school photos and collages of wool and bracken left by the demonstrators as symbols of the hope we all have in a future no longer overshadowed by nuclear weapons.

Maria Aguada
Croydon North West Labour Party
Women's Section

Photo: Wandsworth Photography Co-operative

Blockade of the gates at Greenham Common, December 13th.

Southwark blacks Tarmac

Southwark Council recently passed the following motion:

(1) This Council supports the action of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp in opposing the siting of the US Cruise Missiles in Britain, and affirms its opposition to all nuclear weapons.
(11) This Council notes that construction of silos and support facilities is already being undertaken by British companies sub-contracted by Tarmac, who have been awarded the contract for all work on the missile site.
(111) Therefore, in line with this Council's nuclear-free policy, it is resolved not to employ, in any future capacity, Tarmac, or any of the Companies so engaged.
(IV) This Council also undertakes to encourage other Councils to adopt this resolution, and support them in doing so.

The aim of the motion is to focus the issue of the nuclear bases on the trades union movement. Southwark women were well represented at the recent Greenham Common demonstration. There was an overwhelming feeling of strength and solidarity amongst those who gathered to link arms around the perimeter fence and shout for freedom.

Undeniably this issue has been brought to the government's attention, but we need to maintain this pressure. The Greenham Common women will not win the fight alone. This is where the bureaucratic power of local councils, who have been busily declaring themselves nuclear free zones, can be exercised.

Councils can control their lists of approved contractors so that any firm doing work at proposed nuclear bases is not allowed to work for nuclear free Councils. In the case of Greenham Common the main contractor is Tarmac Ltd. They have subcontracted a large number of firms to do the work on the silos and other support facilities. If we do not use these firms (full list available from me) then they may be discouraged from taking up or continuing such contracts.

Apart from the effect on employers this move, given enough publicity, might have an effect on the workers themselves. The women at the base have reported that the majority of workers there at present are generally unskilled and ununionised. Eventually, however there will have to be electricians, telephone engineers etc who probably will be in unions. We must persuade our comrades in these positions not to work on the sites.

We should be making it as difficult as possible for work to progress. That is why it is important that a large number of councils pass this motion and accept its implications.

Paula Moore

Policing: seize the time!

The GLC Police Committee has approved a paper setting out detailed proposals for bringing the Metropolitan Police under local democratic control. The paper, which is the most important piece of work so far undertaken by the Committee, is to be issued as a discussion document for public consultation and when the views of Londoners have been made known on the proposals a draft Bill will be prepared for presentation to Parliament. Already, Labour's Home Affairs spokespeople have announced that legislation for police accountability in London will be a priority of the next Labour government.

Copies of the discussion document can be obtained free from the Police Committee Support Unit at County Hall. The proposals it contains involve radical changes in the internal organisation of the Met and will provide a major role in policing matters for the London Boroughs.

Possible Options

A number of possible options relating to the creation of a new police authority have been examined and rejected. These include direct elction, the division of the Met into four or five separate forces and an authority based on the London Boroughs Association.

Instead it is suggested that the new police authority should comprise both the GLC and the London boroughs, with the boroughs having ultimate authority over policing in their area and total control over how their proportion of the police precept should be allocated, subject to maintaining minimum standards. The GLC Police Committee would be responsible for central recruitment, training, administration and finance. It would also deal with London-wide functions to be carried out by a Regional Crime Squad covering issues such as fraud.

The national duties presently being performed by the Met should however be removed. These would be undertaken by a National Police Agency which the paper suggests should be controlled by a committee with representatives from all the police authorities. The separate City of London police force would also be abolished under the Committee's proposals.

Fiercely Resisted

It can be expected that these proposals will be fiercely resisted by the Tories and sections of the press. If they are to command the public support which will be needed to ensure that they are embodied in legislation without dilution, the campaign around these proposals must therefore begin now.

Labour Parties throughout London will need to obtain copies of the GLC Report, study the proposals, comment on them and build local leafletting campaigns around the central demands. For this is not the first time in its 150 year history that attempts have been made to make the Met accountable to those who foot the bill and in whose name it acts. But it is perhaps the best chance that Londoners have ever had to bring about radical change. And if we miss this chance the Party will not easily be forgiven.



Steve Bundred
Vice-chair, GLC Police Committee

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BOOK REVIEW

TWO STEPS BACK by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson (1982, Socialist Platform, £3.50).

The Communist Party often presents ifself as an enigma for those who have had some contact with it. Why, for example, do influential Communists so often take a position to the right of the average Labour rank and filer, when they are continually vilified as 'extreme left'? How can the Communist Party defend the dictatorships of Eastern Europe, while at the same time calling for 'democratic rights' and parliamentary reforms in Britain? And why do rank and file Communists loyally support their Party — sometimes at great personal cost — despite the apparent hypocrisy of its leadership?

In contrast to a 'psychological' approach linking Communist Party members to a particular personality that makes them susceptible to this kind of 'double-think', Bornstein and Richardson argue that the explanation can be found in politics and history. They believe that the role of the Communist Party today can only be understood in the light of the history of its formative years, before and during the second world war. It is handicapped by the deformities which it suffered during these years, and it can do no other than to continue in its old ways.

The book concentrates specifically on the relationship between the Communist Party and the wider labour movement before 1945, showing how its politics were determined by the needs of the Communist International and in particular by the requirements of Soviet Russia's foreign policy. At the same time, these policies contrasted alarmingly with the demands of the British labour movement and with the evolution of the class struggle in Britain. Thus, for example, the Hitler-Stalin Pact forced the Communist Party to take up the call for 'peace' precisely when the mass of the labour movement had accepted the war against Fascism; and then Hitler's invasion of Russia led to the call for 'patriotic' war just when the labour movement was beginning to revolt against war-time controls.

This book is essential reading not only for those who are curious about the enigma presented by the Communist Party, but especially for those who find that this form of 'communism' — Stalinism — represents quite difference politics from those traditionally associated with Marxism, socialism and the interests of the working class. If this book only demonstrates the antithesis between Marxism and Stalinism then it will have served its purpose.

Jim Ring
(Southgate CLP)

Save this women's hospital!

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

The South London Hospital for Women is under attack and is being threatened with closure. Unfortunately some members of the Labour Party who are on the Wandsworth District Health Authority (DHA) are at the forefront of this attack. We must persuade them to see sense and oppose any closure plans.

The South London Hospital for Women, located near Clapham Common, was founded in 1912 to meet two special needs: women patients who prefer to be treated by women doctors, and to train women doctors as hospital specialists.

Warm and Friendly

It is a small hospital, with 192 beds, and has a warm, friendly atmosphere greatly welcomed by the women patients and medical staff.

Despite its size however, the South London Hospital is at the forefront of many new developments in hospital care, especially the early diagnosis and treatment of cervical cancer.

Plans for the closure of the hospital have been unanimously agreed by a working party set up by the Wandsworth DHA. Five of the seven members of this working party are in the Labour Party.

The proposal is to be discussed at the next meeting of the DHA on 27th January. The proposal is that in-patient facilities at the South London Hospital for Women should close on 1st April 1984, together with outpatient facilities (other than ante-natal clinics) as soon as possible thereafter and services transferred to St. George's and St. James's Hospitals. This will save about £2 million per annum. The Working Group are asking that the Regional Health Authority (RHA) give the DHA a written guarantee that money saved by the closure will be allowed to remain in the hands of the DHA for them to spend on the mentally ill.

Other hospitals in Wandsworth are incapable of absorbing the services currently offered by the South London Hospital for Women and so in any transfer there would inevitably be a loss of services.

Women Only

As far as I am concerned the prime argument for the retention of the South London Hospital for Women is that it is a hospital for women only run and staffed by women. The only other hospital like this in London is the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital (which has very few beds). The South London is indeed the only remaining general women's hospital in the UK. Women's hospitals are important and must be retained. Many women prefer to be seen by women doctors and this particularly applies to Asian women.

This proposal has to be fought tooth and nail. Already the Greater London Labour Party Women's Committee has condemned the plan and support the retention of the South London Hospital. Instead of thinking about closing the South London Hospital we should be thinking of how to expand its services.

Women's Committee

I will be asking the GLC Women's Committee to approve support – both financial and physical – for the campaign to save the hospital.

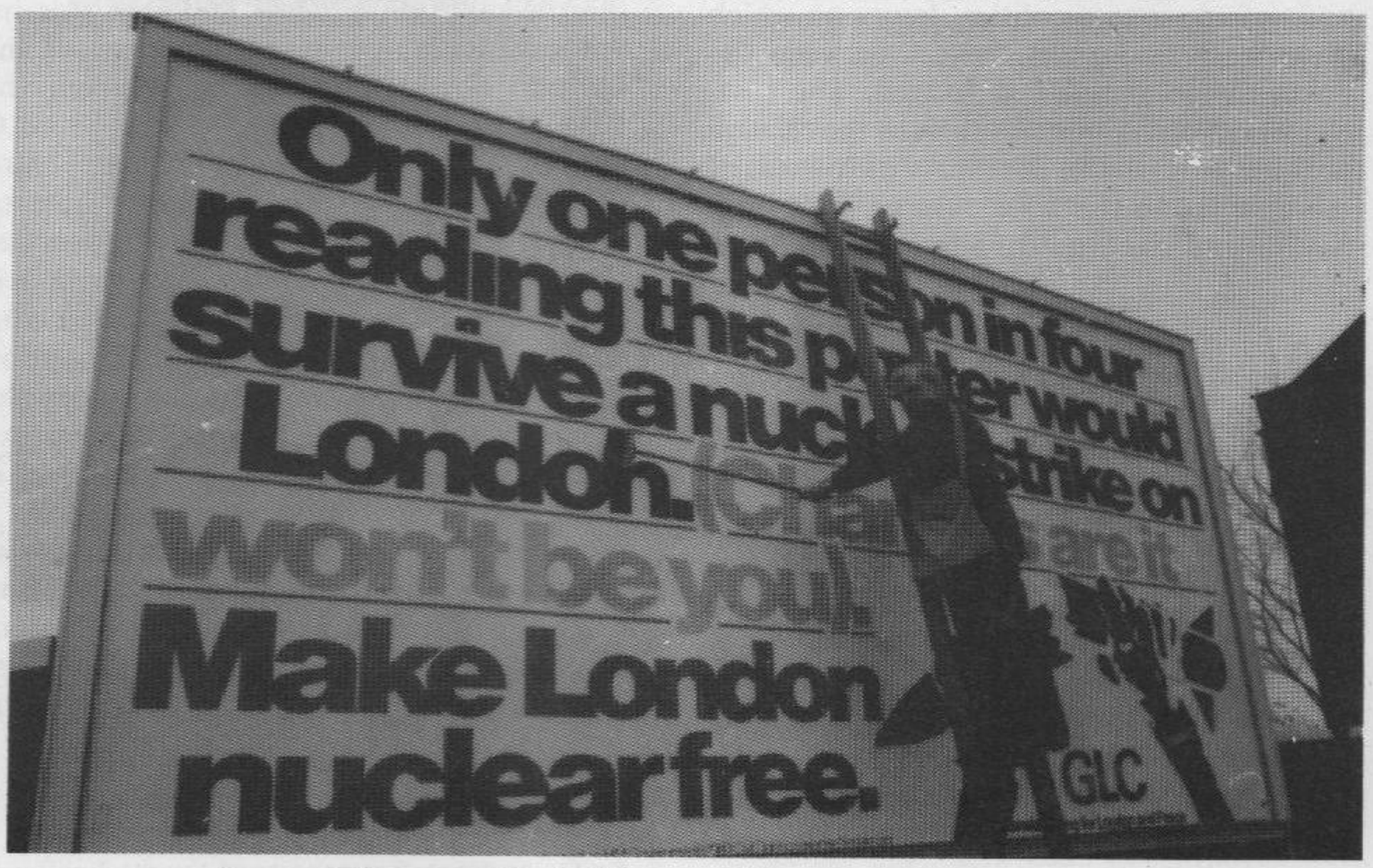
The GLC Women's Committee has already recognised the value of this particular hospital by giving a grant of £11,000 to the League of Friends last November to meet the cost of purchasing a laser for treatment of early cancer in women patients there.

This hospital must not be allowed to close. Letters expressing support for the hospital and opposition to any closure plan should be sent (if possible before 27th January) to Sam Dougherty, Chairman, Wandsworth Health Authority, Grosvenor Wing, St. George's Hospital, Blackshaw Road, SW17 0QT.

It is vital that this hospital remains in being. Join the lobby of the DHA on 27th January at 4pm at Springfield Hospital, Tooting. Let's ensure that with pressure from women (and men) the Wandsworth Health Authority will see sense and allow the hospital to carry on with its good work.

Campaign now and stop any decision to close being taken on 27th January.

PEACE POSTERS THROUGHOUT LONDON



by Illtyd Harrington

Deputy Leader, GLC

Monday the 10th January was an interesting day. Our Peace Woman Statue was heavily vandalised and I posted up the last of our 32 big posters calling for a Nuclear Free London. One in every borough.

Our Peace Year was 10 days old and all the indications are that we are on the right lines. Nazi thuggery is more or less predictable but more optimistic signs are letters, good wishes and international media interest.

In one day we put our programme of Peace Year events to Russian, American and French television. Londoners are stretching out their hands to us in verse — song — and solidarity.

The shunting of our old enemy Heseltine is an act of political panic. At the Department of the Environment he presided over the attack on local democracy. At the Ministry of Defence he will attempt to justify the greatest item of public expenditure, £15,000,000,000.

His jaded comments on GLC profligacy look even more contrived now. After all Thatcher has argued GUNS Before BUTTER. That is why I am proud of my younger colleagues at the GLC who are challenging the philosophical basis of its government where it needs to be challenged. That is JINGOISM and MILITARISM are the enemies of HUMANITY.

Peace Year will spell out our answers to the War Party. In a series of public events, some joyful, some musical and some heavily weighted on the intellectual side we will take on the nuclear maniacs.

Our public campaigning has been greatly aided by the phenomenal impact of the Greenham Common Women. They have sent representatives to our meetings and public ceremonies and the reaction that follows is one of the most interesting I have ever experienced. Their honesty and determination moves all before it. If the Labour Party nationally would begin to understand a little of the positive reaction we are getting even they would learn and benefit from it.

We have the establishment worried and even the journalists who have been instructed to either ridicule or denigrate our Peace Year know from their observations that we are swinging along in the front of public opinion.

WITHDRAW FROM THE L.B.A.

by Martin Coleman,
Leader of Brent Council.

In March the Greater London Regional Council Conference will decide whether London Labour Boroughs should remain Members of the London Boroughs Association. At first sight this question may appear to be a matter of administration and of little significance for the movement in general. In fact it has great relevance and a break with the London Boroughs Association is being strongly resisted by certain members of the London Party Establishment.

The LBA is a voluntary Association of London Boroughs dating from the reorganisation of London Government in 1964. All the London Boroughs have belonged to the Association since its inception. The LBA has been Tory controlled since 1978. It is intended to speak for London on matters of London-wide and local government interest. Until recently the Association's Leadership — both Labour and Tory — had attempted to operate on the basis of consensus politics. Issues on which there were major differences between the Parties were avoided or fudged. The LBA concentrated on matters such as the relative position of London in respect of the rest of the country in the allocation of Rate Support Grant or matters of administrative concern.

BREAK WITH CONSENSUS

Ironically the break with consensus politics has not come from the Labour side but from the Tories. The shift to the left in many London Boroughs last May left the LBA Labour Group largely unaffected. It continues under the Leadership of Roy Shaw of Camden and Paul Beesley of Tower Hamlets. The Tory Group has changed more significantly. Many of the old paternalistic Tories have gone and their places have been taken by Thatcherites typified by Chope of Wandsworth. They have no real concern to protect London and show no interest in local autonomy. Their primary concern is in implementing the Thatcher philosophy at a local level.

So, while the Labour Group Leadership continued in the old way attempting to play on the 'reasonableness' of the Tories, the Tory hard right were planning their master stroke. Officers were asked to prepare a scheme for the transfer of GLC and ILEA powers to the Boroughs and, where this is not possible, to other agencies.

These plans were presented to the LBA's General Purposes Committe in December. Discussion was deferred to January because, claimed the Tory Chair, he did not realise the Labour Boroughs were opposed.

Faced with a right-wing LBA and an ineffective LBA Labour Group London's Labour Leaders decided, with the support of their Groups, to introduce monthly meetings of London Labour Leaders in order to exchange information and where possible co-ordinate strategies. London Labour Councils have agreed to fund a support unit for the Leader's meetings.

The next logical step is for London's Labour Boroughs to withdraw from the LBA and form an association of authorities prepared to defend London and protect public services. There are two main arguments put forward against such a move. First, the Government is required to 'consult' the Associations' representative of local government. It is said that London has gained from the involvement of Labour members and Labour Borough officers in the consultation process and that this involvement would end in the event of the Labour Boroughs withdrawing from the LBA. Legal advice obtained by the GLC suggests that a body representing one-third of London's Boroughs would be able to take advantage of the consultation process. However, even if this advice is wrong it is questionable how useful the so called consultation has been. Certainly most London Labour Boroughs are suffering under the present round of Rate Support Grant cuts.

The second objection to withdrawal is that the LBA continues to perform a number of cross-London functions, the most important of which are the allocation of grants to certain London-wide voluntary organisations and the Inter-Boroughs Housing Nomination Scheme from which Labour Boroughs make a small net gain.

NO DETRIMENT

So far as grants are concerned the mechanism is complicated but centres on the right of the GLC to distribute grants after consultation with London Boroughs. So long as we have a Labour GLC it will be free to consult with all local government organisations on grant allocation. Thus there should be no detriment. If the GLC should fall into Tory hands then it is unlikely that 13 Labour Boroughs as members of the LBA could hold off a Tory GLC and a Tory majority on the LBA determined to cut grants. Even a Labour controlled London Boroughs Association would not be in a position to require a Tory GLC to increase the grant levels.

The Housing Nomination Scheme does slightly benefit Labour Boroughs. However it is no substitute for an effective and properly thought out housing distribution scheme. This does not exist at the moment and will not exist until a Labour Government comes into office. The small advantages of the present scheme must be weighed against the large disadvantages of continued LBA membership.

The traditional justification for a by-partisan LBA was that there are certain matters of London- wide concern that cross Party boundaries and which are best dealt with by a united approach. If this were ever the case it is so no longer. Most of the important concerns facing London are of major political contention. There are strong ideological differences between the Parties. Even if Labour Boroughs were prepared to continue with the old consensus the Tories have made it clear that they wish to push their own political line regardless of the consequences.

SEIZE THE CHANCE

We now have an excellent opportunity to begin a vigorous London campaign in defence of public services — let us seize the chance, withdraw from the LBA and form a campaigning new London association. There will be strong resistance from some elements. It is important that this matter is discussed in constituency Parties and Labour Groups before the March Conference and that delegates are mandated accordingly.

From the Broad Left Organising C'tee. (T.U.'s)

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

You may have read in the press that we intend to hold a conference on the 19. Feb. 1983 (Saturday) on the above subject. The main speaker will be Tony Benn. The venue is the GLC's County Hall London. The conference shall commence promptly at 10.30a.m. and finish 4.00p.m.

It is our intention that the conference shall be as representative of the Left in the trade union movement as possible. Consequently we are extending invitations only to genuine Broad Left organisations within the unions and to trade union official organisations.

The main aim of the conference will be to discuss the whole issue of how the BLOCK VOTE is cast within the TUC & LP on policy and the election of the leadership of our movement. It is quite clear to our committee that it is vital that the Left arrive at a correct view on how we can extend democracy within the unions. The last TUC and LP conferences have both raised the issue of trade union voting at these conferences. We are in danger that undemocratic practices will deprive the rank and file of hard won gains but these same practices will also bring discredit to the whole working class movement.

Just as important we must ensure that a wedge is not driven between the CLP s and the unions because of the recent disappointments. On the agenda will also be a discussion on the need for a real drive for work place LP branches. Could you please give the conference publicity and inform me of the number of credentials you will need.

Yours fraternally,

Phil Holt
108 Prince's Boulevard, Bebington,
Merseyside, L63 7PE Tel: 051 645 1375

POLAND

THE LONG MARCH OF THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION

By a Special Correspondent

New Year's night in Szczecin, the large port on Poland's Baltic coast. At midnight, ships in the harbour welcome the new year with the mournful wail of their sirens, red flares light up the sky, prosperous couples leaving parties in the stately flats along Polish Army Boulevard are terrorised by young kids chucking fire-works about. A couple of drunken army officers, one a captain, bundle two teenage girls into a taxi outside the Reda Hotel. Inside, a worried western businessman in his sixties complains that the woman he was with ran off with the key to his room. The desk clerk checks the room she was working from, then pours me another glass of free champagne and philosophises: "You know, the problem is that all over the world people are demanding far too much freedom. And that's been the root cause of the trouble here. Don't you agree?"

EDMUND BALUKA

A mile away, in the political police prison on Kaszubska Street, Edmund Baluka is presumably asleep by now. He had led the strikes of 1970-71 in Szczecin, went into exile in the West, returned in 1981 and founded a socialist party in the city, based on some workers at the big Warski Shipyard. Interned in December 1981, he has been held in complete isolation in Kaszubska for many months while the police work him over in preparation for a trial and long prison sentence. Few Solidarnosc workers agreed with his radical socialist convictions, but he retains great authority as an indomitable fighter and an historic figure in the Polish working class movement.

Little is known about what happens in Kaszubska, apart from the fact that it has a busy psychiatric wing. It would be quite a coup to break Baluka. The leader of Szczecin Solidarnosc, Marian Jurszyk, is also in jail awaiting trial and a long prison sentence. He is a symbol of the workers' resistance in the city. I asked a taxi driver what he thought of Lech Walesa's release. He replied by asking if I had heard of Marian Jurczyk. Jurczyk's son and daughter-in-law fell to their deaths from a tower block a few months ago. The funeral march was violently broken up by the police.

Other Szczecin Solidarnosc leaders remain underground, among them an acquaintance of mine, Stasek Wisniewski, a leader in the shipyard where he had worked as an electrician for thirty years and who edited Solidarnosc's bulletin there when the movement was legal.

Now a sheet of paper is circulating in the city naming activists who are supposed to be agents of the political police. Wisniewski's name is on the list, but the person who showed it to me said: "Look at the quality of the paper. Beautiful, eh? Guess which organisation can use paper like that!"

"MAINTAIN ORDER"

Out of some 12,000 workers at the Warski shipyard, about 1,000 have been sacked for political reasons during the year of martial law. Only a few of these have been allowed to return later. The head of one department went to the Shipyard's military commissar to complain that its work could scarcely continue because key skilled workers had been sacked. The reported reply was: "What makes you think your job is to produce ships? It is to maintain order!"



"Postage Stamp", produced by Martial Law internees from Szczecin, showing a picture of the camp "Wierzehowo".

The shops in the city have in many ways been transformed over the last year, particularly the food shops. While severe shortages remain in some goods — notably medicine, shoes, socks, shirts, bed-linen — food during the holiday period was plentiful ... for those who could afford it. This indeed is one of the key achievements of General Jaruzelski: to have destroyed the strong, if rough and ready, egalitarianism of the Solidarnosc period and massively increased social inequalities, as a weapon against the working class. Prices of essential items have increased by between two hundred and three hundred per cent. A sociologist told me that about one third of the work-force in Szczecin was living on or below the official poverty line. By regaining control of the economic administration, and using the draconian regulations of martial law, the regime is able to threaten vast numbers of workers with destitution. At the same time, it tolerates or even encourages the rise of a new lumpen middle class of black-marketeers, racketeers, pimps, informers and political opportunists growing increasingly confident that Jaruzelski will pull through against the workers.

Church organisations are providing some financial support for the families of imprisoned activists and of workers who have lost their jobs. A fairly wide network of fund raising by ex-members of Solidarnosc also continues for those in need.

But the Church, in Szczecin at least, appears to be running short of funds. And there is also strong political pressure from the Church hierarchy to pull back from encouragement to the Opposition forces. At St Jacob's Cathedral there was a memorial mass the weekend before Christmas for those workers killed in Szczecin in 1970. After listening to Bishop Majdanski's sermon an angry worker and former local Solidarnosc leader commented: "The bishops had better be careful. If they go on like this, they will find their churches empty!"

HOPES HAVE DIED

The underground movement continues to operate in the city, producing about a dozen different bulletins. But they are more a symbol of resistance than the organising sinews of an effective political force. The resistance leaders and former internees are looked up to as heros, but from a distance. People are less and less willing to become practically involved. The active opposition also lacks a common programme or method of action for continuing the struggle. Growing numbers of intellectuals formerly linked to Solidarnosc are applying to leave for the West. Hopes that Solidarnosc could throw off the Jaruzelski regime and defend at least some of the gains of 1980-81 have died.

Yet as the party and police authorities in Szczecin survey their city what they see is thousands of former Solidarnosc activists who may have been for the moment defeated but who are deeply committed to the movement's basic traditions, know each other, and are linked to the general population by a million personal threads of loyalty.

The authorities' task of building new institutions for controlling and channelling the population in daily subservience to the regime has scarcely begun. The Communist Party and its fringe organisations remain skeletons, the new 'trade unions' will remain an insignificant factor for a very long time. The Patriotic Movement of National Rebirth (PROM) designed to provide a framework for non-party people willing to collaborate with the government remains nothing more than the regime talking to itself. Events like the suspension of martial law have no significance for the general population, despite the prominence given to it in the West.

COUNTERREVOLUTION

Against this background, the general view amongst Solidarnosc supporters is that the Polish counter-revolution is only at the end of its first phase. Its next phase will involve attempts to carry through a much wider purge of public institutions, less dramatic thatn the waves of arrests and trials of the last year, geared to the moral humiliation of Solidarnosc activists with the aim of finally discrediting them in the eyes of the masses. Poland's provincial cities are living through a long march of the counter-revolution.

PALESTINE

Peace Now Movement aids Zionist Colonialism

There used to be a widely believed myth that Israel was a small peaceful nation surrounded by fierce and hostile Arab states. But the blitzkrieg of Beirut blew up more than the capital of Lebanon, it exploded the lies of which this myth was built.

Napalm, phosphorous and fragmentation bombs — these are not the instruments of peace. Recent revelations of Israel's arms sales to El Salvador and South America have also helped reveal the truth. Finally the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla have torn from the face of Zionism the mask that merely mutters 'Shalom'.

'LABOUR ZIONISM'

Those who until now have been unswerving believers in Israel's peaceful intentions (despite Suez, despite the continued occupation of the West Bank and the annexation of the Golan Heights) now argue that Zionism isn't to blame but Begin, that so-called 'Labour' Zionism is good, but Begin's Zionism is bad.

The fact is the disagreements between these two trends have always been tactical. Both desired a Jewish state 'cleansed' of its Arab populace. Both are expansionist. Begin's trend tended to be more honest about its methods and goals: they called clearly for a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan. Labour Zionism, by contrast, busy among Europe's trade unionists and social democratic parties had to be less strident.

Now the 'Labour' Zionists are using the Peace Now movement both to give the impression that they are very different from the Begin-ites (though in fact Labour in Israel supported the invasion of Lebanon and Rabin advocated entering Beirut). The Peace Now movement in Israel fed off the desire of many Israelis to end the cycle of war, repression and expansion. It was a spontaneous movement desiring peace but not wishing to change the state that denied them peace. Except in the case of a few individuals, they have not questioned Zionism whose logic they were rebelling against.

In Britain the Labour Zionists are behind the creation of the British Peace Now. Unlike its Israeli counterpart it contains no desire to end war and repression. It has been established to prevent the drift of British Jews and others into the anti-Zionist camp, and as a means of bolstering support for Israel.

NO DEMONSTRATIONS

It held no demonstrations against the Israeli invasion here, issued no calls for their withdrawal and at its major public meeting such supporters of the invasion as Conor Cruise O'Brien and Hugh Dykes MP were among the guest speakers.

Thousands of Peace Now stickers and posters bearing the word "Shalom" (Peace) were distributed in order to make a link between this campaign to whitewash Israel's warmongering and the genuine expression of war-weariness and war-hatred within Israel.

British anti-Zionists should expose Begin's twins in the Israel Labour Party. Support for Zionist colonisation can no more be a part of Labour ideology than apartheid.

Tony Greenstein
(Chair, Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine)

DON'T ALLOW THE NEC TO BETRAY THE PALESTINIANS

The decision by the Labour Party conference to unconditionally support the just Palestinian struggle for national self-determination seems to have upset the right-wing on the new NEC. In the name of "reaffirming" Party policy, the NEC has issued a news release which totally contradicts it.

Rather than laying the blame for the Sabra and Shatilla massacres squarely at the feet of the Israeli government, the NEC places an equal sign between the actions of the Israelis and the Palestinians by calling for withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, including the PLO. Is the NEC not aware that it was the enforced PLO withdrawal from Beirut that allowed the massacres to take place? And where are the PLO supposed to go having been denied the right to return to their homeland since 1948?

While failing to demand Israel's immediate withdrawal from the West Bank, Gaza and Golan, the statement calls on the PLO to unconditionally recognise Israel. Yet Israel is built on exclusivism, racism and expansionism — its very structure involves the denial of Palestinian rights. It is this which prevents the "just and lasting peace" which the NEC claims it supports.

A democratic, secular State of Palestine, including Jews, Druze and Arabs is the only way to guarantee the political, religious and cultural rights of all those living in the region. This is the demand of the PLO.

Rather than recognise this the NEC statement welcomes the US peace initiative but does not mention that it was the same US which supplied the phosphorous bombs that incinerated many Palestinians and Lebanese. It further commits our Party to close liaison with the Israeli Labour Alignment which supported the initial invasion.

The Labour Committee on Palestine is calling on all CLPs to demand that the NEC withdraws its statement and unconditionally endorses Party policy. Such a manoeuvre on the issue of unilateral disarmament would create a massive outcry in the rank and file. For the sake of the Palestinians and all living in the region, we must do the same.

Alf Filer, Brent East CLP
Chris Khamis, Brent East CLP





Photos by Ryuichi Hirokawa

Above: women mourn their dead. The Chatilla massacre.

The LCP Conference

1982 was the year of Begin and Sharon's war against the Palestinian and Lebanese people. The massacres at Sabra and Shatilla, the continuing Israeli occupation of Lebanon and the deaths and imprisonment of tens of thousands of people cannot be allowed to fade from memory. The victims of Israeli aggression and expansionism need the Zionist lies exposed and active solidarity with them taken up seriously by the labour movement.

This is the main aim of the Labour Committee on Palestine (LCP). It was set up last summer and launched its first annual conference in November. The platform adopted pledged to build support in the labour movement for Palestinian self-determination, recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon and all occupied areas, and opposition to Zionism, anti-semitism and all other forms of racism. The LCP was the main force in getting one of the Labour Party conference resolutions adopted.

A Steering Committee was elected to coordinate the building of the campaign and initiatives taken so far include publicising the Labour Party NEC statement, producing a regular bulletin, preparing a labour movement delegation to Lebanon and the Israeli Occupied Territories. The committee will also be organising a national meeting in June to reassess work around the country and the building of local LCP groups.



YASSIR ARAFAT

PLO Chair Yassir Arafat has sent greetings to the LCP, recognising the important solidarity work being done by the campaign. The Steering Committee is composed of Labour Party and Trade Union members from several political trends and no one group dominates. This is in line with the urgent need to build a broad based campaign in the labour movement.

Therefore, it is regrettable that a few Socialist Organiser supporters and some independent activists left the conference claiming that the meeting had been packed by one political tendency. After leaving they then set up an alternative campaign. While they have levelled accusations of irregularities on membership and delegate status, a discussion on this should be considered in the light of the immediate need to build support for the Palestinian struggle and should be done inside the LCP instead of splitting the campaign.

REJOIN

We urge these comrades to rejoin and actively build the LCP. Division at this stage will only throw potential support in the labour movement into confusion, threatening loss of support for the Palestinians and will only benefit the Zionists and right wing.

In our view, the Palestinian struggle is not the sole property of any individual organisation but the responsibility and duty of everyone in the labour movement.

We urge comrades to join the LCP, get their trade unions and labour parties to affiliate and continue to build support for the Palestinian and Lebanese struggle.

Alf Filer, Mike Heiser, Chris Khamis and Ros Young for LCP Steering Committee

For further information on the LCP contact: Penny Cole, Secretary LCP, 30 Foulden Rd., London N16.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

The Labour Committee on Palestine played a critical role in organising the anti-Zionist forces in the Labour Party. Largely as a result of the L.C.P.'s efforts, last year's Labour Party Conference passed a resolution supporting the PLO. The split that occurred in the L.C.P., at its Conference in November is therefore, to say the least, extremely regretable.

Briefing prints below articles from both sides of the split. But we take the view that the way that the WRP was allowed to pack the Conference was regrettable.

Only the Zionists can gain from the split that has ensued. Briefing will do all in its power to ensure the speediest re-unification of the anti-Zionist forces, and to this end we urge a recalled Conference of the L.C.P.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN FOR PALESTINE

In four short months, the Labour Committee on Palestine succeeded in persuading the Labour Party Conference to support a democratic and secular state in Palestine and to recognise the PLO. It thereby reversed 60 years of Labour Party support for Zionist colonisation.

The potential for solidarity work on the Palestine question and for work exposing the racist and anti-Labour nature of Zionism is enormous. How criminal then that the Workers' Revolutionary Party (which supports reactionary Arab regimes) was allowed to assume a controlling influence over the First National Conference of the LCP, thereby creating a split.

Those who walked out of the WRP-dominated Conference – people including the founding Chair and Secretary of the LCP – decided to set up the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine to continue the work of the LCP.

The LMCfP retains the LCP's programme, remains committed to its orientation, retains the support of all its branches and most of its activists and affiliates. Support and sponsorship has been forthcoming from Peter Tatchell, Jeremy Corbyn, Andy Harris and members of Matzpen (Socialist Organisation in Israel) as well as most of the original LCP supporters.

RALLY

The LMCfP is organising a rally on February 23 at County Hall. This rally will serve to launch a renewed drive to bring the issues of the Palestine question to Labour organisations in London. Given the nature of the rigged Conference of the LCP, we will be holding a 'recall' Conference on May 21st, which we hope can aid the unification of the two campaigns on a proper, democratic footing.

The LMCfP will be campaigning to stop the NEC from reneging on the commitments the Party made at Conference. Its recent statement and many letters from the International Department to CLPs show that the NEC have no intention of carrying out these important decisions. This betrayal could not take place without the trade unions being firmly committed – at present, at least! – to Zionism.

HISTADRUTH DELEGATION

As this issue of London Briefing goes to press, for instance, the TGWU is receiving a delegation from the Israeli Labour Front, the Histadruth. The TGWU itself describes the purpose of this visit to be 'political'. In plain English, the Histadruth delegation is here to plan with members of the TGWU leadership a campaign to whitewash Israel and defeat the growing anti-Zionist movement.

The Histadruth delegation is going to Scotland – no doubt because of the Scottish TUC's support for blacking action in protest at the Israeli invasion of Lebanon – and will try to swing the TGWU's votes at next year's Conference behind a pro-Zionist resolution.

The LMCfP is organising a picket of the Histadruth-TGWU meeting. At the same time organising work is going on in the provinces with branches and speakers' tours being set up.

The Zionists are smarting from their defeat at Conference and are worried at the support Israel is losing as a result of such things as the bombing of Iraq, the annexation of the Golan Heights, the ever greater repression on the West Bank, revelations of torture by Israeli occupation forces, the Beirut blitzkrieg and, above all, the Sabra and Chatilla massacres.

We have to keep them on the run and destroy their influence. Support the LMCfP. For details write to the Secretary, 28 Carlton Mansions, Homeleigh Road, London N16.

Tony Greenstein
Andrew Hornung
Kate Askew
Graham Usher
Ali Wasti

THE FIGHT FOR PALESTINE

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine Rally
County Hall
Wednesday, February 23rd, 7pm

Speakers from Lebanese National Movement, Women for Palestine Group, Eyewitness account from Sabra/Shatilla camps, Tariq Ali, Moshe Machover (Israeli Socialist Organisation Matzpen), Member of Parliament.

CLPD Conference:

The Nuts and Bolts of Unity

The latest bulletin from the headquarters of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy says that the Campaign's next Annual Meeting is the most crucial in its history. Certainly the day long AGM on Saturday 29 January at Conway Hall, will be an important political opportunity for CLP and trade union activists from all over the country to agree on an organised response to the Register, and unite around it.

Maintaining our unity, in the prolonged and exhausting struggle for a democratic Labour Party which serves the interests of the people is the crucial objective on January 29th. That unity is perfectly possible: the test of the CLPD AGM lies in whether it is achieved.

Amendment

The amendment proposed by Greenwich CLP to the Party Constitution offers, we believe, the most potentially successful means of resolving the issue of the Register. The Membership clause of the Constitution reads:

(3) Political organisations not affiliated to or associated under a National Agreement with the Party on 1 January 1946, having their own Programme, Principles and Policy for distinctive and separate propaganda, or possessing Branches in the Constituencies or engaged in the promotion of Parliamentary or Local Government Candidatures, or owing allegiance to any political organisation situated abroad, shall be ineligible for affiliation to the Party.

(4) Individual Members shall be British subjects or citizens of Eire, or other persons resident in Great Britain for more than one year, who

(a) are not less than 15 years of age, and

(b) who subscribe to the conditions of membership and are not members of Political Parties or organisations ancillary or subsidiary thereto declared by the Annual Conference of the Labour Party (hereinafter referred to as "the Party") or by the National Executive Committee in pursuance of the Conference decisions to be ineligible for affiliation to the Party.

The Greenwich amendment would confer rights on organisations within the Party, rather than requiring them to apply to the Party for license, thus reversing the principle of the Register. It reads:

Delete Section (3) and paragraph (b) of Section (4) and insert:

"(3) A political group of Labour Party members not affiliated to or associated under a national agreement with the Party on 1 January 1946 shall be free to campaign within the Party provided that: (a) it conforms to the constitution of the Labour Party and accepts the Party's objects as defined by Clause IV of the Party's constitution, and (b) it does not engage in the promotion of parliamentary or local government candidatures in opposition to Labour Party candidates.

Any political group which in the opinion of the National Executive Committee is in breach of the above conditions shall have the right of appeal to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party against any decision by the National Executive Committee under Clause IX (2) (c) affecting their status as a pressure group within the Labour Party. Individual party members shall have the right of appeal to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party against any action taken against them because of their membership of an unaffiliated Labour Party group.

(4) (b) subscribe to the conditions of membership and are not members of political organisations whose membership is declared by Annual Conference of the Labour Party or by the National Executive Committee in pursuance of the Conference decisions to be incompatible with membership of the Labour Party."

With consequential amendments.

CLPD AGM
Conway Hall 10.30 am on
Saturday January 29th
It is crucial all paid up supporters attend to ensure CLPD does not register!

The amendment, having already been tabled, will automatically come before next year's conference for decision. It commands the unanimous support of the CLPD's Executive. Many trade unionists who saw the Register as some kind of solution to the conflict between constituency parties, Conference and the Parliamentary Labour Party, now recognise their mistake.

CLPs remain as determined as ever to resist registration, restriction of political activity and expulsions of individual members. A major campaign to gain a majority at Conference for this amendment could, with united support, be victorious.

Campaign Divided

The consultative ballot of members recently held indicates that the Campaign is obviously divided over whether or not the CLPD should register. We believe it should not. However we also believe that the question of whether the campaign registers is not of crucial importance, and in any case can and should be settled by vote, in the normal democratic way at the AGM. Indeed in the same way that we expect Labour MPs to carry out the policy of the Party, so we expect individuals who stand for election to the Executive to be prepared to carry out AGM decisions. One of the characteristics of the Social Democrats was that they would only bow to the democratic wish if they agreed with it.

A massive concensus exists, amongst activists in favour of defending the recent constitutional reforms, of securing political representation for women in the Party, and despite the record of some Labour MPs of working to win the next election for Labour and the implementation of key Party policies.

We can agree on how to fight the register. We can agree to resolve divisive tactical questions democratically. We are agreed on our objectives for the Party. In a sense, the interesting question, is why such disunity has been experienced in the CLPD, and threatens more widely on the Left.

Historically the kind of recession we are going through, in its early stages, strengthens the will of reactionaries, most visibly in the viciousness of the press. Unemployment and the struggle to maintain living standards weakens the unions and as we know from the Thirties, produces a Labour leadership timid when facing the Establishment, repressive in relation to the Party. The Left in these circumstances needs to be united but has a tendency to fragment and factionalise, under the strain. This is what is happening now. We hope that the CLPD AGM will help to avert the slide into factional struggle and personal criticism on the Left.

ANDY HARRIS
and FRANCES MORRELL

Socialist Society
ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Sessions on:
The Alternative to Thatcherism
Ending Unemployment
Feminism, Socialism, Labourism
Workshops and A.G.M.

Speakers include: Caroline Benn, Frances Morrell, Lynne Segal, Anthony Barnett, Hilary Wainwright, Tariq Ali and many others.

PLUS SPECIAL MEETING
FRIDAY NIGHT
"EUROPE, NATO AND THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR WAR"

With John Palmer, Kate Soper, Fred Halliday, Greenham Common Speaker, Petra Kelly*, Pat Arrowsmith*, Jo Richardson* (*To be confirmed).

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, 7.30p.m.

Please register me for the Socialist Society A.G.M. I enclose £8 (non-members/waged), £6 (members/waged), £3 (unwaged) for 2 days. I enclose 75p extra for Friday night ticket (£1.50 at the door).

Name . . . . . .

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Send to: The Socialist Society, 7 Carlisle St., London W1 (01 734 8501).

5/6 February
Sir William Collins School,
Charrington St., NW1.

Socialist Councillor

BRENT: IN DEFENCE OF THE RATES OPTION

Frank Hansen, (Vice-Chair of Finance, Brent Council).

Michael Heseltine's final kick in the groin for local authorities before his departure to the MoD has left Labour Councils in London and other urban areas with some very difficult choices to make.

The 1983/4 block grant settlement is specifically aimed at clobbering the "overspenders", i.e. Labour Councils who have broadly defended jobs and services through levying higher rates. Nationally the percentage of local government expenditure financed by Government grant has been cut from 56% to 53% – and most of this cut will be focussed on those authorities who exceed the DoE's expenditure target for their area. For each of the first two percentage points of spending above target, the grant loss is equivalent to a 1p rate (£½m in Brent). For every percentage point thereafter, the grant loss will be 5p (£2½m in Brent).

2,000 Redundancies

Brent's target for 1983/4 is £132.6m to which a block grant of £60.5m is attached. (This in itself represents a £5m cut compared with last year's hypothetical allocation of £65.5m grant). To meet this target we would have to slash £15m to £20m off our budget – which equates to approximately 2,000 redundancies!

To maintain jobs and services at their present levels (including some recent growth), we would have to spend about £147m. At this level of expenditure block grant would be reduced by £18m to approximately £42.5m. Translated into rate figures and taking into account the GLC and police precepts, it would mean an increase in the region of 30%.

To expand our budget to take on board committee's growth aspirations, (manifesto commitments), we need to spend approximately £153m. In this case grant loss would rise to nearly £27m and the rate increase would be 40-50%.

In *purely financial* terms there are various positions beginning to emerge in the Labour Group.

1) Expand the budget, i.e. to £153m. This would mean £6m growth, but would mean levying £15m extra in rates to pay for it.

2) 'No cuts' – in real terms. Defend the existing budget plus committed growth, i.e. rate increase 30-35%.

3) 'No cuts' – in nominal terms. Defend the existing budget but exclude committed growth. The rate increase drops below 30%, but in reality there are cuts.

4) A lower rate (perhaps 20%) plus substantial cuts (perhaps 5%). Already a section of the right have indicated that they will not vote for a high rate increase – if carried out this spells the end of Brent's Labour Council given the casting vote situation: 33 Labour, 30 Tories, 3 Liberals.

The Political Options.

a) No Cuts/No Rate Increase. One section of comrades in Brent argue this as a position of principle. In reality, in my opinion, it boils down to purist propaganda which offers no *practical* alternative to the labour movement given the present class balance of forces. Firstly such a struggle could not be launched on the basis of one local authority. If Brent's Labour Group opted for bankruptcy (a complete impossibility given the present composition of the group), there is no evidence to suggest that it would even get the support of its own unions, let alone the public at large – despite the fact that we mobilised the largest-ever Council strike for the health workers 'Day of Action'. To embark on such a course on a "try and see what happens" basis is sheer adventurism which would almost certainly lead to a crushing defeat and a Tory administration which would inflict massive cuts.

Even if a group of Labour Councils could unite on this basis, (highly unlikely), such a struggle would *probably not* attract sufficient forces in terms of real industrial muscle to bring about a Tory U-turn, let alone bring down the Thatcher government.

After nearly four years of Tory attacks and numerous betrayals by the Labour leaders the working class movement is on the defensive. This is the reality whether comrades like it or not. The idea that a small group of radical Labour Councils can turn the tide by provoking an all-out confrontation belongs to the realms of socialist fantasy not the actual reality or potential of the existing class struggle.

b) Disengagement. If a large number of Labour authorities disengaged simultaneously then this would undoubtedly provoke a national crisis in local government. Achieving such unity, however, is not a practical proposition given the different levels of grant settlement in each area and the right wing domination of most Labour Groups.

Disengagement only makes sense if we can honestly say that we cannot defend jobs and services given the present fiancial arrangements (e.g. if King carries out his threat to place a cap on rates – particularly commercial rates). It assumes that, in practice, it would be better to let the Tories take over rather than implement massive cuts.

Disengagement on Brent Council at present would be tantamount to a betrayal of local working class interests because: 1) We can defend our existing programme – albeit at the expense of rate rises, and 2) the local Tories would literally decimate jobs and services.

c) No Cuts – Put Up The Rates.

In practice the only effective action Labour authorities can take is to deflect the blows which the Tories are raining down on local government. The Tories *want* Labour authorities to carry out cuts. By refusing to do so we are actually thwarting their plans and preserving the organised power of the working class (through jobs).

The argument that rate increases and cuts are exactly the same is nonsense. If it were true then the Tories themselves would not be talking about curbing local authorities' powers to levy rates, and indeed there would be no point whatsoever in having Labour Councils. It assumes that there is no difference between a Tory Council having a nil rate rise and massive cuts, and a Labour Council raising rates and implementing nil cuts – an argument which most working people would ridicule.

Cuts represent a 100% attack on the working class, rates actually redistribute income. In Brent 50% of rates come from business, 30% from relatively well-off Tory rate payers and approximately 20% from people who live in Labour areas,

(CONTINUED OVER)

ISLINGTON: RATES BATTLE AHEAD

By Alan Clinton

The December Rate Support Grant settlement was about as bad as possible for Islington. Before rushing off to perpetrate more atrocities at the Ministry of Defence, Heseltine announced claw back arrangements on grants which lose us in Islington at least £11 million on a total expenditure of £82 million. Without any expansion whatever, the domestic ratepayer could thus face a bill up to 54% more than last year.



Islington Labour Party members on their visit to Heseltine.

CAMPAIGNED

During the autumn, local Labour Party members campaigned in the borough to explain the threat to our services that came from the policies of plunder and pillage of the inner cities from the Tory Government, and not from the socialist policies of the Council, such as they are. The Local Government Committee and all the wards got involved in campaigning, and we knocked on doors throughout the borough. On the whole we found much good will towards the policies of the Council, and up to 2000 people signed letters objecting to the policies of the Tories. These were delivered just before Christmas.

In the weeks before the RSG announcement, there were numerous discussions in the local labour movement about what to do when the inevitable axe fell. One possible course of action which won no support was for the Council to reduce its services. The only way we could have got within hailing distance of Heseltine's 'target', let alone a zero rate increase projection, would have been to close down large sections of what the people need. Ending all meals on wheels, home helps and estate rehabilitation, and closing down an entire residential home and a library would get us nowhere near the Tory proposals. If we sacked every single employee of the Council, we would have to pay out more in redundancy money than our entire income. Such proposals would not only fly in the face of everything we stand for: they simply could not be carried out.

One other possible course of action which did not merit serious consideration was to increase Council rents, which have risen by horrifying steps in the past two or three years. Our Manifesto commits us to a freeze which the Tories of course use to inflict further penalties and claw backs.

FORMS OF CONFRONTATION

In the search for alternative policies, many possible forms of confrontation with the Tories have been discussed. One possibility was that we would not pay our police precept. However, if we did not levy it, we thought that the money would just be confiscated, and we would end up with the very cuts we must avoid. It did not seem easy to achieve much in this direction, therefore.

At one joint meeting of LGC and Group, a resolution was narrowly carried calling for opposition to cuts to be combined with minimal rate rises. At a later meeting in December a rather similar resolution was

BRENT RATES (continued)

(rate rises do not hit the unemployed in so far as they are paid under UHB). In this sense, the working class receives more in jobs and services than it pays in rates – although it cannot be denied that rates raise the cost of living for working people, at least those in employment.

"Lesser Evils"

In an ideal situation, where the labour movement was on the offensive and we could begin to prepare a general strike to remove the Tories, then we would not have to choose between such "lesser evils". The reality is that the Tories will not be removed this side of a general election and Labour authorities must make the choice of defending the worst off at the expense of the middle class and small businesses. At the same time we must use our position on the Council to campaign for more resources from central government, and for a Labour Government which will inject millions of pounds into the inner city areas and actually reduce the rates burden.

The real danger in Brent is not the imposition of a high rate rise, but that the maverick right will vote with the Tories and Liberals to inflict substantial cuts. This is where the political attack of the local Labour Parties must be: against those who want to ditch the manifesto and carry out cuts. In this context, the programme of the 'hard left' on the Labour Group must be as follows:

a) No cuts – defend the manifesto, including growth.

b) No rent rise – reject the Tories' proposal for an 85p increase. Indeed we should be considering *cutting* rents.

c) For a continuing campaign with local Labour Parties and other Labour Councils against the Tory government.

d) For the election of a Labour government which will really challenge the power of the ruling class by implementing Labour Party policies.

SLOW PROGRESS IN GREENWICH

Tim Barnett Woolwich Labour Party and Greenwich Councillor

Progress is slow in Greenwich. Many ongoing disagreements have been temporarily suspended while the budget and rate rise debates rage, but few are likely to have disappeared for good by the time the rates decision is made in early March.

Essentially, the differences in the Labour Group are those of method and generation. For example, the vast majority of Group members are opposed to civil defence preparations, believe in the need for accountability of various public services, and support the concept of consultation with staff and public before action. But, in the past, it seems that few were prepared to let their beliefs take life.

LOWEST RATE LEVELS

Instead, the Labour Group — over half of which are "new" — have inherited a situation of one of the most contracted bases of any Labour London borough. Rate levels are the lowest in Labour inner London, only just above Wandsworth. Spending in various service areas — oustandingly, social services and housing management — are low on even a London-wide scale. There have been, historically, few consistent and well resourced initiatives in such key areas as race policy, forward planning, women's affairs, employment or the community sector. Now we are in the midst of the struggle to put that right.

An early attempt to unify the "new" left on the council was the formation of a left caucus of councillors. It has been an informal arrangement, its power crucially limited by the broad range of viewpoints it encompasses (its membership comprises nearly half the group). Meetings are held before each group meeting, but binding decisions are rare. There is little tradition for left councillors in the borough to follow; many have been elected to committee chairs, and see both their visions narrowing and their diaries cluttered with endless meetings. The caucus has formed no links with the rest of the Party or with the local trade union movement. The existence of the caucus has caused much resentment among the rest of the group — some councillors have no time for our views, others feel peeved at not getting an invitation themselves.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

The left on the council has in particular failed to secure an input from all sections of the party. The Local Government Committee has been inquorate twice since the election, due largely to its membership being dominated, in debate and partially numerically, by councillors. At its first meeting after the election only four non-councillors were present! With such a situation the committee's effectiveness as a link between councillors and the Party is lost. It has been uncritical of the council's performance so far.

The Group *has* agreed to the Party having a direct input to the rates debate. The borough is finely balanced for the general election, containing one SDP, one Labour and one Tory MP, and facing a tough battle if all three seats are to be returned Labour. Much play is being made now on the likely effect of a high rates rise on that election — it is a fraudulent argument, and one which yet further devalues the power of Labour councillors to carry out their manifestoes. The rise in Greenwich will be 34%-40% if we are to restore the most harmful of the last Council's cuts, go some way towards achieving something new and freeze rents. The Party's input will be through a joint meeting of Greenwich and Woolwich General Councils in February, which will consider the Group's proposal on a rate and rent package.

DECENTRALISATION

Meanwhile, achievements have been few and far between — due mainly to our inheritance of a drastically cut budget, and numerous lengthy and inconclusive group meetings dominated by mutual distrust. There has been a commitment to decentralisation, to be achieved through a committee comprising half councillors (one from each committee group and two from minority parties) and half trade union representatives. Only housing decentralisation was mentioned in the manifesto, but the general commitment came out of a debate on the ways to achieve real 'open government'. It is also, I suspect, the trendy thing to do.

A working party on tenant consultation has made some radical proposals concerning tenant co-options onto the housing committee, linked to estate-based consultation bodies feeding into a Borough Tenants Committee. A proposal for funding an eleven-person independent housing aid centre seems likely to be accepted. In the new Community Affairs Unit, health/police/womens /education and race relations officers are at various stages of being appointed, with committees covering each area. At last a realistic employment strategy is being developed, although Group proposals to participate in the Community and Youth Training Programmes are likely to be resisted by Party and trade unions.

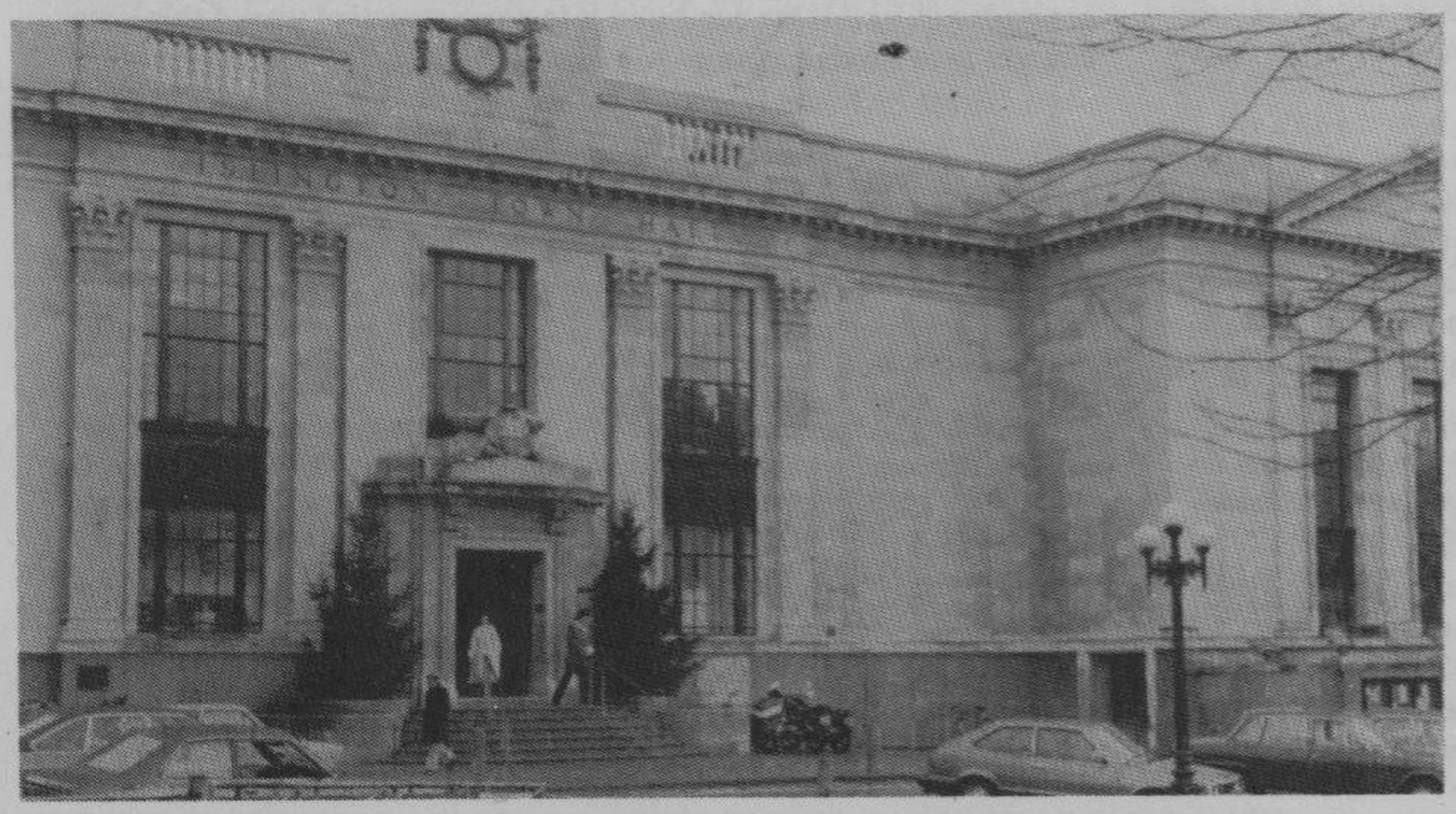
AN ALTERNATIVE REALITY

Something very basic about the way things are moving worries me. We are not creating an interrelationship of tenants, Party, the community sector, trade unions and pressure groups — but if we are to keep rates and services realistic for the next three years and beyond, this needs to happen. Socialism is about these forces working together to create an alternative reality to Toryism and centrism. As it is, we are an extraordinarily isolated group. Our movement has given us an extraordinary responsibility, but we have not responded by ensuring that they share in our tasks.

So there is still much to do in Greenwich ...

heavily defeated, and another was passed calling for the consideration of rate rises of 20-25% without cuts. Many of us believe that this 'realistic' position is in some ways even more utopian than the policies it seeks to replace. As things stand at present, it does not seem possible to leap into this frying pan of rate rises without at the same time being consumed by the fires of cuts in services.

There are many of us who are also alarmed at the attitude which has begun to grow in the Group and the Party as a whole that enormous rate rises are inevitable. It was not on the basis of the acceptance of 'harsh realities', and 'difficult decisions' that most of us stood and were elected. Those who write off confrontation or disengagement have already gone a long way in accepting the madhouse logic of the Tories and their system. Only through efforts to develop alternatives to the policies of depression and social misery will there be any possibility of arriving at any sort of satisfactory solution in the difficult months that lie ahead.



COUNCIL LEADER PUTS MASS RESIGNATIONS ON AGENDA

News from Hackney in *Briefing* is long overdue. Supporters of Hackney Labour Left — based loosely on *Briefing's* politics — Andrea Gray and Phillippa Jones give Hackney Council's new leader Tony Kendall and new deputy leader Peter Kahn a chance to answer their left critics. In response to the turn of Heseltine's screw the council leadership spell out their radical suggestions for action. All too often Hackney is left out of the roll-call of the left-wing inner-city boroughs, yet the council has already started to develop the basis for a mass campaign to restore the rate support grant to a level at which there will be no rates and rents rises above the level of inflation and no cuts.

Andrea: Could you tell us about your political background?

Tony: My politics have been formed in Hackney in my activities in Centreprise, working with tenants and community groups, and developed through involvement in Hackney North CLP. I see myself as very clearly on the left.

Philippa: Last May most people in Hackney Labour Left thought that on paper your politics were no further to the left than John Kotz's, the previous leader, but that you would break with his authoritarian and secretive style of leadership. Is this still a fair assessment?

Tony: I would hope so. On paper Kotz is incredibly left on many issues and probably more left than me on specific issues. But the whole of the old leadership did control things very much more centrally, and I don't think you can create socialism like that.

Andrea: What are the specific issues?

Tony: His views on Eastern Europe and he was much earlier into the whole defence of the DLO.
Peter: Kotz's very good positions were private in a sense rather than ones he'd gone out and argued and built campaigns around.

Andrea: There has been considerable criticism of your handling of industrial relations at the Town Hall. During the period of selective strike action taken by NALGO and NUPE members in the Housing Department you wrote a personal letter to each worker threatening loss of pay for the time union members were refusing to conduct interviews. Is this not Edwardes-style heavy-handed management?

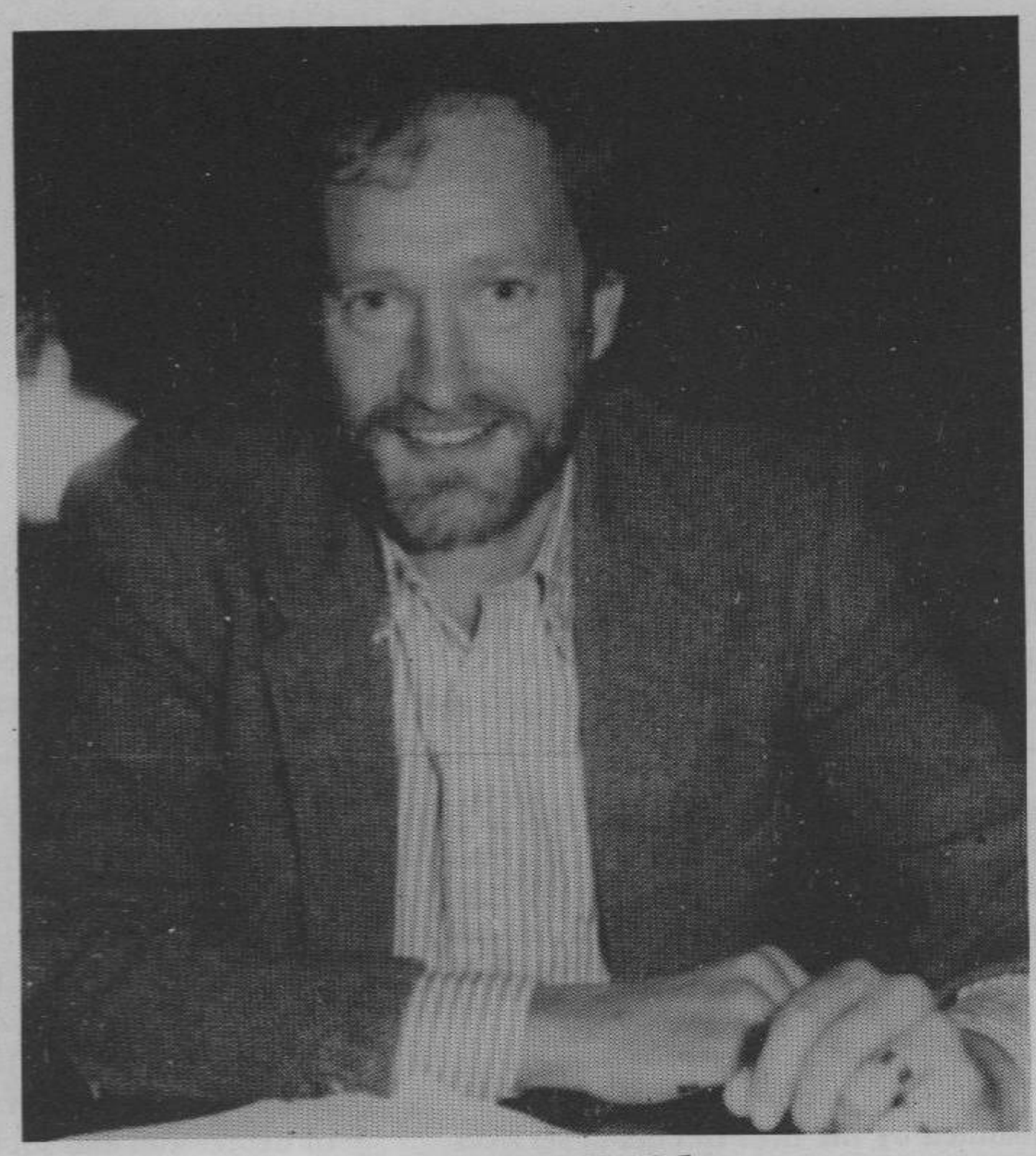
Tony: One of the most difficult things for a left councillor is industrial relations. We employ 7,000 people — there are bound to be difficulties. I'm a great defender of union rights without thinking that everything a trade unionist says is automatically socialism. I felt the claim they were making was not defensible in any terms and the action in not seeing the public was rather pathetic because it hit local people without cutting their wage packets in any way. I think there were lots of things we did wrong in that whole dispute but I still don't think that our policy of saying people who were not going to do part of their job should have part of their pay withheld, was particularly wrong.

Philippa: What exactly was the claim?

Tony: It started as a claim for over 2,000 people in a reorganisation that involved us in absorbing GLC staff. That meant some people who had had no disturbance at all, not even moved their desks, were going to get a payment of £800 as were those who had genuinely severe difficulties. No other authority involved in a GLC transfer got into this position.

Andrea: Hackney Council has launched a militant public campaign to demand restoration of the rate support grant. The trades council and LGC are supporting it. How do you think the campaign should be built?

Tony: The first thing is that it's important to notice how quickly we responded. Within 10 days of Heseltine's announcement we had distributed 10,000 leaflets, spent a Saturday at shopping centres with loudspeakers and organised a public meeting that within the time scale of ten days was not badly attended.



TONY KENDALL

We need new strategies. We need new ideas really. We're developing this mass petition. There is a campaign group set up which Hilda Kean coordinates and they are developing ideas. I get petitions arriving on my desk daily — there is some kind of groundswell and if we can build it in a constructive way, I think we can get a campaign going.

Philippa: What's your estimation of support from other boroughs?

Tony: The new and important element in the whole deal — and *Briefing* has mentioned this over and over again — is the unity across London. There are new leaders in many boroughs and new councillors involved and that must be a base that we've got to build on because you can't fight this as one borough.

Andrea: At the first public meeting of the campaign you said you were against rates rises and cuts — what more precisely do you mean? Are you committing yourself now to a policy which refuses any rates rises, or only rises below the rate of inflation or what would be your maximum limit?

Tony: I suppose people on the left who criticise me remember my very strong stance last year in favour of a kind of pragmatic defence of local government — and local government jobs and services. But I really think we've got to the end of the road of the 50% rate rises. We can't have these sorts of rate rises any more. It's not

on politically; it's not on morally. I have talked publicly and at London Labour Leaders meetings about having a strategy about resignation. I think it's just one thing on the agenda we need to develop.

We desperately need to develop in the Labour movement and amongst ourselves, ways in which we can fight this government. Now there are many difficulties in the strategy of resignation across five, six or seven boroughs but it is nevertheless something we ought to consider. People are already saying that we ought to be going for that rate rise and that frightens me. At the last London Labour Leaders meeting, that was said and it begins to frighten me — that we are admitting it's the sort of position we're going to be in by March.

I don't have a notion of a maximum limit but now we're starting from a totally and dramatically different viewpoint which is to say — No, we're going to have to fight this one for all we're worth because we can't possibly go back to the people and ask for a 50% rate increase. So we're not saying to people there is a 20% cut off point or whatever, we're just going to say it's unacceptable. This borough was heading for a 9% or 10% rate rise which is a bit over our manifesto commitment but politically acceptable. We can't get into a position where we even begin to talk about anything higher than that. We've got to campaign to fight as hard as we possibly can to get it back to that level.

Philippa: How exactly would a policy of mass resignation fit into the campaign?

Tony: It should be considered on the basis of a unity with a minimum number of five boroughs — the more the better — doing it at the same time. It has to be in the context of ensuring that the Tories cannot take control while they're away nor enforce massive cuts. And you've got to put it in the context of this government leading up to a general election. They are hoping for a nice quiet time.

Peter: And the object of all that is not to come back and say that it was a good campaign, now shall we put the rates up 50%; the object is to say that we *have* to change central government's mind. We've got a manifesto commitment that says 'in line with inflation' and that is absolutely irreconciliable with the pronouncements of this government.

Andrea: New directions of the council are women's rights and race relations. In the case of women's rights you said you wanted the Town Hall to employ women at both ends of the scale — in top positions and in manual services. What progress have you made?

Tony:

We must define the bottom end of the scale because there are lots of women at that end. It's just certain manual jobs that are not open to women and it's those particular ones we're looking at. I'm hoping the Women's Committee is monitoring it.

The one I am specifically responsible for is race relations. We've advertised 28 posts recently — exclusively for ethnic minorities and practically speaking for young blacks — 28 traineeships, which is an important initiative.

Philippa: Black activists have complained about the appointment of a principal race relations adviser. Shortlisted candidates were interviewed in one group of 11 which is surely an insensitive way of choosing between people from different ethnic groups. Also there was no Afro-Caribbean person on the interview panel. What are your comments?

Tony: The question is totally misinformed. Actually I think it's been one of the most creative appointments we've been involved in. It went incredibly well and has taken forward the confidence of local black activists and councillors. I put it to members that we should have a 5:5 situation — 5 councillors and 5 people from Hackney Committee for Racial Equality. HCRE chose the people and they chose 2 Afro-Caribbeans out of the 5. The other 3 were orthodox Jewish, Cypriot and Asian. We decided that since it was a different and new sort of post we'd like to get everyone together (11 candidates) and have a chat round the table. It was stressful and difficult but we couldn't have interviewed 11 people for half an hour and come to any sensible decision and it moved us from 11 down to 4.

Andrea: There's a leak of a CRE report on Hackney's housing services in the **Caribbean Times**. *Apparently the report recommends the possibility of serving a non-discrimination notice against the Council for racist practices in housing allocation. What's your reaction to this?*

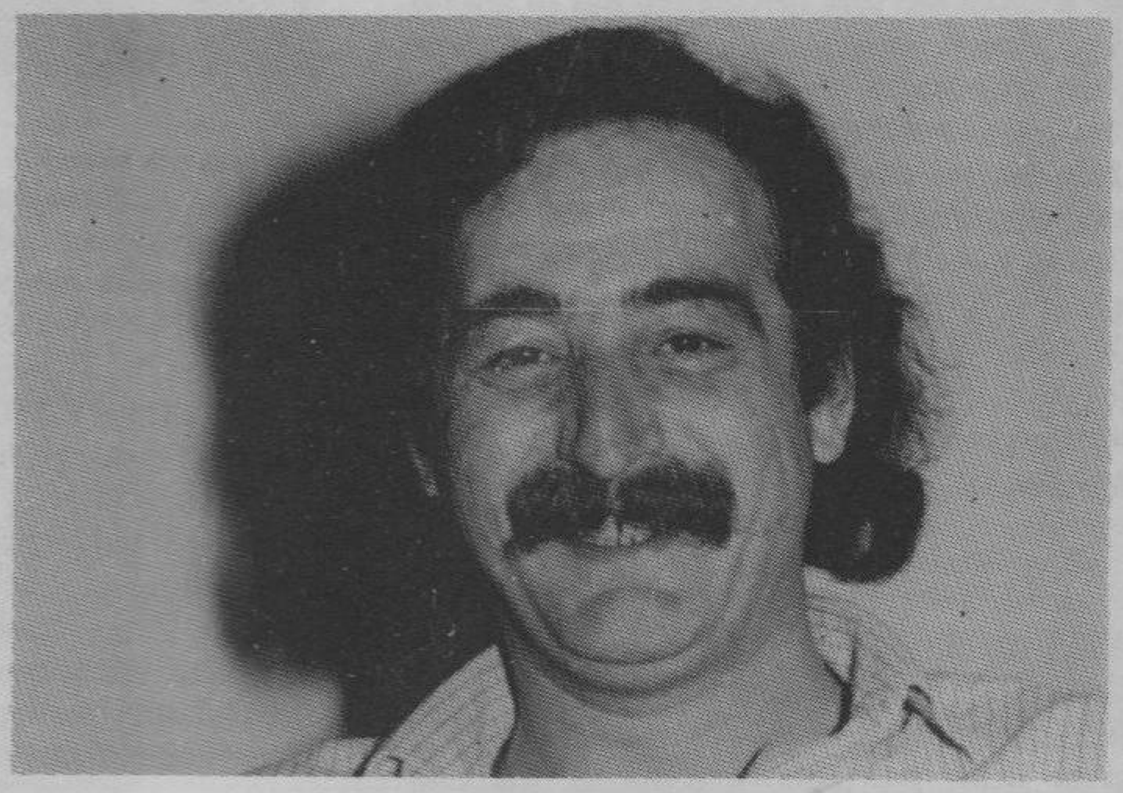
Tony: I feel very positive about the report in one way and sad about it in another way. They started the inquiry four years ago which means that things have moved on light years. I think we have an enormous amount to learn about the way we deliver our services, especially housing services to black people, but I do think in the last four years we have moved forward and especially in the last six months. I'm determined, personally, to keep ethnic records because I think it's the only way you can judge whether housing is being delivered fairly and properly to black people in the borough.

Philippa: When exposing corruption in the DLO management, you Peter said that there were 'social connections' between corrupt officials and councillors. Who are the free-masons on the council?

Peter: I actually said I was very distressed about the freemasonry connections throughout a whole range of areas — the police, officers of this Council, both in the DLO and right through the authority. I'm totally opposed to any member of the LP and especially elected members of the LP who are masons. I'm aware of the masonic connections of our own GLC councillorss (Gerry Ross).

Andrea: Many people on the left welcomes the invitation Peter made to the Sinn Fein delegation. What would the purpose of a meeting in Hackney have been?

Peter: To raise again the issue in people's minds of the six counties — to make people aware that this government and past governments have operated a bi-partisan approach to gagging any serious debate about the situation in Ireland and the withdrawal of troops from Ireland.



PETER KAHN

Andrea: One of the biggest problems of decentralisation has been in the Housing Department where a kind of decentralisation down to district level was imposed by the previous administration. The Federation of Hackney Tenants Association has called this a 'management solution'. What do you think?

Tony: I've a lot of sympathy with their point of view but I can't actually put the clock back. In a sense there is a bit of a halt while our decentralisation policies proceed. It was a pragmatic solution. I don't know how we would have reacted if we'd have had to make that decision because frankly it was pretty difficult. It has confused the debate and alienated a lot of tenants. I wish it hadn't happened but it has and it's a reality we have to grapple with.

Philippa: There's no left caucus of members of the Labour group although there is Hackney Labour Left based on the CLPs which some councillors attend. Do you think the development of a left Labour council is hampered by the lack of a left caucus on the Labour Group?

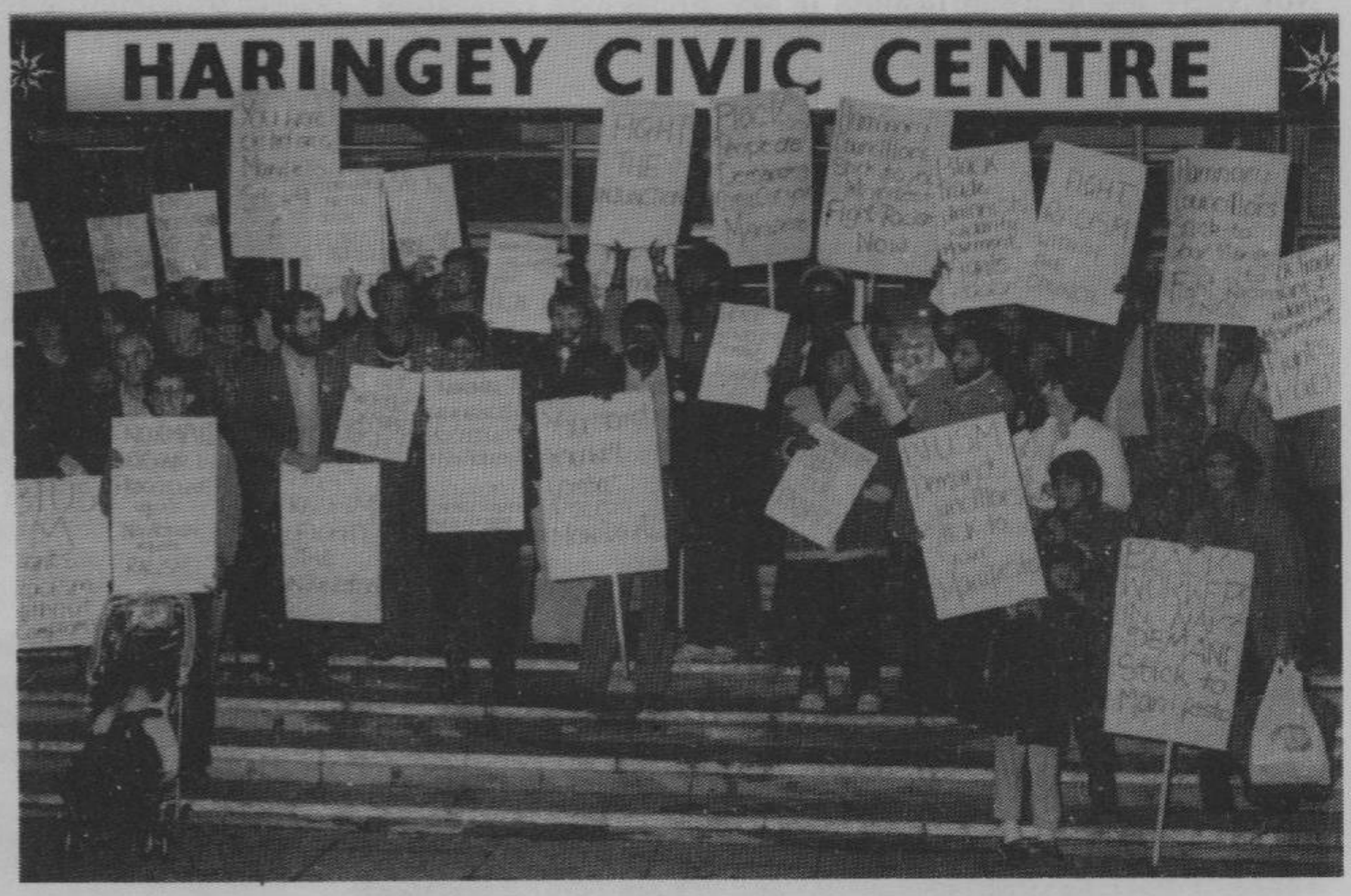
Tony: Yes and no. One of the things we have achieved is that the LGC feels more involved in this council than ever before. They can come along to group meetings in a much wider representation. I try to attend LGC meetings. There are papers passed to and fro. Labour Group should not be seen as just councillors — it's much wider now. I think there's a need for left organisation but I think that whilst there's a potential membership of 50 in the council in reality some people define themselves out of it. I think it's much more happily based at a constituency level with LGC involvement in the Group rather than just councillors.

Haringey: right wing's last throw

Steve King
Haringey Council

Right-wing Labour Councillors in Haringey staged a dramatic revolt at the Council meeting on December 20th. Nearly one third of the Labour Group refused to enter the Council chamber until a motion to adjourn the meeting was proposed. Rather than risk the loss of several key proposals, the Group leadership gave in to this outrageous blackmail. The rebels came in and the adjournment was passed — thus handing the Tories a great propaganda victory.

The ostensible reason for this act of gross betrayal was a heated row at the previous week's Group meeting, when two black Councillors, Narendra Makanji and Bernie Grant, accused the previous Group of dragging its feet over tackling racism within the Council. In the confusion, at least one individual was accused of personally "blocking the employment of black people by the council". At this point, several people walked out and threatened not to attend the Council meeting unless these allegations were withdrawn and apologies given. The black Councillors offered explanations of their statements and offered to withdraw any personal allegations at a subsequent Group meeting. Despite this and the subsequent efforts of the Group leadership over the intervening weekend, it was not enough for the rebels, some of whom, at least, scented their chance to embarrass the Party and the Group.



Anti-racists picket Haringey Council

Real Reasons For The Revolt

After the adjournment of the Council, the Group met immediately to sort out its differences. The ensuing debate revealed a great deal, particularly some of the real reasons for the revolt on the part of a few of the comrades. Ex-leader, Robin Young, immediately accused Group Chair Ernie Large of not being impartial, of not enforcing Group Standing Orders and of not maintaining order during Group meetings. Council Leader Angela Greatley, and Planning Chair Jeremy Corbyn, were also accused of various sins and misdemeanours and it soon became clear, particularly after a magnificent speech by Bernie Grant, that the revolt had been largely inspired by spite and sour grapes at no longer being in control of the Council. Of the rebels, and after repeated challenges by left and centre Councillors as to why the disruption of the Council meeting was the weapon chosen, only Nikki Harrison and Paul Loach advanced the accusations of racism as their reasons for the revolt.

Right-Wing Eroded

The context of the revolt then, is clear. Over the past eighteen months the right wing on the Council has seen its old power steadily eroded. In May, several of their number were either deselected or shifted to Wards that were never winnable, and three of their strongest allies were surprisingly defeated. They were forced to concede joint elections with the Party for Group Officer posts and major chairs. And now most affiliated branches, the three GMCs, the LGC, the Group and the Group Officers consist of an overwhelming majority of members strongly committed to the progressive policies of our Manifesto — policies also hammered out with fuli Party involvement. Faced with this admirable situation the only card left to the right wing is their position on the Council where Labour has only a majority of seven — a card they chose to play on December 20th.

Two ironic postscripts: a split developed amongst the rebels and at least two, George Meehan and Colin Ware to their credit, refused to join the blackmailers. As a result, and in the unexplained absence of a couple of Tories, the rebels' bluff could have been called. Second, a subsequent Special Group meeting, called to discuss racism in the Council, showed that the substance of the original complaints — foot-dragging and general lack of commitment — were largely true!

Rents Freeze in Lewisham

Ann Bliss
Lewisham Councillor

At our last Labour Group meeting on 5th January we voted for a rent freeze in Lewisham for this year. All but two of the members attending supported our proposal. Last year Lewisham put council rents up by £3.50 per week whereas owner occupiers have had their mortgage interest rates cut. It is about time we began to serve the interest of council tenants if we wish to regain their traditional support for us. But holding the rents down for this year isn't enough as the maintenance, management and servicing on estates is more or less in chaos on many estates in Lewisham and urgent improvements are required. The consequences of holding rents down is to incur a £1m penalty by Heseltine. Together with the revenue we may have received if we had put the rents up by 85p, this represents £2.5m gross which will be included in the calculation when deciding the level of rate increase ... (It roughly means an extra 25p on the rates). If all London boroughs can take a lead in initiating a rent freeze, hopefully it will put pressure on the GLC to carry out the same policy.

At the moment we in Lewisham have not finally decided on the rate increase, but to remain at a standstill budget would mean an increase of 27½%. We have agreed to finance the 'Consolidation package' to include a) improvement and decentralisation of services (especially housing services and repairs, GLC housing transfer settlement, filling of posts and deliberate freezing of posts), b) money for Employment and Industry Committee, c) promoting equal opportunity policy for blacks and women, d) training, and e) establishing the Police Committee. This would take us to 35%.

In addition the manifesto on which we were elected was of slight growth and I think to the extent that we have the option of providing the services and resources we were elected to improve; we should put the rates up to the amount necessary. I think the ceiling agreed by the majority of the Labour group however, will be no more than 39½%.

AROUND THE BOROUGHS

HARINGEY

A 25% rate rise to stand still, with 30% to start implementing the manifesto. Some Councillors have been looking at alternative ways of funding to try to avoid the "penalties trap". Haringey is committed to not raising council rents more than inflation, i.e. less than the government's 85p suggested rise.

SOUTHWARK

The Southwark Borough Council is committed to a rent freeze on all Council properties. As regards the rates, with the exception of Islington, Southwark faces probably the worst situation in London, with a projection of 50% plus as a likely figure. In addition, the government has removed a section of the Borough in the north part of it from effective council control and placed it under the non-elected and non-accountable Docklands Development Corporation.

WESTMINSTER

Tory Westminster will be raising its rates by 20%, and blaming this on the GLC and ILEA no doubt. The ruling Tory Group are likely candidates for launching legal action against at least one, and possibly both of the Labour authorities at County Hall.

GLC

The actual level of GLC precept will depend greatly on the outcome of the "Fares Cut" planned and any subsequent legal challenge to it from a Tory Council. The GLC has this year been moved out of the "penalties box" by having its last rate support removed, thereby becoming the third local authority after ILEA and Camden to get no rate support. The GLC is undertaking a large programme of funding to voluntary groups, has an ambitious Women's Committee programme and is aiming to keep an interest in housing. There are also threats in the background to either abolish the GLC or remove its control of London Transport coming from certain government sources.

ILEA's BUDGET

Andy Harris

The processes of deciding ILEA's budget for 1983/84 are still under the heavy constraints that were applicable last year in the wake of the Law Lords decision on fares.

It is worth recapping as to the nature of these constraints, so as to put the current position in perspective. The Law Lords raised the whole question of Fiduciary Duty — the balance of 'Reasonableness' between the cost of the services that the council provides and the burden on the ratepayer. The test of 'reasonableness' lies ultimately with the Law Courts and the House of Lords — thus Fares Fair was considered 'unreasonable', the Camden Action on Minimum Pay was judged 'Reasonable'. The legal implications on Fares Fair's destruction for ILEA's budget last year was that because by most standards ILEA's staffing resources and financial support to schools and colleges were usually superior to every other education authority, counsel's opinion told us that to exceed a budget of £795m would render the authority liable to legal challenge. The argument was that extension of provision had to be based on urgent contemporary educational need and that exemplary cuts had to be shown on the debit side to illustrate financial prudency.

The legal position is little changed this year. This in effect means that the priority areas for development are being put forward for progress — support in the areas of racial, sexual and class oppression as it affects education, youth unemployment and the under-fives. Under all these headings are valuable projects, changes and options that can be paid for from released monies due to falling rolls, from some genuine savings and possibly from some newly precepted cash.

In order to secure a budget that we are happy with, that the party has agreed in consultation and which is likely to steer clear of the courts, it has been necessary to scrutinise the present base budget to eliminate all areas of possible waste. Thus the sub-committee groups have identified areas of underspending and also politically supportable cuts — the grants to boy scouts spring to mind!

The process of budget making was going very smoothly, having consulted on the development proposals with the party. But a few days ago under instruction of the finance sub-committee the officers have hived off many of the growth proposals that were agreed in consulation. They have called these of lesser priority than others. This will leave the other sub-committees very vulnerable to legal challenge if they choose to vote through the proposals against officer advice. What was clearly worked out strategy has been jeopardised by this foolishness which is again exposing members, the authority, its workers and students to the possibility of easily being picked off and taken to court — and we are back in last year's position, which should have been avoided, where the political members end up putting themselves out on a limb if they choose to support all the growth proposals agreed by the party. The events of the next few weeks will prove which way the majority will fall. The choice is clear. Political courage or submission to the proposals of the officers to achieve the certainty of staying out of the courts.

The Inner London Education Authority will receive no government grant for the third year running. The "target set" by the government is so absurdly low that there is no chance of reaching it and even the County Hall Tories are not claiming it can be done in one year!

The ILEA leadership has consulted all the Inner London Boroughs, and for once all the Labour ones have urged a growth budget and firmly opposed cuts. The Tory ones are now muttering darkly about "legal action" and Court challenges may be the order of the day.

Despite everything, the ILEA increase will only be around 9% and shows what the real sort of increases this year should be without penalties or claw-backs. It seems that a campaign will have to be mounted again to defend ILEA from the government and the Tories' lawyers. Nevertheless, a growth package is being pushed, particularly in the areas of "Under 5s" and "16-19 year olds" where more provision is desperately needed. Getting the package accepted without cuts is the main task for the left on ILEA.

NUPE fights Hackney Council Sackings

A major confrontation has blown up in Hackney between the Council and its trades unions — primarily its NUPE Officers Branch. The battle started over the summary dismissal of a member in Social Services, June Simpson, and the suspension of another, Frank Dillon. The action followed a secret inquiry by the Council leadership into this department which the Council has persistently refused to disclose. Officers of the NUPE branch who have seen this "report" however, have confirmed that the contents have nothing to justify any sacking or suspension.

The NUPE branch met at the end of December and voted unanimously to boycott all services and support to Councillors until its members were reinstated. At a secret meeting of the Council's Policy and Resources on 22nd December, the Council's leadership narrowly got their suspensions endorsed despite a picket of NUPE shop stewards outside.

The NUPE officers branch called a mass meeting of its members on 6th January and the 250 people present voted nem-con to extend the action. In addition, the manual workers NUPE branch in Hackney has pledged full support and will not provide any services to Councillors, such as emptying their dustbins!

The Hackney NALGO branch has instructed its members not to do any work undertaken by NUPE and as we go to press the NALGO Branch Executive is meeting the NUPE officers shop stewards committee to discuss taking solidarity actions.

Provocative Letter

What has inflamed the situation has been a provocative letter to all Council employees from the Leader of the Council which incited union members to disregard their union and alleging that the secret report contained stuff that was damaging to the staff members. This "Michael Edwardes" style of approach has annoyed most NUPE members and served to exacerbate the situation. This sort of behaviour is expected from Kensington and Chelsea or Southend – it is not what NUPE expects from a Labour Council. Bernie Grant, the NUPE full-time officer, has pledged full support to the action and has secured official backing for the branch from NUPE's National Executive. What we are demanding is simple:

a) The reinstatement of the two NUPE members.

b) For all disciplinary action to be taken through the proper channels as previously agreed.

c) For immediate negotiations – which the Council are at present refusing.

These are not enormous demands – they are ones any Council claiming to be socialist should concede immediately.

In any event, NUPE are determined to win this one. Hackney's Labour Parties should mandate their Councillors to see they do.

Keith Veness
(Hackney NUPE shop steward)

Dilemmas in Hackney

by Cllr. Hilda Kean

Before the elections in May there was much acrimonious debate in Hackney about the correct political positions to adopt on rates, rents and cuts. There was polarisation between those comrades advocating a position which unequivocally argued for a clear class position in the form of no cuts, no rent nor rate rises, and those who opposed cuts but were willing to raise rates. The validity of the confrontationist strategy was never put to the test: so much energy was spent on internalised debate that none was used to build any real campaign on the matter within the labour movement!

Such was the background to the discussions of Hackney Labour Left, which decided that the priority was to get a campaign of action off the ground: the divisions this time would be between those willing to publicly fight the government's policies and those who weren't, rather than an adoption of a politically pure resolution.

CAMPAIGN OF OPPOSITION

Subsequently, a joint Local Government Committee/Labour Group meeting agreed to mount a campaign of opposition to Heseltine and, as a way of initially raising people's consciousness, a petition was launched. Leafletting during the London-wide Week of Action (sic) and a public meeting gave the campaign impetus. Petitions demanding that no cuts be made and that rents and rates should only rise in line with inflation were circulated to every organisation in Hackney. The campaign has now held several organising meetings and is starting to get off the ground. So far the response from the public at large has been sympathetic. It would, however, be naive to under-estimate the political problems we face in this period of downturn, for there is great difficulty in mounting any successful campaign against this government's policies. The responses to this problem are varied.

In Hackney we have faced the position of the SWP, which has resonance within some of the town hall unions, which is full of despair. On the one hand they argue that only isolated, heroic actions are possible; on the other, that the council should only be supported if it pledges to spend x million on decentralisation, create x thousand jobs and settles immediately, and in full, any disputes between the unions and the council. The defeatism of such a position is characterised by their interpretation of 'Poplarism'. For them the highlight was the imprisonment of the councillors: the fact that this was contingent upon mass mobilisation and support appears to have been forgotten!

On the other extreme we have the more jaundiced view of some councillors, which was also prevalent at the recent County Hall meeting of Labour groups, called by Greenwich council. Here the argument goes that everything is terrible, but 'we', the 'new' socialists got elected in May. Therefore, 'we' should do nothing this year in case the support isn't there for our policies. Only the downfall of the government will alter the situation and we don't want to rock the boat in election year. Our best bet is to put up the rates while explaining to the public that it's the Tories' fault. This will supposedly make all the difference to the way the working class feels dishing out more money in rates.

GIVE LEADERSHIP

I think both of these positions are incorrect. It is the responsibility of 'new, radical' councils to give leadership to the local labour movement in a campaign of opposition to the government's plans. Councils cannot (and should not) expect support unless they are prepared to give a lead and state clearly what their political position is. It is by this preparedness to take action that our socialism should be judged and not by logos we place on job adverts or demagogic rants full of sound and fury and signifying nothing.

To this end I moved a motion at the December Labour Group which stated our full committment to the campaign, the realisation that it was only possible to mobilise the trade union and labour movement if we took a principled stand, and that 'we agree to not raise rents and rates above the level of inflation and not to make any cuts.' This was adopted, albeit by 23 to 18 votes. It is merely a motion which states our strategy, which provides the framework for further tactical considerations such as those outlined by Alan Clinton in his article in November Briefing.

We cannot say that people are unwilling to oppose the government unless we are prepared to give a lead. However, I'm not suggesting that simply by councillors saying they are prepared to fight that this will per se lead to a successful conclusion. But a commitment to fight for oppositional strategies is a pre-requisite for mobilising support.

FIGHT NOW

A related issue is that of the election and the next government. Support for a future labour government will not take place in the abstract; it is likely that any resistance to the cuts will take place in the run-up to the next election. Those LP members, who believe that the next government will automatically be a Labour one, are frequently those who fail to see the necessity for fighting NOW for measures to defend working class living standards. On the contrary, as we saw for example in the February 1974 election, there is a clear relation between struggle and the way people vote. The best pre-condition for a return of a Labour government is for the Labour Party to mobilise now and build grass roots campaigns opposed to government policies.

Over recent months LLB has made much of the 'ideological' positions taken by councils: gay rights, women's right, local political control, animal welfare and so on. Such stands will become so much hot air unless we are prepared to show that we are solidly in favour of the working class and its economic interests and that we are prepared to lead a fight on that basis!

Newham's `dire financial situation´

After three years attending the Newham Labour Group, I thought I had lost my capacity to be amazed or appalled – but no! We are approaching the end of the financial year with a staggering £18m in balances. Last year the District Auditor reproved us for running our balances down to under £3m.

This has been achieved(?) by way of a large underspend in the current year and the accrual of interest on capital receipts (these stood at over £13m last time I asked). Throughout the year it has been apparent that we would have a massive capital underspend but the details of other expenditure have only recently been made available.

Throughout the year senior councillors and officers have blocked new expenditure to implement manifesto commitments from last May using our "dire financial situation" as the excuse.

The government target for expenditure in 1983/4 is £119m while the forecast expenditure to maintain jobs and services at their present albeit reduced levels is anticipated to be £126m. The expected penalty at this level of expenditure is about £4m and the increase in the block grant (after the penalty) is about £5m.

It is possible therefore to hold council house rents at their present level and to maintain the present Newham rate excluding the GLC and police precepts.

In addition we may have room to finance priority items from our 1982 manifesto from our balances. Such action would probably attract further penalties. Indeed we could be further penalised by having our target reduced because of underspend this year.

The irony is that we would be being penalised for beir)o "successful" in earlier rounds of cuts. The ategy that seems to be emerging is to have a rent freeze, a rate increase to cover the GLC and police precepts (up to 10%) and to finance a number of manifesto commitments from balances.

Conor McAuley

NUR: 'THE DEAD VOTE TWICE'

by our correspondent

"The dead vote twice" was one comment about corrupt unions in the USA. It is not entirely true about the current NUR elections, but while not voting, they do seem to come back to canvass! People write what they hope is the final epitaph on Weighell, only to be confronted by yet another exhumation by the gutter press. It's as bad as putting flowers on Dracula's tomb.

The latest, from the *Daily Mail*, while it did indeed exhume Sid, buried whatever faint pretensions to Democracy that John Golding may ever have had. Weighell admitted that the present slender majority held by the forces of reaction on the Labour NEC was the result, not of any last minute agonised decision, resulting from alleged NUM non-support for NUR candidates, but as a conscious, preplanned, move to ensure a right majority.

ELECTION

He then turned his attention to the NUR and its General Secretary's election. Here a note of desperation crept in. Knapp, Chairman of the SETUC, is widely believed to be way ahead in the number of nominations, and even more disturbingly for Sid, has attracted support from across the political spectrum – from all NUR members who expect a change from the old autocratic style of leadership, in which the union was often seen by members to be active only in the suppression of unofficial disputes, while handing over bowlfuls of members jobs to aid 'the industry'. Knaps election slogan sums it up best, within the constraints the NUR places upon candidates – 'Together – A New Start'.

Sid, with his usual lack of political sophistication, has claimed that the general support of the left in the NUR means that Knapp has simultaneously made satisfactory promises to both the Militant and the Communist Party. Anyone who knows the Labour movement on anything above a red-baiters level, would know that the chances of finding those two bunches of reds under the one bed are the same as Paisley and the Pope conducting an ecumenical St Patrick's day service. However Sid has never been one to allow the smooth flow of his invective to be disturbed by facts! Indeed the Dirty Tricks Department is already circulating branches with photocopies of a Militant article in favour of Knapp in an attempt to tap the reservoir of anti Militant sentiment and use it against him.

Weighell's chosen heir apparent, Charles Turnock, would appear to be running on a campaign of continuity promising to carry on the good work done by his predecessor. At every press conference, Sid is pushing him for the job. His adverts in the union paper stress that he has 13 years of experience in National Negotiations, most of them as a partner to Sid. It remains to be seen whether a union that has just divested itself of one General Secretary for *his* actions, is likely to avail itself of his reincarnation promising more of the same! The 13 years of national negotiations, according to many NUR members have been seen as years of a 25% loss of membership, and a decline in wages experienced by the railwaymen.

Certainly these are the issues which will weigh more in members minds when they vote than the political obsessions of the discredited General Secretary. As Sid's allies see their grip slacken, we can expect more and more malicious irrelevancies to be dragged into the campaign – but it will be a measure of their desperation not their confidence.

LEWISHAM: MATTERS ARISING

On December 22nd Lewisham Council voted for an agreement with NALGO and NUPE to end the dispute over transfer of GLC housing stock and 80 staff. All Lewisham staff will be paid Inner London weighting by 1986 in five instalments, and receive a package of improved (GLC) conditions of service including a 35 hour week. The unions have accepted the introduction of new technology. There remains the risk of legal action which could thwart the deal but counsel's advice was that the Council had properly considered all relevant factors in making its decision.

Although the unions consider the settlement reasonable there remains considerable bitterness over the way the Labour Group conducted negotiations during the 11 months the dispute lasted. For six months there was no offer. The Group was apparently paralysed by the threat of surcharges and it wasn't until the favourable Camden decision that serious discussions began. The first offer was incredibly bad containing a package of anti-union conditions which if they had been accepted would have neutered the unions, giving the Council carte blanche in cutting staff. When the Group learned of the unions' rejection, a decision to continue negotiations was carried by only two votes. A number of normally committed socialist comrades were voicing the Tebbit rhetoric of who rules Lewisham the unions or us!

PROBLEMS UNRESOLVED

There has been a long history of poor industrial relations in Lewisham and despite resolutions passed by the Local Government Committee and by Group many problems remain unresolved. I could set out a long list of grievances that have been turned down out of hand or referred to working parties that never meet. Instead I think it would be more helpful to identify four key areas where progress must be made in 1983:

1. **Employment.** The good news is that a new Employment and Industry Committee has been gathering information from a wide range of organisations including the unions and a package of positive proposals have been drawn up. The bad news is that the Council continues to maintain a 10% cash limit on expenditure which in effect delays the filling of vacancies including the freeze of trainee posts. Surely we can't condemn Thatcher's policies that have created 4 million unemployed and tolerate local policies that do the same thing?
2. **Racial Discrimination.** In Lewisham it is now well documented how certain recruitment practises result in fewer black people getting Council jobs. In housing black families get offered inferior properties and mainly in the Northern part of the Borough. We must now take action!
3. **Democracy.** Many comrades at political and trades council meetings speak eloquently in favour of 'workers control' but when they are the employer they refuse to agree to even our modest request to be allowed to attend Council meetings with speaking rights only. I would suggest that union participation would lead to fuller disclosure by officers and enable members to make decisions after hearing direct from the unions.
4. **Decentralisation.** This was a major plank in last year's Lewisham Labour Party manifesto. I understand that comrades are having cold feet over implementing this commitment because of cost. This is a valid objection if new District and local offices are added on to existing central offices. I would suggest that a more radical approach of closing the main Housing and Social Services offices and sharing out Borough 'specialists' amongst the District offices would free resources. And housing together Architects, Planning, Environmental Health and Borough Valuers in one new Department would streamline provision of central services. There is no reason why the Council's Committees Structure can't be reorganised into District Committees with their own budgets, responsible for the co-ordination of services in line with objectives and guidelines laid down by a central Policy Committee.

Ken Terry
Leader Trade Union (Staff) Side
Lewisham Council.
Member Woolwich CLP
(Writing in his personal capacity)

The role of the Gay Working Party

Les Tate interviewed Andy Harris, GLC councillor, about the work of the Gay Working Party, which Andy Chairs.

Les: *Can you run through the major initiatives and achievements on gay rights that have occurred in the ILEA and GLC since this working party was set up?*

Andy: We have made quite a few grants to lesbian and gay groups, but the major progress on GLC/ILEA has been getting sexual orientation included within the equal opportunities statement for employment. In doing this we found much greater resistance amongst some members of the ILEA, and particularly officers who administer that service, than the GLC.

As far as the ILEA goes we have also reversed the policies of banning the Gay Teachers Group from hiring ILEA premises and opened the pages of 'Contact', (the ILEA magazine) to their adverts. We have also reinstated John Warburton, who was banned from employment when children who had seen him on a gay demonstration provoked him into talking about his sexuality in the classroom.

More recently we have been working on funding a gay arts festival this summer, and a joint venture with Islington Council for short stay accommodation for young people who come to London who end up homeless. Incidentally, on housing allocations, since the GLC properties have been transferred to the boroughs, the issue of allocations to gay people will need to be tackled locally through the boroughs.

Other areas we have been tackling are ensuring that a fair proportion of GLC funding and facilities are made to lesbians and gays, and the funding of a 'bust' card for gay men which gives them short advice and help if arrested. The level of harassment of gay men is also being investigated.

Our most recent aim is the setting up of a London Gay Centre, which would be an organising base where the gay community could feel together and secure. It would house campaigns, meeting rooms, social events and existing switchboard and counselling agencies; though, of course, the use of the building has to be democratically decided by the steering committee in relation to the would-be users. At present we have two job-sharing workers heavily involved in identifying suitable premises for this centre.

Les: *Can I take you up on several of the points you have raised? How many gay people themselves are represented in any way on the working party?*

Andy. The Gay Working Party was set up by John MacDonell last year, and the people who came to it all represented gay groups hoping to be funded. Since then more and more people have been coming along. Also the Women's Committee will have one coopted lesbian with full voting rights.

Les: *You mention Labour councillors and administrative officers being resistant to this policy. How do you think you won them round or changed their minds?*

Andy: The Tories did a lot of the work for us in winning some councillors, because when we had a major debate on grants the Tories were just horrifically prejudiced and vilified gay men and women openly in the council chamber. This caused a unification within the Labour Group. Other than that progress has been made talking out the problems that individual councillors might feel, and then taking them forward. As far as the officers are concerned, I think the People's March for Jobs introduced such radically young and different people into this building, that the task of changing attitudes towards gay people, negotiating grants etc was downhill sailing after that.

Les: *What has been the attitude of the press to your working party?*

Andy: In my view we are never going to get a sympathetic hearing from most of the press to the GLC's efforts in most areas. On the gay issue there have been repeated attacks. For instance last year we gave a small grant to the Gay Teenagers Group and the press went beserk. But we have kept our heads down and refused to be intimidated, and the headlines have diminished. So when the Gay Teenagers Group grant was increased this year the press didn't say a word.

Les: *Is the gay issue a vote loser for us? Are we going to alienate Labour's so-called traditional support?*

Andy: We may lose some votes, but also we win a lot of support in the lesbian and gay community. I am also certain that it is very beneficial for the labour movement to meet with gay men and women. In any case we are bound in principle to fight prejudices which are bound up, I am sure, in the maintenance of the capitalist system. If you're going to go softly softly on the gay issue I suspect that you're going to go softly softly on the whole nature of our society.

Les. *What would you say to those on the left who claim that lesbian and gay issues are a diversion from the real economic struggle because gay rights can be accommodated within capitalism, that gay rights doesn't, in effect, challenge the system?*

Andy: I don't agree with them. I regard the individual's ability in relation to their comrades to set up a life style which may be alternative as being challenging to the capitalist system and the messages it keeps pushing out.

Les: *Some comrades would claim, I think, that mass strikes are far more of a threat to the man in the boardroom than alternative life styles which can be marginalised and don't really hit him in his pocket.*

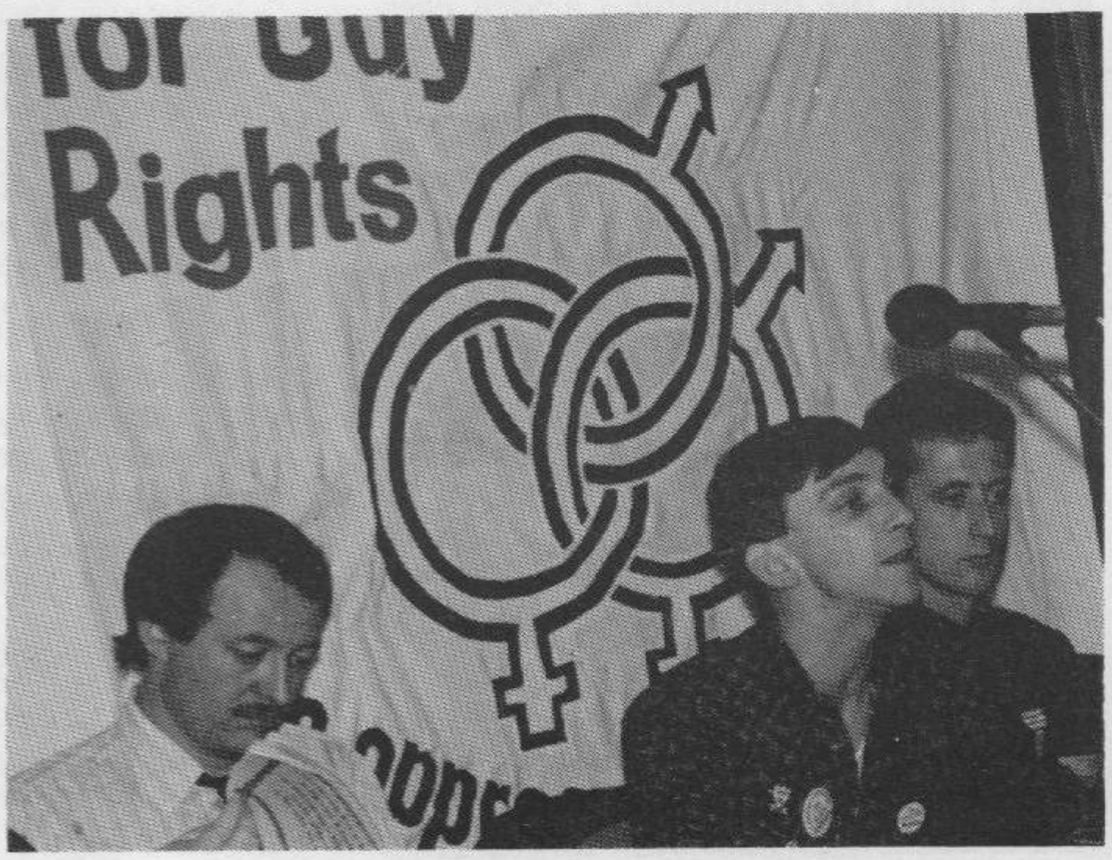
Andy: What that misses out is that alternative lifestyles are actually developmental in the individual and the group gaining a better understanding of class society and their position in it. In the long run this is helpful in the development of the industrial struggle, as well as being valuable in its own right.

Les: *What about prejudice against gays in the labour movement? Do you see it as a problem, and if it is how do you think we can tackle it?*

Andy: It is a problem. There is a lot of good work going on in London, Manchester and elsewhere, but one of the tactics of the right is to try to divide this off from other areas in the country and label us as wild libertarians in the metropolitan Labour Parties. They tried to do this at the last women's conference. But I think if the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights keeps up the momentum of conference and sends out literature and speakers all round the country, that will help. I find that for people to listen for a short while then spew out all their anxieties about gays leads to more realistic and rational views about the whole issue. The other way forward is for councils across the country to give a lead and not duck down when the press attacks them.

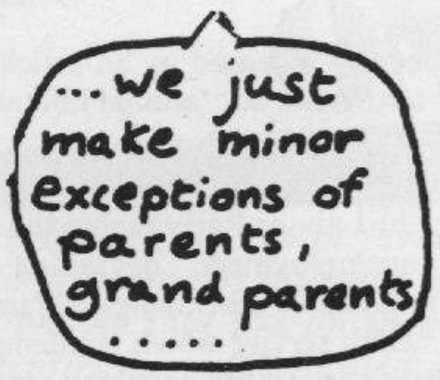
Les: *Do you see the analysis of patriarchy and feminism as equally if not more important for the labour movement to learn from than the traditional class analysis and union activity?*

Andy: My understanding of the situation is that the class and union movement has developed in such a way in the 20th century as to alienate other groups. In some ways the union and labour movement has taken on some of the worst aspects of capitalist society and has assimilated those methods of organisation and meetings that are obviously going to alienate the women's movement and gays who cannot see themselves as members or sympathisers of organisations who are just perpetuating the oppressions they felt all along. I see the women's movement as a very positive force for change indeed, and I think those women in the Labour Party have a great fight on their hands and it is more courageous to be within the Labour Party and taking on that fight than outside. The traditional organs of the party still have a long way to go, but the signs, particularly in London, are very good.



Speakers at the Conference Fringe Meeting organised by the Labour Campaign For Gay Rights.





Cartoons by Fanny Tribble

Not ALL Controls Are Racist!

No, not all immigration controls are racist! Even if ALL controls were racist, Labour's immigration proposals passed in Blackpool last October are considerably less racist than existing controls, and would end the suffering of most people affected by them.

It would help if Michael Foot told our Party members and the electorate generally about this programme to combat racial injustice. Why not make a special party political broadcast? However, until Labour does and unless you can publicise it better, why not cut out the article below and reproduce it in your printed (or even electrostencilled) CLP newsletter?

BERNARD MISRAHI

Labour's Immigration Programme

REPEAL THE 1971 IMMIGRATION ACT AND 1981 NATIONALITY ACT. This article outlines Labour's alternative to the Immigration Act. This act divides humanity into 'patrials' – mainly white – who can enter Britain freely, and 'non-patrials' who can't. Labour will restore full British Citizenship and hence 'patriality' to East African UK Passport Holders. It was a Labour Government in 1968 that withdrew their right to enter Britain freely. Labour will withdraw the Rules that divide families, but won't allow in many non-patrials without relatives here. Abolition of all controls, however, is Labour's ultimate aim.

FOREIGN HUSBANDS AND FIANCES WILL BE ALLOWED IN to join any woman living in Britain - even if she wasn't born here and isn't a British citizen. No longer will men, or women, be chucked out if the marriage breaks down.

THE DIVIDED FAMILIES WILL BE REUNITED. Abdul Wahid, from Oldham, has been trying since 1976 to be reunited with his four sons. Many other men, especially from Bangladesh, are struggling to bring over their children and wives. Labour wants to help them, but has to show that it knows how to defeat the racist bureaucracy obstructing them.

Labour will also remove the shocking restrictions on parents (usually elderly) from joining their children here.

SOME WORKERS WITHOUT PERMITS will be 'regularised' (made legal) but few new permits will be issued. The deported Filipinos may return.

OVERSEAS STUDENTS FEES WILL BE CUT.

FULL AMNESTY will be given to everyone who entered before 1st Jan 1973.

It's amazing that the Home Office deport or remove people who entered ten years ago. This was often when they were children and sometimes their 'deception' consisted of not answering questions they weren't asked. Some have been joined by wives or husbands and now have their own children. The Home Office try to remove the lot.

NO INTERNAL PASSPORT CHECKS. Hospitals, DHSS or dole offices will be forbidden from passing on information to the immigration authorities or asking for passports. Informers may be prosecuted.

RIGHT OF APPEAL, in this country, for everyone charged under the new Act and Rules, with right to bail and legal aid, and before a three person tribunal independent of the Home Office, – not before Adjudicators who now act as judge and jury.

Who says that campaigning for a racially just immigration policy will lose us votes? Anwar Ditta won sympathy and respect, even from those with racist views but who were shocked that a mother was seperated from her children. Leeds busworkers won support from the TUC itself for their fellow driver Shaukat Darr who is threatened with deportation.

LABOUR WILL LEND CREDIBILITY TO ITS OWN PROGRAMME BY FRANKLY DECLARING ITS JOINT RESPONSIBILITY WITH THE TORIES FOR THE RACIST LAWS WE HAVE TODAY, AND BY JOINING IN THE FIGHT TO REPEAL THEM.

YOUR CLP CAN START BY ORGANISING A FAIR TURNOUT FOR THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST LAWS DEMO IN LONDON ON MARCH 27.

Dear Comrades,

Bernard Misrahi's article on the Campaign Against Racist Laws is timely, to the point and would have been useful if it had not been undercut by a headline that can only have been attached by someone who had either missed the point or was deliberately seeking to distort it.

***London Labour Briefing* has NO RIGHT to pin the slogan 'all controls are racist' on to CARL. Not only is it NOT one of our campaigning slogans but the Action Conference on 23 October specifically and democratically rejected a resolution to consider the adoption of such a position. CARL has too much serious work ahead to adopt so divisive a line. It is a broad alliance of anti-racists (some of whom would agree that all immigration controls are necessarily racist and some of whom would not) committed to campaign against existing racist legislation. It is destructive and anti-democratic for *London Labour Briefing* to link CARL to a slogan which CARL itself rejects.**

In fact your headline illustrates Bernard Misrahi's point that Labour activists are better at adopting radical rhetoric on race than at grasping the real issues or undertaking effective campaigning work. Those of us who do engage in anti-racist work in and for the Labour Party were profoundly relieved in September when finally adopted an immigration policy of which we need not be ashamed, and share Bernard Misrahi's fear that neither the leadership nor local activists will promote that policy with sufficient vigour. What help can we expect from the comrades of *London Labour Briefing* if you are going to smear that policy, which includes commitments both to non-racist controls and to guarantees of rights, as racist? If 'ALL controls are racist' is *really* what *London Labour Briefing* thinks is now the most important thing to argue don't you think it ought to argue it properly. and not just chuck it casually into the headline of an article dealing with a policy that most of us think represents a real advance and should be argued for, not against?

I hope that you will give space in future to some *accurate* briefing of your readers on the issues behind CARL's slogans and on the Labour Party's new policy on immigration so that they become capable of responding to Bernard Misrahi's challenge to make it as well known as our policies on jobs and the bomb.

Labour's disgraceful record on race so far is as much the fault of left CLPs who've preferred rhetoric to action as it is anyone else's. Is *London Labour Briefing* prepared to help change that?

Yours in comradeship,
Vicky Guedalla

Ilford North CLP and delegate to CARL from Redbridge Campaign Against Racism and Fascism.



Letters



Two Socialist kittens require good home. Enquiries to David Fryer, telephone 01-732 8274 (home) or 733 3626 (work).

BRIEFING ON THE AIRWAVES

Dear Labour Briefing,

Our Radio **is an open access Community Radio Station, at present illegal. It began in February 1982 and has been gradually expanded, giving a regular service. At present we are transmitting with Dread Broadcasting Corporation, a black reggae evening, on Fridays, 10.00pm to 2.00pm, and a whole evening of alternative entertainment on Wednesdays.**

In the near future *Our Radio* **will be expanding, we hope eventually to go out 7 nights a week, and due to the brilliance of our transmitter design you can pick us up loud and clear in most areas of London.**

At present *Our Radio* **has no income at all, so any and all donations are welcome ... But most of all we need your ideas, tapes, groups willing to make regular programmes or items, as well as any spare sound equipment, records, and publicity. It would be easier to say that we need EVERYTHING.**

The schedule for Wednesday evenings is this at present:

5.00 to 6.00pm. Radio Solidarity.

News views and music from 'occupied' Poland. Half of the programme is in Polish, and it has a wide audience among London's Polish minority.

6.00 to 7.00pm. Women on the Waves.

A programme by women for women. Recent programmes have had features on Greenham Womens Peace Camp and the demo by the English Collective of Prostitutes. Great music too, all women.

7.00 to 9.00pm. Gaywaves.

Britain's first homosexual wireless programme. News, whats on, music and various outrageous events. Is looking for more gay groups to do 15 minute time slots. Stars Anvil Chime and Zaphod McBeeblebrok.

9.00 to 10.00pm. The Message.

Radical radio at its best. Includes mad take offs, wild attacks, interviews, squatting news and all the information you want to hear but the straight media filters out. Plus music to fit.

10.00 to 11.00pm. Utapia.

Utapia is an independent cassette radio show. Music you definitely won't hear anywhere else, none of it on record, all of it lively.

11.00 till late. The BAG.

The notorious BAG is a programme of music and cut ups, but *without* **that nagging DJ to bother you. Each programme is based around a theme ... Religion/Money/Society ... The Under Cover BAG Operation ... The Good, the BAG and the Ugly ... etc.**

Our Radio would like to put on air programming for and by Labour Party members. The station can provide broadcasting facilities and training for anyone who would be interested in broadcasting. This can start as a contribution to "The Message", the existing news and views programme. Hopefully it will develop into a full hour show dealing with the whole range of issues within and facing the Labour Party. Anyone inspired by this appeal should write to Our Radio — and help create a BRIEFING on the airwaves.

COMMUNITY RADIO

Dear Comrades,

Community Radio Lobbyist, Richard Barbrook (December 'Briefing') is absolutely right; socialists must start fighting for democratic and accountable media.

Nearly every initiative over the past ten years has floundered because of the apathy of the Labour Movement on this vital issue.

Underfunding by Labour's establishment has led to community newspaper after community newspaper closing down. Yet the idea of a local pro-left Press is so potent that as one paper closes stalwarts in another area get set to repeat the experiment. If Tory advertisers aren't prepared to support a left wing Press (and, of course, they won't) then we'll have to do it ourselves.

Neighbourhood broadcasting has suffered even worse problems. In the mid-seventies the cable companies (eg: Thorn-EMI and Rediffusion) virtually pulled the plugs out on the New Town TV experiments when it became clear that their philanthropy wasn't immediately going to lead the Home Office to licence movie and commercial TV networks.

Radio is much cheaper than television, yet only three cable radio services survive. After a promising start four years ago they either went to the wall (disappointing a high local listenership) or capitulated to the 'pop and prattle' consensus to gain their full quota of advertising. One station in particular, did so 'well' that after it sacked two workers and ignored an ACAS ruling that the pair be re-instated, a right wing Labour councillor and party activists queued up to march past the picket line.

Those involved in Britain's fledgling community Press, radio, and TV have learnt from all these experiences; we want the vibrant local and minorities' projects which CRADLE describes. The Labour Movement could have these powerful vehicles to challenge the capitalist message, but only if Trade Unions and Labour Authorities (such as the GLC) ensure that they are accountable to the left, and are prepared to pay much more than token amounts to keep the presses rolling and the air-waves in modulation.

Yours fraternally
Chris Huculak
(Barking CLP)

ISRAELI PEACE POWER

Dear Comrade,

It seems that slogans and clichés are more important than a socialist analysis of the Middle East problem. Scoring propaganda points for one side or the other is more important than helping the peace camps amongst both the Israelis and the Palestinians.

When 400,000 Israelis demonstrated for Peace Now in Tel Aviv after the massacre in the refugee camps, many moderate Palestinians understood that this was a rejection of Begin's reactionary and extremist policies. The Palestinians comprehended the significance of the emergence of the Peace Camp in Israel, but what about comrades here, especially those who take an interest in the Middle East.

When I wrote an article for LLB in August, supporting the Peace Camp in Israel, at the height of the war in Lebanon, it was neither published nor acknowledged. Why? Isn't a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians worthwhile? Isn't Peace greater than a Greater Palestine engulfing Israel? For comrades interested in furthering the peace process and an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue contact The British Friends of Peace Now, 148 The Strand, London WC2R IJA.

Peace People — Take the Power!

Colin Shindler
(member of Finchley CLP)

INCENSED

Dear Comrades!
Never have I been so incensed by an article in a socialist paper as the one on "animal liberation" by Val Veness.

It is revealing of the present state of some "socialists" in the Labour Party that in the midst of massive unemployment degrading and demoralising millions of working class families; of cuts in the health service which condemns increasing numbers of working people to extended suffering and even death; in the midst of a vicious war waged against the nationalist population in the north of Ireland, that Councillors and other Labour Party members can preoccupy themselves with "animal liberation".

It is an insult to both women and black people to equate capitalism's oppression and harassment of these groups with the "slaughter of animals" as Val Veness does. Since when have socialists suggested that the consumption of meat is a crime?

The writer even dares to equate campaigns against "The stupid farming systems of the EEC" with campaigns against germ warfare and for the "rights of people in the Third World". Are these "socialists" seriously suggesting that the fight against the mass murder and torture of tens of thousands of anti-imperialist militants in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, etc demands the same attention as campaigns to preserve the rights of farm animals?

To pose these questions is to see how far these comrades have moved from the *real* concerns, priorities and ideals of socialism.
Yours fraternally
Maria Krupska
Lambeth Central CLP

JOHN CARR'S O.K.

Dear Briefing,

'Briefing' articles are normally the embodiment of objective reality but there are always the occasional slips. The article on Anselm Samuel in the last issue was fine apart from a major flaw in that the efforts of the constituency Member, John Carr, were not recognised.

I am not an obvious member of the John Carr Fan Club but without his requisition of the Further and Higher Education Sub-Committee decision to sack Sam, and his hours of painstaking negotiating, the outcome would have been very different.

In those last few days of July *only* members of the Further and Higher Sub-Committee knew they were sacking Sam. *All* the other I.L.E.A. members were blissfully uninformed as to what was being done in their name. All except that is for John Carr, whose swift action to inform five of us and get us to join him in stopping the implementation of the sacking against our own administration, paved the way for the eventual reinstatement.

Yours fraternally,
Andy Harris

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

BRIEFING ON PERSONAL POLITICS

As socialists, we are in favour of public sector housing provision, but are we building houses that people really want to live in? The following articles illustrate that in recent years many of the estates that Labour Councils have built have proved to be real disasters for the people that live on them. Rather than developing communities we have built social deserts. We hope that this issue of 'Streetlife' will provoke much needed discussion in the Labour Party and in the communities on the type of housing we ought to build in the future.

ARCHITECTURE AND COMMUNITY:

GIVE US BACK OUR STREETS!

Everyone knows that tower blocks are bad for housing families with young children, and destroy local communities. Nowadays, we try to build low-rise. But low-rise housing does not necessarily cure the alienating social effects of 'estate' developments. In many ways, the way housing is laid out today perpetuates the social effects of the high rise era. In part, this comes from the assumption that public authorities use in housing design.

DEFENSIBLE SPACE

When architects and their committees come to design housing layout, all too often they think in a simple-minded way. Man, so the story goes, is at heart a territorial animal. The job of architecture is to provide an appropriate physical milieu which contains all the right 'clues and cues' to channel our innate drive to designate and defend the space we live in.

Each housing estate should therefore be composed of a hierarchical series of clear and bounded territories (Fig. 1) leading from the most public realm to the most private. This is supposed to help residents to identify and feel 'at home' in their surroundings, and at the same time discourage strangers from trespassing on those parts of the estate where they have no territorial rights.

This is what is actually meant by the popular term 'defensible space'. It was imported into this country from America in the '60s precisely for use in the new generation of public authority housing estates.

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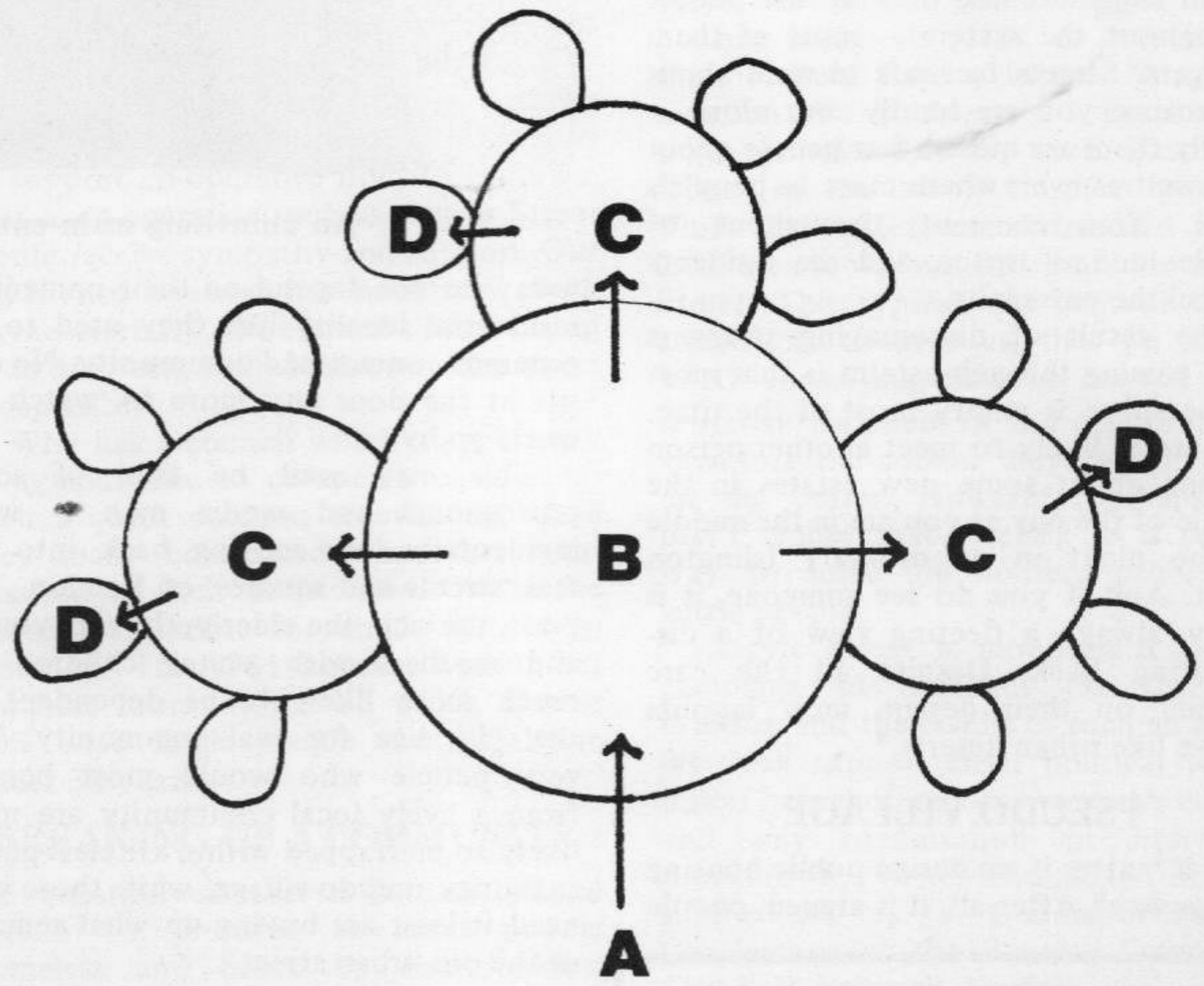


Fig. 1 Defensible space hierarchy: A — public realm of the street; B — semi-public realm; C — semi-private realm; D — private realm of the dwelling.

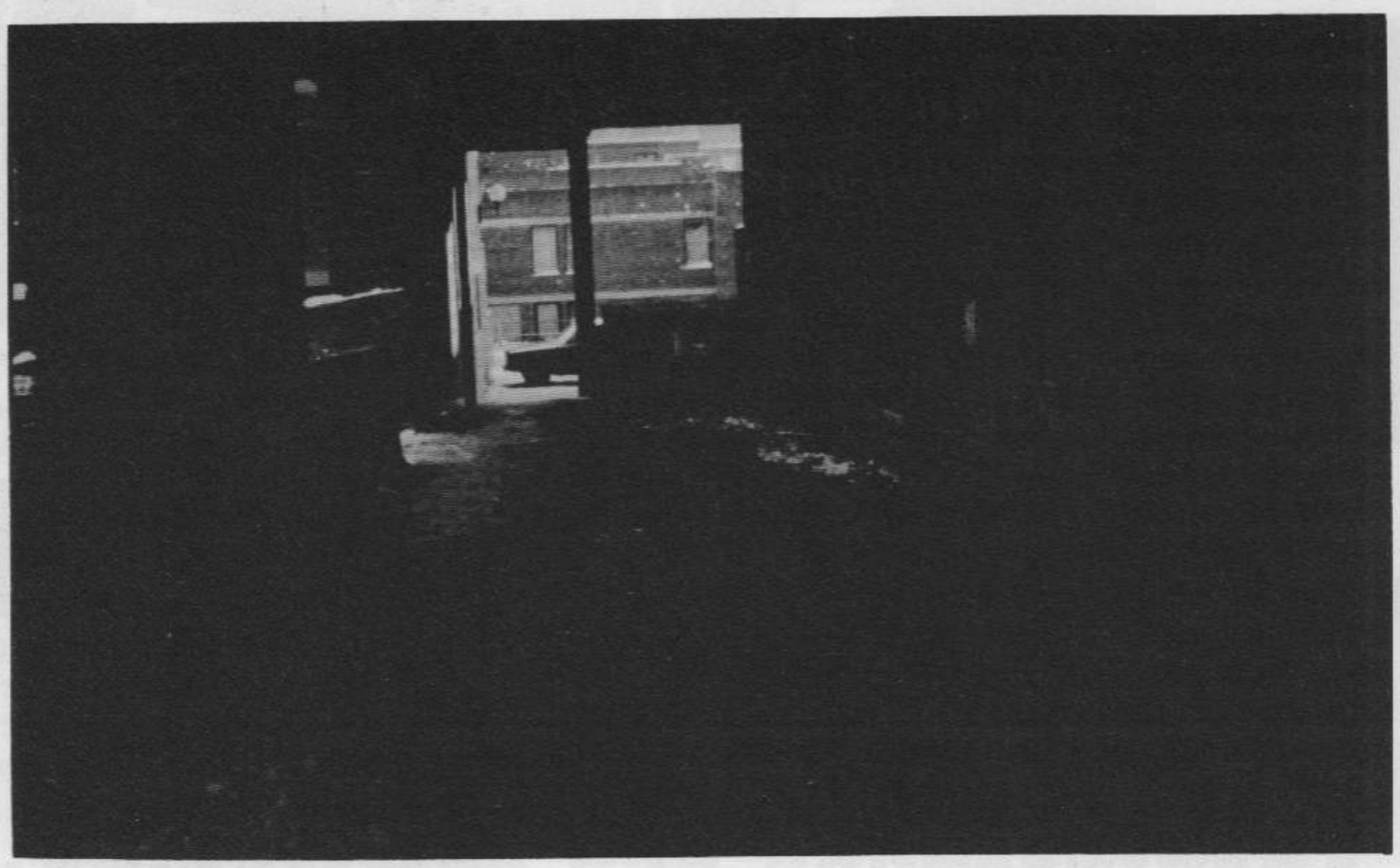
WOMEN—TAKE THE POWER!

GIVE US BACK OUR STREETS (Continued)

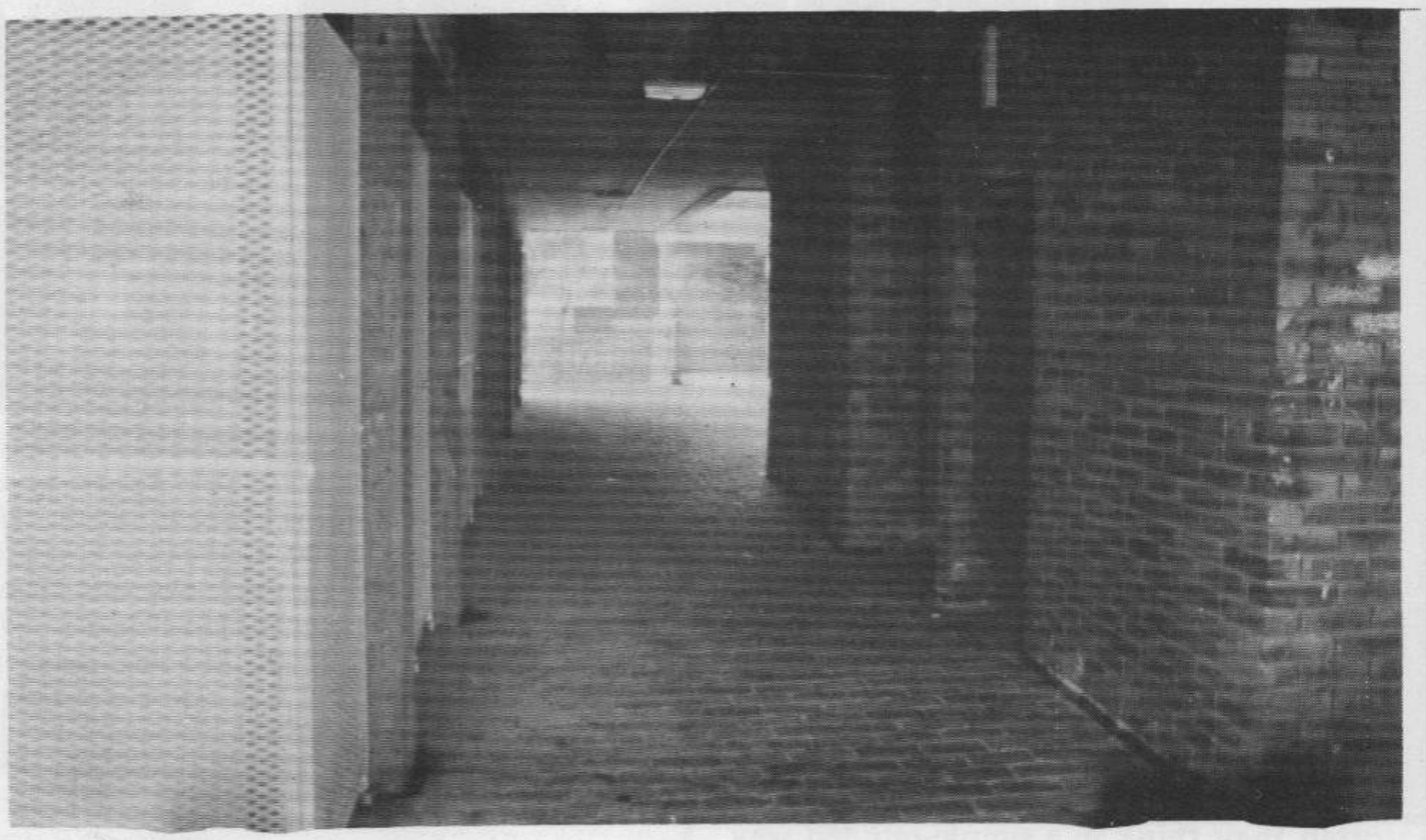
Defensible space results in housing layouts with strong isolationist properties. For example, a pedestrian walking through 'defensible space' is more often than not two or three turnings away from the nearest entrance to a dwelling. These blank-walled spaces, which were intended to create a suitable hierarchy between dwelling clusters, all too often present a squalid and vandalised reality, which because of its remoteness from doorways, is frightening to walk through.

Circulation routes twist and turn away from the periphery towards the secret heart of the estate, so that a stranger is unable to guess whether he will ever make it to the other side. As a result, no one is ever seen passing through, and the area always seems deserted and lonely.

The brick and timber facades of the houses, pitched roofs and arcadian imagery of these new layouts cannot alter the fact that they are based on spatial principles which separate residents from the world outside the estate, and segregate them from each other. This is simply not the case in the traditional urban localities on which these schemes are supposed to be modelled, and whose appearance they ape.



A typical blank-walled zone in the heart of one modern low-rise estate.



An uninviting main entrance to the same estate.

URBAN DESERTS

Bill Hillier and his team at the Bartlett School of Architecture in UCL have just completed a programme of research into the ways in which more traditional urban localities and low-rise housing estates really work in generating and controlling the co-presence and movement of people in space. Traditional urban localities appear lively because they diffuse people throughout the system – most of them strangers. Streets feel safe to walk about in because you are hardly ever alone – usually there are quite a few people about – as well as everywhere close to people's doors. This constant throughput of people 'polices' space, and the residents 'police' the passers-by.

The result of discouraging strangers from passing through estates is that most of the space is empty most of the time. You are as likely to meet another person walking about some new estates in the middle of the day as you are in the middle of the night in an ordinary Islington street. And if you do see someone, it is nearly always a fleeting view of a disappearing back. Despite all the care lavished on their design, most layouts behave like urban deserts.*

PSEUDO VILLAGE

Does it matter if we design public housing in this way? After all, it is argued, people today do not depend on their immediate residential locality like they used to, to generate contact and community. No one sits at the door any more to 'watch the world go by'.

This may well be true of some professional and media men – who, incidentally, are moving back into the real 'streets and squares' of London. The poor, the sick, the elderly, the very young, and mothers with young children are much more likely to be dependent on their locality for real community. The very people who would most benefit from a lively local community are most likely to be trapped within a lifeless public authority pseudo-village, while those who need it least are buying up what remains of the old urban street.

A BETTER CAGE?

Where, then do 'defensible space' concepts come from? Most people believe that they originate in a comparison with the behaviour of animals in their natural habitat. But this is not quite true. Territorial ideas first came to be applied in architecture in solving problems of stress in animals caged in zoos.

But 'defensible space' thinking has its historical origins in the nineteenth century when people became anxious to break up the crowds of workers whom the conditions of industrial production had brought dangerously together. Hence the obsession with re-creating village settings and the 'idiocy of rural life'.

Today's theories, for all their pretensions and pseudo-science, are still aimed to 'divide and rule' working people. The public housing programme remains the Achilles heel of the labour movement. Maybe it is time we got rid of the 'estate' concept altogether, with all its legacy of Victorian paternalism. Why settle for an ersatz urbanity when we can learn to design the real thing?

Julienne Hanson
Bartlett School of Architecture

* **Footnote**: This research is the subject of a series of articles to be published this Spring, and of a forthcoming book, The Social Logic of Space, CUP, forthcoming 1983.

DON'T BULLDOZE OUR HOMES!

In November 1979 a group of young homeless people in Norwich decided to squat a Victorian terrace near the city centre in an attempt to solve their accommodation problems. Although Norwich City Council has a very good record in the field of housing there is an enormous problem of single and young people's accommodation there.

The street, which is a cul-de-sac, had been partially empty for two years. The Council planned to sell the houses to the University of East Anglia. At first the Council refused to talk to us at all, so we formed a House Co-op, called the Street Housing Co-op, knowing that they would then meet us and discuss our future.

We talked to them at just the right time. The City Council considered the houses sub-standard, but they had no money to do them up themselves as Central Government spending cuts had diminished their allocation for housing. The University too had to drop the idea of buying and renovating the Street because they couldn't afford it. We stepped in.

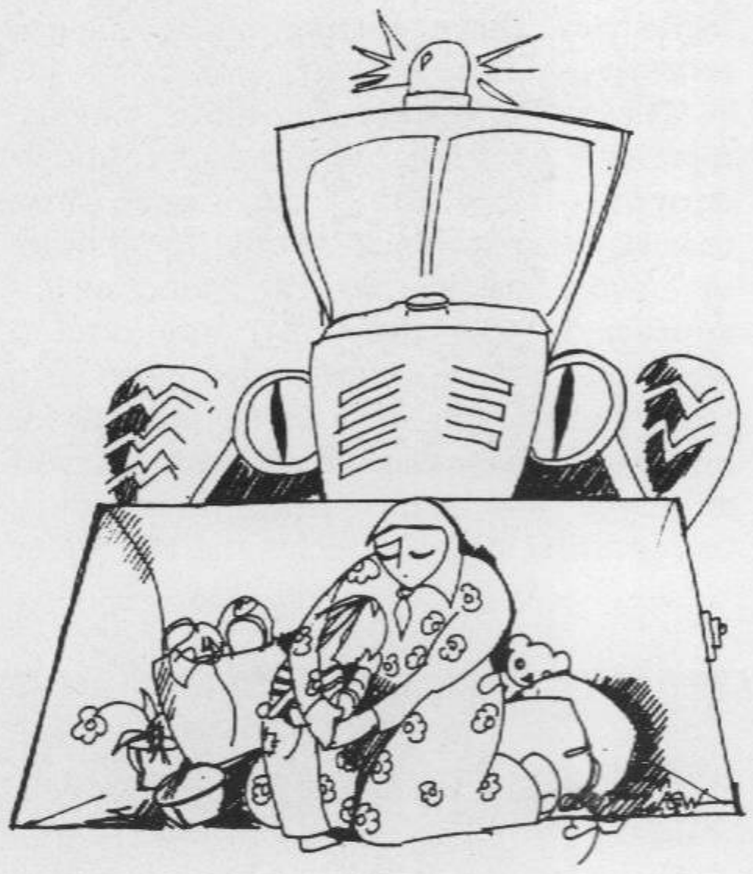
As a legally registered co-op we were entitled to apply for grants from the Housing Corporation to buy and do up the houses on Argyle Street. We discussed this with the City Council and they agreed to give us a four year licence agreement to stay on the Street if we applied for funds to repair and modernise the houses. We did so through a secondary housing co-op called the Society for Co-operative Dwellings (SCD) and in the summer of 1981 we were allocated £215,000 to do the first phase of purchasing and doing up the houses. We were told that the Housing Corporation envisaged an on-going programme of purchase and repair over the four years during which time we would possibly receive a total grant of around £1,000,000.

D.O.E.'S DECISION

Then we were notified by the press, that the City Council had received a letter from the DOE which refused the Council permission to lease the houses to the co-op. The decision by the DOE was based upon a policy which does not allow the leasing of public property to housing associations. However, SCD then informed the council that the DOE had not used this policy in at least four or five similar cases (co-ops) that they had registered. The DOE were particularly unlikely to refuse permission in a case which the Housing Corporation supports and which would meet particular housing needs, as was the case in Argyle Street. SCD suggested that the council point these points out to the DOE and generally re-iterate our case. The council did not do this, but instead served eviction notices on us.

Norwich City Council is an established Labour controlled council and in its Housing Investment Programme 1981/84 states the following:

"Co-operatives are another form of housing tenure which offers the sort of autonomy in self-determination normally



only found in owner occupation, whilst retaining the value of mutuality and community. The council therefore wish to obtain experience of such schemes and hopes to be able to support a co-operative in the near future. They would also welcome the involvement of housing associations in such ventures, which would include the idea of street co-operatives."

One would expect from a Labour council that has published its intentions to support co-operative housing ventures, that a co-operative such as Argyle Street would receive sympathy and support. Our experience however has been very much to the contrary, the council's relationship to us has been, at the best, one of reluctant acceptance.

Why has a council which is apparently so sympathetic to co-operatives come to such a quick decision to evict us? Have they really considered what the repercussions of their decision will be on the housing situation for single people in Norwich? The 1981 housing waiting list numbers were 4,500 of which almost 70% were single people and 60% were under 30 years.

BREAKING UP A COMMUNITY

We question whether a Labour council should be prepared to make people homeless and break up communities. 98 of the 175 people due for eviction are already without jobs, does the council now want to see us without homes as well? There are 19 single parents on the street nearly all of whom would like to stay because the street provides support, baby sitters and company for the children. There are 5 senior citizens who want to stay, and there are 25 children. The street also houses Norwich Women's Centre. The Labour Party as the supposed protector of the weaker sections of our society, is condoning this act of eviction which is the breaking up of a community. A community which is trying to move beyond the nuclear family as the basic unit of society in an attempt to provide a more equal society for all.

The council claims that it wishes to use the site for a sheltered housing scheme. A recent letter to the local press points out that if this is the case, why pull down Argyle Street when there is already a building site earmarked for sheltered housing, which has been there for some time and still no construction has begun on the site.

LOCAL COUNCILLORS

The attitude of the local councillors towards us is highlighted by the disfribution of a handbill produced by them. This leaflet claimed that Argyle Street needed an urgent solution, and that due to the many complaints of noise and other 'disturbances', the street should be pulled down and cleared for sheltered housing. Space was provided at the bottom of the leaflet for a reply. But they did not mention Argyle Street housing co-op, its plans, or even suggest that it could have a future. Nor did it mention the problems of housing for single people. But the most illustrating aspect of the whole business was that while the leaflet was distributed in the local area it was not distributed in Argyle Street. This typifies the attitude of the councillors towards us, that we are not worth consulting, that we are not representative members of the electorate and therefore the sooner they can get rid of us the better. However, perhaps they don't realise that evicting us is not the way to solve the housing problem of single people.

Argyle Street is mounting a national campaign to highlight the threat of eviction and the results of such an action. We seek support from political parties, union branches, co-ops, women's centres, and any organisation or individuals prepared to write statements of their support for us to: **Councillor Fulman, Chairperson of the Housing Committee, City Hall, Norwich, Norfolk.**

Any other form of support or suggestion should be sent to: Argyle Street Housing Co-op, 109 Argyle Street, Norwich, Norfolk.

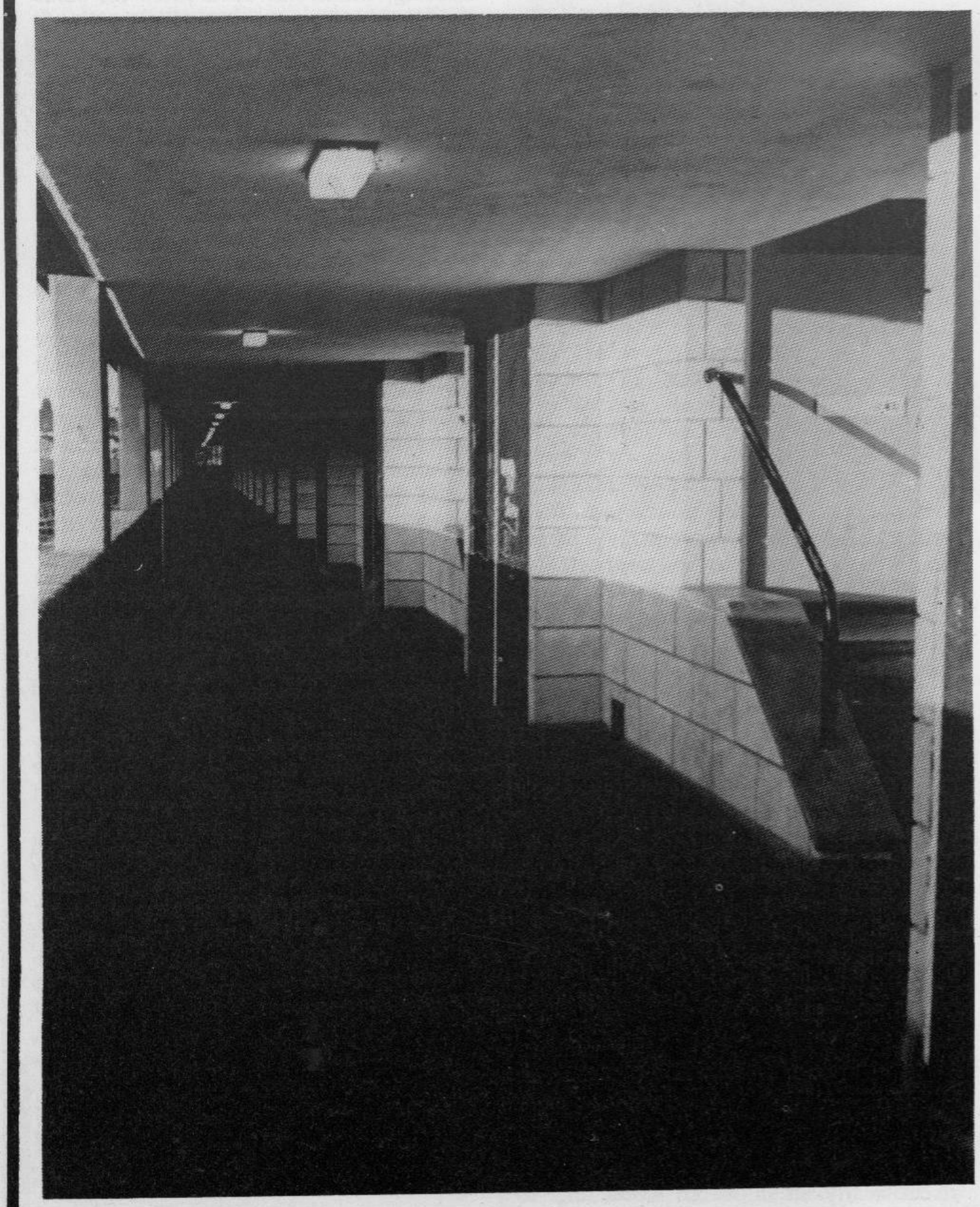
Simon Swann

Angell Lane Estate:
Design for disaster

Angell Town Estate, near Brixton, is typical of the problems of modern council estates. It was built very recently (1977-79) but already many of the garages are out of use, there are roofs charred black from cars being set alight, the walkways are sometimes two feet deep in water and residents dare not walk the length of a block without the fear of robbery.

Many of the residents are very friendly, active and concerned – for instance at one recent tenants' meeting, well over 100 people turned up. At that meeting the lack of security came up again and again. People complained that the rubber walkways muffle the footsteps of possible attackers. There were repeated complaints that smashed lights are left unreplaced for weeks or even months, providing would-be attackers with plenty of dark spots. Incidentally, on the problem of lights, the complications of the GLC transfer, the difficulty of the job, and cuts, have led to a shortage of caretakers – so even less lights have been getting replaced until recently.

The police turned up at this tenants' meeting. At first there was an undercurrent of hostility from some white tenants against black people (who were under-represented at the meeting – another typical problem), but after a while the police came under heavy fire from both black and white tenants for not answering calls. There were cases of people in real need waiting three hours, or reporting stolen vehicles and the police never turning up.



BREAKDOWN IN TRUST

On the other hand the police faced problems as well. The officer explained that car thefts are so out-of-hand that the police can do little except register them. He also pointed to the pitifully small numbers of police available for the estate and the bizarre numbering system which makes it almost impossible to find the flat you've been called to. On the other hand black tenants were only too well aware of the selective nature of these statements. They pointed to the wasteful, alienating and short-term tactics that the police have used in Lambeth; sometimes concentrating large numbers of personnel, cars, vans and the SPG on sorties into estates with a large number of black residents. Then doing nothing for months. This concentrating on panda cars etc. leaves only one home beat officer for a large estate such as Angell Town to restore an increasing break-down in trust. An impossible job for which the police officer is probably poorly trained.

On this estate, as on many others, law and order probably comes top of many tenants' agenda. Break-ins are rife, and people are often trapped in their own homes, afraid that a short walk round to see friends may end in violence. Another effect of the security problem is that every second flat has a dog to guard it. The result is that the estate is stiff with dog shit, which chokes up the drains, and that in turn causes the walkway bridges to flood two feet deep. These bridges are the only way in and out of the estate, so everyone has to slosh through water to get to and from their homes.

Then there's the garages, built underneath the flats where no one can see them – which means that they get broken into so often that no one can leave their cars in them any more. The empty garages become homes for thieves, stolen goods, stolen cars, and cars being set on fire. Then there's the unemployed kids hanging round in the middle of the squares making a row till late at night.

LACK OF REPAIRS

The second priority for many tenants is probably the lack of repairs and services. One man had watched the council repair and re-repair his central heating for three years, and each time the workmen came along they made another botched up job.



Others had waited several months for basic repairs. The estate has been designed with a shared heating system which is pitifully inadequate, and which used to, in the past, frequenly break down, freezing everyone. Four and five bedroom flats have been allocated one radiator in the kitchen, of all places, and only two others to heat the entire house. Tenants often find ice on the insides of their windows and have to resort to oil or electric supplementary fires.

All of which costs. So a typical tenant might have to pay in winter £200 a quarter for a central heating system that provides background heat only, £100 extra for their own fires, and rent plus rates of £500 a quarter. No wonder the ward where the estate is nearly went SDP in the borough elections.

Other estates in Lambeth seem each to have their own particular problem. One has damp everywhere, another has asbestos built into all the balconies, in another the front doors are all hidden from each other which makes unseen break-ins easy.

What seems to count most to the tenants is the poor quality of life they have to suffer. Lack of security and repairs and bureaucratic bungling makes them even more hostile to the council than escalating rent, rate and heating charges. That may be partly because so many people on estates like this are unemployed and they get some of these charges on the giro, but it's also because people have pride in where they live.

REMOTE

No cuts is an important demand in maintaining some quality of life on estates, since cuts mean rubbish uncollected, windows and doors left broken, more empty and decaying properties and allocations or transfer held up. But these problems have existed a good deal longer than the cuts. The repairs system has been remote, inefficient and bureaucratic. One consistent vote loser is: "I saw these council workers come round and botch up the job so what am I paying rates/rent for?" It reinforces a general distrust in public services. Only a huge investment in council housing can halt the decline and an even bigger investment is needed if decentralisation is not to make things worse. Under the present squeeze that may mean that housing budgets have to wring a few pennies out of other areas in council work. There is also a genuine problem of racialism on some estates and cuts budgets often eliminate the racial monitoring that should be going on to stop black people being categorised as 'social problems' and given the worst accommodation.

Rent arrears is another area which comes under pressure when cuts are proposed with media campaigns to introduce distraint. In Wandsworth distraint simply meant evictions into more costly bed and breakfast because people couldn't pay, in Lambeth arrears were partly due to officer inefficiency in not sending out reminders, but once that was cleared up the vast majority of defaulters were elderly, unemployed or single parents. One successful experiment in Lambeth has been the introduction of 'debt counselling' on some estates.

LEARNING TO LISTEN

But more than that we have to learn to listen to the tenants themselves, and understand that law and order and the quality of life are vital to them. That our grand plans are meaningless unless they are understood, and that in the meantime we may have to resort to some short term and 'cosmetic' projects to restore trust. There is no doubt that large scale housing has been a political failure, which stems from years of skimping in a mixed housing economy which bleeds resources towards the private sector. It will take years to undo that failure and improve our support, and failure is likely to lead to total electoral disillusionment.

Les Tate
Lambeth Central CLP

Stonebridge Estate:

POWER BASE

Despite being only six years old, the Stonebridge estate has the same symptoms of decay as the worst housing in Tower Hamlets or Hackney, Peckham or Lewisham. As one of five 'left-wing' Labour councillors representing the estate, the depth and complexity of the problems facing the estate seem almost insoluable. Yet like many areas of the country the tenant vote is the base of many Labour victories (over 70% of Stonebridge residents vote Labour).

The problem of council estates, therefore, are a neglected but central part of any strategy for socialism in London. It is worth noting that several council estates in more isolated parts of London actually returned Tory councillors in May 1982. The problems of unemployment (over 20% on Stonebridge), poverty, lack of social service and child-care facilities and crime are therefore critically important not just as social problems but as political and strategic questions for the labour movement.

CHOICES

The choices at Brent Council level are stark: *either* demolish Stonebridge (and with it a similar problem estate in Wembley) *or* provide a massive injection of social, educational and training facilities. The scale of the latter programme will require massive central funding and thus precludes a future for Stonebridge under a Tory government. The option of demolishing Stonebridge is barely viable given Brent's 11,000 families on the waiting list and the 500 families currently lodged in 'bed and breakfast' hotels. The progressive effects of housing cuts and government limitations on Brent means a decision to demolish would plunge hundreds of families further into despair. In the foreseeable future therefore Stonebridge and similar estates across London are here to stay.

The Tories have a clear strategy for such estates – which no Labour authorities have successfully resisted. By forcing up rents, starving housing of funds, selling off the best council properties the Tories have the aim of creating slums of despair and crime where no political or community organisation can flourish. The options of Labour councils in resisting this strategy are limited – although the consequences of going into opposition are brought sharply into relief. Within the next few years unless the necessary organisations are built on the estates, outbreaks of rioting and crushing of the estates by the state seem inevitable.

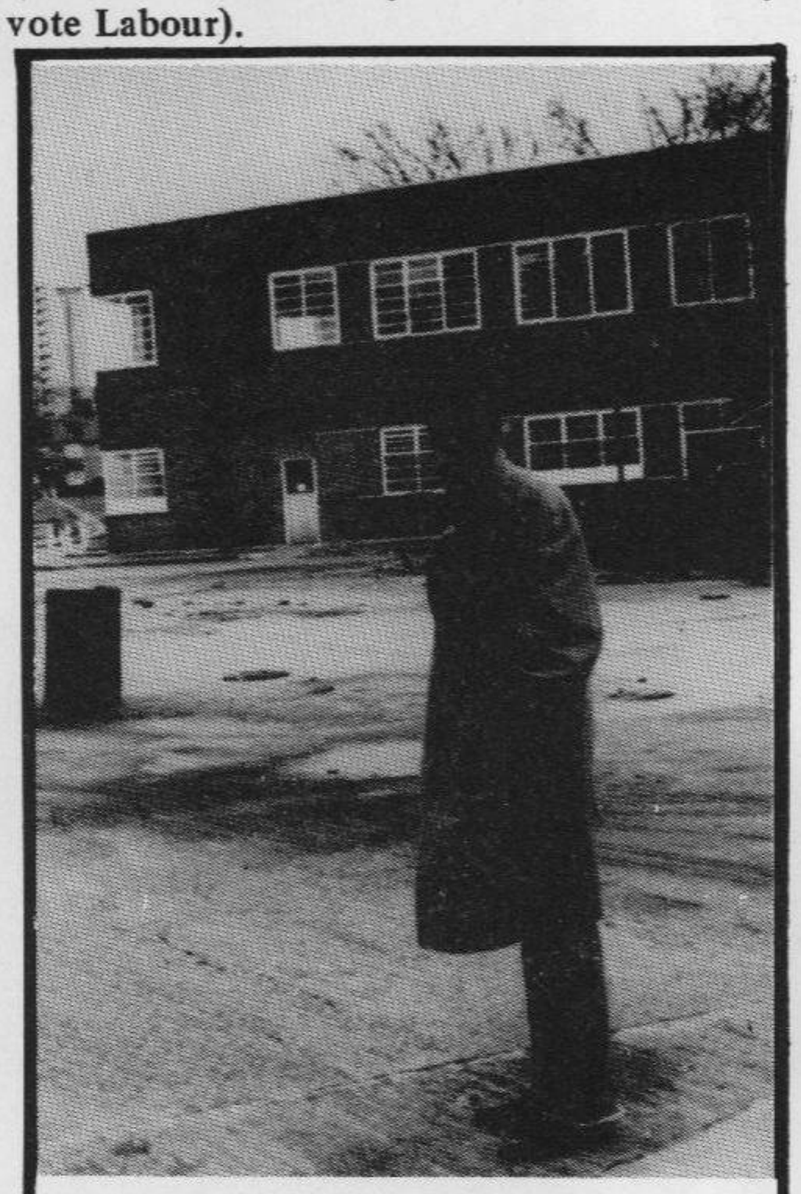
In summer 1981, with rioting in Brixton, Toxteth and elsewhere, Briefing declared that 'next time the riots must be better organised'. This rather begged the question of how and by whom? Clearly organised opposition will only succeed where a high degree of community and political activity is already established. It is the achievement of this aim that I wish to examine.

H.P.C.C.

In 1981, an autonomous black youth organisation, the Harlesden People's Community Council (H.P.C.C.) fought for and achieved the purchase of a disused London Transport garage at Stonebridge. With funding from the GLC, Brent and the EEC, the garage was purchased and is being converted at a cost of £4m. Although this will only be a small step towards the solving of the estate's problems – it is a symbol for what could be achieved on Stonebridge.

The lessons of the H.P.C.C. are initially important for the semi-dormant tenants associations on Stonebridge. In order to build confidence on the estates, councils like Brent must devolve more decision-making back to the tenants. Issues like security, design, rent levels, social provision are almost invariably made clearer by local organisations than by councillors and officers – many of whom are remote from the estates. The priority which Labour councils must give to a democratic decentralised management system is apparent.

One of the key problems of everyday life on Stonebridge is that of fear. Crime is a daily occurrence on the estate and for vulnerable groups like women and their children (a majority of the estate) and the Asian community, the inability to leave home after mid-afternoon is a block on all but the most minimal social activity. Recently the Stonebridge Asian Group demanded that the council improve lighting, replace broken lifts and employ security officers. Clearly the issue of 'law and order' is one that cannot be ignored by the left. Indeed the right to move freely around a council housing estate is a basic working-class right. Whilst Police Committees are being formed by many authorities the usefulness of monitoring and improving the Metropolitan Police performance



Leonard Johnson, founder member H.P.C.C. and Stonebridge Garage Steering Group.

"The Bus Garage project is being run by the community for the community. We do not want it taken over by the council or anyone else. It is not just a black facility – the workshops, training schemes and nursery are one step along the way for real social facilities for Stonebridge."



Irene Greatorex, Crescent Tenants Association

"The main problem on the estate is too high a concentration of people with problems. It's almost as if they no longer care if Stonebridge is a happy environment. Despite this all the people mix happily – there's very little racial tension. The amount of co-operation is fantastic. Few people complain about the inside of the flats, in fact they are very good. It's the environment that sours it. Few people dare go out at night – this is why the estate is unpopular with young and old alike."

OR PRISON ?

seems limited. The funding of community-appointed security patrols seems a more productive way of meeting the threat of burglary and assault which stalks many council estates.

LOCAL CONTROL

In short, a massive spending programme on estates is a legitimate target for Labour authorities – although it is important to protect tenants from the impact of high rates. However this spending needs to be directed away from the bureaucratic management schemes which many authorities are saddled with and into community nurseries, adult education, training schemes, security patrols etc. controlled by local organisations. The role of Labour parties in helping to build campaigns and groups to defend and improve the estates ought to be crucial. Too often council estates have a very low Labour party membership.

Positive discrimination in favour of ethnic groups is a basic policy of many Labour councils – yet the breaking down of white dominated housing, educational, community and social work professionals is a slow process. Only when council employees, Labour parties and councillors actually represent the estates, will real progress towards a politicised and strong community be achieved.

Graham Durham
Stonebridge Labour councillor





FACTS ON STONEBRIDGE

Stonebridge is a mixed high and low rise estate built in 1976. It is a mile from Harlesden in a working-class area of Brent. Over 6,000 people live on Stonebridge – the vast majority in council flats in the tower blocks. By far the largest ethnic group is West Indian but there are many other ethnic groups on the estate, notably a large Indian population.

Since 1976 50% of the original tenants have moved away from Stonebridge. 32% of existing tenants are currently seeking a transfer – more than twice the average for Brent.

THE YOUNG IN STONEBRIDGE

One third of all Stonebridge inhabitants are under 18 – a very high proportion.

22% of all households are one-parent – 7 times the national average.

Only 30% of applicants receive nursery places due to acute shortage.

90% of all under-5s live in the high-rise blocks, 75% of them above ground level.

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue of Streetlife we are intending to explore the division that exists between home/family life and politics. In particular we would welcome articles from councillors and other 'activists' (or their relatives and friends) on their experiences of the effect that political committment has on their personal home lives.

Any articles on this or any other relevant issue should be sent to Jane Stockton 110 Agar Grove, NW1 by Saturday 5th February.

Review: Delphy, 'The Main Enemy'

THE PRIMACY OF

For decades, the central ideological-political debate over which the revolutionary left in Britain has divided has been the debate over the question of the Labour Party. But there has also been a division along a different axis, which has equally divided the revolutionary movement into two camps. This division has been, perhaps, a deeper one than any difference on the Labour Party could be. It has been a difference *beyond* ideology and politics – a dispute over the ultimate legitimacy of ideology and politics as such.

In this context, the 'old' camp has been the camp of the Marxist democratic-centralist organisations, most of them claiming to work within the traditions established by Lenin and Trotsky in the Russian October Revolution. The 'new' camp is in one sense just as old, for it has been the camp of libertarianism and anarchism, with a long tradition of its own. If this camp seems new, strong and viable in the revolutionary movement today, it is because of something genuinely new in the politics of the advanced industrialised countries in the West – the rise of the women's liberation movement within the last ten or fifteen years. This women's movement has had a peculiar power of its own, quite outside any specific organisation, and it has appeared to pose perhaps the only seriously worrying threat of an internal, ideological kind which the more orthodox Marxist groups have ever felt compelled to face. As Christine Delphy has written of the 'problem of women':

> "*Because of pressure from the autonomous women's movement, the far left organisations are resigned to taking the problem into consideration. They are advancing, but uncomfortably, because forced to, and backwards . . .*"

The women's movement has appeared to challenge the ideological authority of the predominantly-male Marxist groups in a creeping, insidious, exasperating way, like a kind of corrosive atmosphere or acid eating away at their commitment and discipline from within and without at the same time. A discussion concerning their personal lives, their sex-lives or the way they treat 'their women' is the last thing men in such groups want to open up. Yet it is by insisting on raising *these* matters that the women's movement has most surely proven a force.

The Marxist groups have counter-attacked by describing the 'politics of the personal' as a 'diversion', an 'indulgence', a 'retreat from the political struggle' and so on. And generally, the *practical* attempts of women to change their personal lives, family lives and sex-lives are perceived as attempts to find 'short-cuts' at the expense of 'politics' – 'politics' meaning the class-struggle and the struggle for Marxist theory and ideology, without which (it is said) the struggle for women's liberation cannot be won. Yet the paradox is that the threat posed by the women's movement to 'Marxist ideology' is actually the threat posed by women's own discovery of the material basis of ideologies and ideas. The women's movement may be a multitude of conflicting tendencies and strands, but if there is one thing on which all strands are agreed it is that they do not *believe in* male consciousness or ideology. As true materialists, at least where the politics of the personal is concerned, women have been insisting that men's 'ideas' are really beside the point. They have been discovering that the whole of sexist ideology is no more than so many ways by which men justify, express and attempt to conceal their *material* dominance, their *physical* intimidation of, ownership of and control over women. The *material* dominance comes first. The 'ideas' which result are merely the forms through which men become aware of their real power.

In relation to this discovery, to give the paradox a further twist, it has been the *radical* feminists (the 'bourgeois feminists') who have been most clear-headed and firm. While the 'socialist feminists' have insisted on the 'primacy of ideology' and on the concept (derived, it seems, largely from Wilhelm Reich) of 'ideology as a material force', the radical feminists have poured scorn on all this and hit men where it hurts. Christine Delphy – author of 'The Main Enemy' – has led the way in this respect. Like Marx and Engels in 'The German Ideology', Delphy has set about exposing the myth of 'ideological power' as such.

In a furious attack on Annie Leclerc's 'Parole de Femme', which had seen the source of women's oppression in women's own 'devaluation' of themselves, she writes:

> "*The reversal of causality – the belief that the ideological superstructure (the devaluation of women) is the cause and not the effect of the social structure – is not one idealist interpretation among others: it is the very ideology itself.*"

Leclerc had complained that men do not value housework, and that women accept this estimation. Delphy comments:

> "*How does she deal with this? She replies that men 'are mistaken', that housework has a value. She argues from the same ground as that which allows men to assert, equally peremptorily, that it does not.*"

Leclerc tries to overthrow one set of ideas – that 'housework has no value' – by counter-posing to this another set of ideas – that 'housework is really valuable'. She does this without realising that it is not the subjective evaluation, but the objective social character of the housework in question which has got to be changed.

Or again, Leclerc complains that women don't experience their menstrual periods as a source of pleasure and strength. Women submit to men's 'devaluation' – on the ideological level – of menstruation. Her answer? Women should change their attitudes – they should raise their consciousness and relate to menstruation in a different way. Delphy replies:

> "*It is not just a question of* my attitude *to my periods. The attitudes of others, their requests, their expectations, their demands are for me as concrete, as tangible as a chair. The social period is a material framework of conduct for the individual. We must hide our periods: that is not an idea of my own invention, but a constraint imposed on me which is quite outside of (and material for) me. As Leclerc herself says, people compel me to behave 'as on other days'. But this is materially difficult, whatever my 'values' may be . . . everything is materially understood and made for a population* without *periods . . . how can women change their* attitude *whilst having a period remains the same* concrete experience?"

And so on.

Society, insists Delphy, has made housework *actually* unrewarding, just as it has made menstruation *actually* a handicap. It's no good urging women to 'change their attitudes' towards such things. That would be to imply that *women's attitudes* were the problem – a suggestion with which men would be only too happy to agree. Nor is anything to be gained by arguing against men, pointing out to them their 'mistakes' or urging upon them a change of heart. Feminists who try to battle against male ideology by resorting to some other ideology are doomed from the start:

> "*Ideology cannot be used against itself, and in this sense the term 'counter-ideology' is false because a true counter-ideology would be an analysis which unmasked ideology for what it is: ideology.*"

Leclerc, writes Delphy, 'takes the pretext (the thing *in the name of which* men oppress women, the reasons *they* give) for the cause of (the real reason for) the oppression . . . .' Because men say that housework has no value, Leclerc thinks that this *statement* lies at the root of the oppression of women in the house, and that therefore the *statement* is the thing to be attacked. In reality, of course, the statement will remain impregnable as long as men are permitted to *own* what women do in the privacy of the home. The same applies to menstruation. As long as women's bodies belong to men, menstruation will be felt not as a source of strength but as a source of weakness and pain. There is no way of fighting the 'idea' of this weakness except by *materially* becoming strong. Women must emancipate their *bodies* from the sexual and other constraints imposed on them by men if their *minds* are to know what liberation can mean.

The prevailing 'Marxist' (and 'socialist feminist') position reflects, according to Delphy, '. . . a desperate desire *to continue to exempt men from responsibility* for the oppression of women.' Don't blame men for sexism or women's oppression, we are told. Blame . . . 'bourgeois ideology'. Writing of Leclerc, Delphy says that she

> ". . . *totally isolates the ideological level. She considers it the most important level, independent of other levels, and the* only *field of battle.*"

Likewise, the position of most 'Marxists' is that ideology is itself a material force. The capitalist class produces 'bourgeois ideology' in order, very cleverly, to get women to oppress themselves. The 'ideology of the family', the 'ideology of motherhood', the 'ideology of patriarchy' – these and similar expressions of ideological power are (so the argument runs) generated by the mass media and reproduced by women themselves through the family, the result being that women are brought up actively to *want* their own oppression. Women actively *want* 'an ideal marriage', 'true love', the 'joys of motherhood' etc., etc. – and in this way become the principal agents of their own

PRACTICE

Chris Knight

oppression. The capitalist class does all this (goes the argument) for obvious political and economic reasons – in order to maximise the exploitation of women's domestic labour in the home, in order to atomise the working class in isolated family units, in order to use the authority of the father in the home as the starting-point from which authority in school and workplace can be developed – and so forth. At root, the capitalists' purpose is to maintain the oppression of the male and female working class.

From this analysis stems the conclusion that the *ultimate* obstacle to women's emancipation is capitalism, while the *immediate* obstacle is . . . 'bourgeois ideology'. The *immediate* task is, therefore, to propagate a counter-ideology. This means, concretely, *explaining* to women that their real interests lie with the working class movement and *explaining* to men that they are acting against their class-interests as workers if they oppress the opposite sex. If only men and women could 'see' that they were oppressing themselves through their acceptance of bourgeois ideology, the power of this ideology would be undermined!

Delphy says the opposite. Her argument is simple and direct. In terms of the *immediate* struggle against women's *specific* oppression, what is 'the main enemy'? Is it 'bourgeois ideology'? Is it 'patriarchal ideas'? No, says Delphy. It is *men*. Break the dominance of men over women's bodies, and the power of men's 'ideas' will be shown to be no power at all. Are women to blame for causing their own oppression? Are they oppressing themselves because of their 'ideas'? No, says Delphy. It is not women who are the oppressors of women – it is *men. Men* have the *material* power – which is given them no matter what their ideology – to dominate, weaken and isolate women from each other. It is *men* who keep women weak. Admittedly, men are given this power by the structure of the wider social system, but this does not alter the basic facts. Men are in a real sense a 'class': Delphy says: ". . . men are the class which oppresses and exploits women."[1]

Like any ruling class, men endeavour to ensure that those they oppress remain isolated and weak. To the extent that they *are* in fact weak, women *feel* weak. These feelings are not 'mistaken' but perfectly correct. Those who are genuinely weak must have the ideas which correspond to this weakness. Other ideas would be simply inappropriate. The ideas of oppressed women, consequently, must be *the ideas of their weakness*. Women who are deprived of practical support-structures, practical sisterhood, practical strength will feel the *need* to get married, the *need* to seek protection from dominant men, the *need* to compete against each other sexually and in other ways for the favours of men. And for as long as women remain actually weak, no 'counter-ideology' on earth will make them feel strong. Weak, isolated women won't feel the need for 'women's liberationist' ideas, which will seem, perhaps, quite laughably inappropriate to their real situation. They will feel the need for other ideas – ideas, perhaps, about a 'perfect romance', 'an ideal husband', 'a new home', 'another baby' or whatever. And, in a real sense, these women will be right. As long as they remain isolated and powerless, such ideas will be the ones required by their situation. Isolated, dependent women need such consolations, compensations and dreams.

Delphy and the radical feminists therefore pose a real threat. Instead of fighting ideas with other ideas, as do most of the "Marxist" propaganda groups, they have given up just arguing with men. They are saying that if men's consciousness is to be changed (as it must be), men must be *confronted* with certain *material* obstacles to their ability to dominate and control. Only to the extent that women apply a *material* force – simply refusing to be available domestically or sexually in the way dominant males require – can women gain an awareness of their real strength as women, and undermine the material foundations on which sexist ideologies arise. These feminists, in other words, are saying on behalf of the revolutionary sex in society what Marx said on behalf of the revolutionary class:

> *"Ideas never lead beyond the established situation, they only lead beyond the ideas of the established situation. Ideas can accomplish absolutely nothing. To become real, ideas require men who apply a practical force."*[2]

Substitute "women" in place of "men" and the identity is complete.

Unlike the believers in a "struggle for ideology", therefore, Delphy and her allies believe in the *struggle for power*. This is a Leninist position. The same women also believe – as did the author of *State and Revolution* – in seizing state power in order to destroy 'politics' as such. Writing of the emancipation of women, Delphy argues:

> *". . . this liberation necessitates the total overthrow of the bases of all known societies. This overthrow cannot take place without a revolution, that is, the seizure of political power over ourselves presently held by others. This seizure of power should constitute the ultimate objective of the Women's Liberation Movement, and the movement should prepare for a revolutionary struggle."*

Delphy and her supporters have concluded, in other words (as all of us must have concluded when we first became revolutionaries): "If the power is to be taken, *we* will have to take it!" No-one else will do it for us. This realisation is the starting-point of every revolutionary movement.

And Delphy and her sisters have also rediscovered another essential component of the Marxist tradition – that starting the revolution *now* involves our beginning *already* to abolish politics as such, by replacing (among ourselves) political relationships with relations of a different kind. Marx wrote:

> *"Revolution in general – the overthrow of the existing power and dissolution of previous relationships – is a political act. Socialism cannot be realised without a revolution. But when its organising activity begins, when its peculiar aims, its soul comes forward, then socialism casts aside its political cloak."*[3]

"But what about capitalism?", the 'Marxist' and other propaganda-groups have never tired of protesting. "Isn't *capitalism* the main enemy?" "And what does Delphy mean by the 'seizure of power'? Does she mean the seizure of power from all men?"

Delphy, in actual fact, considers herself a Marxist. She rejects indignantly the description of her as 'bourgeois'. Her argument is not that capitalism needn't be fought. On the contrary, it is that women can begin the *real* fight *now*. Obviously, working women can fight their employers – to the extent that their husbands allow them to. But the power holding back women from even beginning this fight is the enemy at home. Women who are exploited (as almost all are) *in the home* are up against their husbands as 'the main enemy' as far as that level of oppression is concerned. And this level is the level of the oppression of women as such – the *specific* oppression of women. True, women – as the oppressed of the oppressed – must bear the weight not only of their husbands exploiting them but also that of their employers exploiting them and/or their husbands. But this doesn't mean that the husbands are not exploiters, or that women can expect their 'socialist' husbands to join them on the basis of an 'appeal'. The point is that men have a choice. They can weigh up the *disadvantages* of being exploited by their employers as against the *advantages* of being able to exploit their wives. If they fight consistently against capitalism, they will risk losing control over their wives. But if they insist on keeping control over their wives, they risk losing the fight against capitalism. For Delphy, the crucial question is therefore this: how *serious* are *men* when they say they are engaged in the struggle against the capitalist system as a whole? As she puts it:

> *"It's up to them to see if the alliance with women against capitalism is worth the high cost of abandoning the benefits of patriarchy, or whether they prefer to keep those benefits and to risk not being able to overthrow capitalism by themselves."*

It is certainly in men's economic interests as *workers* to ally themselves with the women's movement. But men are not only workers. They are also beings with sexual, emotional and other interests and insecurities, and – to the extent that they feel insecure – they feel an extremely powerful need to 'keep' their wives or sexual partners to themselves and under their ultimate control. The prevailing system gives men an obvious means of ensuring that their sexual and other needs are met. The question is whether they can be made to see that there is another way.

Note:

This is a slightly revised version of an article first written in 1980. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations are from: Christine Delphy, "Debate on Capitalism, Patriarchy and the Women's Struggle", in: Delphy, *The Main Enemy: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*. Women's Research and Resources Centre Publications, London, 1977.

Other references:

1. Delphy, C. "A Materialist Feminism is Possible". *Feminist Review* 1980, *4*.
2. Marx, K. and F. Engels, *The Holy Family*, Moscow 1956, p. 160.
3. Marx, K. "The King of Prussia and Social Reform". In D. McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx Early Texts*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1972, p. 221.

The right to say no

by ANN BLISS

Most rape takes place in the home, that is, in the place where we live. The rapist often helps to pay the rent, that is, if he is the co-habitee or the legal husband of the woman. In a recent survey of over 2,000 women, carried out by Women Against Rape 80% of women of all ages, race and class thought that rape within marriage ought to be made a criminal offence. There has been an increasing awareness by women over the years about the right to control our own fertility and our own bodies. At the moment, this does not extend to the right to say "No" to sex within marriage. The marriage contract enshrines the man's right to sex. On marriage we give up our right to say no, once and for all. We can say no in theory, but usually we have to make up an excuse like feeling tired or not feeling very well. The responsibility for saying no rests with each of us individually, and if we say no too often, we are accused of being cold or frigid or unloving. When you feel sexually exploited in this way, it is impossible to always feel like sex. We need the right to say no – in a sense the right to strike, just as workers do when they feel exploited by the bosses.

Against Our Will

In her book called Against Our Will, Susan Brownmiller writes "Men, women and rape . . . a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear." This may seem a very generalised and damning statement against men, but however, unconsciously men are aware of it, they do have the whole structure of the system backing them up, in court, in law, in church and until this is changed, Susan Brownmiller's charge is true. However, this would mean a fundamental challenge to the patriarchal and sexist state. When someone as moderate as Thomas Hardy wrote his book Jude the Obscure in 1896 he had all of the church establishment against him because a large part of the theme of Hardy's book was a statement about marriage and the forms of legalised rape that takes place within it.

Changing the law on rape will begin to formalise and conceptualise the right of women, as a class, to have the right to say no.

The issue of rape within marriage has been widely discussed amongst women in the women's movement and some of us have raised it within our women's sections and GMCs. Over 80 women's sections throughout Britain support this campaign as well as MPs like Jo Richardson, Tony Benn, Joan Lestor and Michael Foot and Joan Maynard.

Resolution

At the London Regional Labour Party conference East Lewisham will propose the following resolution.

"This annual meeting requests that the next Labour Party manifesto includes a demand that the offence of rape be extended to enable a prosecution for rape to be brought in all cases where a man has sexual intercourse with his wife without her consent. Further, we call upon the Labour Party to support the campaign to redefine the crime of rape to take in all forms of violent sexual assault against women."

We would like to see this resolution on the agenda at Annual Conference to begin to raise the question of sexual oppression which the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights attempted to do for last year's conference. The right to say no to sex within marriage is fundamental to controlling our own bodies and fertility. Otherwise it will continue to be true that in many households it is "The rapist who pays the rent".

'Streetlife' letters

Dear comrade,
Having just read Briefing for the first time (November issue) I have a few comments to make about it. Firstly, why does Briefing think that 'being a good socialist' automatically gives anyone the right to join the Labour Party. I would think that if a person is a follower of Trotsky then I cannot see how they can join the Labour Party. Secondly, Briefing attacks the gutter press, and yet, after reading some of the letters and articles in Briefing, can anyone be surprised that the Sun and the News of the World have such a field day with media fodder such as the urging of transvestite men to wear dresses at work, or that many CLPs' secretaries are gay. My only concern in the Labour Party is to help get Bryan Gould elected MP for Dagenham, and to promote Labour Party policy, and I would not write or say anything to damage the Labour Party or Bryan Gould. And I think trying to get across to the public that there are alternatives to nuclear weapons, unemployment and bad housing, is far more important than promoting gay rights or the teachings of Trotsky.
Yours fraternally,
Dave Cooper EC member of Dagenham CLP

Dear Briefing,
At a recent discussion by the London Labour Briefing Group on personal politics, complaints were made by some of the women present that Briefing meetings, like most others in the Labour Party, were dominated by men and that this constituted an injustice to women. Allegations have often been made that the formality of party meetings is intimidating for women and should be changed, but when pressed for suggested improvements the complainants will put forward such ideas as sitting in a circle, devoting more time to 'women's issues' and less formality. Would these modest proposals help women? It seems most unlikely. Seating arrangements are usually dictated by the size and shape of the venue and informality only helps the domineering and garrulous.

The real enemy is not the ritual, the chairperson or the other comrades, but fear – fear of failure and fear of looking and feeling a fool, but such feelings are not confined to women. Almost every man I know has confessed to similar nervousness on first rising to his feet to speak at a meeting.

The obvious way out of the difficulty, at first on those subjects with which one is thoroughly familiar. Few are so dull as not to blossom into eloquence on a favourite topic and such has proved to be the case with women in politics.

Unfortunately politics cannot be exclusively concerned with 'women's issues'. More time can and must be devoted to these matters, but equally, much time must be spent on problems which are impersonal and asexual. An international banking crisis is not sexist and it can be solved only by the application of reason. Women, or rather more women, should learn to understand the impersonal disciplines of economics, finance, science and mathematics. Instead the reverse seems to be happening. In the entirely laudable determination to get issues of importance to women on the agenda, women have concentrated too much on particular 'women's issues', thereby reinforcing the system in which women in politics are traditionally assigned to such areas as health and education, never defence, foreign affairs or the exchequer. At the moment women seem obsessed by the politics of the bedroom and the nursery. Endlessly they discuss nursery schools, childcare, the problems of working mothers and the shortcomings of men. All are important, but when the conversation turns to the desirability or otherwise of abandoning floating exchange rates for a system of fixed parities, only male voices are heard, with the unfortunate exception, of course, of Mrs Thatcher.

While women persist in concentrating on their vaginas and the baby's dirty nappies, men will be justified in shunting them off into women's meetings, where women can talk to other women about 'women's issues', but real power will be exercised elsewhere – by men!

P. Watson Westminster S CLP

Editor: Replies please!!!

BECOME A 'BRIEFING' SUPPORTER'

Both in an effort to raise desperately needed funds, and also to provide the *Briefing* network with a tighter structure, we are now introducing Briefing Supporters Cards. These will entitle 'Supporters' to vote at both our Editorial and monthly Briefing Meetings, and to go on Jeremy Corbyn's mailing list (a monthly mailing with details of our activities).

The cost will be £10 per year for waged comrades, and £2.50 for unwaged. Those who already pay at least this amount by Standing Order will automatically receive a Card.

Help us become more organised and better financed. Make cheques payable to 'London Labour Briefing' and send to Jim Ring: 55 Stonard Road, London N.13.

The next issue of Briefing will be out on February 18th. Deadline for articles: February 7th.

The next Editorial Meeting will be at 7pm on Tuesday 25th January at County Hall. This meeting we will prepare the 'Briefing' slate for the London Regional Executive. The meeting is open, but only 'Briefing Supporters' will be entitled to vote.

Next monthly Briefing meeting MONDAY FEBRUARY 21st, 7.30pm, County Hall.

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