LONDON LABOUR 10p

BRIEFING

No 5 SEPTEMBER 1980

G.L.C. Asset-stripping:

TORY VANDALS!

THE DEGREE OF DESPERATION reached by Tory GLC Leader, Horace Cutler, has now become clear. To prevent us implementing the Labour socialist policy for the GLC, he is telling GLC officials to speed up the sale of £1,000 million worth of publicly-owned property between now and May 7th, 1980.

JEREMY CORBYN
Regional EC Member
and Chairman of the
Planning Cmttee, Haringey

The property is in 1,100 different sites throughout London and promises the Tory property-speculators their biggest bonanza since the Heath boom of 1973.

Sites for sale are in every borough, the major ones being most of Charing Cross Road, The Strand, The Aldwych, Kingsway, Shaftsbury Avenue, Upper Street (Islington) , Mare Street (Hackney), Tooting High Street (Wandsworth) and Notting Hill Gate.

Every borough will be affected by this latest trick by Thatcherite Tories to redistribute wealth to the true heroes of monetariam—the property-speculators.

If Cutler succeeds in this plan he will have decapitated the Housing, Planning and Industry programmes that the whole of the London Labour Movement are about to agree on.

So far, the reaction of the Labour Group at County Hall has consisted of (a) a predictable statement from Deputy Leader Illtyd Harrington in which he pledges that the Labour Group will oppose the sales at County Hall, and (b) appeals to citizens to exercise their right to go to the District Auditor "to ensure that public funds are not wasted".

The Tories will not be defeated by these manoeuverings!

Their efforts to transfer GLC housing over to the boroughs have been partly successful because of the refusal of some Labour boroughs to act in a unified way to fight back. Had all Labour boroughs stuck to the decisions of the special London Labour Party Conference and *refused* to accept transfers in the way that Lambeth, Lewisham, Hackney, Brent, Camden and Haringey did, Cutler's nose would have been severely bloodied.

If we are serious about defeating the Tories on this issue, the full resources of the London Labour Movement must be mobilised to act *in unity:*

EVERY BOROUGH must identify which GLC property is on sale, give local publicity to the pocket-lining motives of the Tories and place a compulsory purchasr order on each property to delay the sale.

EVERY BOROUGH must oppose any planning applications that are made by prospective purchasers of the property or sites.

EVERY LOCAL PARTY must campaign on this crucial issue by physically identifying each threatened building or site; and point out to people that there can be no ending of the housing crisis unless land and assets are publicly owned. The Tory plans will make the present desperate situation critical for thousands of homeless and jobless people.

THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE must act now to ensure that opposition is effective and coordinated. The Party should not shirk from requesting public sector trade unionists to 'black' all work which will assist the sale of these vital public assets.

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The sites that the Tories plan to sell are either 'prime sites' where the speculators would make hay, on prices artifically lowered by the sudden increase in 'supply', or in the poorest areas of London such as Hackney where a Labour GLC must do much new house building and renovation.

The test of the resolve of the Labour Party is as much in opposition as in power—fight back **now** to win in May.

NEC : ELECT TED KNIGHT !

FOR MANY YEARS NOW the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party has been totally dominated by two groups: full-time union bureaucrats and MPs. In particular, the constituency section has been the private preserve of the parliamentarians. Despite the swing to the left in recent years, this basically elitist concept has not been seriously challenged. In particular, the growth of a socialist current amongst Labour local councillors has not been represented.

This year, **LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING** has decided to challenge this. We are supporting the candidature of Ted Knight for the constituency section of the NEC, and urge all our readers and supporters to do the same. Ted is well-known to most activists in London as the leader of Lambeth Council and a prominent member of the London Labour Party Executive. He is also, however, a campaigner for accountability and fought the expulsions from the Labour Party in the fifties and sixties, explusions which included Ted amongst their victims.

The election of a socialist whose main activities have been fighting witchhunts and cuts in local government jobs and services can only strengthen the left on the NEC and help the fight for local democracy. However, it's not sufficient to simply agree with the idea that Ted Knight's candidature should be supported. If this challenge is to succeed, this is what you can concretely do:

1. **If your party is to hold a mandating meeting**—propose that you mandate your delegate to vote for Ted Knight—using the arguments about supporting a non-MP as listed above—and ensure your delegate keeps her or his mandate. An argument may be advanced in some left-wing parties that we should support the existing NEC against its critics. It can be argued however that a vacancy on any left ticket exists due to the presence of Joan Lestor, whose voting record and chairing of conference is such that she cannot really be supported this year. If you can get your Party to support Ted Knight, see this is recorded in the minutes.

2. **If your party does not hold mandating meetings or has opted to give your delegate a free hand**—try firstly to get your delegate mandated anyway. If this fails or you deem it to be unrealistic to do this, speak to your delegate personally and urge her or him to vote for Ted. Also, send them a note before they go to Blackpool reminding them of it. Also, if you are going to Blackpool, or anyone else from your CLP, see your delegate up there again and lobby them about voting.

Last year, with no real campaign and a last-ditch lobbying, Ted Knight polled 40,000 plus. This year we can greatly increase this figure and elect the first non-MP for the constituency section since Harold Laski in the late 1940s. However we can only do this with your help. A very large vote for Ted Knight will be interpreted as a vote to support Lambeth Council's defiance of Heseltine, and will inevitably incense both the Tory media and the right wing of the Labour Party. It will also help to put over the idea that the ordinary party members are taking back control of our party. Blackpool will be one of the most vital conferences in the history of the Labour Party—vote for Ted Knight and help to break the MP domination of the NEC.

LAMBETH: OUT WITH THE S.P.G.!

THE SPECIAL Patrol Group are still in Lambeth. They should have left, according to police promises, on August 18th, after the group's 150 members completed a one-month tour of action in the borough.

But now they are to stay for an "indefinite period" in the area.

GRAHAM NORWOOD
Lambeth Norwood CLP

COUNCILLORS & ACCOUNTABILITY: ENSURE A DEBATE !

THE PAST YEAR has reinforced the need for formal accountability to be exerted by the Labour Party on their representatives who serve on local authorities. In Manchester and Bristol this year, a minority of Labour councillors opposing the decision to institute cuts found themselves being disciplined by their Labour Group, even though these councillors were following both national and local policy.

Following this and other instances of Labour Groups flouting Party policy, and given the recent upsurge in interest in the relationship between local Labour Parties and their councillors, the organisation sub-committee of the NEC brought forward constitutional amendments to give local Labour Parties much greater control over their councillors. Whilst these proposals have been referred back, meaning that Conference will not be able to vote on them, seven CLPs have submitted resolutions or amendments (on local government democracy) to this year's Labour Party Conference.

Normally, seven resolutions on one topic ensures a debate. However, the resolutions have been artifically divided up into two subject headings, that of electing the Leader to the Labour Group, and that of amendments to the Standing Orders of Labour Groups. This means—unless Standing Orders Committee can be convinced of the need to take the motions under a single heading—that Conference will be unable to express a view on a subject of growing importance.

Please ask your GMC to write a letter (1) to the Conference Standing Orders Committee and (2) to the NEC, complaining about this attempt to stifle debate.

NEIL NERVA
CLPD Executive

RANK & FILE MOBILISING CMTTEE

HARINGEY

Tuesday, 23rd September at 7.30pm

Haringey Trades Union Centre, 2a Brabant Road, Wood Green.

Chair: Jane Chapman (Cllr)

Speakers: **Joan Maynard, MP**
Tom Litterick
Jeremy Corbyn, Cllr
(NUPE Area Officer)
John Bloxam

BRIEFING suggests the following model resolution on Poland:

"This GMC salutes the determination of the Polish working class in asserting its basic rights, including the right to strike, and calls on the NEC to establish links with the independent trade union organisations so far formed, coupling this with the affirmation of Labour's defence *of the socialist gains of Poland against the threat posed by NATO and capitalism in the West."*

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ACCOUNTABILITY & OUR COUNCILLORS

KEN LIVINGSTONE GLC Member for Hackney

DURING THE SUMMER the NEC Organisation Sub-Committee decided to recommend to the Annual Conference that the policy-making body for Labour controlled councils should cease to be the Labour Group on each authority and instead each Local Government Committee (District Parties, outside London) should determine policies which would then be implemented by the local Labour council.

This proposal was immediately condemned by Rodgers, Owen and Williams in their now-infamous letter to the *Guardian* and all manner of local 'municipal statesmen' joined in with a chorus of "the end of civilisation and democracy as we know it".

The critics concentrated their fire on the lack of consultation with Labour Groups and CLPs on the change and it clearly was completely wrong on the part of the Organisation Sub-Committee to propose such fundamental changes without full debate within the Party beforehand.

The discussion at the Organisation Sub-Committee grew out of the Greater London Labour Party's Annual Meeting decision that in future the Annual Meeting should elect the Leader of the GLC Labour Group. Unfortunately this decision, which needs to be ratified by the NEC before it can come into operation, has now been caught up with the discussion on accountability and is unlikely to be brought into operation in time for the next Annual Meeting shortly before the GLC election. This means that the new GLC Labour Group will continue to elect its Leader. However the recent decision of the GLC Labour Group to change its Standing Orders so that the new group will also elect all committee chairs and vice-chairs instead of the old system where they were appointed by a "Leader Advisory Committee" will mean that the election of the Leader can be decided on a political basis and not as a result of vote-buying in exchange for the promise of a job in the new administration.

But having raised the issue of accountability of Labour councillors it will not go away. In view of the fact that Labour councils have a vital role in the implementation of socialist policies and thus how the public view and respond to the Labour Party it is surprising that the debate on accountability has overlooked councillors for so long.

A Labour council should be known and respected in its area both for the provision of its services and its defence of ordinary women and men from the attacks of this government.

But many local Parties and indeed local Labour councillors themselves are prevented from building this base by undemocratic, behind-the-scenes manoeuvring of council leaderships who work closely with chief officers in imposing policies which are dealt with in a purely administrative way as the following examples show.

1. If a Labour Group has decided not to freeze vacant posts the Council Leader can still quietly tell the officers to take their time in recruiting staff to fill vacancies. In some Labour boroughs, it is taking weeks for a job advert to appear and when people apply they are kept waiting a couple of months before being called for interview. If all posts suffer just a three-month delay that is equivalent, in financial terms, to freezing 25% of all vacant posts in any one year.

2. If the Labour Group initiate a new policy which involves setting up a new unit then the chair of the staff committee can ensure that the posts are offered at too low a salary grade and the group is told "no suitable applicants applied but we are going to readvertise." If the group suggests that the post needs to be at a higher grade then the answer is usually "These are the nationally agreed grades– if you regrade these posts NALGO will demand regrading for all other staff on similar grades and the council is heading for a financial deficit this year already."

3. Halfway through a financial year the council Treasurer will claim that there is massive overspending due to inflation and "departments must contain (cut-back) the provision of services to the level of the budget." By the end of the year it is discovered that the "containment" has led to a healthy balance which can be used to keep the rates down next year.

4. If a speculative office development comes up for planning permission the group is often told that if permission is refused then the developer will win on appeal to the DOE and the council sells out on another prime site in exchange for some minimal "community use". But as the rejection of the Coin Street office development shows no planning appeal is a foregone conclusion and yet the officers advice to councillors will reflect the wish of the council leadership to get the scheme through.

5. In one Labour dockland borough the Leader has instructed the Planning Department to process all office developments before the GLC elections so that the Tory GLC will give the go-ahead for a whole series of schemes which are contrary to the planning priorities of the Greater London Labour Party. As the instruction is verbal nothing is reported to committee. The Chief Officer just reorganises the work priorities within the Planning Department.

6. If the Labour Group is likely to vote against a rent increase the Leader will ask the chief executive to get a legal opinion on the risk of surcharge. The catch is that you can get whichever opinion you pay for and the chief executive will always go to the most cautious and conservative barrister around (usually Sam Silkin of ABC fame) and get the most alarming possible opinion which is then used to stampede the Labour Group into accepting a rent increase.

In fact we could fill this LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING with a list of all the tactics used by Leaders and Chief Officers to control local Labour councillors but they all basically stem from two tactics. First, restrict full information to a small caucus and second keep the Labour Group in the dark about what passes between the Chief Officer and the Group Officers. Often even those who chair council committees are not kept in the picture as they may oppose cuts within their committee areas.

The only way to end this state of affairs which exists on the *majority* of Labour councils is to completely open up all the workings of the council to full scrutiny by the Party and Town Hall trade unions whose members are affected by councillors' decisions.

Ordinary council employees have a much clearer picture of what is going on inside the Town Hall than most chief officers and council workers should be coopted to all council committees so that the Party and the trades unions are in constant contact across the whole range of council policies and services. Too often chief officers blame "union bloody mindedness" to cover up their own deliberate obstruction of Labour policy and union representatives need to be present to challenge these lies.

The management services empire that has grown up in each council must be broken down as this is the key point at which Labour policies are frustrated administratively. Each council committee should develop an executive role in the running of their relevant departments. It is no good councillors sitting discussing policies at committee without following through to see that those policies are explained to staff and carried out.

No 'cabinet style' policy committee of leading members should exist without backbench representation and the right of any Labour councillor to attend its

–continued on back page

LONDON POSTAL WORKERS: FIGHTBACK NEEDED NOW!

I AM SURE THAT most readers will be aware of the various national attacks on the Postal Service and the "big snoop" by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the London Postal Service which resulted in a productivity scheme being agreed between the London District Council of the Union of Communications Workers and the PO London Postal Region, which was subsequently agreed by the June UCW National Conference.

The productivity scheme involved withdrawal of certain concessions and various "savings", and for UCW Branches in London, some of whom rejected the productivity scheme, the end result has been the withdrawal of the concessions anyway by management, and without their paying any money for it either!

In the light of the accumulation of a number of attacks on the Postal Service recently one awaited the challenge of the UCW leadership to the various propositions of the PO management aided and abetted by the 'Militant Capitalist' Sir Keith Jospeh.

"I would be surprised if anybody took industrial action over these proposals," said Tom Jackson, UCW General Secretary on Wednesday 16th June, when the proposals for breaking the Postal monopoly were announced in Parliament.

Frankly, with the present leadership of the UCW, so would I!

Meanwhile, the ordinary postal worker looking elsewhere for a fighting response to the Tories' attacks reads in the latest edition of *The Post* (UCW journal) that Mr Alan Tuffin, the UCW Deputy General Secretary, felt it unacceptable that the recent "Peace, Jobs, and Freedom" statement issued by the NEC of the Labour Party refrained from pushing the old bogey of an incomes policy as a policy for the next Labour government.

To his credit, he did support the idea of the renationalisation of PO assets (hived off by this government), without compensation, but elements in the UCW seem unwilling to support Labour Party democratic accountability to ensure that this Party policy was actually implemented by the next Labour government.

Inevitably, the big question is thrown in the face of those many UCW members who do want a real fight-back against the Tories various proposals, what can the membership do themselves?

I offer a few ideas which might prove useful as a basis for the broad left in the UCW to rally round:

(1) We need to get organised on a broad left basis and the best way for this to be done is for those in the UCW sympathetic to the idea consulting with the POEU broad left which is a very formidable force in that union.

(2) A common programme needs to be adopted for UCW postal workers and personnally I agree with those who advocate the following:

a) an end to unsocial hours;
b) one post office union for all PO employees;
c) workers control in the Post Office;
d) an immediate campaign for the 35-hour week;
e) no redundancies or cuts in the Postal Service;
f) the re-introduction of the "third delivery" to create more postal jobs;
g) an immediate severe limit on overtime working.

(3) We also need to involve postal workers more in the Labour Party and this should encompass a fight on the five demands of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee at once and a campaign to get all UCW Branches to affiliate to local CLPs.

Only when we organise along these lines will the UCW be able to build on its past and present record of maintaining its postal workers members' livelihoods and living standards.

P. C. SMITH
Wanstead & Woodford CLP
and London UCW Member

G.L.C. SELECTIONS SO FAR

* Newham S	Tom Jenkinson	
* Stepney	John Branagan	
** Bermondsey	George Nicholson	
* Newham NW	Arthur Edwards	
* Peckham	Harvey Hinds	
** Hackney C	John Carr	
* Brent S	Illtyd Harrington	
* Woolwich E	Mair Garside	
* Hackney S	Margaret Morgan	
* Bethnal Green	Ashley Bramall	
* Tottenham	Andrew McIntosh	
* Newham NE	John Wilson	
* Battersea N	Gladys Dimson	
Greenwich	Deirdre Wood	
* Deptford	Alex McKay	
Lambeth C	Paul Moore	
* Southall	Yvonne Sieve	
* Dagenham	Harry Kay	
* Barking	John Ward	
* St Pancras N	Anne Sofer	
* Vauxhall	Brun Davies	
Islington S	Frances Morrell	
* Islington C	Simon Turney	
** Tooting	Tony Banks	
** Leyton	Denise Luinberg	
Walthamstow	Paul Boateng	
Hammersmith N	Dave Wetzel	
* Holborn	Charlie Rossi	
** Hayes & Harlington	John McDonnell	
Wood Green	Mike Ward	
Feltham & Heston	Peter Pitt	
** Erith & Crayford	Elgar Handy	
Edomnton	Ken Little	
Lewisham E	Paul Rossi	
* Mitcham & Morden	Tony Judge	
Battersea S	Valerie Wise	
Dulwich	Lesley Hammond	
** Paddington	Ken Livingstone	
Ealing N	Gareth Daniel	
Fulham	Barry Stead	
Ilford S	Ed Gouge	
Putney	Andy Harris	
Woolwich W	Neil Davies	
Brentford	Roy Gregory	
Ilford N	Mike Kinningworth	
Hendon N	Frank Cooper	

** = previous member defeated
* = previous member re-selected

The 46 GLC candidates so far selected are shown above in order of safety (based on 1979 General Election results). The total number of GLC seats is 92 and at the 1973 election Labour gained 57 including all those listed above. So far three sitting members have been defeated and 15 reselected.

Five ex-members from the 1973 administration have failed in their attempts to be selected again and five have succeeded.

Given that the outcome in the remaining seats does not differ greatly from those selected already in terms of left and right then the next Labour Group will represent a completely break with the past at County Hall. Of those candidates already selected, 50% are broadly on the left, 25% in the centre and 25% on the right. In the 1973 Group this left-right balance was almost exactly reversed.

The decision of the ILEA to cut the education budget by 4.2% has clearly played a part in this shift as five of those defeated at selection meetings had voted for the cuts and two others were only narrowly reselected.

The debate on accountability within the Party has also had an impact and a majority of those selected have a firm commitment to implement the manifesto which conference will vote on, on the 17th and 18th October.

They will need the support of the whole movement if that commitment to the manifesto is to overcome the opposition of the government, chief officers and the CLV supporters withour own Labour Groups.

Fighting Racism in ALL its forms

THE DIFFERENCE between now and 1977-78 is that the National Front is less overtly active, but the attacks on black, Asian and Cypriot people are as great as ever. However the opposition being mounted by Labour Movement activists is less effective.

In the past few months in London there have been a number of very significant events—the increased use of the Special Patrol Group and the opposition it has met in Lambeth, the 'fishing' expeditions by police and immigration officers to a series of factories in Tottenham and Edmonton when instant deportations followed, the racist murder in Newham at the end of July, the arrest of over 70 predominantly black youths in Hornsey and the moves by the Home Office to deport large numbers of Philippino workers.

TORY LAW

All this is in reality part of the build-up that the Tories are trying to promote before introducing their new nationality law, heralded in the July White Paper, *British Nationality Law.* The White Paper opens ominously enough by stating, "the present Government agree with many of the ideas that were put forward in the Green Paper" (which was produced by the last Labour government and was widely condemmed at the time). The contents of the White Paper have not had wide circulation. Their intention is to draw a tight line around the UK, and in the process 3½ million existing nationals will get a status which means nothing in citizenship terms.

Needless to say, almost all of these are of non-European descent. The details of the White Paper are extremely confusing and highly complicated. Significantly, the document does not recognise that Britain is a multi-racial country and greatly increases the area of discretion allowed to the Home Secretary in matters of naturalisation; there is to be no appeal against refusal and a decision could be taken on the basis of secretly obtained information.

LABOUR FAILURE

The frightening prospects in the White Paper are built on the Immigration Acts of 1962, 1968, and 1971. It is the complete failure of the last Labour government to repeal the 1971 Act which has allowed the Tories to introduce the latest, and most racialist, set of proposals.

In our opposition to the White Paper we must ensure that the Labour Party is committed to repeal the existing immigration legislation, and that the present harrassment of immigrants ends.

POLICE

The relationship between the police and the black community has never been good and in the aftermath of the Blair Peach murder and the SPG harrassment throughout London we must campaign for democratic control of the police force. A campaign to acheive this has been set up by the London Co-op Political Committee with the support of the London Labour Party, the NCCL and State Research. The draft manifesto for the GLC elections contains a commitment to establish a Police Committee, which will not have legal power over the police (that power rests with the Home Secretary) but will be a basis for making demands for control of the police, and will provide a method of independent public inquiry into complaints raised against the police.

FIGHTBACK

The fight against racism is a vital one, and nobody should be under any illusion that the decline in National Front activity since 1977 means that their threat is any less or that racism is not alive and kicking in the Tory Party. Too many comrades have shown themselves to be quite willing to oppose the fascists but not to be involved with opposition to immigration law or police harrassment of ethnic minorities.

The 1976 Labour Party Conference carried motions which called upon all Labour Parties to establish Labour Movement Anti-Racist Campaigns, and the 1979 London Labour Party Conference voted that not only should Local Authorities keep ethnic records, but that they should take affirmative action to redress imbalances in areas such as housing allocation, and that local Labour Parties should produce recruiting material in different languages.

CUTS

Cuts in public spending mean that ethnic minorities suffer far worse than white people, and in unemployment again it is the ethnic minorities who suffer the most. Our task is to campaign against cuts and unemployment, *and* to campaign against racism in all its forms.

JEREMY CORBYN
Regional Executive Member

REPORT your news on the fight against racism, and what action is being taken by your Labour council to carry out the 1979 Conference decision on ethnic records and affirmative action.

TELL the London Labour Movement what fightback is going on in your area against police harrassment and immigration officials' "fishing" expeditions.

CALL for support from other groups for your activities.

SEND your information to: BRIEFING, 158 Theobalds Road, Ilford.

HOUNSLOW

HOUNSLOW IS ONE of the Labour controlled boroughs in Greater London that has maintained its overall expenditure this year, at the expense of a 41% rate increase last April. There has been some re-allocation of resources with an effective reduction in staffing in some areas, and fees have been raised for part-time students.

More significantly, Hounslow did not have the courage to raise the rates even higher to offset the reduction in housing finance, with the result that substantial rent increases have been imposed, meaning council tenants paying twice for maintaining services.

Despite these criticisms, Hounslow must be supported for the stand it has taken, and in the main has received this support from the local trade union movement, Labour Parties and the cuts campaign.

Perhaps the biggest criticism of Hounslow council is that they have not sought to mobilise support for their action as Lambeth and others have done. Hounslow appears to be keeping its head down hoping that Heseltine will go away, but in practice Hounslow is on the 'hit list' and will be penalised if the Tories succeed in defeating the councils opposing them.

The only way in which Hounslow's services can be maintained is for Hounslow Council positively to identify itself with the Lambeth initiative and to help build a united campaign with the Labour Parties, Trades Council and trades unions in Hounslow. This must be done before it is too late.

PETE ROWLANDS
Secretary
Hounslow Trades Union Council

Lessons of the 1973–77 Labour G.L.C.

AS A MEMBER of the previous Labour GLC and as Chairman of the General Purposes Committee for the last two years of office (1975-77), it is not now my intention only to detail its successes, but it certainly had quite a number. Anyone who has read the GLRC Discussion Papers on Housing, Transport and Planning will readily appreciate how much was achieved by the GLC between 1973 and the defeat in 1977 brought about because of massive Labour government unpopularity. However, it would be sterile to make detailed comparison with the present Tory GLC since no Labour administration could ever be as bad as Cutler's band of municipal cowboys who are currently running London into the ground.

The only comparison which is of any real value to socialists is the difference between stated objectives and eventual actions and in too many instances the last Labour GLC fell well short of its objectives.

Commitments made in 1973 on fares and rents were not kept and the Labour GLC refused to give any sort of lead in London over the Housing Finance Act which still echoes all these years later with the scandal of Clay Cross. Cuts were made towards the end of the administration in the housing programme and in general expenditure as a response to the dictat of a Labour government which was by then pursuing cash limits and general monetarist policies and setting the scene for a Thatcher take-over in 1979.

Of course, the Labour GLC could point to the difficulties it faced. Cuts in public expenditure by government, a high inflation rate and pressure from Labour boroughs to keep down rates, were all factors which cannot be simply dismissed as unimportant. However, the GLC made no attempt to mobilise the Labour Movement in London against these policies but instead implemented the unacceptable and sought to absolve itself from the blame.

It was this failure to involve CLPs and unions in the struggle which was both the biggest criticism to be made of the last Labour GLC and its main source of weakness. Individuals, however heroic, cannot take on and transform the system single-handed. Even an entire Labour Group is still a rather puny opponent for capitalism and the GLC Group was never that united.

Without the broadest possible concentration of power within the Movement inside and outside County Halls, Town Halls and Parliament our elected authorities will surely degenerate into apoligists for the system just like the last Labour GLC and the Callaghan government.

AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP

Mobilising the London movement hardly fits in with the traditions of County Hall. From Herbert Morrison onwards the style of leadership has been one of secrecy and authoritarianism. Old hands will tell you, with perhaps a grudging admiration, of the days when expressing a contrary opinion in Group meetings was guaranteed to bring down the wrath of the leader, who in any case was able to appoint and dismiss committee chairmen at will. No talk in those days of democratic accountability, election of leader by the Annual Meeting or the Executive being responsible for the manifesto. Nor indeed, did we ever read in London newspapers descriptions such as "Right-wing's iron-grip on County Hall" or "The Right-wing dominated London Executive".

In those days decisions were made without consultation and without thought of having to give account to anyone outside County Hall.

In retrospect the Labour GLC 1973-1977 will probably be seen as the last twitch of the dinosaur's tail. Group meetings eventually became open battle grounds for left and right and the old powers of patronage held by the leader were steadily eroded. But even as defeat stared us in the face the old style machine boss politics made one last stand.

THE 1977 ELECTION MANIFESTO

The policies adopted by the 1979 GLRC Annual Meeting set out an excellent basis for a fighting socialist programme for London. During that year study groups met and their findings were reported to a one-day conference at which speaker after speaker stressed the need for firm socialist election pledges. But working parties, the day conference and GLRC policies were discarded in favour of a document drawn up within County Hall which effectively committed us to nothing.

At the Regional Executive meeting to agree the manifesto, the draft was handed out as members arrived and they were given 30 minutes to read and prepare amendments. Having forced the manifesto through the Executive it was then decided to publish before the 1977 Annual Meeting in case delegates attempted to put in the socialism missing from the document.

It was the cynicism of this move to circumvent the London movement that led to the call being made by a number of GLC candidates for the publication to be delayed and the manifesto to be put before the Annual Meeting. In this attempt we failed. The manifesto was published. The row at the Annual Meeting passed away as indeed did the Labour GLC a few months later in May 1977.

The bitter lessons, however, were all well learnt by the London movement and our lengthy and detailed consultations over the 1981 manifesto owe something to that twitch of the dinosaur's tail back in 1977.

THE NEXT GLC

The next Labour GLC will confront problems unlike anything previously experienced. Not only will we be taking over an authority which has been systematically sabotaged by Cutler's cowboys, but it will be at a time when Thatcher's monetarism will have brought the country to the edge of economic and possibly social chaos. The Labour GLC will not be able to face these problems in London alone. Our policies are being carefully and collectively worked out, so I will make only a few general points of principle here.

First, the Labour GLC must give a political lead in London to Party, unions and Labour boroughs for total opposition to Thatcher. The financial and organisational power of County Hall must be used as never before to defend working class interests, and support those Labour boroughs involved in the same struggle.

Second, the entire London Labour Movement inside and outside County Hall must pledge its strength to guarantee the implementation of the GLC manifesto. The Movement cannot will the ends unless it also provides the means.

Third, the Labour GLC must not be allowed once again to distance itself from the Party. The leader of the Labour Group must be elected by Annual Meeting. The primacy of Annual Meeting policies must be accepted and the role of the Regional Executive as the custodians of those policies accepted.

Fourth, individual GLC members must be held accountable for their actions by their respective General Committees. A GLC report should be made regularly at GCs and London-wide, a rolling manifesto adopted and published by the Regional Executive.

Democratic accountability is as crucial in the affairs of the GLC as it is in the wider movement outside London. In our method of drawing up the next manifesto and in its implementation, London can give an example to many comrades engaged in similar struggles elsewhere.

TONY BANKS
Tooting CLP

Commission Report ~

Watch out for the Small Print !

IT'S THE THREE "sexy" constitutional issues that have been getting most attention in the Commission of Enquiry's Report.

But it would be most unwise of the left to neglect the 'small print' of the Report—71 recommendations for reorganising the work of the Party. Many of these recommendations make a lot of sense. But there are some whose implications need careful thought. It would be a great mistake if these went through 'on the nod' through concentration of the left's resources on the three major constitutional issues.

Quite rightly (though perhaps accidentally) the Commission has handed the decisions on the three constitutional issues back to Annual Conference itself, without taking upon itself the power to recommend what those decisions should be. Recommendation 29.1 of the Report (added after the Report had gone to press) states: "that the Commission, having carefully considered all the evidence on the constitutional issues and having discussed the issue at length, in the absence of a consensus, make no recommendations."

And so we are now mobilising for further battle on those three issues that should never been taken out of the hands of Conference in the first place. But what about the other 71?

One of the first messages to emerge from a reading of the Report is that if the Party were to implement all of the recommendations, we would need vastly *more* money than we have at present or seem likely to have for some time in the future. The alternative to a magical increase in our income is, of course, a switch of resources from some present or proposed areas to other new proposed areas. So the recommendations have to be evaluated not only with regard to their intrinsic merit (or demerit) but to the priority they deserve. Such decisions on organisational priorities have of course political implications.

Let us look at some of the more debatable recommendations:

Recommendation 3.1 proposes that a new post, 'Director of Finance', be set up to solve the problem of their being "no single person, under the General Secretary, who has a total control or oversight of all Party finance." According to an estimate put before a Head Office union branch, this post would cost the Party £30,000 in the first year. Does the Party really need *more* super-senior expensive salaried officers rejoicing in autocratic titles like "Director"? And from what other area of current expenditure would the money come for this additional 'top job'?

Recommendation 4.2 proposes a pilot scheme appointment of fund-raising organisers. Introducing the idea of the appointment of such organisers at Regional level, the Report says: "The cost of making such appointments would be high but it is hoped that in the long term these would be covered by the generation of extra income for the Party." In the short term, what other areas of Party expenditure would be cut in order to finance these appointments?

Recommendation 5.7—registered Labour supporters. This proposes that there be two classes of member, the lower class consisting of those "who have no desire to take part in any of our normal constitutional activities by being members of the Party, yet would be prepared to make a single annual payment to the Party of, say, £1." The NEC rejected this, but it remains a part of the Report to be presented to Conference. Do we on the left believe that our attitude to those who are politically unaware and/or poor should be that we'll take their money and otherwise disregard them?

Recommendation 11.5 proposes that Party constitution Clause III (3) (b) on the requirement of trade union membership, be amended "if necessary". It is difficult to see why this needs to be amended if the problems, as the Commission see them, arise not from the rule itself but from interpretation by some CLPs and from communication with the TUC.

Recommendation 12.4 (ii) is another of the sexy 'big issues'—the Commission's proposal that the three-year rule for Conference resolutions be reinstated for constitutional issues only. We all know what we think about that one.

Recommendation 13.6—full-time organising service. The Commission agrees with the proposal that full-time organisers, not tied to a single constituency, "be responsible for organising within a number of CLPs and be accountable to the Region." One of the effects of such an arrangement would be that a CLP which had previously had its own separate paid agent or voluntary organiser/agent might be worse off in terms of democratic control over its organiser. If such a joint organiser came under the direct control of Regional office, as is suggested, there would need to be, at the very least, a compensatory increase in the real democratic accountability of the paid Regional staff to the elected Regional Executive Committee. At all costs we must avoid CLP organising and campaigning decisions being made by increasingly remote and unaccountable salaried officers.

Recommendations 16.3 and 16.5 propose expansion and development of political education courses in the day, residential and correspondence fields. Among the suggestions is one that "Trade Union and the Co-operative Union should be asked to consider including an explicit socialist content in their training courses." (16.3 (ii)).

It would seem to be a good idea if we practised within the Party what we are preaching to the other two wings of the Movement. Through a simplified modular system of curriculum we could ensure that "an explicit socialist content" became part not only of TU and Co-op training courses as proposed, but also part of our own Party training courses—and not only in the obviously 'political' courses but also in the so-called 'non-political' courses such as the suggested courses on "Labour Party Organisation", "Magistrates" and "School Governors".

We need to ensure that members whom we are appointing as Party representatives in various fields are able to recognise the political implications of matters they come up against and are not being set unwittingly on the road to becoming complacent and uncomprehending "non-political" office-holders.

Recommendation 28 on opinion polls, suggests that "the Party should not exclude some investigations in marginal constituencies or investigations to assess the best way of getting policies across." Yet again we need to watch out here for those who want to descend into the populist tactic of "finding out what the people want" (or what the slavish Tory press hammers home to them that they want) and then to tailor the Party's political approach to accord with these "findings".

The above are only some of the recommendations that we need to be scrutinising closely. So let's have "eyes down" to the small print of the Commission's Report, and mobilise on all those issues that we feel are of particular political significance. We ignore them at our peril!

PAULINE ASHBRIDGE
Hornsey CLP

Lambeth national conference:

Lambeth's call for a national conference of the Labour and Trade Union Movement to meet on November 1st at Camden Town Hall to discuss the crisis facing local government is gaining support from cities throughout the country.

The Conference organised jointly by local trade unionists, Labour councillors and Constituency Labour Parties has already received endorsement from Labour Groups in Sheffield, Leeds, Rochdale, Sunderland, Bradford, Wallsall, Mansfield, and Tyne & Wear County Council.

The National Union of Public Employees has circulated all its branches urging the election of delegates. London Regional Council of UCAAT has likewise endorsed the conference and is asking support of branches and shop stewards committees. The London South District Committee of the AEUW is calling for delegates from branches. Meanwhile T&GWU, G&MWU, NALGO and NUT branches are being contacted. The Greater London Association of Trades Councils has wirtten to its affiliated organisations urging support. Jack Dromey, Secretary of the South East Regional TUC, has offered all help for the success of the Conference. Other regional TUCs have been asked for their support.

Constituency Labour Parties have all been circulated with an invitation to the Conference and notifications of delegates are now being received.

A statement is being drawn up for discussion at the Conference. This will present the options available to the Labour Movement in face of the Tory attacks on local government. Organisations will be able to submit amendments. The aim of the organising committee is that the Conference should finally agree a course of action which can be fought for within the Labour Movement as a whole.

It remains the view of the Lambeth Labour Group and CLPs that the only way to stop cuts is to force the government to change course. No other option is open. We have seen that demonstrations and days of action are not enough to achieve this. What is needed is extended strike action with the objective of bringing local government to a halt throughout the country until the government either agrees to provide the money that is needed, or resigns. This strategy will certainly be posed at the Conference.

Of course, a Conference, constituted like this one cannot instruct individual councils or trade union branches how to act. But it can agree on a programme to be argued and organised for by those who support it.

That is why it is important that we now fight in every trade union branch, district committee, Labour Group and CLP to get delegates elected. The Conference must be able to speak with authority and it can only do that if it is truly representative of the organised Labour Movement.

TED KNIGHT, Leader of Lambeth Council

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OUR COUNCILLORS

continued from page 3

meetings. All items of 'chairman's action' should be reported to the relevant committee including verbal instructions. There should be regular meetings of all Labour members of each committee to review the activities of the committee chair and each member should have an area of delegated responsibility to investigate and report on to these meetings.

All GMC and LGC delegates should be able to attend full group meetings as observers and the LGC delegates should have the right to request a roll call vote on any issue which would then be circulated to ward branches.

The problem with the NEC proposals is that without opening up local government processes to full scrutiny any council leader with a touch of left rhetoric will still be able to dominate a LGC as they at present dominate the group.

We need as a Party to examine just how compatible are 'strong leadership' and democratic socialism.

Equally important, we need to consider radical solutions to the problems of administering the local state. A bit of left rhetoric is no substitute for changing the way that local council bureaucracy 'administers' the people they are supposed to serve.

Next editorial collective meeting: 19th September, 7.30 pm, Ken Livingstone's room, County Hall. Deadline for articles: October 6th.

LETTERS

DEAR COMRADES,

Now that the immediate threat of the break-up of ILEA seems to be lifting, the time has come for a review of the authority's operations as seen through the eyes of the Labour Party member and voter.

There is and has been a distinct feeling that the ILEA is remote, anonymous and above all bueaucratic. The fault must lie with the Labour Group itself and in this we are all to blame, to a greater or lesser extent, in failing to show a human face for the authority.

More seriously, at the political level, the Labour Group is perceived as a distant body lost in the corridors of County Hall and only feebly responsive to the constituency parties' views and to the public at large. The policy committee is seen as a tightly-knit group manipulated by a caucus irreverently described as "the gang of three-and-a-half"! The line is long overdue for a complete shake-up of the leadership of the authority to bring a draught of fresh air to the group's proceedings, thus enabling the group to respond to the London Labour Parties' views—instead of reacting automatically against them.

Yours fraternally,

ELLIS HILLMAN
GLC Member for Hackney Central

BRIEFING'S policy is to print all letters—even from repentent right-wingers, anxious to get themselves re-elected as the winds change!

JOINT ACTION AGAINST THE CUTS

The Greater London Campaign for Economic and Social Advance (GLCESA) was initiated earlier this year, comprising the Greater London Labour Party, Greater London Association of Trades Councils, South East Region of the TUC, and the London Co-Operative Society. Its activities have been mainly confined to organising for May 14th and other demonstrations and producing a "Cuts Bulletin".

Currently the SERTUC initiative for a November "Month of Action" and the campaign to retain ILEA are the major focus. GLATC has meanwhile established a "Cuts Campaigns Committee" embracing most of the active cuts campaigns in the London area, based mainly on local Trades Councils and Labour Parties.

PETE ROWLANDS
Vice-Chairman, GLATC