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REGROUP AND FIGHT BACK!

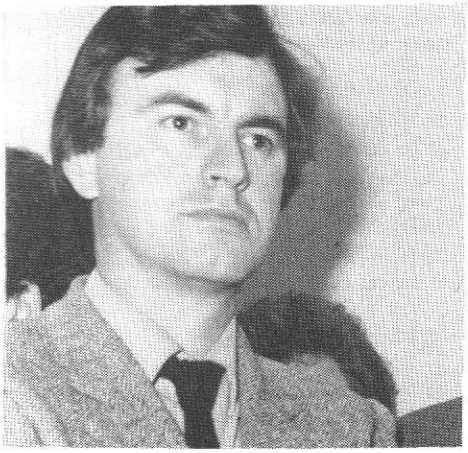
John McDonnell

In a recent joint statement in Labour Herald, Ted Knight, Matthew Warburton and I called for a regroupment on the left as a result of the repercussions of the miners' strike and rate-capping battle. The call for regroupment was made not because we believe that the Left in the party had been weakened by these struggles, as the capitalist press have portrayed the situation, but because both the miners and the rate-capping campaigns have more clearly identified the issues confronting the Left in the next period.

The first issue for the Left is to recognise that the past 1979 broad left alliance which came together around the development of the Alternative Economic Strategy and Labour's Programme for 1983 is now dead. It is inevitable in struggle that the Labour Party will divide along traditional lines between those who are genuinely seeking a socialist transformation of our economic and social system and those who are basically reformist and willing to accommodate in struggle.

The miners' strike and rate-capping struggle not only divided the Labour Party on these lines but also resulted in the Broad Left similarly being divided as some elements (now describing themselves as soft left or sensible left!) rejected the necessity of standing firm in the fight against Thatcherism. The critical role which we envisaged in the Herald Statement therefore was for the regroupment of those left comrades who had maintained their commitment throughout the miners' and rate-capping struggles, not to launch into a new sectarian grouping in the party but to develop and consolidate a current of left ideas and influence in the party.

The second issue for the Left is to appreciate the role which the Kinnock/Hattersley leadership is now playing to push the Labour Party back down the Wilson/Callaghan road of social democracy. The recent policy statements launched by Kinnock and Hattersley prior to the party conference are aimed at bouncing the party back into the social democratic tradition of Crosland and Gaitskell. It's clear that the leadership have learnt no lessons from the catastrophic failure of this route between 1964 and 1979. Thatcherism was born out of the despondency brought about by the social democratic governments of Wilson and Callaghan. The launch of the Employment Institute is also obviously the preparation of a future pact or coalition with the Liberals, SDP and even Tory wets if Labour fails to obtain an overall parliamentary majority. To isolate the Left opponents of this process Kinnock has warmly embraced those elements and leading figures who have now deserted left positions. The new relaignment is being forged on the centre and right of all those individuals who either refused to support the miners or who bottled out in the rate-capping struggle.



John Chapman

Of course the capitalist media has donated pages to welcoming this new realism by past left bogeymen and women and a whole series of articles and interviews have been published in desperate attempts to justify what was simply an unprincipled rejection of past commitments to fighting Thatcherism. It is nauseating to witness the slick abuse of concepts such as vanguardism and socialist feminism to justify what were straightforward acts of opportunism and in some instances cowardice in the face of a threatened parliamentary career.

The third one for the Left to confront is to clarify the objectives of the regroupment of the Left in the light of our experiences over the last 12 months of struggle and in the face of this centre/right realignment. In the Herald statement we set out three basic objectives:

** To mobilise and organise support for the immediate struggles opposing Thatcherism;*

** To develop a firm left programme for the socialist transformation of our society and fight for its adoption by the Labour Party;*

** To ensure the implementation of this programme while Labour is in office.*

We consider these are the key aims any regroupment of the left should address itself to.

The miners' strike and rate-capping struggle have been portrayed as weakening the Left. Obviously we have lost some past comrades in the campaign as they have gone over to the right.

Nevertheless the product of both these struggles has been the development of a firm socialist rank and file in the party which having learnt the lessons of struggle are now committed to coming together to build a socialist party.

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

COUNTY HALL FARCE

Deirdre Wood

The socialist farce at County Hall ground its way to an inevitable conclusion at the GLC AGM on April 29th. In the face of what seemed to be a record number of resolutions from local parties supporting the position taken by John McDonnell and others, with a number calling for no witch-hunt and in the knowledge that the party favoured this, the Labour group set about purging itself of the deputy leader.

It was an exceptionally cynical exercise. Block nominations from Ken Livingstone, Alex Mackay, John Carr, Valerie Wise, etc. supported the other members who had voted with John so that the new "participatory left" (Ken Livingstone's phrase) could with hand on heart explain that McDonnell was removed, not for following party policy and embarrassing those who did not, but for misleading group and party and for being inefficient.

Comrades and friends who I have worked alongside and trusted failed the truth test that night. Who now believes that they will fight witch-hunts and purges in the party? Who now believes they will support party policy except when it is to their advantage? For weeks after the rates fiasco the phone lines between County Hall and the media were hot and officer time taken up with strenuous efforts to ensure that the leadership line was widely and sympathetically reported by Fleet Street and the reputations of those who supported it kept intact.

For a group that believes it took the correct decision I think they do protest too much — in print — Guardian, Morning Star, Marxism Today, Tribune, on and on it goes. I believe the Labour movement would be better served by those discussions taking place 'in house'.

Back to the purge — Michael Ward replaced John McDonnell as deputy leader. Voting: 22 to 13. Alex Mackay replaced John McDonnell as Chair of Finance. Voting: Illtyd Harrington 4, John McDonnell 13, Alex Mackay 19. Sir Ashley Bramall filled Alex Mackay's place as Chair of Technical Services — rewards perhaps for services rendered.

It was obvious from the voting that discussions had taken place between the right and the establishment left, as Illtyd Harrington — a loyal supporter of Ken Livingstone as leader and a friend to people on both sides — was ignored and humiliated by both groups.

Rumour has it that the real pay-off, to the right wing for supporting the leadership, comes when the new ILEA is elected in 1986. Comrades beware!

As the GLC Labour Group in County Hall continues to purge the ten councillors who actually stuck by Party policy, support within the unions is growing.
The following resolution was passed overwhelmingly at the COHSE Region 6 Council, representing 20,000 health workers:

(f) GLC RATECAPPING:
"That this Region supports wholeheartedly action taken by the ten GLC Councillors:

John McDonnel	*Paul Moore*
Tony Banks	*Charlie Rossi*
Paul Boateng	*Bryn Davies*
Deirdre Wood	*Dave Wetzel*
Jennie Fletcher	*Lesley Hammond*

in carrying out and maintaining London Labour Party policy/mandate as agreed at two London Labour Party Conferences "not to set a rate" during the Greater London Council rate fixing debate."

L.L.P. RESOLUTION

The London Labour Party executive pledged its full support for the resisting rate-capped councils at a special meeting on May 9th.

"The Greater London Labour Party Executive calls upon all Labour councils still following Party policy of not setting a rate to reaffirm their rejection of cuts and refusal to accept government restrictions and to increase their work to build a mass campaign.

We reject the illusion that there is any possibility of councils getting through this financial year and still avoid the effects of rate-capping next year.

Furthermore an abandonment of a serious struggle against the government now will undermine the credibility of future Labour councils' campaigns and mean effectively giving up the fight to win back the rate support grant the Tories have stolen from local authorities.

We deplore the fact that many councils have in effect allowed their anti-government campaign to wind down after the March 7th council meetings.

We call on these councils and local authority workers to take immediate strike action in the event of any councillor being surcharged or disqualified or the District Auditor taking action, to ensure that no one council is left isolated.

We call on all London trade unions to support the campaign of resistance and in the event of industrial action we call on all trade unions to respect picket lines and take all possible action in support of local authority trade unions.

We condemn those Labour councillors who did not take the opportunity of resigning their seats before this battle and then used their council position to stab the Party's policy in the back. We call on Ward Party branches not to select for the 1986 Borough council elections any councillor who voted to comply with the government and that a letter to this effect be read out at the beginning of all ward council selection meetings.

Letters should be sent to all Labour councils reminding them of GLLP policy and to the GLC and ILEA calling on them to exercise the discretion that they have not to charge the boroughs the penalties in paying rate precept.

Despite setbacks we believe that even one defiant Labour council could still stimulate a mass movement against the Tory attacks."

To ensure that full support is mobilised for the battle the EC also resolved to produce publicity for all of London's labour movement and to demand that the movement's leadership give their support to the rate-capped councils.

The District Auditor's visit to Islington met with a resistance of 2000 council workers — those in the front line of the battle against rate-capping must not be isolated.

Wandsworth by-elections

Recent opinion polls indicate that Labour will win back Wandsworth from the Tories in 1986. Local Labour Parties are determined to confirm this by increasing the majorities in two by-elections due to take place on June 27. St. John war is held by Labour and will be contested by local activist Dick Muskett, whilst the GLC seat for Battersea North, formerly held by Gladys Dimson, will be contested by Norman Lucas. Canvassing campaign starts at the beginning of June and help from Party comrades all over London is requested. For details of when/where to report, please phone Roger Harris, tel: 228 4468.

WOMEN IN POLITICS
By Paula Watson and Vidya Anand

". . . the clearest, and shortest and most pungent summary of the argument I have seen . . ."
Tony Benn
Price 60p

The Labour Party and Common Ownership by Paul Derrick
price 40p.
Published by the Committee for Socialist Renewal.
Obtainable from Briefing at 162 Millfields Road, London E5.

THE BATTLE FOR HACKNEY

Hilda Kean
Leader, Hackney Council

Little has changed in Hackney in the anti-ratecapping campaign since the last reports in *Briefing*. We continue to have the same legal threats we have borne since we took our first decision in March to defend jobs and services; we continue to be presented with the 'bogey' of the district auditor. But we also continue to enjoy the support of the unions, community groups, local parties, and black organisations, who are maintaining both political support for the position of non-compliance and no cuts and organising financial support in the event of councillors being surcharged.

The councillors are standing firm in their commitment to jobs and services and at the regular council meeting in April yet again all Labour councillors rejected the Tories and the Liberals' cuts budgets. The Liberals have requisitioned a council meeting, presumably to present their cuts package for a further time and no doubt this will again be overwhelmingly rejected.

The problem we face in Hackney is how to keep up the momentum of our position. We have rejected the tactics suggested by the Camden comrades of, for example, refusing to pay the police precept, on the grounds that this would not further the campaign. While remaining convinced that the government will be forced to recognise the problems its policies are causing in the inner city areas if we continue to stand by our policies, we do not believe that there are any easy gimmicks that can bring that realisation about. Instead we have to keep our nerve and continue our local campaigns outside the council chamber with the local labour movement.

In Hackney we have also used the opportunities afforded us in by-elections to press home our ratecapping message. The result in Rectory Ward, where Felicity Harvest stood on a platform of campaigning non-compliance, was particularly encouraging. She polled more votes for Labour than in the past three council elections; the Tories received their lowest vote. Although we did not win against the Liberals in Haggerston, we increased our vote since the last election.



John Chapman

TRADE UNIONISTS PICKET IN SUPPORT OF HACKNEY COUNCIL

We hope to carry the campaign forward in the coming weeks in the Shoreditch area where yet another Liberal resignation has forced a by-election in the Wenlock ward.

We have been told by the courts that a rate has to be made by the end of the month. Our May council meeting on Tuesday 21st will give us a further opportunity of reaffirming that our allegiance is to the labour movement of Hackney and not to the courts, district auditor or Tory policy!

TOWER HAMLETS: STOP THE RIGHT WING WRECKERS

Tower Hamlets council met on April 23 to consider a revised budget. The previous meeting of the right-wing-led council resulted in no rate being set, but nine Labour members still face expulsion from the Labour group for opposing the cuts.

On April 23 such was the confusion after the mayor had taken a bogus vote with no hands counted, that even the Chief Executive could not confirm whether a rate had been set. The next day of TV the mayor announced that a further meeting would be held, and then proceeded to seek senior legal opinion to find a loophole to try to avoid any such vote. The LGC called for both his, and the Chief Executive's, resignation.

Also at the April 23rd meeting the mayor tried to rule out of order the motion not to set a rate, supported by the local parties. This ruling was overturned but not before the member concerned was threatened with being removed from the council chamber.

As expected, only nine left councillors, plus one independent, voted for 'no rate' and were opposed by the entire right wing and Liberal opposition.

The alternative that was then moved as a left Labour initiative to fight the cuts, although receiving the support of only seven left councillors, continues to form the basis of the LGC fightback constructed in conjunction with the local unions and community groups.

Initially an amendment calling on the council to spend its available money held in funds to prop up services and maintain levels of spending, was later expanded to a full-scale alternative budget. This was a growth budget of 4%, with £3 million extra money from the GLC never previously claimed in full by the borough. It aimed to increase staffing levels in social services and housing, and to use an extra £2 million capitalised money to expand housing maintenance. It involved a rate increase of 8%.

(CONTINUED OVER)

THE SOUTHWARK STORY .. .. ..

The unity of Southwark Councillors against the Tory Rates Act did not last very long despite the initial rhetoric to defend jobs and services. However the Council meeting of May 8 still did not set a rate. This, the funniest Council meeting for a long time, involved the Leader offering a "meals-on-wheels" which looked like a Chinese takeaway to the Tory leader and the Fix a Rate brigade (Labour) dividing into two equal parts to each vote against each other's budgets by prior agreement. This was to maintain the Labour Group's latest decision to not fix a rate, yet, or do anything until after a Conference of rate-capped authorities, while at the same time enabling cowards to "seek" in legal jargon "to set a rate".

The Labour Group meeting on the 25th of April came out with a decision to effectively set a rate (the split in the Labour Group being 24 to comply and 20 remaining defiant). The full council meeting was set for Friday the 26th April.

Occupation!

In response, the joint Trade Union Coordinating Committee for the first time in its history called a proper Joint Stewards meeting, which agreed to occupy the Council Chamber from 4.00pm onwards, as the only means of preventing the Labour group from selling out the Trade Unions.

There were obvious lessons to be learnt for the Trade unions from Lewisham.

This action was successful not only in preventing the council meeting from happening and being deferred to May Day, but also in uniting the Trade Unions against the rate-capping legislation.

Tenants and community organisations and Labour Party members also joined in.

The jubilant feeling of the success of the occupation was still there when the Joint Trade Union stewards met again the following Tuesday. There was obviously a recognition of the importance of the joint stewards' meeting and there were calls to continue to meet regularly.



Ted Knight joins Southwark Councillors, May 1st. John Chapman

The meeting agreed to call a mass rally on May Day and invite speakers from neighbouring Lambeth unions and London Bridge, Liverpool and the NUM.

However, there was some reluctance from some unions to mobilise their membership for this rally.

May Day Crunch

The rally on May Day packed the council chamber. The defiant Labour councillors then proceeded to move delegations to address the full council.

Trade unions, community organisations, tenants organisations, women's sections and even a black sections delegation addressed the council and left the 24 scab councillors in no doubt about the views of the working class in th borough on their treachery. Ted Knight, Leader of Lambeth Council, also arrived at the meeting and received a standing ovation from the packed chamber.

The meeting lasted for 7 hours and the motion of the scab councillors calling for deficit fudgeting and spending the suddenly discovered "£6 million reserve" did not get the support of the Tories and was defeated. Jubilant applause and singing of the Red Flag followed.

May 8

At the following council meeting on the 8th May called by the Tories, the scab councillors "attempted" to modify the Tory resolution and arrive at some kind of a compromise, without success.

It is quite clear in Southwark that the Trade Unions are going to have to take the leading in defending their jobs and services. Their focus cannot remain on the Council chamber and there is a need to build on the foundation of the joint stewards' meeting and prepare for industrial action.

The local Labour Parties also have a big task ahead of them. They need to translate their policy in defying rate-capping legislation into mobilising active support for the trade unions, the defying councillors, and calling for the resignation of the scab councillors.

Anita Patel
Southwark Black Section

TOWER HAMLETS : (Continued)

The Labour Party correctly assessed the need to stick to a 'no rate' position and twice put forward motions based on model ALA policy, but realistically with support from only ten councillors out of a total of 50, drew up an anti-cuts alternative to attempt to save the services from the right wing's clutches and the subservience to Tory spending targets. With the Liberal opposition's opportunism there was a clear political delineation, where only the left councillors were prepared to breach the spending limit of £64 million, by budgeting to £70.4m (without penalties).

The active agreement and participation of local community groups and tenants, with the council unions, went hand in hand to organise against these cuts, to monitor the coming year and prepare to fight the government's rate-capping measures next year. The alternative budget has come to be regarded as central to the success of any coordinated fightback.

However two of the nine councillors broke off, disagreeing with this fighting alternative and taking a stance of voting against everything. The LGC took the view, as the other seven did, that this would result in the right-wing budget going through.

The fight must be continued with all sections of the party organising to stop the right wing's wrecking path, and building a concerted campaign against an even worse cuts budget next year.

The party will now take into account the budget voting in selecting candidates for the '86 election. All seven councillors supporting the alternative will be offering themselves for selection. Left councillors here have been ill-organised and isolated, but now a few committed to a future council have drawn together and are actively campaigning. In addition any expulsions will be fought but with the cut-throat policies of the right-wing Labour group, the local parties will probably consider switching allegiance to the Labour left as the budget debate develops.

As we go to press the council in Tower Hamlets has still failed to set a rate. Meeting for the third time on Wednesday 8th May, Liberals and Labour Left combined to vote down the leadership cuts budget. The Labour Left's alternative no-cuts fighting budget was narrowly lost by 22 votes to 25, with two Labour Left councillors voting with the right wing to defeat it.

It is clear that the Liberals are now prepared to do a deal with the Labour right, which will mean an unnecessary cuts budget. The strategy of the left so far has been to block cuts, since the fight to maintain a solidarity position with the rate-capped authorities was lost. The council now remains in a political vacuum with no solidarity position with other councils, and the officers with no instructions to organise against government rate-capping legislation.

The trade unions and the community groups are still demanding a no-cuts budget, and have forcefully supported the Labour Left's fighting growth budget.

Cllr Susan Carlyle
Terry Connolly
Secretary Tower Hamlets LGC
(personal capacity)

.. .. .. GOES ON AND ON

Penny Newell,
Southwark NALGO (personal capacity)

An everyday story of ratecapping in Southwark.

THE STORY SO FAR. A group of Labour Councillors, some old some new, with a manifesto open to interpretation on 'where the money comes from' gets elected. Each year for three years the decision on what to do about it is put off. Fight 'next year' is the cry.

The Government, the old spoil sports, mess up the plot by introducing ratecapping. Some Councillors so used to the cry of 'next year' carrying on repeating it. Some others, who have argued against the 'next year' plan consistently – 'the fighters', are joined by a few 'next yearers'. Some of 'the fighters' join the 'next yearers'. Still with me?

What this mess has resulted in is some baddies of last year (who were instrumental in forcing NALGO on strike for six weeks last year) are goodies this year.

As Trade Unionists trying to support the fight against the Tory attacks on local councils our life has been difficult.

In Southwark NALGO we produced a video about ratecapping and showed it round all the workplaces. The aim was to demystify the jargon of GREA etc. but also to get over the point that if the experience of Lothian Council was anything to go by then we were in for a long fight. 5½ thousand jobs gone and not one single compulsory redundancy. Just massive demoralisation. So when we went on strike in support of the Council's stand against ratecapping last month we knew it would be hard.

What I wasn't prepared for was how painful and exhausting it would be. Meeting after meeting, lobby after lobby (four in one week). Hanging on – one week at a time. Something's missing, I kept telling myself. Longterm strategy. That's what's missing.

Lessons for trade unions

It's missing from the ratecapped Council leadership and we the Trade Unionists have only one strategy – support the Council as long as we can. Did all the ratecapped council leaders think Patrick Jenkin was going to come running when they 'deferred' setting a rate? They carefully didn't talk about what they would do if he didn't play the game. This has led many Trade Unionists to feel used and abused. What did we go on strike for? Our occupation of the Council Chamber in Southwark was good. It captured the room. It no longer belonged to the Council. We had a bit of fun too. Why can't politics be more enjoyable? Rallying *all* the unions together for the first time was good. Our example has been a useful exercise for the other council Trade Unionists when it's their turn. Many have been active with us, from Lambeth in particular.

Unity is the latest word being bandied about by Labour Councillors tonight at Labour Group. Well, as Trade Unionists we have all now come together in Southwark and are united – manual and office workers. We've met some smashing manual shop stewards for the first time in the last fortnight, we've learnt how to use our combined strength. We've got to stay together. Southwark Council is our employer, let's not forget that. We will support their antics if they will save our jobs and services, but if they sell us out they will have our combined forces to reckon with.

It's difficult to put what's been going on in some clear political perspective. As a Trade Unionist I feel we've been compelled to play a game without the rules. All we do know is that we're going to lose however well we play.

I believe we can change that. We can write our own rules and if the Council wants to join a proper fight against the Tories they should take not and together we can win – even now.

7 ACT SHOW

Viewing ratings of Council Labour Groups and their showings in full Council are outstripping Spitting Image. Rising star writers have come up with a great tragi-comedy, "Fudge-It-And-Run", which had its premier in the GLC on 8/9 and 10 March and has since been touched up at a number of re-runs in lesser chambers.

The essentials of the side-splitting plot are:

1. Declare unswerving support for the Great and Good fight against evil to "Save Our Services Now And Forevermore!" and call the masses into action.

2. Find the Liar – The Enemy Within – the McDonnell figure (or in Southwark The Previous Administration, who have been gone 3 years) and Denounce It for hiding money under the table.

3. Bring forth bags of gold (largely next year's wages) to "Save Our Services Now!"

4. Raise The Principled Socialist Standard diversion. Many of these appear to have been imaginatively improvised on stage and include:

a) A Deficit Fudge-it in which you agree to Overspend "come hell or high water" by a sum which might still just be waiting to be found under (next year's) table.

b) A stirring declaration that the true revolutionaries are correct and we must "Up-The-Ante" and indeed Will Say So to our Allies in other Chambers... but add the dire warning that if The Ante is not upped (and it had better not be because we wouldn't know how to) then there is not much point in carrying on the fight.

5. When the Going Gets Tough the Tough Get Going with some incredible subterfuges which are accompanied by NOT calling the masses to action. There are only two ground rules here:–

a) Declare total support for the fight to "Save Our Services" while privately encouraging fellow Councillors and Allies to cop-out first.

b) It is admissible to be ill, indisposed, or go to the loo, or for your car to break down, when you really must Get Going.

6. The Final Irony. Set up an "Expenditure Processing Committee" which will carry out Tory Cuts in the name of fighting them. Through this delay vital spending on housing improvements as part of the Great Campaign to "Save!" lest the Evil Knight Sur Charge should come jousting.

7. The Encore. Delay a final decision until a Great Meeting Of the Allies at which a Super-Duper Deficit Fudge-It Strategy For The Future ("It's a long campaign, comrades") can be agreed and return to carry on the Great Campaign to " !"

Piers Corbyn, Bermondsey CLP

STOP DEBT PAYMENTS !

An air of hopelessness is settling over the fight against the Rates Act. But all that is needed to change that is the will to fight.

Labour councils should pledge themselves to stop debt service payments as soon as any councillor is penalised, or any council runs out of money to pay wages. A conference on April 20 of councillors and activists from Hackney, Islington and Camden endorsed this plan. If it is supported by any serious number of councils it will give new life to the campaign.

It was never likely that Tory minister Patrick Jenkin would come scurrying with a white flag as soon as councils voted to postpone setting a rate. Anyone who thinks that is what happened in Liverpool last year is suffering from an optical illusion. The Liverpool labour movement committed itself to an illegal budget and mobilised trade union action. Only given that commitment – and with the help of the miners' strike – was it able to use an (accidental) 'no rate' position as a basis for negotiation.

Liverpool had a commitment to confrontation. The 'no rate' council leaderships have been saying, so far (to quote Islington leader Margaret Hodge) that they will "*go right up to the brink*". Such a stance makes Jenkin's job easy. He waits for "the brink" to come right up to the councils and watches them panic.

But there are still enough councils left to win. Remember: the tiny Clay Cross council finished the Housing Finance Act single-handed though at tremendous cost. Even one council sticking to its commitments, right through to the point of confrontation, would worry the Tories. The present disorderly defeat without a fight is the worst alternative of all.

Any sizeable number of councils stopping debt payments simultaneously would be a serious blow to the City. It would end the phoney war overnight, and open head-on class struggle over the Rates Act.

The focus of the battle would then shift out of the council chambers and into the local authority workplaces and council estates.

Local authority trade unionists have shown themselves ready to fight. The campaign against the Rates Act so far has generated an unprecedented level of organisation among council shop stewards. The London Bridge shop stewards' committee has endorsed the call to stop debt payments.

The trade unionists, tenants and community groups who demonstrated on March 7 expect something from Labour councillors: not brilliant new tactical gambits, but simply some honesty, some willingness to stand by their loud promises to fight the Rates Act. They are prepared to take the risks of a struggle. They will not forgive the Labour Parties if we allow all the brave talk to end with a whimper.

John Bloxam

INTERVIEW WITH — FIRST

The debacle over ratecapping in Haringey has led to the election of a new leadership for the Labour Group. The old Council leader George Meehan was intent on taking Haringey out of the ratecapping campaign at the earliest opportunity. When the Party and majority of the Group opposed his attempt to panic them into making a rate, he and his deputy, Angela Greatley, resigned. As a consequence the Labour Group went into a ratemaking meeting on 11th April leaderless. At that meeting 13 right wing councillors, including Meehan and Greatley, broke with policy of the Group, local Party and unions and voted with the Tories against deferring a rate. Eventually a 14.19 per cent rate rise and a "creative accounting" budget was passed by the Tories and Labour right. The local campaign against ratecapping has been smashed.

The left has now taken over leadership of the Group. Dave Palmer of Haringey Briefing interviewed Bernie Grant, a Tottenham councillor and key figure in the Black Section movement, who has been elected Group Leader.

Q. *The election of the first black leader of a council is a historic breakthrough. What effect do you think it will have on the attitude of the black community, particularly locally, to Labour and what sort of role do you think that the black sections have had in bringing it about?*

A. I think that the black sections must have had some effect on the eventual outcome because the black sections have been very active in lobbying people. In terms of the effect on the black population, I think it has already had a dramatic effect. I have been told that black people in Tottenham are all discussing it. They are all overjoyed by it. We have already seen an effect in terms of potential recruitment. I would expect the Tottenham black section to undergo a big growth in membership over the next period. The priority is to build the black sections ... to get more black people involved in shaping their future.

Q. *So you think that as more black people get power in the LP, that is going to lead to a massive change in the attitude of black people and will lead to a large influx of members?*

A. Yes. It is quite clear that must be the case. If we get black Labour MPs then that will be another shot in the arm and more people will come forward. The thing is that through racism the black community, especially the youth, has been told that they are sub-normal, that they are violent, that there is no place in society for them. This has been put about in the media, schools and so on. People have been told that they can't achieve. Once they see black people in leading positions this will enable young black people to have something to aim for. So I'm all for getting people into leading positions.

Q. *Up till now opposition to black representation in the Labour Party has come mainly from the Labour right and the* Militant *Tendency. As black people get elected as MPs and into leading positions in the LP the likelihood is that those people are going to be attacked from another front ... by certain groups in the black 'left'. In the most recent issue of* Race & Class *there is an article, part of which is a direct attack on what you represent. To quote from it: "Black sections are no more representative of black working people than the Labour Party is of white. In fact black politics has to cease to be political for blacks to get into politics. The BTUSM (Black Trade Union Solidarity Movement) is no more interested in the rank and file than their Lordships Chapple and Murray were as erstwhile leaders of their unions". What do you think about that ... because there are likely to be more sorts of attacks like that from black 'leftists' in future?*

A. *Race & Class* **... what class? I would say. Because these people who are academics haven't got their feet in the black community and in the working class. They are academics who come about and criticise people for doing what they think is necessary. They don't represent anybody. They are very good at trying to knock anyone who is trying to do something for black working class people. I have got very little respect for people who come round and attack on a theoretical basis the work of the black sections and BTUSM.**

The BTUSM is trying to make sure black people get proper representation from their trade unions to ensure they fight racism. They pay their dues, they are entitled to proper representation and they're not getting it. Organisations like BTUSM are doing that ... that's their role. Along comes *Race & Class* **and starts attacking them. I don't have much time for them because, whilst they are free to criticise, I want them to show** *us* **what they have actually done for black people. BTUSM can point to where they have helped individuals to achieve something ... where they have taken initiatives within unions to try and get black representation. Similarly, people criticise black sections and black councillors and call them opportunist. But we can say we are fighting to do something concrete so people can relate to it and build up black self-esteem.**

Because the situation amongst black people is not the same as among white people. We are talking about people who have been suffering racism for hundreds of years. People who in some instances do not have a lot of self-esteem. We are talking about building up the self-esteem of black working class people, so that they can take things on themselves. These academics who sit in their ivory towers and pronounce are not on ... I want them to get their finger out and get to the grassroots of the community. Then I will have some respect for them.

Q. *You've taken a number of positions on international questions before, notably South Africa and Grenada. What do you think you can do now as council leader about those questions?*

A. I think that the situation is such in black and third world countries that it is incumbent on us to take up the cudgels on their behalf. Because I think my role in Britain is fighting to alleviate the pressures on those black people and other peoples who are not in the Westernised capitalist countries. My position would be firstly to create links with socialists in third world countries and with blacks in other countries. We are also going to look at how we can help out and further the cause of those comrades who are battling in Central America and the Caribbean. We are trying to get links with Nicaragua and at some stage we hope that the Nicaraguan Ambassador could address a meeting of Haringey council. When we take a party of youth to Jamaica in the summer I am personally hoping to take a party to Cuba for a few days. We have already established links with some of the women comrades in Cuba who came over, and we took them into Broadwater Farm (council estate with a high black population) and had a meal and so on.

Also the same for South Africa. We will be working with the ANC in order to support their struggle. We are not going in on a typical left patronising approach ... we will be asking what assistance we can give them. In the next year I hope we can declare Haringey an Apartheid Free Zone. If the council has investment funds who invest in South African companies, we can try to get out of that. Mainly, I think we can bring to the attention of the people in Haringey the plight of the people in the black countries and the third world countries so that we can establish links. Once we are able to establish links then I think the people themselves will make their own links and do their own thing.

Q. *You have taken over at a very difficult time in Haringey. A rate was made by a rebel right wing faction of the Labour Group in conjunction with the Tories. What future do you see for the campaign against ratecapping both locally and nationally?*

A. Because of the previous leadership ... and I might have respect for individuals ... but I do not have respect in the way in which they were led by the nose, we are in the unfortunate position of being out of the front line in the defence of local democracy and opposition to the rates act. That is a fact of life. We can only sit back, really, and give them support. On the one hand over the next period we will encourage those comrades to keep up the fight and support them. On the other hand the fight against the rates act and the attacks on local democracy continues. The government has got a Green Paper out on privatisation so struggle in the next period will not only be against ratecapping, it will also be against privatisation. They are talking about putting the dust, parks, catering services out to compulsory tender, and even if the council wins the tender, they are talking about the Secretary of State being able to overturn it and instruct the council they cannot give work to their own workforce. However, if for example a private contractor wins the tender, the Secretary of State has no power to go in and take it away. So we will have our hands full over the next period in terms of fighting against privatisation. What shape the struggle against ratecapping will take has yet to be worked out because we have got to see how long people can hold out ... In July new targets are going to be set and they are going to be telling us soon which other councils are going to be ratecapped. So there are going to be new people coming into the struggle. You will have learned lessons from this year's campaign and perhaps we will have to change our tactics in terms of the next period.

Now I see as key in all this getting together the groups in the borough, going out and explaining what the budget is all about, how it is made up and what we intend to do. Personally, I saw this in operation in Grenada ... Grenada and Haringey are a similar sort of size ... where 3 months before a budget was announced the New Jewel Movement went out for consultation with the pensioners, the youth groups and women's groups,

BERNIE GRANT BLACK COUNCIL LEADER



John Chapman

the Chamber of Commerce and everything, they all had their input into it. So that when the budget was brought out there were no surprises.

Q. *If the local unions take action to support other boroughs like Hackney who are still in the ratecapping fight would you support them in that?*
A. Yes, of course we would support the unions. I think one of the things we have to do is work quite closely with the Haringey Council unions. I am particularly conscious that at the end of the day it will be the strength of the unions that will see us through in any battle. Individual councillors can say we shall not be moved, but in terms of actually doing something that will have an impact on the government, it is the unions that ultimately have that sort of muscle and power. So we will have to work closely with the unions.

Q. *What is your attitude to the right wing faction in the Group who took Haringey out of the ratecapping campaign?*
A. I don't think we as a Group should do anything until the Party comes to us, after full discussion in the wards and GCs, and says what action to take. Because this is a Party matter as opposed to a Group matter. It is up to the Party to decide what to do with them. Personally, I think the biggest service the wards can do is to deselect those people who went against Party policy. I think that is the most constructive thing. I don't think we should have any witchhunt. I think the Party should deselect them and that's the end of it.

Q. *As things are going to be financially difficult next year, what policies do you think can be carried out within those constraints?*
A. We have to seriously start looking at the way our services are delivered, because not every problem can be solved by chucking money at it. There are very simple, straightforward things to be done which should make radical changes. For example, decentralisation, which I feel will radically alter the way in which services are produced. Initially it may cost us more, but in the long run, in terms of getting to the people, in terms of saving of officer time, in terms of saving people's time, I feel we will get gains that way. Because we have already seen it on Broadwater Farm where the sort of facilities available to tenants and the services provided are second to none. So I think decentralisation is one area we need to look at seriously and need to spend a lot of money on.

Q. *Since the end of the miners' strike there seems to have been a major realignment of the Labour left. Both in the attitude to Neil Kinnock and what happens over the ratecapping fight. Ken Livingstone, in a recent article in* Marxism Today *defined the split as between the particpatory left versus vanguardist left. He seemed to be implying that he now identified himself with the 'participatory' left (which used to be called the soft left). What do you think of this split and which side do you come down on?*
A. My attitude is I wouldn't come down on either side. I would look and see what the political situation is at the time and decide, on what are the requirements of the class and the LP. Although Kinnock is important, in some ways he is an irrelevance because events will take place that he cannot control. In relation to Livingstone and McDonnell, if you press me, I come down on the side of McDonnell, because he has been more principled in terms of the struggle than Livingstone. I personally thought the position Livingstone eventually took over ratecapping was a disgrace. Because people were calling for leadership and when he was called on to state where he stood ... when he was actually put to the test, he wasn't prepared to carry things through. I have felt very let down by Livingstone.

If that's the participatory left ... if that's the sort of Kinnock line ... then I am absolutely opposed to it. Then again, I don't see the Livingstones and Kinnocks as important. What is important is to get the grassroots in the party, the people in the community, to determine what's happening, to get people mobilised. We are in a period of mobilisation to get rid of this government. Whether Livingstone or Kinnock or whoever wants to manoeuvre in the party, I don't think that is important. We have got to get to the activists, get to the grassroots, in order to mobilise them in defence of basic democratic rights. I think what we are looking for in London in particular is a new leadership which is prepared to face going to jail on principle, and it doesn't matter if we have to face the whole force of the state against us, if we are prepared to stand up and challenge them. We need that kind of firm leadership. Now is the time to come forward with clear alternatives and stop the manoeuvring.

Westminster South reneges on Black Section

At a rather sad General Committee meeting on 25 March, the Westminster South Labour Party reneged on its month old commitment to establish a black section with full constitutional rights to seats on the G.C. and E.C.

An official from party headquarters had managed to frighten the members of the Executive Committee with a threat that if the party persisted with the rule changes all future actions and decisions would be open to challenge and could be ruled invalid. Alarmed that the local party would be destroyed by such measures, the Executive successfully persuaded a majority of the General Committee to reverse its earlier decision.

The real reason for the change was the anxiety of some members that such a rumpus would damage the party's chances in the 1986 local elections. Much time and effort has already been expended on this attempt to win control of Westminster City Council and many, particularly those already selected as candidates, are determined that nothing must interfere with the campaign.

What these comrades have failed to realise is that the sacrifice of principles to electoral expediency has probably already cost them the election. Why should voters, particularly black voters, bother to turn out for people who have shown themselves so willing to surrender their principles for marginal electoral advantages? Even more to the point if Labour did win control in Westminster, how will these men and women, who are panicked into an humiliating retreat at the first whiff of grapeshot from Walworth Road, react when faced with the full might and majesty of the capitalist state? Will they stand and fight when they see ranged against them the massed ranks of the courts, the judges, the police and the full weight and power of the City establishment?

I think I know the answer to that one and so does the electorate.

There are times when compromise is necessary, but this is not one of them. The miners have shown that this is a time for heroism and self sacrifice. The only way to arouse the enthusiastic support of the working class is to take a firm and principled stand and, if necessary, to go down fighting. Westminster Labour Party, I fear, may learn, too late, that they have sold out for nothing.

Paula Watson
Westminster South CLP

ILEA backs down on striking teacher

Vivienne Newby

This month I was due to face a disciplinary Tribunal at County Hall. The Tribunal was my appeal against a permanent reprimand being placed on my personal file which states that "It is to be deplored that you have no regard for the consequences of your actions upon your pupils". I was being disciplined for taking four trade union actions over a period of nearly two years. These strikes had been in support of the miners, health workers and my own teacher colleagues when we faced the threat of redeployment and job loss in our schools.

Although these strikes involved large numbers of trade unionists and NUT members acting in solidarity, they were deemed "unofficial" as they did not receive the "official" backing of my union executive.

I was the first teacher in London to be disciplined by ILEA for taking part in valid trade union action. Many other teachers however were beginning to find themselves similarly threatened.

Such disciplining of teachers who have taken "unofficial" strike action, had serious implications for trade union rights and solidarity, especially against the present background of Tory anti-trade union laws. Given the socialist platform of ILEA members, and their public support for the miners and other workers against job losses imposed by the Tory Government, questions were being asked about the contradictions implicit in ILEA's decision to discipline its teachers for giving that support, especially as these same teachers had supported ILEA when it was threatened with abolition by the Government.

A well co-ordinated campaign was built from George Orwell School NUT Group, publicising my Tribunal. Different NUT groups sent motions to the Authority condemning their action, and letters of support were sent to me personally. Alongside this, ordinary Labour Party members, not all of whom were teachers, took motions through their ward meetings. ILEA members were asked to listen to us and address themselves to the socialist principles they claimed to hold. They did listen. They asked their officers to withdraw from teachers' files the disciplinary letters which related to action in support of the miners. This has led to my Tribunal being "frozen", pending talks between our union and our employer. We can claim this as a small victory for democracy, which shows that ordinary Labour Party and union members are able to exercise their power through their wards and workplaces to call into account our elected members of ILEA.



Vivienne Newby, second from the left, at Islington march in support of the miners.

However the story cannot end there, but must end with the withdrawal from teachers' files of reprimands, and all letters which threaten them with disciplinary action, when they exercise their rights and solidarity as trade unionists, albeit under the label of "unofficial". "Unofficial" by whose criteria?

Although this attack on "unofficial" action by ILEA was not really about me personally, I was merely the first in line, it did at times feel very personal. On this basis I would like to say thank you to everyone who played a part in this campaign.

ILEA: ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

Never let it be said that our comrades on the ILEA do not respond to their Party's policy. Following on from the London Labour Party Conference decision in March, the officers of the Inner London Teachers' Association secured an agreement with the ILEA, which ended the compulsory movement of teaching staff for this year only.

The ILTA agreement has also frozen disciplinary proceedings in train against London teachers who took industrial action in support of the miners. When one contrasts ILEA's capitulation over rate-capping with Hackney Council, which, at the time of writing, is still holding out, it is interesting to note that one of the teachers to suffer from ILEA's uncomradely behaviour was Hilda Kean, Leader of Hackney Council. In April, Hilda, a teacher in North London, was informed that her indiscipline would be recorded on her references for the next three years.

The ending of compulsory transfer has taken many London teachers by surprise. Teachers are still being identified in schools as "surplus to requirements". Across London, hit lists in schools vary from mere handfuls to staggering lists of 60. Headteachers and District Inspectors are still interviewing hapless classroom teachers and informing them that they have been chosen for voluntary transfer. They emphasise that the process really is voluntary, but then hint at problems if the volunteers do not cooperate.

The most serious attack on Inner London education, aside from the Government, is still ILEA's determination to reorganise 16-19 education out of secondary schools. It needs to be reiterated that the policy has nothing to do with an educational judgment in favour of 6th Form college rather than secondary schools.

There is no disagreement that, in London, working class children are not opting to stay in 16+ education. ILEA members contend, simplistically, that 16+ education in secondary schools is unattractive because students lack sufficient choice of subjects and courses. They argue that if resources were pooled and centralised in FE colleges or sixth form centres, choice could be widened and made more attractive. In part, they are seeking to shift resources from secondary schools into some form of separated 16+ education. This will also allow them to shed large numbers of teachers.

The main thrust of ILEA's reorganisation is to bring about a deliberate worsening of the staffing ratios for 11-16 education (from 17:1 to 17.9:1 pupils per teacher in the basic allocation ratio) in order to finance their plans for 16-19 education. This partly explains the huge numbers of teachers currently identified as surplus to requirements. The direct consequence of this is an increase in class size for 11-16 pupils, which will seriously impair the quality of the education they receive. They will then be even less likely to opt to continue their education at the age of 16.

ILEA's consultation methods remain farcical. The single public meeting for Tower Hamlets and Hackney was poorly attended. Parents were informed of the meeting by a leaflet given to children on the same day as the meeting. Many primary school parents received no notification at all. Even if they were willing to attend, few could have organised baby-sitters at such short notice. The projected meeting for Southwark has been equally poorly publicised. I doubt if the situation has been handled differently elsewhere in ILEA's 10 divisions.

For ILEA members like Bryn Davies and Andy Harris to describe critics of their policies as reactionary simply begs the question. Secondary education in London is failing and to deliberately increase class sizes, as ILEA is doing, will produce more failure, not less.

Keith Lichman Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

GLC BY-ELECTION:

VAUXHALL SELECTS BLACK WOMAN

During the week in which the cancelled GLC elections should have been held, the polls showed that 50% of Londoners supported Labour. But, apart from some ads in the press, the campaign to save the GLC seems, to all extents and purposes, to have ground to a halt in the wake of the recriminations and purges following the GLC's budget fiasco. To the cynical, Ken's political career now seems to take precedence over the objective need to retain a democratically-elected London-wide authority.

The London Labour Party has taken a back seat in the campaign against abolition — allowing County Hall to provide the finance, expertise and imagination. The time has now come for the party to take the lead — both at regional and constituency level. Despite Ken's statements to the press, the anti-ratecapping campaign is not over. We have not been defeated. Those ready and willing to fight in the Party have to link up with trade unionists and keep the campaigns against abolition and against ratecapping going.

The 'fixed' by-elections last September did not provide the boost to the campaign they aimed to. But three real by-elections in South London in July, coinciding with the abolition bill going through the Lords, could provide the focus we need. The by-elections are happening because of the resignations of Gladys Dimson, Andy Harris and Bryn Davies in Battersea, Putney and Vauxhall respectively. The latter two have made it clear they will not serve for longer than their elected term.

Whilst most energies need to be concentrated in Putney — which needs a 10 per cent swing to Labour if the last general election figures mean anything and which has seen an influx of middle-class SDP-types over the past few years — in Vauxhall we expect to be the first constituency to elect a Black woman, Lorna Boreland, to the GLC. We aim to be out campaigning not just against abolition, not just for Lambeth Council's stand against ratecapping, not just on a whole range of education issues, but also on issues of particular importance to women and Black people. As well as fighting on the GLC's record of involving disadvantaged and minority groups, we will need to be challenging the racists who have been attempting to organise on some of our estates, taking up police harassment of local Black youths — and confronting the myth, still perpetuated by white males, especially those in the PLP, that Blacks and women are electoral liabilities.

This by-election will be an important test for Vauxhall's Black Section. Forced by the resistance to change and institutionalised racism of the Party to concentrate energies on constitutional issues, much of the necessary work of going out to the local community to win Black people to the Party has not been a priority. Moreover, the size of Vauxhall's constituency (from Waterloo in the north to Clapham and Brixton in the south) has meant that most Black Section activists and activities are based in Brixton and they have not made significant inroads into the northern part of the constituency — which is the area covered by the GLC by-election because it is based on pre-83 boundaries. Whilst not Brixton, the old Vauxhall still has a significant proportion of Black voters and potential Black Section activists. The Black Section nominated Lorna, but was not involved in the selection conference itself as their only eligible delegate (only delegates resident in the 5 wards of the old constituency could participate) had to give apologies because of family commitments. Because Lorna was also nominated by other organisations, regional staff "ignored" the Black Section nomination and allowed the selection to proceed. Rumours abound about the Black Section's participation, but I believe that it doesn't stand as a precedent to be used either by supporters or opponents of Black Sections. If a Black Section delegate had been present, we would have gone ahead and "faced the consequences". As one wasn't, it was a non-event as far as the campaign for recognition of Black Sections is concerned. What is important is that a firm supporter of the right of Black and women comrades to organise autonomously has been selected as a prospective candidate. We had two contenders who were both rigorously questioned on their positions on accountability and how they would have voted on 10th March. Both answered well — but Lorna's knowledge of ILEA gave her the edge. Positive discrimination, yes, but not tokenism.

Bryn Davies has stuck firmly to Vauxhall's policy of non-compliance with ratecapping and, as one of the Ten, has been made to pay for his principles. As vice-chair of Norwood CLP, Lorna's commitment to the fight against ratecapping in Lambeth and elsewhere is not in doubt. We will be watching to see the extent of the majority of the GLC Labour Group's commitment to positive discrimination during the by-election campaign and when Lorna joins them. If the all white male composition of the Policy and Resources Committee is anything to go by, the first Black woman on the GLC may receive a less than rapturous welcome!

Details of where and when to help in the by-elections will be in next month's Briefing, or contact the London Labour Party.

Joan Twelves, Secretary, Vauxhall CLP and Regional EC member

A socialist strategy for the provision of legal services

The London Labour Party Conference in March took the first steps in formulating a socialist legal service for London by approving unanimously a resolution sent by the Richmond and Barnes Labour Party calling for the establishment of a regional working party to devise a strategy for the provision of legal and advice services in London.

One of the profound achievements of the GLC has been to provide funding and resources to Law Centres and Advice Centres including Citizens Advice Bureaux. We began to see the establishment of a network of public legal services in London. Many of these Centres are now at risk because of the threat of abolition. Very few local authorities have agreed to take over funding. The result will inevitably be to strengthen the power of the private sector and the legal profession which have never encouraged the initiatives taken at local level to provide better and more accessible legal services.

The Labour movement which has a record of achievement in campaigning on issues connected with the National Health Service and which is vigorous in its attacks on private medicine, has failed to campaign effectively on the need to roll back the power of the private sector in law. It must have something to do with the fact that so many Labour lawyers are making their fortunes under the present system, so why change it? When in office all we have done is to raise the legal aid limits from time to time. Legal Aid work is regarded as being second rate work by private solicitors and rarely is it touched. Vital areas such as employment rights and welfare rights do not come within the Legal Aid scope.

There is clearly a need for a thorough review of our approach to the legal profession and when we come to draw up our next manifesto it ought to include as a minimum the fusion of the archaic division between solicitors and barristers, the abolition of the Bar, a new democratic system for the appointment of judges and magistrates, and the removal of the Law Society's control of civil legal aid. But much more important must be a wholehearted commitment to the Law and Advice Centre as the founding stone of the national legal service.

Local Labour Parties must as an emergency item begin campaigns specifically designed to draw attention to the erosion of civil liberties that would occur if any Law Centres or advice agencies were scrapped. It must be shown to be a matter of fundamental rights. People have to be reminded that they do not need to seek legal or other advice merely because of criminal offences or if they are suing for a debt. There are a whole host of civil rights in education, housing, social services, employment and in every other area which they should know about.

It has of course been the struggle of the miners that has woken up the Labour and Trade Union movement to the unrepresentative and unaccountable nature of legal services in Britain. We must show by campaigning for proper legal services for all that we regard access to law as being as fundamental as the right to free medical health care.

Keith Vaz and Valerie Vaz
Members of the
Socialist Legal Services Campaign

BRENT EAST AND

On April 28th Brent East CLP selected Ken Livingstone as its Prospective Parliamentary Candidate. Following the selection a number of delegates to the selection conference wrote in to Briefing. We print below *every* article received.

CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR KEN

The 'contra ballotistas' failed to win majority support in Brent East despite their argument in May Briefing (and elsewhere) that "Ken Livingstone can no longer be trusted" because of the GLC budget fiasco.

Some of the 'contras' were honest. Their support for Ken Livingstone did change as a result of the exposure of backroom manoeuverings on the ratecapping issue. But a small number of 'contras' never intended to support him. Well before the GLC budget fixing meeting they had looked for a candidate to entice votes away from Livingstone who was clearly the popular choice of the Left dominated GMC. Many on the Left feel that as a Black woman candidate Diane Abbott was used and badly abused. Having made approaches to Diane, her 'supporters' did very little to promote and provide backing support. Half way through the Selection Process they seemed to drop interest in her altogether and only returned to support her when they lost the no-ballot position at the Selection Conference.

The GLC ratecapping issue enabled the anti-Livingstone and disaffected Livingstone supporters to unite. However, with no willing candidate sufficiently well known and with widespread popular appeal to counter Livingstone, they opted for the no-ballot position in order to oust him and buy time to find another candidate who might have more solidly Left and trustworthy credentials.



Ken Livingstone with Brent East Chair, Emma Tait, following his selection John Chapman

TEMPTING ARGUMENT

In some ways it was a tempting argument because almost no one of the Left was happy about what had happened in the GLC and clearly there were criticisms to be levelled at the Leader, as a motion passed at the GMC a few days before the Selection Conference demonstrated. But there were also criticisms of the antics of the entire GLC Leadership with no-one coming out of it looking very good, and many Labour members feeling they had been manipulated and conned.

Secondly, having invested so much energy into getting the right to select its PPC and having pinned its sails to the Livingstone mast at least three years ago, many potential candidates knew they did not stand a chance of being selected in Brent East and turned down offers to be considered. If the Selection Conference was collapsed then Livingstone would probably be selected elsewhere and the CLP could start afresh and look at a new crop of candidates.

Those delegates on the Left who voted against collapsing the Selection Conference, most of whom voted for Ken Livingstone, did so only after a lot of thought, reassessment and discussion. On the whole they decided that to do otherwise was a negative stance and one fraught with dangers. But there were also positive reasons why they maintained support for Ken Livingstone.

It was partly because the Selection Process was delayed last time and the Left caucused that the NEC stopped the CLP selecting its PPC before the last General Election and imposed the sitting MP. There was a widespread feeling that there was unfinished business – the Party wanted to see the NEC endorse its original choice.

POPULAR CHOICE

Although most wards, trade union branches and affiliated socialist societies had decided on their short-list before the GLC rate fixing meeting they held nomination meetings after the issue had been settled. Ken Livingstone gained 13 of the 18 nominations. He remained the popular choice of most Party members.

There was no indication that the local electorate considered Ken Livingstone untrustworthy. Indeed, they would probably be confused if Brent East suddenly decided to drop him. The GLC ratefixing fiasco did not seem to be a major issue with them. Rather, many in the Irish and Black communities were looking forward to Ken Livingstone being the local Labour Party candidate.

With a sitting MP, an ex-Minister, determined 'not to go away', and threatening to stand as an independent candidate, unless the Labour candidate is able to command substantial support in the Constituency, there would be a real danger of splitting the Labour vote and letting in a Tory.

The question of Ireland is one on which both Brent East and Ken Livingstone share publicly known positions. The Party knows that the large Irish community in the Constituency respect him for his vociferous stand on British withdrawal from the north of Ireland. Although it was accepted that Ken Livingstone was not the only Labour Party member with republican views, he is one of the few leading politicians that the Irish community identify with. It is very important to Brent East that its Parliamentary representative will take a firm and vigorous stance on the question of Ireland. If Ken Livingstone bottles out on this issue, then it is likely that this Party would cease to support him.

Few people would disagree that Ken Livingstone should be in Parliament in order to help strengthen the more radical part of the PLP, and perhaps eventually stand as Leader of the Labour Party.

With a Left dominated GMC, Brent East considered it would be in a good position to maintain the pressure on Livingstone to promote radical socialist policies and practices. The ratecapping issue has certainly tarnished his image and credentials in the eyes of the Left, and any hero worship has evaporated. But it has led to a more sober and realistic recognition of his strengths and weaknesses, and acknowledgement that 'controlling' Livingstone will undoubtedly be difficult. Perhaps it has always been unrealistic to think that a CLP can control a shrewd and ambitious politician, other than through the reselection process. It will challenge the political organisation of Brent East and that may prove to be healthy for the CLP.

Although there is a difference of opinion within the Left in Brent East about Ken Livingstone, almost everyone on the Left will give him (critical) support. How critical that support from the Left becomes will depend on Ken Livingstone's performance in the Constituency, demonstration of accountability to the CLP and the extent to which he promotes Brent East policies – even if they are contrary to national party views.

Emma Tait Chair, Brent East CLP
(writing in a personal capacity)

KEN LIVINGSTONE

PERSONALITIES OR POLITICS?

April 28th 1985 marked an historic moment in Brent and London politics as the first successful deselection of a sitting MP, former Housing Minister Reg Freeson, took place at the Brent East selection meeting. The selection of Ken Livingstone marked the end of a six-year battle to exercise control over who the Parliamentary candidate is – a battle which has involved the NEC and its officers in deliberate attempts to save Freeson. It is partly a tribute to the determination of Brent East CLP that Freeson has ended up a defeated and isolated figure.

However in the last extraordinary weeks of this saga Livingstone was clearly receiving support from an unusual source – national agent David Hughes and his London sidekick Terry Ashton. How was it that Livingstone's erstwhile opponents on the NEC suddenly used bureaucratic measures – particularly suppression of debate in branches – to ensure his selection? The answer of course lies in the widespread disarray in Brent East over Ken Livingstone's vote for a ratecapped GLC budget on March 10th. The joy of Neil Kinnock at Livingstone's selection found an uneasy echo in the minds of the left, who had campaigned hard for his adoption until March – had we been sold another opportunist?

These fears were fuelled by Ken Livingstone's increasingly hostile position to those, both in the GLC Labour Group and in London boroughs, who dared to advocate opposition to ratecapping. At the selection conference, Livingstone attacked the London boroughs who continue to resist as "sure to collapse" and explained that he was not conducting a GLC witch hunt against anyone "except John McDonnell". The despair of many left delegates, searching desperately for reasons to cling to Livingstone, was expressed by one much-respected veteran delegate who hopefully suggested that "ratecapping is an invention of the ultra-left"!

Right turn

For most delegates Livingstone's right turn had gone too far – as explained last month, a political career had been put before Party policy on the most important issue in local government for a decade or more. Twenty-two left delegates voted to start the whole selection again (50 right and soft left votes were cast to continue). In the first ballot most of the left supported the black woman candidate, Diane Abbott (26 votes) whilst a strange coalition of CLP officers, soft left delegates and Socialist Action stayed with Livingstone (31 votes). In the final ballot 18 votes cast for right-wing Kinnockites swung behind Livingstone (giving him a 50-25 majority). Ironically those who had supported Freeson and attacked the Brent East party in the media for three years now cast their vote for Livingstone.

What lessons can be drawn from the Brent East selection for the London Labour Party? The most important, in view of the NEC's green light for Livingstone *when it suited them*, is to ensure that CLPs choose candidates how and when they wish. As Bermondsey proved, and Lewisham East and others are now experiencing, the NEC right and centre bitterly resent the democratic victory of 1981. Where necessary the NEC and its full-time officers must be defied. Sadly some genuine socialists in Brent East were bundled along a bureaucratic road to Livingstone's selection by the silver tongues of full-time Party officials.

Secondly a thorough discussion needs to be held inside the Party on what type of candidate is needed. Many in Brent East looked for a socialist candidate who would not capitulate to pressure from the right – when Livingstone caved in *before* selection. Far too many comrades discovered that they really supported Livingstone because he was popular or had a record on the GLC. But there are many comrades across London who are fighting ratecapping, who also have excellent credentials in opposing the British occupation of the north of Ireland – but perhaps lacked publicity of the type Livingstone draws.

Realignment

Thirdly, and perhaps of most significance to Labour's future, are the lessons of the "realignment" proceeding apace in the Party. Ken Livingstone's claim at the selection that no new alliances were being built is a shabby and insulting lie. Ken himself has gleefully outlined his "new" theory of the "participatory left" and their "realistic" role in the next Labour government. His practice at County Hall has shown his rapid accommodation to the reality of Kinnock's strengthened position following the miners' defeat. Every London Labour party is now experiencing a new attempt to isolate what Livingstone calls the "vanguard left", i.e. those who wish not to reform but transform British capitalism. It will be the task of the left to support the ratecapped councils and resist the new "left pressure on Kinnock" analysis so beloved of the LCC and the Eurocommunists.

Finally, Brent East is an overwhelmingly white party which had only a handful of black delegates at a selection conference in a constituency with a large black population. Few delegates, including those on the left, took the issue of positive discrimination seriously – for the vast majority Diane Abbott remained a token candidate. Her impressive behaviour throughout the selection process – despite a considerable propaganda campaign against her – has forced the issue in Brent and elsewhere. The difficult decisions involved in encouraging and making way for black people and women has now to proceed throughout London. Certainly Ken Livingstone's claim that "I always choose black or women candidates where their talents are similar" has left many delegates thinking critically of their role in the selection.

Graham Durham
Brent East CLP

RIGHT SELECT LIVINGSTONE

On April 28th, Brent East selected Ken Livingstone as its PPC. That is well known by now. What is not well known is that he won because *the right* transferred their votes to him on the second ballot. There were four candidates – Ken Livingstone, Diane Abbott (Black, left-wing Westminster Councillor), John Ryan (right-wing Brent Councillor) and Anthony West (right-wing ASLEF official).

The voting was: First ballot – Livingstone 31; Abbott 26; Ryan 15; West 3. Second ballot – Livingstone 50; Abbott 25.

Most of the right preferred the white male hero of the GLC debacle to a black woman who made it clear that accountability meant carrying out policy, not wrecking it.

Indeed, on the day it was difficult to understand how *anyone* on the left could vote for Livingstone. He 'excused' a joke about AIDS made to a Students Union by saying he has a sick sense of humour; claimed his right to a safe seat in an area with a large black population by saying he wanted to be in parliament for a long time (remember how he used to say that the main issue was winning the marginals, not reselection?) and wound up with a bitter attack on John McDonnell.

Yet many on the left with whom we have worked closely in the past *did* still support Livingstone with dubious arguments and personal attacks on those who campaigned to drop him. They now face a serious choice – either they continue to work with those on the left who refused to support Livingstone, *or* with those who helped them get their candidate selected – the right. We are willing to work with them and Livingstone (though not to accommodate to him). The next few months will show whether the left who voted for Livingstone go for the 'realignment of forces' which Livingstone argues for in Marxism Today and shift Brent East to the right.

'Unity at any price' has always been the war-cry of the right and those moving right: no-one on the left has ever accepted it. We will unite around specific policies and principles but not ditch them in favour of a spurious and abstract unity.

Signed by the following delegates to the selection conference (in a personal capacity):

Steve Barton
Jacqui Brown
Kyran Connolly
Rosemary Deane
Pete Firmin
Jill Fried
Paddy Harkins
Deborah Knight
Howard Platt
Dave Statham
John Tymon
Mark Wall
Mick Woods
Paul Wilkinson
Ian McLelland

Why Brent East made the right choice

APRIL 28th, 1985, should have been a day of celebration in Brent East CLP. Instead, the three-year campaign for our right to reselect was overshadowed by the fall-out from March 10th during which personal relationships on the left in Brent East reached an all-time low. Before I explain why I think Brent East made the right decision it is important to note a few facts.

Firstly, a minority of the GMC delegates can be described as "hard left", even fewer as Marxist revolutionaries. To achieve the election of hard left/revolutionary candidate would have been difficult, though that is not an argument against trying.

Secondly, of those who voted to collapse the selection conference, less than half had changed their minds since March 10th – the rest, for quite valid political reasons, had always opposed the selection of Livingstone. Some had organised against him in 1982 and organised against him this year prior to March 10th.

Thirdly, the Livingstone bandwagon was reaching top speed. For many comrades it was a matter of clearing up unfinished business. The NEC had prevented Livingstone's selection in 1983 and it was a question of putting matters straight. One of the many ironies of the past few months is that when approached about possible candidates should the selection be collapsed, Graham Durham came up with the names of three women from Brent East – all of them voted for Livingstone on April 28th. Some of the comrades who changed their positions had helped to start the Livingstone bandwagon – they ended up getting run over by it.

I have supported Ken Livingstone's candidature since 1982. I have never considered him to be, nor has he ever claimed to be, a revolutionary. His performance during GLC budget-making was inexcusable and has damaged his reputation on the left -- not a bad thing, as hero worship is no good for anyone. However, he is still seen by most Labour activists and supporters as being different from Kinnock and Labour leaders of the past. It was precisely for this reason and to unite the Left against Freeson, the sitting MP, that many comrades supported him in 1982/3.

The other reason for supporting him then and now is the state of class struggle against the Tory government. It is no coincidence that the budget-making debacle came as the miners' strike ended, a morale-sapping setback. It is quite clear that the pace of class struggle has now slowed right down. Were it to be forging ahead and Ken Livingstone holding it back I would not have supported him. Should that situation arise I would be working to ditch him. Graham Durham and Dave Statham wrote in the May Briefing that the working class of Brent East fully understood what Livingstone had done on March 10th. I agree. Unfortunately most of them will have accepted what he did as a mistake or an evil necessity. I wish we were in a situation where they were demonstrating outside County Hall in protest but that is patently not the case.

Finally, some comrades have said that Ken Livingstone should become an MP but not in Brent East. I find this rather incongruous but also highly defeatist. One of the reasons given by some comrades is that Ken Livingstone will swamp the party with people committed to watering down Brent East's policies. A terrific and essential fight took place a few years ago to introduce radical policies – in particular on the Irish question. This was an undoubted success. Now it is time to move on – it is time to turn Brent East out to the working class and to involve more people in the Labour Party. Many of those comrades who voted against Livingstone admit he can help to do it. Many are also afraid of the consequences – this is a sign of weakness on their part, not one of strength. People can only be worried about a Trojan horse if they are too weak to defend against it.

Selecting Ken Livingstone as PPC for Brent East always was and will remain a tremendous challenge to the hard left. The fight to achieve reselection inevitably meant a lot of time spent in internal Party meetings. Now is the time to unite and build a community-based Labour Party able to take on the Government over ratecapping and all its pernicious policies. It is not a simple task, but one that has to be done, if there are to be any radical changes in the near future.

Colin Adams,
Brent East CLP

Positive action betrayed

It would appear from TLG's last article on reselection that support for black and/or women candidates is essential everywhere... except Brent East!

All principled opposition to Ken Livingstone is reduced to "white male activists engaged in ideological warfare with Ken", thereby excluding all the women who felt dissatisfied with Ken in particular, and *white male* candidates in general. Ironically, those activists supporting Ken *were* largely white males – the usual power-brokers in Brent East politics.

Throughout the selection process Ken was questioned closely about his commitment to positive action (and TLG objectives) by chasing after a safe seat in a multi-ethnic area. His answer was that he "wanted a base from which to transform the PLP, the Civil Service and British society as a whole", and he wouldn't stand in a marginal because he wasn't prepared to risk the same fate as Tony Benn in Bristol. He added that he was happy to represent us for the next 30 years. However, he *did* give us his assurance that he would be prepared to offer his resignation if he felt he was out of line with Brent East policy.

Ken seems to be under the impression that if you're not a 'Livingstonite', you must be a 'McDonnellite'. Our reasons for opposing him were matters of political principle, not factionalism, and Ken should surely know by now that feminists (unlike most men) do not hero-worship figureheads. Indeed, the Left in Brent East have long argued that policies, not personalities, mattered most. Sadly, in the end, commitment to a personality was, for many, more important that the policies they professed to support.

With regard to the mandation argument (are we delegates or individuals?) we would like to relate our experience in facing our wards with this problem. By March 10th *all* wards had drawn up their shortlists, and one or two had even nominated. Others were to follow in the next few days, before the impact of what had taken place at County Hall had really hit home. Suddenly even people who had supported Ken unswervingly were full of misgivings. So we argued that the process should be suspended, to give us all time to discuss the ratecapping issue in our wards. This was refused us, and an open meeting on ratecapping which the Left organised was virtually boycotted. We therefore tried to raise the 'moral mandate' question – we didn't feel we were just voting fodder, but we all feel very strongly about accountability. Sadly, many wards refused to allow the debate, but those who did fully endorsed delegates' right to vote according to their consciences. After all, why *have* a Selection Conference if you are just carrying a mandate? Why sit for hours listening to speeches and asking questions? Why not just let the officers rubberstamp the candidate on number of nominations?

Lastly, many women comrades are surprised by Ken's new assessment of Left politics – that feminism and sexual politics will be championed by the participatory (soft) Left, rather than the vanguardist (hard) Left. Once again, a white male defines our political priorities and direction for us. How do TLG comrades feel about that?

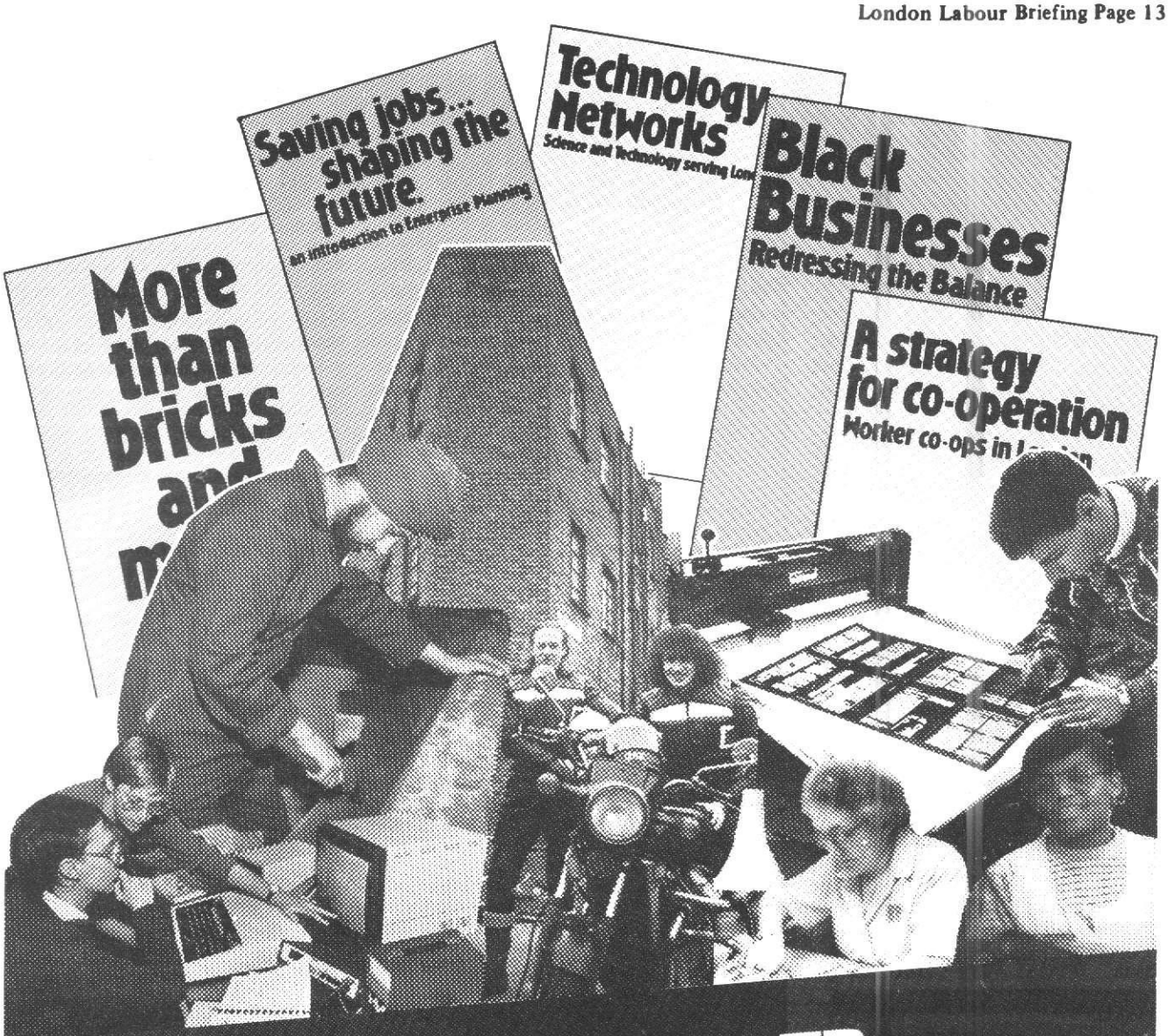
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Jill Fried
Rosemary Deane
Deborah Knight
Sally Palmer

Women delegates to Brent East selection conference.

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Prince's room, Ealing Town Hall

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VALERIE VAZ
Chair Ealing Action for Benefits
MICHAEL LE BRUN
DHSS, Harrow
JOHN MCSORLEY
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WIN LONDON!

Labour's performance in London could pave the way for a Labour Government at the next general election. This is the outcome of various opinion polls published recently; the most interesting of these polls is the one conducted by the Harris Research Centre and commissioned by the GLC. According to this poll, Labour would end up winning 64 seats, Tories 28, Liberals 2, SDP 0.

This result would be based on the continuing and loyal support of Black Londoners, nearly 90% of whom are indicating their support for Labour despite the efforts of the NEC to drive this support away. It is important that Left candidates get selected in all the marginal seats indicated on the accompanying table.

Parliamentary Constituencies	Present MP	1985 Poll outcome	Labour lead % 1983	Black electorate 1981	Reselections – Progress chart
Barking	J. Richardson (L)	LAB	11.8	5.4	
Battersea	A. Dubs (L)	LAB	7.5	21.6	A. Dubs (white male) selected. Shortlist of one!!
Bethnal Green and Stepney	P. Shore (L)	LAB	20.6	24.4	NEC inquiry into "infiltration" by Black members.
Bow and Poplar	I. Mikardo (L)	LAB	18.3	15.4	Shortlist of 6 includes 4F and 2B — Selection on 19/5/85
Brent East	R. Freeson (L)	LAB	12.4	29.9	Livingstone (WM) selected (27th April)
Brent North	R. Boyson (C)	LAB*	−33.2	23.0	Closing date 13/6/85 Support for Black candidates.
Brent South	L. Pavitt (L)	LAB	26.4	45.7	Selection on 13/6/85 — All Black shortlist
Brentford and Isleworth	B. Hayhoe (C)	LAB*	−18.2	13.7	
Carshalton and Wallington	N. Forman (C)	LAB*	−33.8	3.5	
Croydon Central	J. Moore (C)	LAB*	−30.5	7.6	
Croydon North East	B. Weatherill (C)	LAB*	−30.1	13.4	
Croydon North West	H. Malins (C)	LAB*	−18.1	22.7	Request for early selection likely to be refused
Dulwich	G. Bowden (C)	LAB*	−4.9	17.2	Closing date 1/7/85
Ealing Acton	G. Young (C)	LAB*	−22.5	14.0	Begins after selections for Borough Council candidates are completed
Ealing North	H. Greenaway (C)	LAB*	−12.3	14.3	Begins after selection for Borough Council candidates are completed
Ealing Southall	S. Bidwell (L)	LAB	21.8	43.7	NEC inquiry into "infiltration" by Black members
Edmonton	I. Twinn (C)	LAB*	−2.7	17.0	Nominations close 10/6/85
Eltham	P. Bottomley (C)	LAB*	−18.6	4.4	
Enfield North	T. Eggar (C)	LAB*	−23.8	7.2	
Erith and Crayford	D. Evennett (C)	LAB*	−9.8	6.4	Closing date 26/6/85 — Support for all-women shortlist growing
Feltham and Heston	P. Ground (C)	LAB*	−3.9	19.6	
Finchley	M. Thatcher (C)	LAB*	−24.2	16.4	
Fulham	M. Stevens (C)	LAB*	−12.2	11.6	Early selection requested. No date set yet.
Hampstead and Highgate	G. Finsberg (C)	LAB*	−7.6	9.4	
Harrow East	H. Dykes (C)	LAB*	−27.5	16.9	
Hayes and Harlington	T. Dicks (C)	LAB*	−10.4	11.0	Closing date 28/6/85. Key marginal
Hendon North	J. Gorst (C)	LAB*	−26.2	11.2	
Hendon South	P. Thomas (C)	LAB*	−27.5	14.8	
Hornchurch	R. Squire (C)	LAB*	−20.2	3.0	
Hornsey and Wood Green	H. Rossi (C)	LAB*	−7.4	21.3	Closing date 7/6/85. Support for all-women shortlist growing
Ilford North	V. Bendall (C)	LAB*	−26.1	7.5	
Ilford South	N. Thorne (C)	LAB*	−11.1	19.9	
Islington North	J. Corbyn (L)	LAB	15.2	21.0	J. Corbyn (WM) reselected — shortlist of one!!
Islington South and Finsbury	C. Smith (L)	LAB	1.0	11.8	Reselection likely to be put off to 1986
Kensington	B. Rhys-Williams (C)	LAB*	−16.4	11.0	
Lewisham Deptford	J. Silkin (L)	LAB	16.8	23.4	Reselection likely after October Conference decision on Black Sections
Lewisham East	C. Moynihan (C)	LAB*	−4.5	9.6	NEC interference tries to stop selection of Black candidate
Lewisham West	J. Maples (C)	LAB*	−5.7	12.0	
Leyton	H. Cohen (L)	LAB	11.9	26.7	Closing date 7/6/85 — No serious challenge likely (WM)
Mitcham and Morden	A. Rumbold (C)	LAB*	−13.9	11.6	
Newham North East	R. Leighton (L)	LAB	21.9	32.6	Closing date 17/6/85 — No serious challenge likely (WM)
Newham North West	T. Banks (L)	LAB	24.7	32.7	No reselection without Black Section
Newham South	N. Spearing (L)	LAB	27.1	13.0	Closing date 8/5/85 — No serious challenge likely (WM)

Racists encouraged by Islington Council

Islington council has an Equal Opportunities Employment Policy, negotiated and agreed with the unions, which states that 'black workers will be given equal rights'. During last year, 'Anti-Racist Year', the council promoted its own 'One Islington Campaign'. The last council meeting heard speakers from SWAPO, ANC, and the Pan-African Congress, and voted to declare Islington an apartheid-free zone.

However, this is only the public face of an apparently progressive socialist Council which has been unable to effectively deal with prolonged and systematic racial harassment amongst its workforce.

NALGO first became aware that a black workers in a section of the Housing Department was being harassed in January 1984. It became clear that this situation had been going on for the previous two years. A number of black workers had been affected and all had left the section as quickly as possible. While in the section they have been excluded from social events and have endured outrageous racist comments, accusations of incompetence and dishonesty, and incidents like ashtrays being emptied over desks. The two black workers who took the matter up with us were also ostracised by the rest of the section.

We took up the first case and got nowhere with management, who insisted on redeploying our black member and, despite negotiations lasting several months, took no formal discipiinary action against the racists, two of whom are believed to have National Front connections. The worker who was redeployed experienced problems in her new section caused by management's inability to face up to the reasons for her redeployment and was subsequently moved again. Almost a year after NALGO first approached management, the worker was moved to a third section where she is now happy in her job.

Meanwhile another black worker started work in the original section. Though the racists were, to begin with, somewhat muted, she too suffered harassment and like all previous black workers in the section moved as soon as possible. NALGO nsisted that the racists be formally disciplined and the charges heard by councillors on the Personnel Sub-committee. We were hopeful that after such a long time, the matter would be properly dealt with by the Council.

In fact, we have been appalled at the result of the sub-committee meeting. Five people were charged with racial harassment by management. The sub-committee found two 'not guilty' and found the remaining three guilty of only half the charges. (It appears that in cases where it was a black worker's word against that of a white worker, the committee automatically found the racists not guilty.) The councillors on the sub-committee in fact took the minimal disciplinary action, by cautioning one worker and cautioning and reprimanding the other two. We feel that by doing this, the council is giving a licence to all racists in the workforce to harass people and know they can get away with it. Our demand of management that workers found guilty of racial harassment should not be allowed to work with the public has been rejected. Meanwhile our worst fears have been realised and five people (witnesses and union officials) are experiencing intimidation and harassment at their homes, which could well be organised by the NF. Black workers who have put themselves at risk by exposing racism have been betrayed by the council, and it seems that the Equal Opportunities Employment Policy and all the council's other apparently anti-racist initiatives are nothing but empty words and gestures.

Dave Burn,
Branch secretary, Islington NALGO
Member, Islington Labour Party.

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Peckham	H. Harman (L)	LAB	27.4	20.6	Closing date 10/6/85 — Reselection challenge to H. Harman (WF) likely
Putney	D. Mellor (C)	LAB*	−10.7	8.8	
Romford	M. Neubert (C)	LAB*	−34.1	2.4	
Streatham	W. Shelton (C)	LAB*	−15.0	20.2	
Tooting	T. Cox (L)	LAB	5.8	24.1	Reselection ?/6/85. Shortlist of one likely (WM)
Tottenham	N. Atkinson (L)	LAB	21.8	37.5	Closing date 5/6/85 — Contest likely between three men (2W, 1B)
Twickenham	T. Jessel (C)	LIB*	−42.9	4.5	
Upminster	N. Bonsor (C)	LAB*	−32.0	1.7	
Uxbridge	M. Shersby (C)	LAB*	−32.0	4.5	
Vauxhall	S. Holland (L)	LAB	19.8	25.1	No reselection without Black Section
Walthamstow	E. Deakins (L)	LAB	3.9	19.6	Closing date 12/7/85. No challenge likely (WM)
Westminster North	J. Wheeler (C)	LAB*	−3.9	15.0	All-women/black shortlist — Selection date 28/5/85. Key marginal
Wimbledon	M. Havers (C)	LAB*	−33.1	9.6	
Woolwich	J. Cartwright (SDP)	LAB	−7.1	10.8	J.A. Walker (WM) selected. Key marginal

TOTALS

CONSERVATIVE	56	18
LABOUR	26	64
ALLIANCE	2	2

* Notional Labour Gain

POLICE BRUTALITY IN NEWHAM WILL NOT SUPPRESS THE PEOPLE

Man Mohan,
Chair, Lewisham Asian Association
Co-Sec. Deptford CLP Black Section.

I have never encountered such madness, such unprovoked attacks, and such brutal and sadistic police tactics as on the 27th April, on the Newham 7 march.

The march got off to a spirited start, happy people of all ages marching along in a determined but joyful and loving mood. The demonstration was dynamic as all anti-racist forces marched in unity against racist attacks and the criminalisation of innocent men and women. Many linked arms and chanted together, making it clear that their struggles are fights against racial discrimination, exploitation and oppression of all kinds. It was led by a lively steel band. The demonstrators marched in solidarity, demanding justice for the Newham 7, who defended themselves and their communities from vicious attacks from racial thugs; and justice for the Pryce brothers.

The national demonstration was a clear warning to fascist thugs and white state racism: "We will tolerate no more attacks, we are fighting back!" "Newham Seven innocent, justice for the Pryces; and self-defence is no offence!"

Peacefully marching on, the demonstrators reached the Forest Gate police station. All of a sudden I found my feet lifted at least six inches high from the ground, my hand snatched away, my palm burning. I looked behind and saw a policeman tossing away my banner into the crowd. All this happened in a moment – people being attacked, dragged, punched, kicked and everything nasty – disgraceful, inhuman, unnecessary – was happening. It was a war act from the police.

Snatch squad

At the Forest Gate police station, the snatch squad made it impossible – the demonstrators stopped, sat down, and demanded the release of those arrested. They refused to move until their innocent comrades were released. But the arrests continued sporadically; demonstrators were dragged into side streets and pushed into waiting District Support Unit vans. Many of those arrested had been taken by the back entrance to West Ham police station and were held and charged there.

It was 4.50pm when the first two people were released. One of them, Lakbir Heer, said outside the police station: "They just jumped me and kicked me". Another, Mumtaz, told us: "One police officer punched me a couple of times. First of all he threatened me. He said he would take me to the cell and beat the living daylights out of me".

Near the Forest Gate police station, the snatch squad jumped over the barriers, lunging into the demonstration and dragging people into the police station. Truncheons were indiscriminately hurled around; people were pinned to the ground with police officers standing on calves and shoulders. It could have been anybody! For doing nothing except standing quietly in the crowd or in front of the police station. The crime was simply being in the demonstration.

Charged the crowd

By 6pm more and more police appeared to have arrived, eventually outnumbering the remaining demonstrators by about five to one; often the police linked arms, compressing the crowd into a small area in front of the police station. Around 6.15pm the police suddenly surrounded the main demonstration-lorry, forced it move off and then linked arms and charged the crowd, attacking everyone in their way. There was no consideration for age! Eye-witnesses saw one boy about 9 or 10 being attacked by eight policemen. A black woman was seen being thrown to the ground, surrounded by policemen and kicked. Police began to shout racial abuse. The area was saturated with police.

Further along the route outside the Duke of Edinburgh pub, one could see only police and not a single paving stone. If the police had not succeeded in breaking the demonstration at Forest Gate police station, they were determined to stop it at this point. The demonstration was brutally crushed by the police, who outnumbered the peaceful citizens. The police shamefully concluded their day of atrocities by launching a sadistic attack on the fleeing people. The vast majority were assaulted in one way or another.



John Chapman

Police leave cancelled

It seemed to have been carefully planned all police leave in K division had been cancelled for the march and at least six other divisions were drafted in. They made it sure that black and white anti-racists shall not march through Newham in support of black people involved in major cases of alleged racial attacks and POLICE RACISM – the Newham Seven and the Pryce brothers. These two cases are the latest symbol of the black peoples' anger, mistrust and solidarity; and the police attack on the peaceful demonstration put the seal on that bitterness. The scenes of police brutality clearly showed the development in police strategy and tactics and the increasing fascistic direction that they are taking; the use of the brutal 'snatch squads'. The deployment of the notorious Metropolitan Police was an attempt to suppress the rights of the people.

It was a brutal attempt to crush the march and rally. However, the national demonstration was a massive success and conveyed the growing defiance of all blacks and victimised communities; and once again exposed our true enemies. We must defend our rights and advance the struggle. We are determined not to accept any attack on our rights, lives and dignity. The police and their masters are frightened when they see the developing unity in action of all oppressed people in the united struggles.

Police brutality and unwarranted measures will not suppress the people. They should think again! Read the history of independent movements' fight for freedom and liberty. People will not be intimidated, the fight will continue to fight against racists in or out of uniform.

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PREPARING FOR GOVERNMENT

Phil Hearse (Hampstead and Highgate CLP)



Kinnock and Hattersly united — Labour Party Conference, 1984 John Chapman

No one can seriously doubt that the outcome of the miners' strike was a substantial victory for the capitalist class. But it was not an unqualified victory for the Tories — indeed they are running into major political problems. Public opinion is running strongly against Thatcher. Even more telling than Labour's opinion poll lead are recent surveys showing a clear majority of trade unionists now supporting Labour, and the indications that there will be a positive outcome to the political levy ballot in many unions.

Even ruling class opinion shows a trend away from Thatcher — for the simple reason that despite the miners' strike, despite the attacks on the welfare state, despite rate capping, despite everything, the economy show no signs of any sustained recovery. The demoralisation of many Tory MPs, and a political atmosphere in which David Steel gets only approval when he talks about 'increasingly strange orders coming from Thatcher's bunker', are indicators that the mood is changing.

Of course, none of this automatically means that the Tories will lose the general election which is likely in 1987. But it is an encouraging confirmation of what many of us have always believed, despite the doom and gloom of the defeatists who want to abandon class politics, that *a Labour victory at the next general election is possible*. There is still everything to play for.

POLITICAL OFFENSIVE

The left of the party has however been rightly totally immersed in the defensive battles against the Tories, not least the miners' strike, which it was our elementary duty to wage. Little attention, however, has been paid to going on the political offensive, to preparing for the next Labour government.

The right of the party has not made this ommission. Roy Hattersley has spearheaded the ideological offensive against nationalisation, and in his 22nd April speech to the

(CONTINUED)

BRIEFING AND 'LEFT REALIGN

By Chris Knight (Lewisham East CLP) and Graham Bash (editor, London Briefing)

From all sides, we are being told that a "profound realignment of the Labour left" is now under way, in the course of which Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Arthur Scargill and the supporters of class struggle politics in Parliament, local authorities and the unions are becoming increasingly isolated. The major feature in this "re-alignment" – so we are told – is a sudden recognition by the bulk of the former "Bennite" camp of the need to foster party unity and show "a willingness to work with Neil Kinnock as leader". Ken Livingstone's apparent abandonment of the "hard left" camp is singled out as particularly indicative; other signs are the new editorship of Tribune, the isolation of Tony Benn within even the left of the PLP and on Labour's NEC; the retreat of many Labour authorities from "illegality", and a greater "realism" among rank-and-file activists now apparent since the defeat of the miners' strike.

The immediate context of these developments can be quickly sketched. Three features stand out: (1) the supposed discrediting of "vanguard politics" as expressed in the outcome of the miners' strike; (2) the collapse of our attempted "second front" – the retreat from non-compliance with rate-capping legislation; (3) Labour's sudden rise in popularity in electoral terms since these twin defeats.

How should we respond?

(continued next page)

Preparing For Government

Continued from previous page

AUEW conference boldly outlined his conception of a new 'compact' between the party and the unions — wage restraint in exchange for jobs.

Those readers politically active during the last Labour government, and who went through the Grunwick and firefighters battles, and the 'winter of discontent', will have a rough idea of what Hattersley means — wage restraint in return for cuts and more unemployment.

The coming general election will increasingly concentrate the minds of party and union activists. All the pressure will be to 'unite' behind the leadership and its policies. It would be a disaster to bend to this pressure. For the experience of the Mitterand government in France shows that a right wing social democratic government at a time of acute economic and social crisis creates the basis for widespread working class apathy and demoralisation and the growth of the far right. The interview with Ken Livingstone in the latest issue of *Marxism Today*, the attack on Benn and the 'hard left' in *New Socialist* and the role being played on the NEC by the likes of Blunkett and Sawyer, show that the 'soft left' is producing its own band of 'new realists'. Their implicit strategy is to quiten things down and create 'left unity' with Kinnock in preparation for the election. But it is all based on an illusion — that a Kinnock-Hattersley government would in some sense be a 'left' government. It would be utterly foolish to forget the lessons of the Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s.

Unless the left of the party begins to go on the political offensive again we shall become increasingly the victims of the drift towards Kinnockism. In my view Briefing supporters need to set themselves the objective of initiating a debate around central policy objectives to be implemented by a Labour government — objectives which break with the capitalist logic of Kinnockism.

This debate should aim at drawing up a series of proposals to take to both union and Labour conferences, with the aim of building up the maximum support by 1986. Taken together, these proposals should constitute the main planks of a socialist Labour government.

Such a project is far from being a simple propaganda exercise. We urgently need to resume the offensive and give a political, governmental, perspective to all those forces which have battled through in the fight against Thatcher.

To initiate the debate I want to propose the following measures, and explain why they are the key for a Labour government which breaks with capitalism.

First, *the next Labour government must break with NATO.* It may seem paradoxical to start with an international issue, but this is a vital issue which will affect everything about such a government's basic political opinions. Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have done the movement a real service by forcefully raising this issue, despite the predictable rebuff from the NEC majority.

Any Labour government which wanted to pursue a socialist foreign policy, and break with Thatcher's utter subordination to the policy objectives of the United States, would have to break with imperialism's main military alliance — NATO. Moreover, there could never be any real unilateral nuclear disarmament without evicting the hundred-plus United States military bases from this country, along with Cruise and the rest.

The question of NATO is a touchstone. It sorts out the real unilateralists from the fakers. In the socialist movement it sorts out those who want to break from imperialism and those who don't.

NATIONALISATION

Second, a Labour government which wanted to make any serious moves towards socialism would have to be pledged to renationalise all those industries de-nationalised by the Tories — and extend nationalisation to the banks, the financial institutions and the main monopolies.

I recently heard a well known supporter of a Trotskyist newspaper describe nationalisation as 'the boring old economic strategy'. In his own way this comrade was echoing the line of Hattersley and the rest — that nationalisation is 'old fashioned', bureaucratic, irrelevant to peoples needs and so forth.

But to fight for the nationalisation of the banks and the monopolies under workers control is the very opposite of creating 250 National Coal Boards. Without the power to control investment, without control over the vast financial resources of the banks and monopolies, any socialist reconstruction of the economy is a pipe dream. At best it would be a Keynesian reflation which would soon collapse under an assault from the IMF and the City institutions.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

Third, there is now an urgent need to throw back the poisonous encroachment on democratic liberties, which started under the last Labour government and has dramatically deepended under the Tories. The left should propose a charter of democratic rights, to be implemented as a bill by the next Labour government, aimed at throwing off the shackles placed on the labour movement and all the threats to democratic liberties which Thatcherism stands for.

Such a bill of democratic rights would have to include: the disbandment of the political police — the Special Branch and MI5 — and the disbandment of the Special Patrol Groups. It should also aim at disarming the police. Full trade union rights must be restored, including the right to picket, to strike, and to conduct union activities free from the law. The bill should also include the right of free assembly and demonstration.

IRELAND

Fourth, the next Labour government must withdraw British troops from Ireland, abolish Diplock courts, repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and enter into dialogue with the representatives of the nationalist community in the Six Counties — Sinn Fein.

Fifth, a Labour government with any claims to socialism would have to commit itself to a massive extension of social and democratic rights for all sectors of the oppressed — for women, black people, lesbians and gays.

As the general election approaches, you can bet a pound to a penny that despite all the promises to the contrary, the pressure for some kind of deal with the SDP or the Liberals will begin to reassert itself. Here and now the left has to hammer away at the theme of 'no coalitionism' — for a Labour government.

Whatever the outcome of the next general election the organisation and political clarity of the party's left will be vital. But all the gains since 1979 can be squandered, with the left retreating into demoralisaton or capitulation to Kinnocksim, unless we can unite around a clear alternative socialist platform.

What we have proposed here is just the beginnings of such a platform — much more work needs to be done.

But without clear political goals and much more serious organisation the kind of politics represented by *Briefing* will be chopped to pieces in the party in the next two years.

MENT'

(CONTINUED)

All of us can derive strength from the humiliation of the Tories in the county council elections and the electoral support for Labour which could well sweep us into office at the next general election. Kinnock, Hattersley and others will of course try to argue that Labour's new-found electoral support is thanks to the eclipsing of Bennism and Scargillism within Labour's ranks. The truth is that it is the miners' strike above all that has left the Tories looking battered, arrogant, vindictive and out-of-touch, and which has identified the struggle for jobs and industry more closely than ever with the movement of the organised working class. Without the magnificent leadership of the NUM and without Labour's close links with the miners' struggle – links forged despite the efforts of Kinnock and Hattersley – the electoral scene would not look as promising as it now does.

The same can be said in relation to local government.

The abolition and rate-capping struggles have deeply damaged the Tories and strengthened Labour for many months despite the efforts of Kinnock. Had Ken sided with Kinnock two years ago, few of these gains could have been made.

All this is not to pretend that we think vote-catching is what politics is all about. It is simply to re-emphasise our continuing commitment to electoral strength as an adjunct to strength on other levels. We must prevent Kinnock, Hattersley et al from claiming otherwise in their attacks on us. For there is now certainly a danger that electoral success will be used as a bludgeon against the left in the years running up to the next general election.

Over the next eighteen months, we are likely to see an avalanche of attacks on existing party policy as Kinnock and his office tell us that each of our specifically socialist commitments is a vote-loser and must go. Kinnock's publicity team have certainly been doing well recently in promoting his "image". With the defeat of the miners – the result for which he worked – his position as leader seems secure.

But far from "working with" him, internally we have no choice but to resist his influence right down the line. Our job is to hold fast to existing policy gains, stake out our own positions where we must go beyond them (combining unilateralism with NATO membership, for example, is simply ludicrous) and retain the morale of the many excellent new recruits to the party which we made during the course of the miners' strike.

Ken Livingstone

Since Tony Benn came within an inch of winning the deputy leadership contest, defeat has followed defeat. The election of Thatcher to her second term, the election of the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership team, the defeat of the miners – each one of these has pushed us back. In this light, the GLC's retreat, the collapse of much of the local authority resistance to rate-capping, and the split in the London left appear as one more stage in a process.

Each setback has produced a wave of defections to the right – each time with the defectors claiming to be doing something "new". Always, the defectors have clothed themselves in left verbiage; always, they have branded those standing firm as "dogmatic", "ideological", etc. Almost the whole of Kinnock's present entourage consists of defectors from "Bennism". They all claim that it is Benn who has isolated himself – not they who have swerved hard to the right. After the Benn Deputy Leadership defeat, the LCC went over. Now, in the aftermath of the miners' defeat, Ken Livingstone, Tribune's Nigel Williamson, and many others are deciding that the same bandwagon is theirs – using in essence identical language and excusses to those of their predecessors. "Realism" is always the code-term for their accommodation to the powers-that-be. There is nothing "new" in this at all.

For Briefing, of course, Ken Livingstone's defection is particularly hard to take. Briefing was set up by Ken and a number of us determined to use the struggle for the GLC as a vehicle through which to create something *genuinely* new in Labour politics in London. It is easy to play off "feminism" against class struggle, the fight for "participation" against the fight for accountable leadership, the "new" politics against the old orthodoxies. It is much harder to be creative and embrace the genuinely new currents in progressive politics *without* abandoning class-struggle fundamentals.

In Briefing, we were determined to assert a logic of revolutionary class struggle which could express itself as naturally and easily on the level of sexual politics as that of class politics, anti-racism as anti-imperialism, in neighbourhoods and communities as easily as in the workplace. This was and remains in a real sense new. The Bolshevik tradition – we have to admit – has been decidedly weak on certain levels, feminism and sexual politics being among the most notable. Nevertheless, the consistent following-through of the logic developed by Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and others – we always argued – forced us to be as implacably hostile to sexual and personal levels of oppression as to the more well-recognised class levels. The *same* logic – we argued – had to be applied on every level. This prevented us from choosing between sex and class, the personal and the political, the cultural and the industrial or economic levels of struggle. "Organising at the crossroads" was how we put it – a genuinely revolutionary organising framework had to refuse to allow itself to be pulled apart by competing priorities, each of which was absolutely legitimate. *All* the pressures, *all* the debates, *all* the searing contradictions, had to pass through us within a framework broad enough – and strong enough – to contain them all and transcend each sectionalism without itself breaking and splitting under the strain. Briefing was readable and useful because of this openness to conflict and tension. We are still committed to that project.

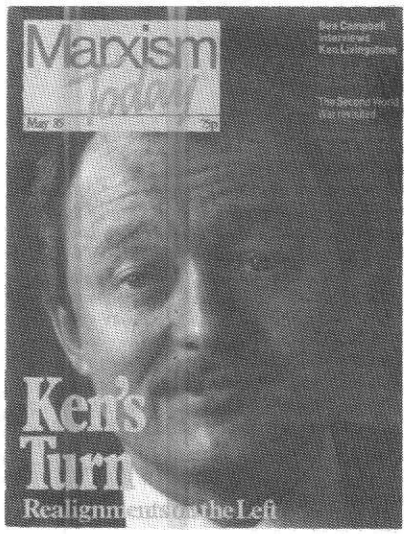
'Marxism Today'

Ken Livingstone, by contrast, has now apparently chosen to distance himself from the attempt to make ends meet. In a recent interview with the 'liberal' Stalinist Beatrix Campbell in Marxism Today (May 1985), he

(i) accepts the interviewer's terms of debate – "vanguardist" versus "participatory" politics – siding (surprise! surprise!) with the latter;

(ii) accepts the historic dichotomy within the Stalinist camp as comparable with the basic divide within the Labour left. Briefing and our allies in this context become the "tankies", while the new Tribune, the LCC etc. appear as the "Euros". Ken supports the "Euros"

(iii) In the same interview, Ken hi-jacks "feminism" as a cloak to cover his own retreat in the face of rate-capping legislation



'Told you so!'

Some comrades have adopted a "told you so!" approach, saying that we should never have displayed confidence in Ken in the first place – he was never a revolutionary anyway. True. But is Tony Benn a revolutionary? Is Arthur Scargill? Leaders are tested in practice, and the outcome is never completely determined in advance. We did not expect revolution from Ken. We did, however, expect him to show at least the same degree of commitment on his own chosen level of struggle as was shown by Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill on theirs.

What is sickening to us about Bea Campbell, Eric Hobsbawm, Stuart Hall, Raphael Samuel and their revisionist ilk is the utter cynicism and pessimism of these people regarding their own (or anyone else's) capacity to intervene in politics to produce change. Their attacks on "vanguard" politics have nothing to do with opening up "participatory" alternatives; everything to do with leaving intact the prevailing structures of organised ruling-class power. It was not the middle-class cynicism of Marxism Today which enabled working-class women to "participate" (inadequate term!) in politics more powerfully than for a generation – it was the "vanguardism" of the leadership of the NUM.

And we keep hearing about the "community" politics, local initiatives, co-ops, etc which have been supported by the GLC, as if these are somehow "better" than organising for principled leadership. To Bea Campbell and others we would simply say: without some of us having battled away for years to break the old Labour Party oligarchies – particularly in London – all these "local initiatives" would have remained starved of funds and support to this day.

We in Briefing are proud of the role we have played in pioneering aspects of personal politics while holding firm to our class-struggle priorities, working simultaneously at "grass roots" level and at the level of "leadership". And we don't intend to choose between one and the other level in the future.

In any case, one thing is certain. We are not moving. Nor do we feel isolated. In the case of this journal, its standing within the grassroots of the Labour Party has probably never been higher. It is those who lose confidence in the revolutionary potential of women, black people, the oppressed and the working class whose isolation from reality will be demonstrated most forcefully as our struggles unfold.

OPEN LETTER TO LABOUR HERALD

Following discussion at the Briefing Editorial Board, this 'Open Letter' was sent out to the organisations listed below. We shall report in a future issue on the progress made at the May 18th meeting

27/4/85

Dear comrades,

We are writing in response to the call in *Labour Herald* of 12th April for 'the socialist left to regroup to fight the right'. We strongly agree with this sentiment and the call for left unity.

We feel however that it would be wrong for any one group or campaign to pretend that it alone can be the sole vehicle for such unity. We are therefore calling on all socialist groups and currents within the left wing of the party to meet to discuss how to work together over the coming period. We would ask all those organisations who come to the meeting to bring proposals for action. For ourselves, we would suggest the following proposals:

1) **Joint action in support of those in struggle against the Tories. Specifically, support for the amnesty campaign for the sacked and victimised miners; support for the councils and councillors defying the Tories' ratecapping legislation; support for the campaign against the Powell Bill and Gillick judgement; support for the campaign in the unions to defend the political levy.**
2) **Joint rallies around the country sponsored by all the organisations supporting these proposals around the themes of 'Organising the Left' and 'For a Labour Government Committed to Socialist Policies'. The aim would be to promote left unity and a socialist Labour Government, with a strong emphasis on women, black, lesbian and gay speakers, and those fighting the Tories such as the miners.**
3) **Co-operation at annual conference to produce a joint daily bulletin with space given over to the different campaigning groups in the party, and a conference fringe meeting jointly built by all the sponsoring organisations.**
4) **Joint campaigning within the party, including model resolutions at regional and national conferences over the next few years, around a few key policy themes:**
   a) **International policy: support for the Benn/Heffer withdrawal from NATO document, and the Benn/Roberts Bill on withdrawal from Ireland.**
   b) **Economic policy: support for the nationalisation of the banks, major finance houses, and the top industrial monopolies, together with renationalisation of industries privatised by the Tories, under workers control; support for a commitment to full employment within the first term of a Labour Government coupled with opposition to incomes policy.**
   c) **Social policy: support for repealing all the repressive legislation enacted by the Tories and by previous governments on trade union rights, immigration and race, police powers, the rights of women, lesbians and gays, and for its replacement by a Bill massively extending all social and democratic rights.**
   d) **Internal party policy: support for the demands of the Womens Action Committee and the Black Sections Steering Committee, for defence of the democratic gains of the past few years and their extension to include the election of the shadow cabinet by the PLP; and opposition to all witch hunts against socialists in the Party and the reinstatement of those expelled.**
5) **Joint preparation by those organisations supporting these proposals for a serious challenge to the Party leader and/or Deputy Leader as soon as possible, in line with the above campaigns to change the party's policies and its internal organisation.**
6) **Joint discussions to be started on the possibility of a new paper/journal of the left supporting these proposals, which would be democratically accountable to its readers and supporters.**

We would stress that these are our ideas for discussion at the meeting, but other proposals will have equal status for discussion.

We suggest the meeting takes place on Saturday 18th May at 11am in County Hall (exact room to be confirmed). Please confirm in advance in writing whether you are able to attend.

Comradely greetings,

Graham Bash, for the editorial board of Briefing
Please reply to: G Bash, 162 Millfields Road, London E5

Copies sent to:
Campaign Group of MPs, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Target Labour Government, Labour Herald, Womens Action Committee, Black Sections Steering Committee, Labour CND, Labour Committee on Ireland, Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Socialist Organiser, Socialist Action, Militant, Socialist Viewpoint.

INDUSTRIAL BRIEFING

Starting this month, Briefing will be setting aside a section specifically for trade union issues. The aim will be to provide a forum where the left can discuss strategies for trade unionists above and beyond our normal trade union coverage.

The miners' strike has exploded the myths of the 'new realists' that trade unionists are only interested in protecting their mortgages. But at the same time, the varying responses by Broad Left groupings to the miners' fight has shown that there is still no unified left response to 'new realism', and to the Tory anti-union offensive.

We hope that trade unionists will use the pages of TU Briefing to debate out questions of importance, and will build it into an organiser for their activity; where women and black militants can discuss their experiences inside the unions, and make proposals on how the left should build alliances which can incorporate the needs and demands of the whole working class.

1985 WOMEN'S TUC

Josie Edwards
Trade Union Briefing: SCPS

As an introduction to women's trade unionism in Briefing, what follows is a short, factual report of the 55th Women's TUC conference in Southport in March. It covers resolutions carried or lost.

Further details of the resolutions are available from TU Briefing, 49 Milner Square, London N1. The subjects taken at the Women's TUC Conference cover what could be called a total agenda for trade union women. In future issues, we hope to be able to analyse how likely or otherwise it is that the trade union movement will respond to women's demands.

SINGLE MOTIONS

MOTION No.	SUBJECT	CONFERENCE DECISION
4	Parity for women in Northern Ireland	carried
10	Standing Orders: time limit for moving and speaking to motions; extension of Conference	lost
11	The wider involvement of women in the Trade Union movement	carried
14	Social Security Reviews	carried
15	Maternity Benefits	carried
22	Cancer Screening	carried
25	Community Care	carried
26	Women with Disabilities	carried
27	Control of drugs	carried
28	Homeworking and New Technology	carried
29	Renationalisation and the consumer	carried
35	Female offenders	carried
	Amendment	lost
39	The attack on local government	carried
42	Maternity rights and parental leave entitlement	carried
48	Creche facilities: taxation	carried
51	School talks	carried
61	International Year of Youth	carried
62	Peace	carried
63	Leisure and the Arts	carried
64	GCHQ	carried
65	Freedom of information	carried

COMPOSITE MOTIONS

COMPOSITE No.	SUBJECT	CONFERENCE DECISION
1	Equal pay for work of equal value	carried
2	Women into science and engineering	carried
3	Equal opportunities through teaching	carried
4	Miners' dispute	carried
5	Child benefit	carried
6	Discrimination in pension schemes	carried
7	VDUs and pregnancy	carried
8	Privatisation and employment	carried
9	Women and prison	carried
10	Government scrutiny of legislative and administrative burdens on business	carried
11	Women's employment	carried
12	Black and ethnic minority women	carried
13	Lesbian and gay rights	carried
14	Creche facilities and nursery education	carried
15	Unemployment, education and adult training	carried
16	Apprenticeships and training opportunities	carried
17	Community Programme schemes	carried
18	Youth Training Schemes	carried
EMERGENCY MOTION: Contraceptive advice for girls under 16		carried

Ballot rigging and the T&G right

by ALAN THORNETT



Press Association Photos

Moss Evans (left) with Sydney Staden, TGWU regional secretary for London and the Home Counties, at press conference after ordering full investigation into the ballot rigging claims 18th April

A victory for George Wright in the forthcoming re-run ballot for General Secretary of the TGWU would be a disaster not just for that union, but for the whole labour movement. It would establish a hard right leadership which would line up Britain's largest union with the likes of Terry Duffy and Eric Hammond. It would establish a formidable right-wing block vote within both the TUC and the Labour Party, and make the conditions for a fightback against Thatcher very much more difficult.

The left has a responsibility to organise an effective campaign in support of Ron Todd, to counter the intervention of the media.

Moss Evans has said that this episode is "the most serious crisis in the history ne union". If this is so it is entirely the responsibility of successive leaderships .. he union: they have established and defended balloting procedures which have long been, among union activists, a sick joke.

These rules are so loose as to constitute an open invitation to ballot rigging. In the ballots for Regional Committees and General Executive positions, branch secretaries receive bundles of ballot papers and a return form for the results. All the branch is required to do is to appoint two scrutineers, check the membership cards, and stamp them. The ballot papers are required to be kept for one month after the vote (not the result).

This leaves huge loopholes for corruption. The ballot papers are un-numbered, and no details of the voting are disclosed. In regional ballots, only the total results are disclosed, not those of the individual branches — which is what counts in terms of a serious check.

In balloting for General Secretary, cardboard ballot boxes are provided, which are then counted regionally, with no branch votes being disclosed. The regional results are then collated at the national office. Candidates have a right under rule to be present at the count — but which count?

I was a candidate in the 1978 election for General Secretary, and asked to be present at the regional count, where the branch votes would be counted. This was refused. Jack Jones interpreted the rule as giving me a right to be at the national adding-up of the regional figures. I attended that, and of course there was not a ballot paper in sight. Nor would they reveal any details of the regional voting.

There are plenty of examples of ballot-rigging in the history of the T&G. But they have always been whitewashed or covered over, with only minimal action, if any, taken against the offenders.

In 1975 Alan Law, a regional officer in the Midlands, and secretary of the huge 5/35 haulage drivers' branch, was caught red-handed casting the whole of the branch's 17,000 votes for three candidates of his own choice. It was euphemistically called "block voting". In reality it is ballot rigging, in that case on a massive scale.

After 25 years in the TGWU I have been a victim of ballot rigging myself. In 1977 I stood in the vote to represent the Cowley and Coventry car plants on the Midlands Regional Committee. The successful candidate was a little-known right-winger, who won by a huge majority, in a ballot which lacked any credibility. Anticipating a fiddle, militants within the biggest plant involved had checked the voting. They had counted the number of members casting their votes: the figure was just over two hundred. The right-winger won by an unbelievable majority, yet the branch officers refused to reveal the branch voting figures. A process of elimination revealed, however, that about 6,000 votes had been 'cast' in that plant for the right-wing nomination.

After complaints were made, the Regional Committee held a 'preliminary enquiry'. This declared the ballot void and ordered a fresh election because, they explained, there had been a "technical infringement" of the rules; which, it emerged, was the destruction of the ballot papers contrary to rule, thus preventing a full investigation taking place. Those involved were completely exonerated by the enquiry's report.

The right wing in the TGWU have supported this state of affairs. The voting figures in George Wright's Wales Region, for example, were less credible than the much-quoted 'unbelievable' figures in Ireland. There are 77,626 members in Ireland, of whom 60,600 votes: that is, 66.6%. Ron Todd got 40,111, George Wright 8,022, and others 12,600: which is a 2-1 vote for Todd against all others. In Wales there are 80,319 members, of whom 49,100 voted, or 61.1%. 2,401 of these voted for Ron Todd, 43,639 for George Wright, and 3,000 for others. That's an 8-1 majority for Wright against all others. Yet the media concentrated on investigating Ireland.

The media role in all this is completely hypocritical. Why the sudden interest? They have never been interested in the past when the right-wing have been caught and proven to be ballot rigging against the left. Now, because it involves a right-wing campaign which ties in with the Tory drive towards postal ballots — suddenly they are the champions of democracy.

T&G members therefore have two very important jobs to do. First they must ensure that this particular media campaign does not succeed, and that Ron Todd is re-elected. Secondly they must change the structures within the union, which not only make it vulnerable to this kind of thing, but deny the members basic democracy, and protect bureaucratic positions at the top.

There have been serious attempts to do this in the past, which have been rejected by the leadership. My branch, the Cowley Assembly Plant 5/293, campaigned for changes at the last TGWU rules conference in 1980. We proposed amendments to rule which would have provided for consecutively-numbered ballot papers, the scrutiny of all used and unused ballot papers at regional level, the retention of all ballot papers for one month after the declaration of the result, and the publication of all details of the voting, including the branch results. Membership cards would be stamped as now.

These proposals were opposed by the platform and voted down. The current arrangements were declared to be perfectly adequate. The matter of democracy in the Trade Union movement is far too important to allow this attitude to continue. It is not yet clear what procedures will be used for the re-run ballot, but T&G members should not be satisfied with anything less than proper democratic procedures.

The left must campaign both for a victory for Ron Todd in this ballot, and for democratic reform for the future.

Reinstate all sacked miners!

John Wray
(Redbridge Miners Support Group)

Although the miners' strike has come to an end it will become increasingly more important in the near future to maintain the ad hoc organisations built up during the 12 months when the miners were out on strike. It has already been made clear by the NCB that there will be no forgiveness on their part. Local branches have been undermined by cynical victimisation of officers and committee members who supported the strike. Furthermore, we are still waiting for the government to start carving up the coalfields and actually close the pits it has singled out. And there is still the fight to get back the jobs of those sacked during the strike.

Redbridge Miners' Support Group has begun a campaign for the reinstatement of all sacked miners. The two strategies will be petitioning and winning public sympathy. To this end we have organised one public meeting with Terry Harrison from Betteshanger and other miners from Tilmanstone. We are still collecting money for sacked miners in N. Staffs as well as Kent but intend to distribute it nationally in future.

Because many areas were slow in organising support for the miners it is vital that we continue to keep the groups going so that we're prepared for the distinct possibility of another national strike or series of local strikes before the Thatcher government is itself sacked. If we become disorganised and complacent again, the coalfields will be taken apart. There is still the propaganda battle to be won against the ideas of mass unemployment being necessary and inevitable. The NUM and the support groups must form a strong rearguard to see off the present attacks and then get back on the offensive.

In the meantime, all support groups will have to keep up the work. We need to petition, leaflet, keep up the propaganda — whatever it takes to resist monetarism. Without the effort mass unemployment will continue to grow inexorably.

Miners on trial in South Wales

Stevi Jackson

Over 140 miners in South Wales were arrested last September after occupations of a crane at Port Talbot docks and a transporter bridge at Newport docks. They were charged with unlawful and riotous assembly.

The first eight of these, plus one woman supporter of the occupation, went on trial in Newport in April.

Newport Miners' Support Group organised a demonstration outside the court and distributed the latest edition of their newsletter. The first act of the judge was to have one woman arrested for contempt of court and cameras and banners seized by the police. He then imposed a ban on all demonstrations within a quarter of a mile of the court and all leafleting within a mile. In a town the size of Newport this meant banning all town centre demonstrations.

The outcome of the trial itself, however, will give some hope to those miners still awaiting trial. The defence tore the police evidence to shreds, exposing it as total fabrication and the judge was forced to drop first the riotous assembly charges and then the unlawful assembly charges.

A triumph of British justice? Well, the men were still fined and bound over (and the one woman defendant bound over) despite having not been convicted of anything at all. Charges against the other men involved in the Newport occupation, as well as that at Port Talbot, still stand. They will still go on trial even though a judge who was obviously not sympathetic to their cause found that the police evidence was not reliable.

It remains to be seen what happens to the men charged as a result of the Port Talbot occupation. The first of their trials, to take place in Cardiff and Swansea, will be underway by the time this edition of *Briefing* is in print.

Here too supporters will make their presence felt outside the courts. We are waiting to see whether other judges will (in the interest of justice, of course) interfere with our right to demonstrate.

150 new left review

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MACMILLAN EDUCATION

STILL FIGHTING IN SHEFFIELD

Sheffield's stand against rate-capping was ended on 7th May 1985 by twenty right-wing Labour Councillors. By voting with the Tories and Liberals to set a rate, these renegades made sure that the first round went to Thatcher by default. Although the vote was a severe setback, the campaign has opened up a new situation inside the Labour Party in Sheffield and resulted in important links between the Labour Councillors and Party, and the Council trades unions.

A week before the May Council meeting the District Labour Party (DLP) voted by a massive 81 to 48 to instruct Councillors not to set a rate. This followed an intense campaign by David Blunkett, leader of the Council, for setting a legal rate and "deficit budgeting".

Such a major defeat for David Blunkett was a result of a number of factors. The majority of the trade unions favoured not setting a rate. Their resolve was a clear result of the intensive campaign amongst the workforce over the past 6 months. They had been convinced that a fight was necessary and expected Labour to fight.

A growing co-ordination of the left on DLP and in Group joined with this voice of the trades unions and carried the day. The emergence of a significant wing to the left of David Blunkett is new. It is simply the result of his so-called "Firm Left" stance having been tried and found wanting when it came to the crunch. It must be added that despite his defeat he followed the DLP instruction, making 38 (out of 58) Labour Councillors who voted to not set a rate.

Dissatisfaction with David Blunkett's stance may well have been intensified by his unsuccessful attempts to reintroduce a "deficit budget" in the Council Chamber after the vote to set a legal rate had been carried. This provoked a split of 22 councillors who correctly argued that DLP had given them no mandate for such a position.

The day after May's Council meeting, representatives and shop stewards of the 30,000 Council workers met to decide how to continue the fight. They reaffirmed their commitment to defending jobs and services. Committees will be set up in each department to monitor the activity of Chief Officers. Full meetings of all representatives will be convened at regular intervals to carry on the campaign against any cuts. The focus of the fight to defend jobs and services now switches to the Council unions.

There is some confusion over the budget agreed on 7th May. It provides for spending £30 million *less* than Labour's "no cuts" budget. However, the original spending will probably be restored at the next Council meeting with the shortfall coming from reserves. This will leave the Council in a desperate position in 1986/7.

The credibility of the Group and the Party has not been irreparably damaged. But this will be tested in two ways. First, in the fight to retain the no cuts, no redundancies position this year against almost certain sabotage by Officers. And second, in dealing with the 20 scab Councillors in preparation for renewed struggles in 1986/7/8. As Councillor Tony Tigwell said in the debate, "they have ten months to get out of the Council and make way for those who will fight the Tories".

Winning DLP and a majority of Labour group to the 'No Rate" position was an important step forward. The left had an important influence in the recent debate. We now need to organise in the Party, build on the links with Council unions, and prepare for the further attacks on local government.

John Kirkby, Sheffield (Heeley CLP), personal capacity



John Chapman

David Blunkett

Tories crushed in South Glamorgan

This was the headline in the *South Wales Echo* on May 3rd.

The morning after the county council elections the media were full of the supposed gains made by the SDP/Liberal Alliance. Both Tories and Labour, we were told, had lost out to the Alliance with Labour losing overall control of its more marginal councils.

Of course we on the Celtic fringe are well aware that London-based news reporters think that the world ends at the Bristol Channel. Much was said about Labour losing overall control of Avon, but it seemed to be forgotten that the most marginal of all Labour controlled councils was South Glamorgan – just the other side of the Channel. Here it was a different story. Prior to these elections Labour had an overall majority of only one. Now we have a majority of six, and this after boundary changes which greatly favoured the Tories.

The Tories suffered massive defeats, losing supposedly safe wards to both Labour and the Alliance. We can hardly expect people living in select rural and suburban areas where they have swimming pools and tennis courts in their gardens to vote Labour. That some such areas voted in Alliance councillors indicates that even some of the most affluent of the traditional Tory vote must be disillusioned with Thatcherism. Even where the Tories did get in their majorities were drastically reduced. They now have only 18 councillors to Labour's 34 – on a traditionally Tory council. (The Alliance have nine seats and Plaid has one.)

Labour's position was also strengthened on the other, more traditionally Labour, South Wales councils. In Mid-Glamorgan, for example, the Tories were left with only one councillor.

These gains, however, are not necessarily good news for the Left given that all these councils are heavily dominated by the Right of the party. Rather ironically, the Tories campaigned in South Glamorgan around a red scare, informing the electorate that if Labour won the council would be taken over by 'extremists' and would become 'another GLC'! In so doing they did more to promote the cause of socialism than most Labour councillors.

Long before the elections most of South Glamorgan's Labour council seemed to have resigned themselves to defeat. They certainly were not willing to campaign on truly socialist policies and argued that their best chance of avoiding electoral disaster lay in meekly complying with Tory cuts and spending targets. They will, no doubt, argue that events have proved them correct. The major gains, however, were made where the candidates were to the left of the majority and some notable right-wingers will be absent from the council chamber.

The one really progressive measure the council is now committed to is to establish and fund a women's committee. This is likely to be resisted by the male right who are known to be against it. But we have two more women on the council now and Labour women in South Glamorgan intend to make sure that the committee they have worked and fought for will become a reality.

Stevi Jackson

FIGHTING FOR BL

BLACK SECTION IN NOTTINGHAM EAST

In November 1984, some black members of Nottingham East Labour Party met and decided to form a black section in the constituency. Nottingham East has something like 11% black members of the electorate, it is very marginal and one of the best winnable seats. Like elsewhere in Britain black voters have proved to be the most loyal Labour supporters, yet have been victims of racism in housing, education, social services and immigration laws under national and local Labour rules.



April 16th: black demonstrators outside County Hall, Nottingham Mark Salmon

Manifestations of institutional racism in the Labour Party through its practices and organisational set-up have compelled the black people in Nottingham to question their loyalty to the party which academically is supposed to fight against all kinds of oppression and exploitation.

It has recently been expressed in different forms of protests and campaigns. A lot of uneasiness and anger was shown by black people on the question of misuse of section 11 funds by the Labour-controlled County Council. A number of pickets were organised outside different schools to protest against the high number of suspensions of black children. A big demonstration took place on April 14th outside County Hall against racism in education and lack of consultation with the black community. Frustration was apparent when a group of black people called for a boycott of County Council elections to protest against racism and suspensions.

Quick response from NEC

The formation of the black section in Nottingham East and the subsequent change of rules by the CLP in its AGM in February 1985 brought a quick response from the NEC which indirectly threatened disaffiliation of the CLP if it insists on giving voting rights to black section delegates.

On April 3rd when delegates of Nottingham East CLP arrived to discuss the NEC letter and black section delegates' voting rights they faced a mass picket of young black people demanding a show of solidarity and asking the GMC to stand firm on the decision taken earlier to stand by its AGM. The special meeting overwhelmingly decided to stand by its AGM decision to give full voting rights to two delegates in GMC and one in EC including at the selection of the parliamentary candidate.

It was also decided to send two delegates in conference called by Vauxhall Labour Party in London to coordinate a campaign and discuss other relevant issues.

Black sections are about more representation of black people at all levels in Labour Party organisation as well as in local councils and Parliament. They are trying to get a direct say for black people in the fight against racism and oppression. It is first and foremost a duty of every socialists to join the struggle of black comrades to put an end to the disadvantage and oppression of black people.

Surprisingly more than one constituency has affiliates to the or from the trades council (rightly so) including Chesterfield in which trades council delegates actually took part in selection of Tony Benn, but there were no big noises made by the NEC or leadership, black people are wondering why there is so much fuss about black sections.

Crucial test

On issues like black sections the labour movement in general and the left in particular is facing a very crucial test. If democratic rights of black people are denied within the labour movement then what credibility is left for the Labour Party to represent and claim to fight for the rights of black people in society. It is essential for the specially oppressed groups like women, gays and lesbians, who themselves are fighting against sexism and oppression, to show complete solidarity in the struggle of black people.

Today, constituencies like Lewisham East, Nottingham East, Vauxhall, Deptford, Newham North, and Hornsey and Wood Green are facing the wrath of the NEC. A lot of sympathy is being shown by the grass roots of the labour movement, but sympathy alone is not enough. The only way to make NEC think twice, and to build up a campaign in the run-up to Conference, is to amend the standing orders of as many constituencies as possible, even if there are no black members.

Hassan Ahmed, chairperson Black Section Nottingham East CLP, and national coordinator, Campaign for Recognition of Black Sections

.... and in Norwood

On Sunday 28th April, Norwood CLP decided at its parliamentary selection meeting not to proceed with selection until a rule change has been passed enabling Black Sections delegates to take part in the proceedings. Janet Boateng, secretary of the Norwood Black Section , examines the background.

Norwood Black Section exists to provide a voice for black members of the party in Norwood and as a means of focusing the attention of the party on some issues critical to the black community.

We have a monthly mailing of over 200 members and regular attendances of between 12 to 20 at our meetings. They provide an opportunity to question our councillors, to work for black representation at every level within the party and on bodies to which it nominates, and also to discuss policy issues.

A recent meeting on 'Blacks and Mental Health' was open to black members and non-members of the party. We had a valuable discussion including a speech from a black psychiatrist and a nurse who is a member, and prepared the ground for our own contribution to the development of party policy. We also recruited a number of new members for the party.

The party was for the first time actively reaching out to these people, and seeking to involve them in an issue of critical importance to our community.

Neil Kinnock and Gerald Kaufmann ought to come along and see for them-

LACK SECTIONS

Why East Lewisham must win

The row over East Lewisham CLP's continuing involvement of its black section in selecting a Parliamentary candidate reached its climax on 10th May, when the selection finally took place.

The local party's defiance of the NEC's attempt to stop the agreed selection timetable was confirmed on 3rd May when we decided on a shortlist of four to put to the selection meeting. Leading the four were two black people, Lambeth councillor Sharon Atkin and Lewisham councillor Russell Profitt.

In response to a letter from National Agent David Hughes to all delegates asking them to sign statements 'reaffirming' their support for Labour's constitution and policies — the so-called 'loyalty oath' — it was agreed that they would be signed by all delegates. This was to prevent the NEC from going ahead with another selection without the majority of the General Committee.

Black section delegates were to sign the declaration, as well, and the replies were sent together with a resolution passed by the GC by 37 votes to 5 on 26 April. The motion maintained East Lewisham's determination to continue involving the black section in selection and sticking to the agreed timetable.

The 26 April meeting ended more than two months of bluff and counter-bluff between the NEC and East Lewisham. Television and newspaper reporters were there to record delegates being lobbied by some of the 25 to 30 other CLPs which have committed themselves to black sections.

East Lewisham's decision to press ahead was taken after they'd heard from a NEC/Regional deputation led by NEC Organisation Chair Charles Turnock and David Hughes.

References by the NEC reps to 'our coloured colleagues', repeated use of the term 'Chairman', implications that East Lewisham activists were 'anarchists', and arguments that women's sections hadn't done women any good did little to endear the Head Office to delegates. People at the meeting, many of whom would have described themselves as moderate, were appalled at the NEC's callous disregard for their views.

The strong possibility of the Party casting us aside and imposing its own candidate has only stiffened our resolve. Nor have intimidatory tactics such as individual letters over the heads of CLP officers worked.

The truth is that most delegates to East Lewisham's GC have thought long and hard about the dilemma of going against Conference policy. For us it's a question of policies which must be overridden by the principles that the Party is against racism and against sexism in society. Those policies must apply equally to the Party itself.

The battle is far from over. In the months ahead, we will no doubt be accused of jeopardising Labour's chances of victory in a key marginal constituency which, in turn, affects the Party's chances nationally.

But victory for whom? The nearly all-male white PLP and trade union leadership or the thousands of black people who have no access to the Labour Party and the millions who have no access to Britain's political structures?

East Lewisham needs to win because the black sections movement needs to win. The Party's structures will never be turned inside out if it is left to those who hold power to carry out the reform.

It's a difficult choice for us, but unless we make it in favour of black people, then the Labour Party will be the losers. And, once again, black people will have been let down.

Jim Mallory,
(Chair, East Lewisham CLP)

Russell Profitt was selected and became Labour's first black candidate in a winnable seat. Over to you, Neil!

selves, speak to black members, new or now active after long periods of dormancy in the often hostile environment of a party to which hundreds of thousands of blacks have remained electorally loyal. They might not then sound so negative and destructive in the tone that has become the hallmark of the leadership on this issue.

The Norwood Black Section is no "black careerists' rump" or "conspiracy against the party or local MP", but an active and vital part of the party that believes its delegates to the GMC ought not to be excluded from the parliamentary selection process.

There is no reason to rush the selection process in Norwood. We have a sitting MP who looks set to sail home again. We have a Labour Council which is likely to win the next election with an increased majority. Every effort has been made by regional and national officers to exclude our Black Sections' GMC delegates. They have sometimes found the assistance of all too willing mischievous elements within the GMC. They are either opposed to the very concept of Black Sections or are willing to support them only so long as their progress does not interfere with their hidden agenda.

The GMC has, however, reasserted its position by refusing at its reselection meeting on Sunday 28th April to bow to intimidation by the National Executive and to allow Black Section delegates to be a part of the reselection process.

Black members in Norwood say to our white comrades, "Stand firm, pass the rule change, carry the fight to Party Conference. Your Black Sections delegates must not be denied a voice. Come what may, we're here to stay!"

To: Delegates to Lewisham East CLP
Nominees for candidature.

8 May

Dear Colleague,

I understand that East Lewisham CLP, the Officers and some of the delegates to the General Committee are proposing to continue the process of parliamentary selection in East Lewisham unconstitutionally and without the participation of the National Executive Committee.

I have to draw to your attention that any selection made on 10 May will be invalid, and will be reported to the NEC as such. Those participating in it either as delegates attending an unconstitutional meeting or as nominees attending an invalid selection will also be reported to the National Executive Committee.

The National Executive Committee will be conducting a valid selection in Lewisham East involving all those who are prepared to abide by the Rules of the Party.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID HUGHES
NATIONAL AGENT

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DEFEND THE NHS

Demonstrate June 29th

A dramatic new wave of strike action by hospital workers in Newcastle, Liverpool, Chesterfield and Oxford, all in opposition to privatisation, show workers rapidly recognising the stakes at risk in today's National Health Service.

Privatisation itself — putting cleaning, catering and laundry services out to competitive tender — threatens to destroy established NHS standards of hygiene and patient care while it decimates the ancillary workforce and their trade union structures. On average, domestic cleaning tenders appear to be seeking to *halve* the number of hours to clean hospitals; already there is a proliferation of scandals arising from such contract cleaning methods.

Couple this with the deliberate rundown of the NHS — with increased spending lagging far behind the rapid increase in demand for health services to the elderly and the rising cost of medical technology — and the result could only be a downhill slide to disaster.

GRIM WRITING ON CRUMBLING WALLS

Already there is grim writing on the crumbling walls of Britain's hospitals:

★ Waiting lists and waiting times for treatment are on the increase, while more hospitals and wards close down, most devastatingly in the London area.

★ Prescription charges, dental charges and the price of NHS lenses are soaring, eroding the idea of a health service free at time of use.

★ Hospitals are looking for extra sources of cash — including possible charges for patients' meals, renting out NHS clinics to private medical firms, and encouraging more private patients.

★ An epidemic of charity funding is sweeping the hospital service, with a destitute NHS raising special appeals for everything from body scanners to cardiac equipment, kidney units and liver transplants to heart surgery.

★ With moves well afoot to close down large psychiatric hospitals and disperse mentally handicapped and geriatric patients to "community care", an all-party committee of MPs has pointed out that this has not been properly prepared or costed and could prove "positively inhumane". A regional health authority treasurer recently admitted that community care means "people are going to have to face the fact that they are going to have to work for nothing ... We should be talking about people giving up part of their leisure time to look after people in the community."

Press Association Photos



London 27th March. Women demonstrators outside the South London Hospital for Women Clapham Common, evicted by police following their nine month occupation of the building to prevent its closure

★ The crisis is even creating shock waves among Fowler's hand-picked health authorities. West Lambeth DHA has voted to *reject* a budget of savage cuts including the closure of two large hospitals plus 200 beds at St Thomas's (with a loss of 1,500 jobs). Elsewhere, ministers are having to intervene to prevent DHAs giving ancillary contracts to in-house staff. And Kenneth Clarke has tried to prevent a repetition of the Bromley episode, where a DHA decided after 6 months of sub-standard work to ditch the contractors, Hospital Hygiene Services; ministerial directives now make it even more difficult to get rid of an incompetent contractor.

UNMATCHED RUTHLESSNESS

In short, all the signs are that despite the problems they face, and with a ruthlessness unmatched by any serious resistance from Labour or trade union leaders, the Tories are forging ahead towards their goal of a two-tier health service, offering poor-house treatment for the millions of unemployed and destitute, but with a new, insurance-based private scheme for those with the money to pay. To create the climate to force this through they have first to hack down established standards in the NHS, and drive up the delays and frustrations of patients and health workers.

In their way stands the proven willingness of health workers to fight cuts and closures and defend standards. Despite the lack of national leaderhsip from the health unions — often busier scoring points or poaching members off each other than organising their members to fight — the past 12 months have seen repeated struggles.

Most courageous of all has been the 14-month ongoing fight of the Barking Hospital women, battling against wage cuts and a slashing of standards by contractors Crothalls. At Addenbrookes, Cambridge, cleaners fighting similar treatment from OCS have been out over 7 months. Each of these strikes has received only tokenistic support on a regional or national level. Meantime there have been hospital occupations in London, Harpenden, Oxford, and the marathon 14-month work-in just recently ended at Thornton View hospital in Bradford.

SPREADING STRIKE ACTION

Now the new wave of strikes in Newcastle, Liverpool and Oxford have begun for the first time to link up the various ancillary grades in a common fight against privatisation. They show a new determination from the membership and a welcome shift by some union officials to *spreading* strike action — in Liverpool across 9 hospitals; in Newcastle across other towns in the region — in place of the suicidal acceptance or imposition of isolation at Barking and Addenbrookes.

As a focus for the fightback already clearly under way, and for the battles that must be waged to defend the NHS, a demonstration, supported by London Health Emergency, is being called for the afternoon of **Saturday June 29th**. It will focus on the DHSS headquarters at the Elephant and Castle, and on the closed and threatened hospitals which surround it.

The organisers are urging union bodies, Labour Parties and cuts campaigns from outside London to join the march. Hopefully by then demonstrators will be able to cut notches in their banner poles to mark the first, long-overdue victories in the fight against privatisation in the NHS.

Publicity for the march and further information, together with copies of a free anti-cuts newspaper are available from London Health Emergency, 335 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Tel: 01-833 3020.

By John Lister (Publicity Officer, London Health Emergency, writing in a personal capacity)

BEHIND THE STANLEY ROYD DISASTER

The outcome of the enquiry into the deaths at Stanley Royd hospital in Wakefield has hardly been in doubt from the moment it began. It is ultimately possible to guarantee any answer if the question is framed with sufficient care, and in this case it is possible severely to limit the options by excluding the principal villains of the piece.

A number of old and highly dependent people died a few months ago because the food they were given to eat was poisoned. It was poisoned by contact with salmonella bacilli and by storage in environments best suited for the breeding of those bacilli.

So the enquiry has to decide where the bug came from, who let it in and how and why it was allowed to breed.

All very neat. Find someone to blame. Expressions of deep regret. Most unfortunate. Never happen again.

Fundamental cause unchallenged

But of course it will happen again – because the fundamental cause of the disaster still remains, and remains unchallenged by this enquiry.

The situation finds an analogy in the Short Sharp Shock philosophies of successive Tory home secretaries. A young man commits a misdemeanour and the first reaction of the State is to isolate him and punish him. Drive out the badness and don't bother too much about the real causes. It's more important to find fault with the lad and put him in jail than to find him a job.

The real questions are why does a hospital kitchen cut corners; why does it use second-rate techniques for feeding its charges; why does it need to store as much food as it does and for as long as it does between preparation and consumption?

Health Authorities consider the freeze storage of complete meals to be the answer to many of their problems. This was not the cause at Stanley Royd, but it is a technique which is spreading and which is finding favour with the providers of 'Meals on Wheels'.

On the face of it, it sounds like a good idea. You cook the ingredients and make up the meals on tin-foil plants – gravy and all. Then you freeze them and store them until needed. It centralises the work and spreads it across work shifts – thus evening out peak demands. So fewer staff are needed and of course, the fewer people you can employ, the better for your cash-limited finances. Also, of course, it guarantees the provision of a meal in situations where the transport may be uncertain and the human contact part comes a poor second.

But what if the freezers become faulty? What if the old person's home freeze-box warms up to – say – minus one or minus two? The meals will remain frozen but the bugs will grow. And what if the hospital kitchen staff defrost too many meals in error – who will guarantee that no-one will attempt to re-freeze rather than waste them?

The wonder of Stanley Royd is not that so many died, but that more thoughout the Health Service have not also fallen victim.

The guilt behind the outbreak lies with those who have imposed the intolerable working conditions and the impossible accounting conditions on kitchen staff and administrators alike. Fowler claims to have increased NHS expenditure by 17% in real terms. That is a deception. It ignores demographic changes, actual cost changes and increasing replacement charges. The truth is – and it has been well argued elsewhere – that in real terms less is being spent now than six years ago. And now that the local elections are finished, and he stops playing games with the Treasury, then the actual cuts that he originally identified and agreed with Lawson in the first place, will be made.

Fowler also speaks of efficiency and the virtues of firm management. He implies that the NHS is badly run, and quietly invokes sympathetic support from many workers who believe they have too many chiefs and too complex a managerial structure.

There may be a little truth in this; it may be that there is some inefficiency in line management – but the total cost of administering the Health Service amounts to about 3% of the bill. So to halve management costs would only save 1½% of the total. Small, as they say, potatoes! This is a classic divide-and-rule situation in which the options for blame are limited to those directly involved, and as usual in such cases those with the weakest position, those furthest removed from the seats of power, will bear the greatest blame and will suffer the greatest consequences.

Kinnock

Comrade Kinnock in a recent (shall we, in charity, call it an) unguarded moment, promised the nurses a 20% pay rise – incidentally on the same day that his deputy was speaking about pay restraint. Well, that's one cheer for Neil. Assuming he still believes the Tories to be the party of social division and socialism to be the philosophy of unity, can we conclude that he hopes to win the other two cheers by applying the same principle (and the same arithmetic) to the pay of all Health Workers and to the overall budget of the service and of the DHSS as a whole?

'Massive cash injection' has become something of a cliche phrase – but only because so many are saying it while nothing ever happens. The only real guilt behind the Stanley Royd disaster lies in economic policy, and the only means of preventing further similar episodes is a radical reappraisal of what the nation spends on its Health Service. Any other verdict is a cop-out.

Bryn Glover

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INTERNATIONAL LABOUR BRIEFING

STAR WARS DRIVE
MAKES LABOUR'S DEFENCE POLICY
OUT OF DATE

BRITAIN OUT OF NATO

By Oliver MacDonald

In four short months the Reagan administration has taken a series of major steps in the field of global military policy which undermine most of the assumptions on which Tory, Liberal and Labour Party defence and foreign policy has been based for four decades. These steps centre on the Star Wars programme. However unpalatable it may be for many of us to admit this, the Star Wars drive makes Labour's own defence policy (based on last year's NEC statement) hopelessly out of date.

Reagan chose to make his inauguration speech, setting the tone for his 4 years in office, centre on the Star Wars programme. At the same time, leading figures in the US administration started to say, and have since repeated, that Star Wars cannot and must not be linked to discussions in Geneva over nuclear missile reductions — in short these people are not interested in any deal with the Russians or the West Europeans, all of whom agreed that missiles and machines for shooting them down must be discussed jointly. Next the Reagan administration went to diplomatic war against the West European Union and any moves towards West European co-operation in the defence and security fields. After a WEU meeting in February, diplomatic notes were sent to WEU governments warning them not to discuss defence policy behind the backs of the Americans.

When the WEU countries then thought they might participate in the Star Wars research but do so collectively as West Europeans, exchanging information amongst themselves, this idea was brusquely squashed by Washington. And when Howe — the British foreign secretary — publically raised questions about Star Wars in April, abuse was heaped upon him by top Reaganite officials like Richard Perle and the foreign office received two official reprimands from the State Department for its cheek.

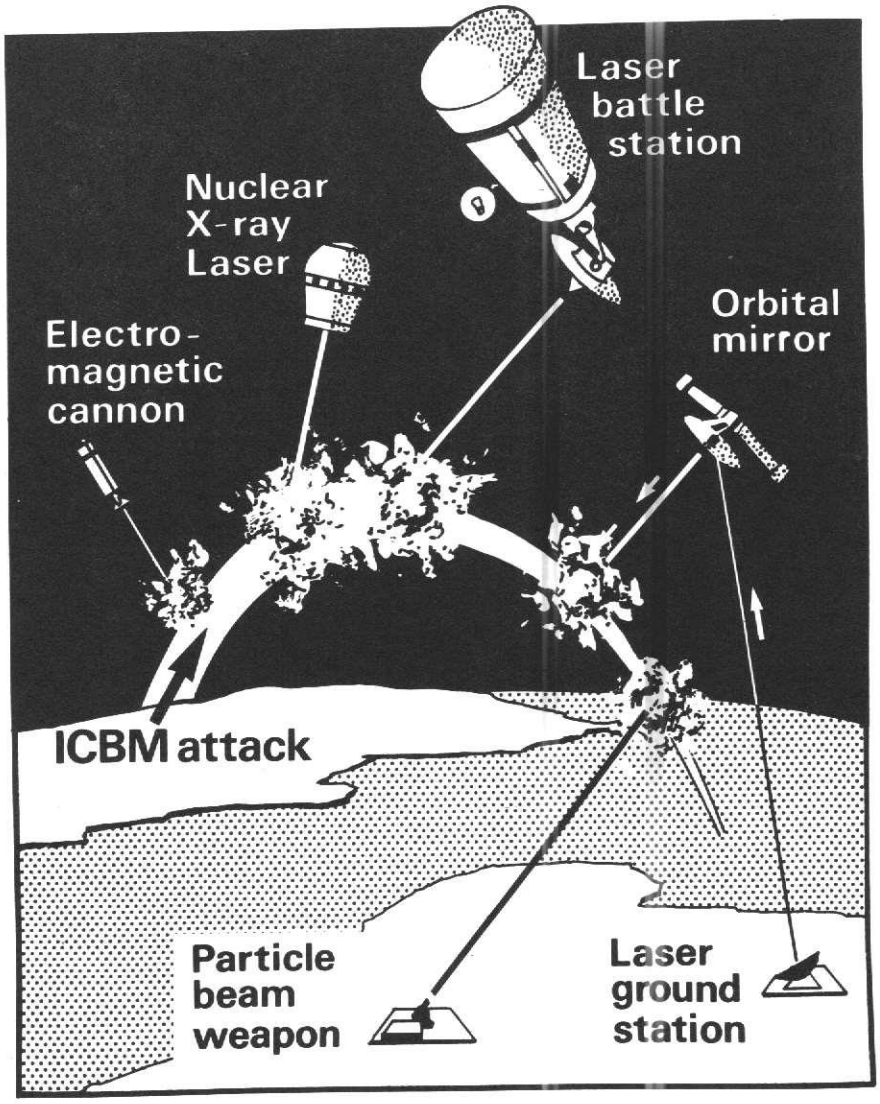
VIOLENTLY HOSTILE

It is clear that the overwhelming bulk of official opinion in West Germany and in Britain is violently hostile to Star Wars. The hostility of French opinon has been voiced quite openly. Yet Washington doesn't give a damn. It never consulted them at all over the whole Star Wars project. And it has served notice that the policy is not open for discussion now.

Some sections of public opinion have been lulled by a false idea that all this star wars business is twenty years off. As some sort of operational system it could be as little as 7-9 years off. As a programme violating the ABM treaty we are talking perhaps of two to three years — research requires tests and tests violate the Treaty. And as a military strategic doctrine Star Wars is already with us now.

The Thatcher government on one side declares that it will participate in the research for Star Wars; while on the other side it opposes deployment on the grounds that this violates the ABM Treaty. This supposed 'holding position' is soon enough going to make Thatcher a laughing stock: if she wants to participate in ABM research then she is urging the US to break the ABM Treaty, which bans the Americans from sharing ABM technology with other powers. Yet out of the other side of her mouth she is insisting, like a prim little lawyer that the ABM Treaty is sacrosanct and that for this legalistic reason she opposes deployment. Out of one side of her mouth she supports research. But she simulataneously repudiates any experiments — tests — without which the research, like most research, cannot get anywhere.

A useful starting point for our own assessment of Star Wars is provided by David Watt, until recently the head of the Royal



Press Association Photos

A graphic showing how Reagan's Star War proposals could develop into a galaxy of laser particle beam and electro-magnetic weapons.

NATO: THE DIVIDE BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT

The Labour left should give maximum support to the campaign, led by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, to orient the Labour Party against NATO. British withdrawal from NATO is more than 'just another issue', for unless we confront it, the achievement of socialism is impossible.

NATO, established in 1949, serves to unite all the major West European countries behind the United States and its imperialist policies. And, so long as the Labour Party is committed to supporting Britain's membership of NATO, our policy and strategy suffers a whole series of crippling contradictions.

NUCLEAR TARGET

Firstly, it is pointless to call for nuclear weapons to be removed from Britain, but to remain within NATO. If hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union develop, Britain will remain a nuclear target so long as the country is tied to the United States military apparatus. Genuine security, therefore, means abandoning NATO.

Secondly, while the Labour Party continues to support NATO, it is upholding the right of US troops to occupy Britain in order to defend us against the 'Soviet threat'. While the Party maintains this stance, the socialist transformation is precluded simply because a socialist Labour government would have more to fear from the United States than the Soviet Union.

Thirdly, by supporting a military alliance with the United States in order to defend the 'free world', the Labour party is upholding the United States' definition of freedom as it is applied to Grenada, Nicaragua, Vietnam and elsewhere. If we are to support human rights and progressive social development in the Third World, a total break with NATO is required.

1945-51

Indeed, the case for committing the Labour Party to opposing NATO is overwhelming. What needs explaining is why the Labour right wing is so frightened by this demand.

It must be remembered that it was the 1945-51 Labour government which helped to set up and take Britain into NATO. The same government promoted the British military intervention against communist Greek partisans. In fact, the whole orientation of post war Labour Party social democracy was based on an alliance with the United States. Just as the Labour right did not challenge the fundamental structures of capitalism in Britain, so it did not question the right of the United States to impose capitalism on the world.

Thus when we call for withdrawal from NATO, we confront the core of the Labour right's social democracy. Yet, our demand is necessary, coherent and easily understood, and would, if won, constitute a major rupture with social democracy in the Labour Party.

Peter Bowing
(Devon Labour Briefing)

Institution for International Affairs. Writing in the Times (29th March) he tells us that:

> "the real view of the British government, as freely expressed by officials in unbuttoned moments" is that the Star Wars programme is "**dangerously destabilising and at worst disastrously hostile to European interests.**" Watt adds, still paraphrasing these officials, that "the US administration has behaved with astounding arrogance in foisting **an entirely new doctrine** onto the alliance **without the slightest consultation.**"

Quotes similar to these from David Watt can be found from similar impeccable establishment sources. The Financial Times editorialises that we must ask ourselves whether we need a major debate "on the *essentials* of security strategy" because of the Star Wars drive. Mr Bland himself — Geoffrey Smith in the Times — writes that "the transatlantic partnership between the US and its European allies is about to be subjected to the most severe strain it has endured since the alliance was established." All this because of Star Wars. And even since the Economist, usually a lively competitor with the Times for the title Reaganite Organ of the Year has enough staff and readers based in Europe to publically declare that it hopes Reagan gets no more than two thirds of what he is after in his strategic drive.

By and large the labour movement has not yet fully grasped the enormity of what the US is up to. Since the remarks just quoted are kept well away from the headlines of any of the papers, and since the real meaning of Star Wars remains largely unexplained in the media, the Left is far from being adequately alerted. The alarm bells are so far ringing only behind closed doors.

MILITARY DOMINANCE

But what Star Wars shows is that the US administration is deadly serious in its drive to reassert its military *dominance* on a world scale. This abstract phrase means that Washington is after two things: a demonstrable ability to defeat the USSR in a war; and a demonstrable ability also to fight and win a war with the USSR confined to Europe.

To achieve these objectives, the USA does not need to gain a perfect, 100% complete capacity to destroy Soviet missiles. It requires enough only to launch a nuclear first strike against the USSR and to use Star Wars to cripple Soviet retaliation. And it requires enough only to be fairly certain that the shield will prevent a war that destroys Europe from turning global.

This is the aim of the US administration. It is an objective shared by elements in the US establishment far beyond the groups of Reaganite nuts from southern California. As Watt says it is a revolution in NATO doctrine, making the assumptions of the type of debate that used to go on two or three years ago largely irrelevant.

NEC DOCUMENT

And whether we like it or not, it means that last year's NEC document on defence is hopelessly out of date. Let us be absolutely precise as to where the document has become outdated and where it has not:

(a) The commitment to unilateral British nuclear disarmament remains an extremely important question of principle and the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons and facilities for the US in Britain also remains crucial. Denis Healey's attempts to ditch this commitment on US nuclear weapons here must be resolutely repudiated.

(b) But the deep assumption of the defence document, that peace in Europe requires a balance of forces and mutually assured destruction and that NATO is committed to these principles — such assumptions are now out of date. Equally out of date is the document's other assumption, that a war in Europe will inevitably embroil the US itself and that the US will thus have an overwhelming interest in preserving the peace in Europe. Star Wars makes America safe for managing a war in Europe, if necessary.

(c) The experience of the last four months also demonstrates that the NEC document's view of NATO no longer bears the slightest resemblance to reality. The document sees NATO as an alliance of equals in which the West Europeans can exert great influence, at least over matters of vital regional security. This is shown to be just nonsense. As for notions of turning NATO into an instrument for detente, nobody in or around Washington treats such ideas with anything more than contempt these days.

So whether we like it or not, the events of the last four months indicate that the most basic iussues of security and defence will be thrown open to debate again within the Labour Party. This will happen whatever any committee decides. It is written into the coming international events. And when the debate does begin it will have to focus on the following new questions:

(a) Can Labour justify continued British membership of an alliance whose leading state is gearing it up to achieve military superiority over the USSR so that it can win a war rather than deterence?

(b) If so under what conditions would Labour urge withdrawal from the NATO alliance? Are there any? Or do we follow the US wherever it leads us?

(c) If Star Wars testing and deployment goes ahead, and the fighting of a war limited to Europe becomes a possibility, what would Labour do in response to that? Would it call for the disbanding of NATO and the removal of all US troops from Europe, thus making the launching of such a limited war by a dominant America impossible? Or would it restrict itself to nuclear weapons reductions while, as at present, being ready to spend more on American and West European conventional forces and equipment?

(d) What are the realistic alternatives to continued acceptance of US military hegemony, known today under the euphamistic name of NATO?

These issues would have seemed wildly hypothetical and even academic to professional politicians even just two and a half years ago. Even 12 months ago foreign office officials would have dismissed them as speculative. Now they have to be considered. People who say that membershiop of NATO is not a fit subject for discussion are not fit to be trusted as responsible politicians in the new conditions we face.

Against this background, the recent proposal by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer for the NEC to open a new discussion on NATO is both courageous and far-sighted. Nothing shows the immaturity and light-weight character of such people as Meacher, Sawyer and Blunkett as serious Labour leaders so clearly as their nervous fear of breaking the taboo over NATO.

The labour movement in Britain will not quickly break with Atlanticism and NATO and opt for a socialist neutralist course. It will take such a grave step only when traumatic experience demonstrates the criminality of Washington's present course. But what must happen swiftly is that the case for withdrawal it freely debated within the Party. And from now on hackneyed demands for unconditional loyalty to NATO, for loyalty to Washington at any price, in any conditions must not be accepted within the Party. Too much is at stake for us to stick to a "policy of blind faith".

FREE SPEECH ON IRELAND

David Hughes, Labour Party National Agent, is now denying that he ever forbade the London Labour EC from implementing Composite O on Ireland carried with a clear majority on a card vote at the London AGM in March. That the paid London officers were instructed by Hughes not to implement the composite in a letter to the regional secretary is now so much history it seems. Hughes is busy getting NEC ratification of his decision — so busy in fact that the NEC was pre-empted by Walworth Road press office telling the Irish Times that a resolution in support of Hughes' position had been carried 'on the nod' by the Organisation Committee on April 15th. Only problem was that this was a complete fabrication! The Organisation Committee hadn't even discussed the issue having had to adjourn their meeting early. Many members knew nothing whatsoever about any such resolution — never mind passing it on the nod!

But this infamous resolution will be going to the NEC on May 22nd. Hughes' argument is that we mustn't talk — or listen to — those who are in opposition to "our sister parties in the Socialist International". Does this rule out Fine Gael? Fianna Fail? Unionists? Or is it ONLY Sinn Fein that we should have nothing to do with?

The original resolution, from Hornsey and Wood Green Women's Section and Hayes and Harlington CLP, argued that the continued strip-searching of women in Armagh prison raised the issue of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland and requested the London EC to organise discussions and public meetings throughout the London labour movement on this issue based on Tony Benn's model Withdrawal Bill. The discussions and meetings were to involve majority republican opinion as well as a whole range of other individuals and organisations, in particular women's and trade union groups.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT TO LOBBY THE NEC TO SUPPORT OPEN, NON-EXCLUSIVE DISCUSSION ON IRELAND.

LOBBY THE NEC,
8.30am, 22nd May.
150 Walworth Rd,
London SE17.

The right wing of Exeter Labour Party promotes the Labour/Liberal coalition which has run Exeter City Council for one year. The coalition produces consequences for the Labour Left and the struggle for socialism.

Anything in the Exeter Party which might lead the Party into campaigning for socialism has to be crushed, lest it offends the Liberals. Nothing must endanger the civic careers of leading Labour councillors, even if this means resorting to blatantly undemocratic procedures. For the Right to succeed, the Party must be maintained as a rotten borough.

Following the campaign led by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer to reorient the Party against NATO, Exeter's Labour Left took up the issue.

Right-wing GC delegates ignored their responsibilities to the branches which elected them: they bullied and deceived the GC to prevent discussion and possible policy change on the NATO issue. Resolutions were arbitrarily ruled "out of order" on the grounds they were against party policy!

Yet only by developing a clear and coherent socialist approach can we break the Tory/ Alliance dominance in Devon.

Peter Bowing **Tony Parry**
Jan Ochsner **Neil Todd**

MODEL RESOLUTION/ AMENDMENT ON DEFENCE

Despite Labour's welcome commitment to renounce nuclear weapons, the Party still uncritically accepts the authoritarian nature of the armed forces. In a bid to commit the Party to a policy of military democratisation, the following is the text of a model resolution for submission to Annual Conference. It could also be tabled as an *amendment* to an anti-nuclear resolution:

"Conference believes that the non-nuclear defence policy of a future Labour government should include a commitment to the democratisation of the armed forces to ensure that they reflect within their own internal organisation the democratic ideals they ostensibly exist to defend; thereby making the military more attractive to a wider range of recruits and more representative of a broader cross-section of society. This extension of full civil, political and trade union rights to service personnel, which has *already* been granted to members of the armed forces in many other NATO countries, ought to include (a) the right to participate in political parties, pressure groups, protest marches and public meetings; (b) the right to participate in trade unions and for those unions to negotiate on behalf of their military members; (c) the creation of a consultation machinery for lower ranks to participate in the administration of their units; (d) the appointment of an independent military ombudsman to investigate complaints by servicemen and women; (e) the abolition of separate all-female corps and the full integration of women into all sections of the armed forces; (f) the opening up of *all* military occupations — including combat roles — to servicewomen on a completely equal basis with men; (g) the introduction of equal pay and maternity leave for women members of the forces; (h) the outlawing of racist barriers against black recruits joining the elite Guard's regiments and elsewhere; (i) the legalisation of homosexuality for off-duty members of the armed forces; (j) the reduction of class differentials between officers and lower ranks by introducing common messes and barracks for all personnel and by increasing the percentage of officers promoted from the lower ranks to at least 50 per cent; (k) the right of servicemen and women facing disciplinary charges to have legal representation."

By Peter Tatchell

Book Review:

The politics of Euro-Missiles

The Politics of the Euro-Missiles, by Diana Johnstone, reviewed by John Mullings, London Region CND and Peckham CND (in a personal capacity)

At Labour CND's Annual General Meeting, for the first time, we begin to discuss what NATO represents and its overall strategy in Europe. Diana Johnstone's book is important reading for our understanding of the structure of NATO, the latter's decisions, and its relation to the missiles and labour movement.

Johnstone's starting point is the NATO "double track" decision taken on December 12th 1979, which involved deployment of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe, and at the same time to hold talks with the Soviet Union in order to reach a more "stable" military balance and to "avert an arms race in Europe". The author then details the chaotic effect this decision had in the internal politics of the European countries.

In West Germany, during the security debate at the April 1982 SPD Congress, it was clear that the majority of delegates had been convinced by the critics of the missiles, with help, of course, of a massive peace movement. The party leadership then kept the congress from voting against missile deployment by arguing that the "Yes/No" vote should be held off as long as possible to put maximum pressure on the superpowers to reach an agreement in the Geneva arms talks.

In France, for all the French Left's arguments, that an independent nuclear system – the Force de Frappe – could be used to defend the Communist Party/ Socialist Party's socialist programme against outside intervention, this is being gradually undermined by NATO weapons in the rest of Europe. The Mafia played a significant role in Italy, where missiles are based at Comiso, Sicily.

"The Mafia supported Reagan... Sicily has an important role to play within Reagan administration policy, and mafioso control of the economy and society could guarantee that the project for occupying the island is carried out, in the sense that mafioso interests and violence already are, and will seek to be even more an effective deterrent to prevent and hinder the growth of a mass movement able to block the project".

Although in Britain, the peace movement was able to focus on Cruise and the NATO decision more sharply because it already had missiles of its own, whereas other deployment countries did not, it still has the problem of being able to oppose real wars.

"Part of the trouble was that although the Falklands war fitted perfectly into the American Global Strategy of which Cruise and Pershing were a part, this relationship was not perceived in the movement".

Political intervention

The essential theory of the book is that the Euromissiles have been used by the US to intervene *politically* into Europe to make the European powers pay for further militarisation. Thus by arguing that Europe should take a more independent military role in NATO, the US can get the European ruling class to take more economic responsibility for the missiles. This will mean a huge austerity drive against the European working class.

What conclusions can we draw? Now more than ever the politics of Jobs Not Bombs must be pushed, getting CND to support workers in struggle, linking this in with a campaign for withdrawal from NATO. Unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from NATO must be a key part of the programme for a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

MAKING THE LINKS: IRELAND, NATO — AND THE LABOUR PARTY

Scant attention is paid to the question of NATO. CND has a formal policy position of withdrawal, but behaves as if it wishes it hadn't. The peace movement has embarked on a moral crusade to save humanity and while we certainly need saving – and we need a mass, broad peace movement – the net result has been a focus on symptoms – missiles, bases, bombs – to the exclusion of the disease – Atlanticism in the form of NATO. The Labour Party actively supports the disease, indeed it is part of Labourism's raison d'etre. A recent book comments, "in foreign policy Labour came to share the values and perceptions of the ruling class more thoroughly than in any other area . . . atlanticism and imperialist nostalgia . . . underpin the party's perspective in the field of foreign affairs."*

And the left? While the leadership's '83 election campaign equivocation on unilaterism had us all very hot and bothered, the commitment to NATO has been largely unchallenged. A 1982 annual conference composite resolution which included withdrawal from NATO was defeated by a margin of almost 5 to 1. It has not made the floor of conference since, hardly making any appearance at all on the agenda amid a flood of resolutions on disarmament and related matters. NATO does not appear to be a related matter in our thinking.

And if NATO manages but a cursory glimpse in our political thinking Ireland and Britain and NATO is non-existent. To say this is dangerous is only to state the obvious – but then the obvious is staring us in the face and we seem completely unable to examine it back.

A Tudor jingle went, 'He that would England win, Let him in Ireland first begin.' And so they did and have kept at it ever since. The 1801 Act of Union was passed shortly after the United Irishmen rising had attempted an alliance with revolutionary France against the common enemy of Britain. Dear Mr G.B. Shaw hit the nail on the head, especially as far as the Labour Party was concerned when he argued for Home Rule in 1920 but said – 'It is impossible to treat Ireland as a separate country from Great Britain for military purposes. An invasion of Ireland would be an invasion of Britain.' Perish the thought.

The 1949 Labour government approved a secret report which put the issue with equal clarity – 'as a matter of first-class strategic importance' Northern Ireland 'should continue to form part of His Majesty's Dominions.' A British Commonwealth Relations Office document from 1951 carries the argument a stage further – 'A united Ireland whose willingness and unqualified co-operation could not with certainty be relied on, which was neutral, or which was sharply divided internally over neutrality, would be a major problem in the defence of the United Kingdom and in the defence and support of Western Europe.' In the May 1982 issue of International Relations Vice-Admiral Sir Ian McGough, formerly of NATO Command, wrote, '. . . if Britain should once again find herself at war – and particularly with the Soviet Union – she could not accept a militant left wing government in Eire, with the prospect of military facilities being not only denied to Britain, but made available to her enemy.' Ah, well there you have it – Gerry Adams starring as Che in 'Cuba on Our Doorstep'.**

So – the scenario is canvassed of a united Ireland in exchange for NATO membership and everyone is happy – except hopefully you and me and all the good socialists – and the vast majority of the Irish. A poll carried out for the Irish Times at the end of April showed that 64% of people in the Republic believe that Ireland should not join any military alliance at any time. Irish CND has requested, and is campaigning for, a referendum to incorporate neutrality into the constitution and thus make it non-negotiable. But the powers that be, never ones for democratic niceties except when it suits them, have been carrying on regardless, behind Irish peoples' backs. Northern Ireland, of course, is already part of NATO and is completely integrated into the NATO military system. The Republic, also however, already allows NATO access to strategic facilities such as ports. The jointly Irish/UK funded Mount Gabriel radar station in County Cork is already fully integrated with both NATO and British early warning and communications networks.

CND's journal 'Sanity' carried a special feature on Ireland in its March '85 issue. Written by Irish CND itself (north and south) the material is highly informative and very valuable. But British CND says nothing – no editorial, no article saying how it should relate to British CND's work. 'No comment'. An introduction from Irish CND makes the point – 'Irish CND is well aware and appreciative of the support CND in Britain gives to Irish neutrality. We would however appreciate even more!'

Sarah Roelofs

* *Citizens and Comrades*, Brian Jenkins and Gunter Minnerup, Pluto 1984.
** Information from *The British in Ireland*, Geoffrey Bell, Pluto 1984.

Labour CND AGM

The main concerns of Labour CND's AGM held at City University on Saturday 21st April were:
1) The Labour Party's failure to have a national campaign on Labour's unilateralist policy.
2) The necessity to move the Labour Party towards a commitment to close down all foreign bases including communication bases and towards withdrawal from NATO.

For this year's Labour Party Conference the AGM requested the incoming committee to circulate four separate resolutions on:
1) Closure of all foreign bases including communication bases.
2) Star Wars, Airland Battle and FOFA and demanding a discussion on the NATO problem throughout the movement.
3) Reasoned resolution demanding withdrawal from NATO.
4) A demand that the Labour Party should launch a campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

"Whilst recognising the importance of jobs and services in the 1985 Campaign programme" the AGM regretted the omission of Defence policy as a major issue and demanded that the Labour Party "at all levels should campaign for Labour's unilateralist policy." There was a strong feeling that the issue had not been sufficiently campaigned on at either national or local level.

Conference also noted the success of Neil Kinnock's visits to the USSR and Nicaragua. The visit to Nicaragua showed that the Labour Party supports democracy and freedom throughout the world and can lead a campaign against U.S. intervention and its potential consequences of regional and possibly world war. The AGM wanted Labour CND to work for full acceptance of CND's objectives and campaign policies by the Labour Party. In this context the AGM gave a high priority to British withdrawal from NATO.

The AGM also charged the incoming committee to establish a working group to report before the 1985 Labour Party Conference on the various means whereby Labour Party policy and action at all levels of the Party can be brought closer to CND policy and campaigning.

The 1985 Labour CND Committee consists of: Joy Hurcombe, chair; Walter Wolfgang, vice-chair; John Moreland, treasurer; Carol Turner, secretary; Kate Edwards, Mary McQuire, Jane Mitchell, Aleks Sczerbiak. Additional members will be appointed by the regions.

There was a very strong feeling at the AGM that CLP's this year should make one of the suggested resolutions their resolution for Labour Party conference.

Walter J. Wolfgang
Vice-chair Labour CND

Copies of the Labour CND draft resolutions for the 1985 Labour Party Conference can be obtained from Labour CND Secretary Carol Turner, 29 Stodmarsh House, Cowley Estate, London SW9. Alternatively you can phone Carol during the day at 01-254-0261.

ADVANCE NOTICE
BRIEFING ANNUAL MEETING
SATURDAY JULY 20th

10am to 5.30pm
COUNTY HALL, LONDON
Details from Graham Bash tel: 01-533 2593

Next national editorial board:
Sunday 23rd June at 1pm at Digbeth Civic Centre, Birmingham

Next issue out: June 20th
Deadline for articles: Monday 10th June

All correspondence to:
162 Millfields Road, London E5
Phone: 01-533 2593

LABOUR WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

WAC DEMANDS PAVE THE WAY

The demands of the Labour Women's Action Committee once again dominate this year's Labour Women's Conference (Bournemouth International Centre June 16th-18th). Following the clean sweep for the long-standing WAC demands at last year's Conference, the committee has moved on to build imaginatively on its successes. This year three WAC model resolutions have been adopted by a total of 16 women's organisations.

One calls for Parliament to operate a normal working day in an attempt to break down the gentleman's club atmosphere of the House of Commons, with some MPs still taking the nineteenth century view of the House as an after-hours watering hole. The strange hours and arcane rules of the House of Commons are arguably class-based masonic rituals designed to keep the great unwashed at bay. They have common roots with the upper class tribal customs of Henley, Ascot and the Oxbridge Senior Common Rooms. For Tories to collude in this is predictable, for Labour MPs allegedly representing the working class, pathetic. As Dennis Skinner said when pointing out the former Speaker to a visiting group of school children: 'There goes Lord Andy-Pandy'.

A second WAC resolution calls on the facility for an additional woman CLP delegate agreed for National Conference to be extended to trade unions, to enable trade union women to play a greater part in Labour Party affairs. It is on the union side that the overwhelming male domination of Conference is most apparent.

ELECTION OF WOMEN'S SECTION

But arguably the most challenging WAC resolution relates to the election of the Women's Section of the NEC. Following the WAC-inspired '84 Women's Conference decision that the Women's Section of the NEC should be elected by the Women's Conference, the '85 WAC model calls on the National Labour Women's Committee to organise a shadow election for the Women's Section. Nominations would be sought from all eligible women's organisations in time for elections to take place at the '86 Women's Conference. WAC believes that such an election would show up the yawning gulf between the present male-elected women and those that rank and file women would wish to elect themselves. To recite again the demand that the Women's Conference elect the NEC Women's Section sounds dry, but the consequences of male domination in the Labour Party are far from academic. The reality of Party power is domination by middle-aged, white, conventional men. They are very little different from the average civil servant, bank manager or businessman, especially those drawn from the union side. Like all men of this ilk, they cling desperately to the outdated stereotype of the super-hetero, macho, blue collar married-man-'n-two-kids, in both their personal politics and their decision making. This cannot be overstated. A few right-on *Briefing*-style guys bravely sucking their thumbs in encounter groups doth not a sexual revolution make. If anything, as the recession bites and the stakes rise, Labour man has regressed. Anyone who doubts this should see the puzzled disbelief that greets women when they ask for what ought to be an automatic provision – that women are chosen for Party women's organiser posts.

The painful struggle with such men has exhausted many a sister, and the only strength is in numbers. White men are uniquely privileged. However they differ on politics and personal style, they can confidently recognise themselves wherever they see images of success and power. They can never know the alienating experience of constantly facing 'the other', and being the outsider, the sore thumb sticking out. The connexion between sexual politics and feminist political reform is a profound one. The WAC demands will pave the way for both.

Josie Edwards
Press Officer, WAC



Marxism 85

A WEEK of meetings, discussions and debates organised by the Socialist Workers Party 5-12 July University of London Union

The most important event of the last year has been the miners' strike. It was a strike which raised thousands of people to activity and drew many of them into politics for the first time.

In the wake of the strike many of these people are asking all sorts of questions. Why did the defeat occur? Could Labour have done more? Would the rank and file have fought if the union leaders had given a stronger lead?

They are asking other questions as well. Can women ever be liberated? Can the working class win? Is there an alternative to the Labour Party?

MARXISM 85 is about discussing these and many other issues. It is about exploring the past—the ideas of Marxism and the experience of the working class movement—to understand the present and to consider the possibilities for the future.

Most of the debates will be between revolutionaries and others on the left. Some will include more than two speakers.

DEBATES ★ Which strategy for the left? ★ Trade unions and the fight against the Tories ★ Women and the struggle for socialism ★ Is Trotsky relevant today? ★ Which way forward for students? ★ Police and the state ★ Russia today

This year we are planning about 250 meetings organised into over 30 courses.

COURSES ★ The Labour Party—a history ★ What makes a revolution? ★ The rank and file and the Broad Lefts ★ Fifty years of the popular front ★ Capital for beginners ★ Socialism and culture ★ Racism and nationalism ★ Women's liberation and socialism ★ Labour in Irish history ★ Problems of Marxist philosophy ★ Anarchism and syndicalism ★ The history of the miners

SPEAKERS ★ Ken Livingstone ★ Chris Harman ★ Tariq Ali ★ Tony Cliff ★ Alex Callinicos ★ Lindsey German ★ Quintin Hoare ★ Nigel Harris ★ Paul Foot

The cost of Marxism, including entrance to all meetings, debates and entertainment, is £16 for the whole week (in advance) and £10 for the weekend. For further details write to Marxism 85, PO Box 82, London E2.

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