LONDON LABOUR 10p

BRIEFING

No 7 DECEMBER 1980

TARGET 1982

THE LEFT NEEDS TO BEGIN NOW to build towards left control of Labour Councils in the 1982 London borough elections. In the fight against Thatcherism we need to ensure that our councillors will be people who accept that they have a political role in fighting the government.

On December 8, London Labour Briefing will take an early step towards achieving this, at a meeting at County Hall. We need to start planning and analysing the situation NOW.

JEREMY CORBYN
London Labour Party
Regional Executive Committee

COUNCIL PANELS

The 1982 elections must be fought on the strategy of opposition to, not administration of, Tory policies. To achieve left control of Councils means that work must begin now on nominating people to the Council panel who accept that they have a political role in fighting the government.

The record of London's Councils in this respect has not been inspiring. Only Lambeth has stood out as a Council prepared to fight the government. All others to a greater or lesser degree have accepted cuts in spending.

Isolationism is a feature of local government. Most Councils act as though their basic wish is to represent their area, rather than be part of the wishes of Labour controlled councils.

It is this attitude that has led Labour Councils into unholy alliances with Tory authorities on the dubious line of "our needs".

The need to control local authorities has never been in doubt, but Party activists must be clear that unless they select and elect candidates who are prepared to lead a fight against the Tories, to change the approach of a Council from one of 'administration' to one of political leadership and to seek cooperation and support both from and to local authority trade unions, then control can be a nightmare for the working class who see Labour councillors wielding the axe.

CHANGING ROLE

The political role of local councillors has been growing in its importance in the last few years.

The attacks on council tenants and council workers by the Heath government in 1970 and 1971 show what a crucial—or treacherous—role Labour Councils had to play.

The Callaghan-Wilson strategy of spending cuts from 1976 onwards showed that they were prepared to use local councils as their agents in passing on the

CONTINUED ON PAGE TWO

Council House Sales: Greenwich says NO!

BY AN overwhelming majority the Labour Group on Greenwich Council decided recently to defy Heseltine by refusing to sell council houses. The decision was confirmed at a full council meeting on Wednesday 5 November, and Greenwich becomes the first borough in the country to take this action.

The Group fully considered alternative ways of frustrating the government's intentions, including every possible administrative delay. We came to the conclusion, however, that such were the powers of the Secretary of State in the Housing Act that bureaucratic and administrative delays would soon prove ineffective.

The Act gives the Minister power to intervene in general or in particular cases where it appears to him that a tenant or tenants are experiencing difficulty in exercising the right to buy "effectively and expeditiously". If any borough is effective in delaying sales, clearly the Minister will step in.

Furthermore, the Group considered the morality of agreeing to go ahead with sales whilst deliberately obstructing them.

SELLING IMMORAL

We felt that there was greater credibility for a Labour Council in being open, direct and honest. Sale of Council houses in areas of housing need is immoral and makes no economic sense—we have a powerful message to get across and we are putting it directly to our electors.

We are explaining to all our tenants and the 8,700 applicants on the waiting list why we have taken this action.

We had a clear commitment in our manifesto in 1978 (when our waiting list was 7,000) and we are acting in accordance with that.

I personally hope that the trade unions in Greenwich will take action to back us in our decision and do all they can to block any action by the Secretary of State.

Of course we are disappointed by the fact that we are on our own. We hope many more Labour Councils will join us. We are sure they will once the Secretary of State intervenes in their boroughs.

JOHN AUSTIN WALKER
Deputy Leader, Greenwich Council

SQUATTERS RESIST GLC SALES

AT MIDNIGHT on Friday 3rd October, a group of 50 homeless people occupied Kilner House—a block of 60 modernised GLC flats which the GLC had promised to the original tenants, but in the summer decided to sell on the open market, at prices from £18,000 to £22,000. The action was planned by the London Squatters Union and coincided with the coming into force of the sales section of the Tories' new Housing Act.

A letter was immediately distributed to tenants in the surrounding estates. It said:

"Our reason for occupying Kilner House is to stop the GLC selling it. Many tenants on this estate were promised homes in Kilner House once it had been remodernised and there are hundreds of thousands of families in London who need council housing.

"It is a crime that the Masters in County Hall should even think about selling the block. What makes the situation worse is that a number of the flats have been specially adapted for old folk: we intend to occupy these flats and stop them being sold so that they can be handed over to their rightful occupants."

TENANTS JOIN IN

As soon as the tenants heard about the squat, several of the families who had been promised a modernised flat in Kilner House decided to move in too. The numbers have swelled to 130.

This is the biggest take over by squatters of a building in a single operation since 1975. It marks the beginning of a series of mass squats against Tory housing policy The block, which is beside the gas works at the Oval Cricket Ground, is the first modernised inter-war block the GLC has tried to sell.

The GLC took swift action, obviously peeved that their corrugated iron, barbed wire and security guard had been of no use. A High Court injunction was served almost immediately, summonsing the occupants to the High Court on Friday 17th October. Seventy people picketed outside. The hearing was put off to give time for a defence to be prepared.

SUPPORT

Meanwhile, support has flooded in from local tenants organisations, the London Tenants Organisation, Lambeth Trades Union Council, Vauxhall Labour Party, Stuart Holland MP, and Ted Knight.

The building workers at the GLC Maintenance depot at Oval were ordered by the GLC to build 60 grilles, and to be prepared to board up Kilner House as soon as the squatters were evicted.

The building workers voted unanimously to black any such work after hearing a speaker from the squatters.

The NALGO workers in County Hall have refused to process the eviction orders.

More support is needed, following the High Court reversal, and at the barricades if it comes to that. Offers of support, requests for speakers, should be made to the Office in Flat 1, Kilner House, Pegasus Place, Clayton Street, Kennington Oval, SE11, or phone 701 5691.

LATE NEWS:
A split in the Labour ranks at County Hall followed the decision of Labour Leader Andrew McIntosh to support the Tories in "increasing security arrangements by spending another £300,000 on security firms to protect other properties of the Council which may be exposed to this sort of treatment".

When the vote was taken on Tuesday 4th November, McIntosh insisted that it be minuted that the Labour Party did not oppose this decision although several Labour members voted against, including Ken Livingstone and Anna Grieves.

(Continued from page 1)

TARGET 1982

reduction in working class living standards.

As London's 32 boroughs begin the initial process of selecting their candidates for the 1982 elections the time has never been more ripe for Party activists to decide exactly why **we need to control local government, and exactly on what basis they intend to implement this control.**

The situation is stark:

* 60% of local government income derives from the Rate Support Grant (or, from this year, the Block Grant); 40% is raised by the local rates. The services provided are a vital ingredient of the welfare state/social wage package: education, social services, housing.

* The Tories have decided that one of the major thrusts of their attack will be to force local government to make the major cuts in working class living standards so ardently desired by them, and to back up this desire they will use the whole paraphernalia of the state machine.

THE LOCAL STATE

Far from being bastions of local democracy, local government is designed very much to be an administrator of the state —no capital building programmes can be effectively undertaken without the agreement of the Department of the Environment, right down to the actual building cost of each house, and capital debt charges form a major element of council spending.

As an example of a typical London borough: Haringey's income is £169 million, of which only £48 million is raised by rates. Expenditure by service shows that education is the largest at £44 million (40%) with social services second with £15 million. However, looked at from the angle of where the money goes, over £38 millions is spent on loan repayments and debt charges.

The Block Grant about to be announced for all local authorities in place of the Rate Support Grant will be a major blow. From a system that made an annual grant on the basis of existing services, Heseltine has decided that the government will decide what level of spending there should be. The announcement will herald major cuts in spending, and an immediate chain reaction of loss of jobs and reduction in working class living standards.

Labour councillors will be faced with a very clear choice this year, because the option of putting up local rates to compensate for the loss of central government income will no longer be there. In any event, to increase the rates to the levels required to maintain services would be a massive attack on the living standards of the working class.

Thus the only role for Labour councillors, unless they wish to actively pursue the diktats of the Tories, is to resist.

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING wants to see the development of the left in all Labour Parties, but especially we believe that it is necessary to extend the achievements in selection of GLC candidates to the control of local councils in 1982.

Come to a meeting to be held at 7.30pm on Monday December 8, at County Hall to listen to the experience of councillors and discuss closer cooperation between the left in different boroughs.

Local Government in CRISIS!

THE "LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CRISIS" CONFERENCE held on November 1 represented the beginnings of a fightback against Heseltine's local authority cuts. In the face of deafening silence from both the TUC and the Labour Party NEC, Lambeth Labour Group had to take the initiative itself and call this conference.

GRAHAM BASH
Ilford South CLP

The positive result from November 1 was the wide representation at the conference. Over 70 Labour Groups, 137 CLPs and 295 trade union branches and trades councils sent delegates. The beginning of a broad united front was thereby created. More's the pity, therefore, that from those organisations capable of giving real *material* support to Lambeth and those few other councils in the front line against Heseltine, there was a lot of backtracking.

To its credit, NUPE, alone of all the trade unions, supported the conference at national level. But the message from Ron Keating was far from encouraging. His pessimism about any fightback from NUPE members may well now need some qualification in the light of the government's attempt to impose a 6% pay limit on local authority workers.

LABOUR GROUPS

Just as dangerous was the fatalistic attitude of many Labour Groups themselves. John Lebor, Leader of Brent Council, probably spoke for most Labour Groups when he tried to justify his policy of imposing substantial cuts—a policy described by Ken Livingstone as a "stab in the back" and which leaves the front line councils dangerously isolated.

A number of delegates expressed concern about the lack of a clear cut commitment from Lambeth itself not to implement cuts. As one delegate put it: "It strengthens the whole movement when the councils fight, but if Lambeth imposes cuts it will weaken us all."

It was true that the Lambeth leaders were still hedging their bets as to whether, when the crunch comes, they will be prepared to defy the government, alone if necessary. But Matthew Warburton, Lambeth Housing Chairperson, came very near to giving a pledge that they would do so.

POWER TO IMPLEMENT

The obvious weakness of the conference was that many delegates represented organisations that either lack the power to implement the radical resolutions that were passed, or would refuse to be bound by them. The second problem was the degree of "buck passing", with Labour Group and union representatives each in turn trying to off-load the responsibilities to each other and voting for resolutions which committed *other* organisations to action.

The Labour Groups, for instance, were almost unanimous in supporting the call for the TUC to prepare a plan for a general strike, but somewhat less than forthcoming when it came to what they were going to do themselves.

The conference was nonetheless valuable. If Ted Knight hammered one point home, it was the urgency of the situation.

"Time is running out," he warned. "Lambeth in the next three months will decide on its budget. If we are to balance our books it will mean cuts of millions of pounds. I do not believe that is a decision Lambeth can take. But if we are left alone, we will be defeated."

What they said

Arthur Latham, Chairperson of the London Labour Party (who chaired the morning session of the Conference)

* Our main task is to decide how we're going to achieve the maximum unity of action.
* I don't know that it is profitable to spend a lot of time discussing the route with those who don't intend making the journey anyway.

Vanessa Wiseman, President of Lambeth Trades Council:

* Clay Cross were right. We must call on councils to make a stand. Failure to get industrial action will not justify cuts. If councillors state we must fight the government and then in a month's time plan their cuts, I'll be cynical and so will the rest of the Labour movement.

John Lebor, Leader of Brent Council:

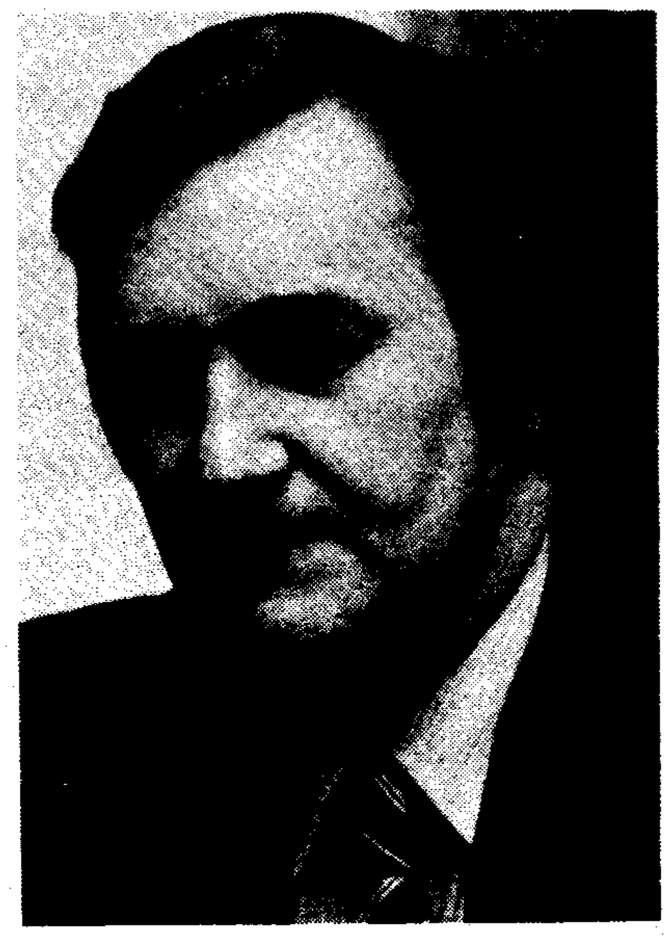
* We must face realities. We shall be forced to consider substantial cuts. The support is just not there. We must beware of leading people into a struggle we know in our hearts we cannot win.

Ken Livingstone, London Labour Party Executive:

* What John Lebor didn't tell you is that Brent Council have applied for a waiver. By crawling to Heseltine they have forfeited their right to struggle. We cannot wait for the pendulum to swing. We must start the fight now. The view that we must keep our heads down stabs in the back all those fighting against the cuts. Councils have their mandate: no cuts whatsoever. Let us ensure it is implemented.

Matthew Warburton, Housing Chairperson, Lambeth Council:

* We are putting our credentials on the line. We will fight, despite the risk of surcharge, and on our own if necessary.



Ted Knight, Leader of Lambeth Council:

* Labour councillors weren't elected to reduce the living standards of working class people.
* This conference should not have been called by Lambeth—it should have been called by the TUC and the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party
* If Lambeth stands alone, and gets only letters of congratulation and the proceeds of collecting boxes, we will be defeated.
* The capitalist class is trapped in a crisis of their own system and seek to pass it on to the working class. Yes, we are at war. The battlefield is local government.

Ron Keating, Assistant General Secretary, NUPE:

* Yes, there IS a war, but our members are not going to be kamikaze pilots.

London Labour Plumps for Socialism

THE SPECIAL London Labour Party Conference called to determine our policy for the GLC election next year was a great success with all the right wing attempts to water down the Executive's manifesto proposals being defeated.



KEN LIVINGSTONE
GLC Member, Hackney North

*** EDUCATION:**
The complaints of the ILEA leadership that the document was "undemocratic" because the Executive had accepted the 20 amendments submitted by affiliated organisations and this changed the original working party report, were ignored by the conference, which adopted the education policy with only a few hands raised in opposition. The many amendments submitted strengthened the policy and set much firmer targets than in the original document. The promise to cut school meals from 35p to 25p will mean an immediate confrontation with government but the policy will be popular amongst parents and will stem the fall in the number of pupils taking school meals.

*** PLANNING:**
The electricians' amendment to delete "Excessive office and hotel development will be resisted" was defeated on a card vote by 285,000 to 385,000 with most of the support coming from trades unions whose members work in these jobs. It is important that we fight for projects which benefit the whole community on the prime sites of central London and don't just accept what is on offer which, in the case of Coin Street and Hays Wharf, is three million square feet of offices (equal to over 20 new Centre Point-sized blocks).

*** TRANSPORT:**
Conference accepted the Executive amendment to replace the "free fares by 1982" policy on the grounds that all the four main trades unions representing the 60,000 London Transport staff opposed the policy but the TSSA (booking clerks) amendment to delete any reference to the long term commitment to the abolition of fares was defeated by 628,000 to 48,500.

APEX and the TSSA had also moved the deletion of the pledge to cut fares by 25% following the election and this was supported by the T&GWU delegation who had been worried by the rate increase arguments of Andrew McIntosh (Leader of the GLC Labour Group). After a long and highly charged debate the conference voted to endorse the 25% fare cut by 416,500 to 173,500.

There was complete agreement that following the 25% cut fares should be frozen for the life time of the next GLC. At present rate of inflation this will mean that over the next four years the subsidy for London Transport will rise from 23% to between 50% to 60% (depending on the rate of inflation).

The conference decided not to debate the issue of the national leadership struggle but over 90% of the delegates signed a petition calling on the PLP to suspend the leadership election until the electoral college was established. Given the precedent this could have for the election of the GLC Leader by the London Labour Party conference, it is interesting that Andrew McIntosh was one of the few delegates to refuse to sign.

With the bitter experience of the betrayal of the 1973 manifesto clearly in mind, the candidates already adopted were told bluntly that if they could not stomach such a programme they should resign now.

"We don't want people saying 'stop the bus, I want to get off'," said conference chairperson Arthur Latham, former MP for Paddington.

"If there are people who feel unable to accept in total the programme to which you have been committed this weekend, then the time to decide not to stand is now."

Unfortunately such integrity is rare among politicians and all the candidates have paid lip service to the manifesto.

There will be many struggles ahead to keep the group to the manifesto. An indication of what is to come was given in *Time Out's* coverage of the conference:

> "You could call it tough, you could call it radical, but you couldn't call it left wing," Labour's contender for the leadership of the Greater London Council (GLC) Andrew McIntosh told *Time Out* this week, following the adoption of the manifesto Labour will be putting to voters in the May election. But McIntosh insists that the whole group will support those parts of the manifesto which relate to London. "Things to do with GLC policy are agreed by left and right. I'm thought of as a moderate, but fares are the only thing there was any real doubt about at the conference and I am and always have been determined to cut fares. I was very much opposed to the unions' attempt to delete this. The left is constrained by the manifesto, as I am. We're not going to be locked in conflict because the policies are agreed and all that is required is determination."

ILEA Must Toe

AT THE ILEA Labour Group meeting on November 4, I moved the following motion on behalf of 11 Group members:

This Group—
(i) notes the policy document on education endorsed by the special meeting of the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party;
(ii) instructs the policy committee to call for reports from the authority's officers on the proposals for the education service made in the document; and
(iii) resolves that in the period up to the May 1981 elections policies will be pursued as far as is practical in line with those adopted by the conference, including in particular the restoration of those cuts made in the authority's budget for 1980-81 which were not once and for all measures.

Non-controversial you might have thought. It merely suggests that the present ILEA Group carry out the policies they have promised to fight for at the forthcoming elections. In practice of course, the present Group are so detached from the wider Labour movement in London that we never got a chance to vote on the motion itself.

MANIFESTO BUDGET

First it was quite a struggle to get to the motion. With only an hour and a quarter for the meeting, considerable time was spent on items coming earlier on the agenda. When the motion was reached attempts were made to rule it out of order on the basis that the next manifesto was only the concern of the next Group. This completely ignores the fact that next year's budget, the budget upon

The Riverside for the People

THE PLANNING of the South Bank is going to be one of the first tough issues that an incoming Labour GLC administration will have to face, and this time there can be no fudging the issues.

It is now clear that a future Labour GLC is heading on a collision course with Southwark Council following two recent Southwark decisions: one to give permission for over two million square foot of speculative offices on Hays Wharf in return for some dubious "community benefit", the other official "death sentence" of riverside communities in the form of the North Southwark Draft Local Plan. Take these two succinct statements from Southwark:

* A prime function of the Council was to determine the best environment for the people of Southwark. An area criss-crossed by railway lines and major roads leading to the bridges over the Thames and including a power station was not suitable for family housing.

* It should be clearly stated that although every consideration should be given to the views of the local community, the land under discussion should be developed in the interests of the borough as a whole and the final decision should be made on that basis.

MANIFESTO

Contrast this with the very clear statements agreed on October 18 at special conference to decide election policy:

* In the interests of the local community and of London as a whole a Labour GLC will use its powers to resist the expansion of office development in areas which are already over-developed to prevent existing communities from being pushed out by speculative office building when homes, industrial jobs and recreation facilities are the developments needed by these communities.

* Labour will halt the disposal of publicly-owned land in the South Bank/ Coin Street area, and return to the previous intentions for this area.

It is clear that the two positions are untenable. It is no surprise therefore that the last day for consultation on the Draft plan is May 4 next year! The Executive of the London Labour Party and the Opposition Group at County Hall will have to make it clear to Southwark that their present approach to the planning of the South Bank is completely unacceptable.

One complication that has bene sprung on Bermondsey is the extension of the Urban Development Corporation boundaries to London Bridge, taking in most of the Bermondsey Riverside including Hays Wharf. This is equally bed news to what is happening already, because it is impossible that the UDC will have the same objectives as a future Labour GLC.

FOR THE PEOPLE

Quite how the Labour GLC is going to deal with the UDC is something we will have to give careful thought to, but the strategic role of the GLC is slowly being eaten into, and will have to be fought.

We have always said in Bermondsey: "The Riverside for the people." The recent planning of London is leading to a situation where further no-go areas for working class people in addition to the privileged enclaves already carved out for the rich are being created.

If we are serious about putting the needs of people first then we are in for a fight with forces much larger than Southwark Council. The communities of North Southwark, Waterloo, Battersea, Covent Garden and elsewhere have a right to expect us to take up that fight, so we had better get used to saying NO now, so that we have had some practice by the time next May comes around.

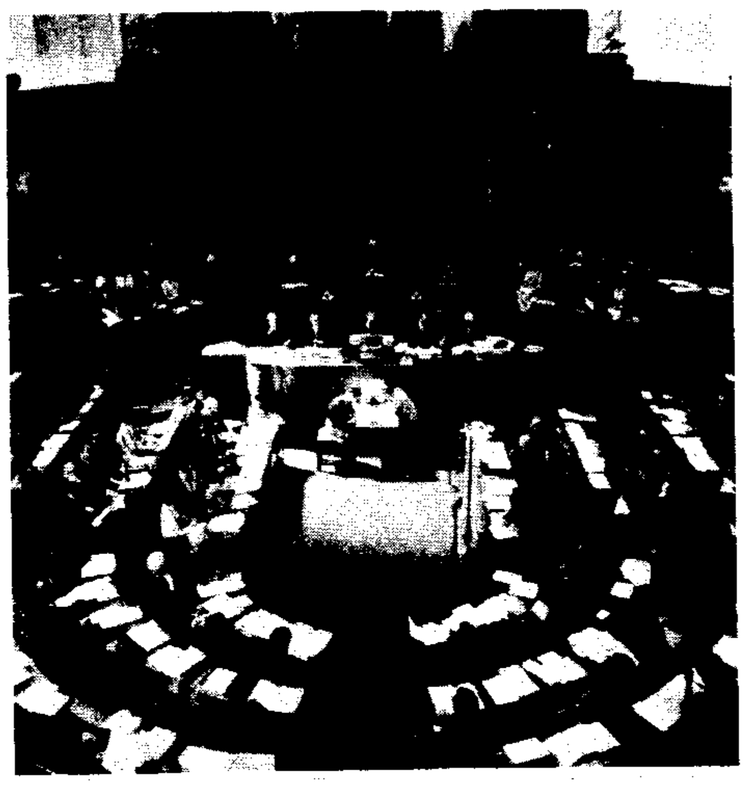
GEORGE NICHOLSON
Prospective GLC Canddiate
for Bermondsey

the Line

BRYN DAVIES
GLC Member, Vauxhall

which we will fight the elections, will be decided by the present Group. When this tactic failed, the next line of defence was to misrepresent what the motion said. Ashley Bramall said he would be supporting the motion since it merely stated the obvious. Ken Livingstone's response was to make quite clear that it would be quite hypocritical for anyone to support this motion unless they also intended to vote to reverse the '80-'81 cuts, to cut the price of school meals and to press for the other measures in the manifesto which the present Group had failed to achieve.

The final move was to propose that because of lack of time debate on the motion be postponed until the Group meeting in December, that would discuss next year's budget. I opposed this, pointing out that everyone had already made up their mind on the issues. Either the Group intends to try and carry out the policies agreed at the Special Conference or they intend to duck the issues. In the event the Group voted 18:8 to duck the issues. It is important now that as many branches as possible pass resolutions along the lines of paragraph (iii) above. There is a real chance of getting the Group to carry out the Party's policies but only if the maximum pressure is applied through the Constituency Parties



HOW THEY VOTED:

1. For postponement

J Branagan
M Kingwell
J Keys
A Sofer
W Ross
J Phillips
T Walker
A Ward
A Grieves
F Styles
J Merriton
S Mayne
C McAskell
R Goodwin
M Morgan
M Garside
A Bramall
L Bondy

2. Signed original motion

B Davies
S Turney
L Layward
L Herbert
N Fletcher
C Rossi
E Hillman
H Hinds
K Livingstone
G Dimson
D Chalkley

Nine of those supporting the postponement of the vote are either coopted or retiring members. Amongst those who are fighting the 1981 election, seven supported the motion and only five opposed.

Hammersmith & Fulham:
Not Office but POWER

STEPHEN CLARK
Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

THE DEBATE in Labour Groups throughout London is about the extent to which socialist administrations should be prepared to water down their principles and policies in order to retain office.

Despite government pressure on local government budgets Labour Councils did, at least in theory, possess the option of raising rates to maintain services to the community. Additionally they could also decide on some level of Council house building and resist demands for Council house sales.

Recent Heseltine directives and legislation have effectively undermined local democracy and substantially altered the role of the Councils to that of instruments of central government policy.

Readers of **Briefing** will be aware of the need for concerted action to fight this pernicious attack on the poorer sections of society.

I would like to highlight an interesting debate within the Hammersmith and Fulham Labour Parties over developments on the Hammersmith and Fulham Council and the extent to which this mirrors the problems facing Labour administrations under the Tory government.

LIBERAL HELP OFFERED

After the 1978 local elections the Labour Party found itself with 24 seats against 24 Tories and 2 Liberals in Hammersmith and Fulham. After a heated discussion it was agreed to go into opposition rather than accept the erosion of Labour policies that were being demanded by the Liberals in return for their support.

Having taken that decision one would have thought that the question of a coalition was resolved until May 1982. But, following difficulties in the administration over the Heseltine penalties and the defeat in the Council of the Tory proposals for a £1.80 rent rise, the call for a Lab/Lib coalition is once more raising its head among some Party members.

This call must be decisively rejected. It is hard enough for Labour Councils with large majorities to fight the government imposed cuts. For a Labour led coalition it would be impossible. All a coalition would lead to is more cuts, this time Labour inspired, and disillusion among our supporters. We would rightly be seen to have taken 'power' for the sake of the trimmings of office and we would additionally jeopardise our chances of victory in 1982.

CONFRONTATION

If Labour Councils, with the support of the local government trade unions, are to mount an effective campaign of confrontation with the Tory government, they require a clear mandate from the electorate. We in Hammersmith and Fulham will get that in May 1982 and can then be full participants in the united effort to reverse the trend of government policy.

The proponents of coalition in Hammersmith and Fulham are advancing arguments of a similar nature to those used in other parties to persuade Labour authorities to conform to central government directives as a worthwhile price for continuing in office.

These are empty arguments. Winning local authorities is not an end in itself, it is a means of implementing socialist policies.

If this power disappears our time as councillors would be better spent on door steps campaigning for the removal of the Thatcher government.

No Pacts!

There should be no pacts—either formal or informal—between Labour councillors and other parties, these two articles say.

In Hammersmith and Fulham, where the Council mix is 24:24:2, Stephen Clark calls for a decisive rejection of suggestions for a Lib-Lab pact.

In the "leafy suburbs" Nigel Williamson speaks out against the "club atmosphere in local politics", in which some Labour councillors feel more at home with fellow-councillors of all parties than with the grass roots of their own local Labour Parties.

Ending 'civilisation' in the leafy suburbs

UNTIL NOW, **Briefing** has quite rightly concentrated on the monumental struggle of Labour Councils in London against Heseltine's axe. However I feel that it is wrong to completely ignore what is to be done in some of the outer London Tory boroughs, where Labour Groups represent a small minority with little realistic chance of ever becoming otherwise.

I feel that it is important that we create a coherent strategy in such boroughs to make life as difficult as possible for Tory Councils. What we do not want to see is Labour councillors settling back cosily into their positions, happy to wine and dine at official receptions with their Tory opponents, and voicing only polite formal opposition of the kind we have come to expect from the PLP.

Mrs Thatcher, for instance, paid Mr Callaghan tribute on his resignation for his "cooperation as leader of Her Majesty's Opposition in the best Parliamentary tradition".

Now what the hell is a Labour leader doing cooperating with a vicious, intolerant, uncaring Tory government rampaging its way through the country, destroying our social services and the living standards of working people?

REJECT COSINESS

Just as Dennis Skinner calls for an end to 'pairing' and all the other polite conventions of Parliament which merely make it easier for Thatcher to continue on her trial of devastation, so we must reject the 'club' atmosphere in local politics.

It is undeniably true that certain Labour councillors feel more kinship with their fellow councillors of all parties than with the grass roots of their own local Labour Parties. However, it is the duty of every Labour councillor to obstruct the Tories wherever they seek to swing their axe.

They must expose decisions taken in secret committees, create disruption in full Council and in committees, drawing attention to the unacceptable face of Tory cuts, and work as widely as possible with the trades unions and other organisa-

Continued over→

Housing Cuts Hit Builders

THE HALT to council house building—aimed at "recalcitrant councils"—exhibits the total contempt of the government for the consequences of its actions for the industries affected.

It is aimed at councils who, in Michael Heseltine's opinion, should simply knuckle under to whatever spending programme he says they should adopt. It is not a policy intended to shape the building industry, so much as one to assert the government's determination to control council spending. It is primarily something for the local governments to fight.

Nevertheless, like various other Tory policies, this moratorium on council house building has secondary effects.

BUILDING UNEMPLOYMENT

The building industry accounts for one-eighth of the country's unemployment, and is suffering anyway from historically very low rates of new house building and commercial building. Overseas contracts have suffered recently from the strong pound, the 'fall' of Iran and the general world recession.

Such industry groups as the National Federation of Building Trades Employers and CABIN (Campaign Against Building Industry Nationalisation) were major noises behind the move to the right in the Tory Party following Heath's defeat in 1974.

But CABIN was not the main reason for the failure of the last Labour government to carry out major changes in the industry as outlined in Party documents like "Building our Future"—decasualisation, strengthening direct labour organisations (DLOs), cleaning up contracting, control over land, etc. The industry has been a low priority for all governments in the seventies.

The main construction union, UCATT represents workers in both DLOs and the private sector, and has problems with the success that the private sector has had in presenting DLOs as inefficient and low paid. Direct Labour was created in order to provide councils with some way of checking the charges for council building made by the private sector, after some particularly gross scandals about private sector costs in this area.

DLO FIGHT

The conditions of work are much better in DLOs, but private sector pressure has always managed to keep them restricted to only certain kinds of building work paid out of general council budgets.

Now, Heseltine has dictated that DLOs show a profit or be disbanded.

DLOs if allowed to do so, could become workers' co-ops which could contract for any building work and retain the benefits for workers that exist at present. But considerable changes would be necessary for this to happen, not the least in the consciousness of the workers and the union.

The general despair in the building industry has been little affected by the moratorium, although it has served as a focus of reaction against the government by all sectors. It is a problem whose solution is long term and structural. It requires commitment to major house building and economic expansion, which are, of course, the opposite of present policies.

Meanwhile, the government is trying to do away with direct labour organisations altogether and between now and April 1981 the battle is on. The problems of staging a fight to win are complex. In the short term the union will have to face a contradiction between the interests of its members in the private sector and those in the public sector.

SITE CONFLICTS

I work for Camden DLO. My site is being flooded with labour as other jobs come to an end. We cannot hope to work efficiently and make a profit by April under present conditions. We have many private sub-contractors working on our site who are members of the same union as us, who also have no other jobs to go to. They are doing work which could be done by the DLO.

At our last shop stewards meeting we learnt that the council is suggesting voluntary redundancies, early retirements and redeployment.

There is considerable feeling that, whilst our jobs are under threat, together with the whole future of our building department, we will have to insist on the removal of all sub-contractors doing work that we could be doing.

This can only be achieved through industrial action and by uniting with other unions within Camden working in the public sector and with DLOs across London.

All Labour Party members must be involved in the fight to save their local DLOs, otherwise when we beat the Tories there will be nothing left to begin the reconstruction.

JANET KRENGEL
Bricklayer Steward, Camden DLO
North Islington CLP

(Continued from previous page)

tions outside the narrow confines of the Labour Group. The 'leave it all to the councillors' argument is just as unacceptable as the similar argument put forward by the PLP.

I must admit that I do not know all the answers to how we make life difficult for Tory Councils which may have in-built majorities of 30 or 40. What I do know is that there are far too many Labour councillors who regard themselves as responsible members of a Council first and as fighting socialists a poor second.

We must reject this. Labour Groups must come out of their elitist shells, and one part of the answer must surely be that there must be far closer relationships with local unions, community groups, women's groups, tenants associations and all others actively seeking to defend working class interests. Local government committees, which in outer London boroughs often tend to be moribund, also have a greater role to play.

We are simply too nice, too polite, too accommodating to Tory controlled councils who, encouraged by Hit Man Heseltine, are now gleefully embarking upon orgies of destruction and vandalism upon the very fabric of working class life.

TORY CLASS WARFARE

I refuse to believe that there are not ways in which we can make life less tolerable, less comfortable and cosy for these Tory hooligans, ways by which we can fight back more effectively against the vicious class warfare declared by Thatcher and her fawning acolytes in the leafy suburbs

The conventions and niceties which tend to characterise politics both locally and in Westminster are now obsolete

I fully realise the problems of sustaining a frontal attack on Tory Councils where Labour Groups represent such a small minority, but those without the stomach for such a fight and who regard their oppositional role as a conventional and formal one should make way for those who are prepared to take the fight to the enemy.

Let's hear some further suggestions in **Briefing** about how we can transform minority Labour Groups into genuine major irritants for these obnoxious Tory controlled Councils.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON
Orpington CLP

CLPD WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

Open the Floodgates!

A MAJOR NEW initiative to campaign for positive discrimination in favour of women within the Labour Party had been launched by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's Women's Action Committee.

The starting point has been the publication of a consultative document for Labour Party women with campaigning proposals. This was followed by a remarkably well attended fringe meeting at Blackpool which was the first ever Women's Rights Rally to be held at Annual Conference. Then came a one-day conference last month which attracted almost 100 women to discuss the proposals in the consultative document, the development of our campaign to achieve them, and the whole idea of 'affirmative action', as they call it in America.

The conference agreed that the following proposals should go forward to the AGM of CLPD next month for ratification:

* a reformed parliamentary day with normal working hours and appropriate facilities for women members;

* positive discrimination on parliamentary short lists;

* creche facilities at party meetings;

* an NEC Women's Section elected by Women's Conference;

* Women's Conference to table motions at national conference ;

* a National Women's Department at Labour Party headquarters;

* positive discrimination on NEC Study Groups;

* Women's Advisory Committee elected by Women's Conference.

AT EVERY LEVEL

The objective of the campaign, as agreed by the conference, is: "To campaign for action, including positive discrimination, to ensure that women are fully represented at every level of Party life, and thereby to strengthen the fight for a fundamental shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of women as well as working men."

Frances Morrell, introducing the proposals, made the point that the Party ought to be the political means by which the excluded groups in our society—the working class, women, and ethnic minorities—seek emancipation, but in reality many of them simply regard the Party as irrelevant. This is partly because of the disastrous record of the last two Labour governments, but it is also because neither Labour governments nor the Party have offered a serious challenge to privilege, whether it is based on class, sex or race. The ideas of intervention in order to redress the balance of power by changing the system has not yet been tried.

The Women's Action Committee starts from the premise that a major reason for this fellied knee approach is the fact that the Labour Party itself reflects privilege of class, esx and race. . . . therefore it must be changed. As Frances said "It is a man's world, and a middle class world at that." The result is a paternalistic attitude towards women. As with the other democracy issues, it is not just a question of getting the policies right, but also of changing the nature of the Party, and its representation in Parliament.

A TALKING SHOP

The facts of the case justify positive discrimination: there are fewer women Labour MPs now than since pre-war times. At the moment the Women's Section of the NEC does not *represent* women and is not accountable to them. The Women's Conference is merely a talking shop with no real power and the National Women's Officer of the Party is only part time in that capacity.

But the idea of our campaign is also to encourage women to participate with more confidence at whatever level of the structure they choose, and in doing so to have the full support of other women. Many women at the conference gave personal views of the difficulties that they faced as women in the Party and made proposals as to what should be done about them.

Obviously, there are a variety of views on the sort of identity that our campaign for women's equality in the Party should develop, and clearly it will evolve after more democratic discussion, and trial and experience. There is much thought needed about the form of tactics to adopt for a campaign which seeks not only to involve women at grass roots level but also to achieve identifiable goals which will change the structure of the Party. But the experience of the five-year drive towards mandatory reselection of MPs by CLPD shows that from small beginnings a snowball can develop which becomes the spearhead for change within the power base of our Party.

The Women's Action Committee feels that not only must feminist thinking become an integral part of a wider class analysis within our ranks, but also that this can be translated into action by specific demands which will open the floodgates to a new phase of grass roots action. Its significance will be that it will represent the politicisation of the Women's Movement into a new stage. . . . but this time *within* the Labour Party.

JANE CHAPMAN
CLPD Women's Action Cmttee

TO:
ALL LABOUR PARTY MEMBERS

The National Executive Committee has set up a special working party to review existing party policy on Northern Ireland. The establishment of this working party is a direct response to pressure from the rank and file of the party for a review of party policy with a view to the ending of bi-partisanship and the adoption of an independent Labour Party policy in its place.

The National Council of the Labour Committee on Ireland is preparing a document to submit to the working party. In this we shall argue that there can be no long term solution to the problems of Ireland outside of a perspective of the ending of partition and the re-unification of the whole of the Irish nation.

In order to consider our submission in full, the National Council will be convening a meeting of all paid-up supporters to discuss and if necessary to amend our draft document. This meeting will take place on **Saturday 13 December in London,** though an exact venue has not yet been fixed.

If you wish to attend or would like to see a copy of the draft, please write to the Labour Committee on Ireland at 5 Stamford Hill, London N16, enclosing an A5-size self addressed envelope and 16½p in stamps. Further, if you wish to become a member of the LCI, please write to the same address enclosing £1 annual subscription.

Labour Committee
On Ireland

Rising Tide of Fascist Violence

THE NATIONAL Front, in the general election in 1979, polled a miserable 70,000 votes in the London region. Many in the anti-racist movement hailed this as a success for the Anti-Nazi League. Others pointed to the "swamping" remarks made by Thatcher in 1978 and concluded that racists had found a respectable home in the Tory Party.

Analysing the elections, the anti-fascist journal *Searchlight* predicted that the hard core of the NF would resort to violence and harassment of the black communities in an effort to recruit new support amongst some white working class youth.

RECRUITING SKINHEADS

Aided by Thatcherism—which has increased unemployment, decimated public services and worsened the housing shortage—an assorted range of Nazi organisations have concentrated their efforts on recruiting skinheads, particularly at pop concerts and at football matches. In addition, the Nazis have been creeping out of their traditional strongholds in the East End and South London and into the relatively better-off areas in the North and North West of London.

Fascist harassment is taking several forms, such as:

* Abuse shouted at black passers-by
* Rubbish dumped on door steps
* Burning material (sometimes petrol bombs) thrust through letter boxes
* Serious assault including the use of broken bottles and weapons.

The victims of harassment cover a wide spectrum of society—shopkeepers, school-children, council tenants, bus and tube employees.

POLICE RELUCTANCE

Many agencies have dismissed the incidents reported to date as mindless violence unconnected to the current political climate. The police have been reluctant to get involved and to act decisively to stamp out racist violence. Sympathetic housing departments have acted to transfer the victims rather than the aggressors. The ILEA, despite pressure from the Community Relations Councils, has not issued instructions to head-teachers to institute firm anti-racist and anti-fascist policies in each and every school.

Faced with such attacks, institutional racism and inaction by the authorities, black and Asian communities are coming together in an unprecedented alliance to protect themselves and to pressurise the police and other agencies to take effective action. In Newham, for example, several thousand Asian youths came together to demand action following the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig on July 17.

LABOUR RESPONSE

The response from the Labour movement has been patchy. Camden NUT has issued guidelines to all its members and is supporting its local CRC in all its efforts. East London Workers Against Racism (ELWAR) has responded with a support service for those families who are—or feel that they are—under threat. Transport unions have demanded adequate protection and increased staffing to prevent violent incidents. These demands have been backed with industrial action.

Blacks are not the only victims of fascist violence. Several cases of assault and abuse on Jewish people have also been reported. In July Tollington Park School in Islington was wrecked and its walls daubed with anti-black and anti-semitic slogans. An Islington pub frequented by gays, punks and left-wing groups has also been singled out for attacks by NF sympathisers.

CASES NOT REPORTED

All this, it is generally agreed, is only the tip of an iceberg. Many cases go unreported because the victims believe either that nothing will be done or that they themselves will be blamed for inciting the harassment.

So what can be done? All victims need support. However, mere resolutions of support are, at best, meaningless and, at worst, a cynical exploitation of the victim for electoral gain. All individuals can support victims, try referring them to appropriate and sympathetic agencies such as law centres and councillors, and advise on the best course to follow. Organisations such as ward parties and trade union branches can be mobilised to ensure that vital agencies (housing departments and the police, particularly) are aware of the situation, to pressurise them where appropriate and to coordinate any action needed to support the victims.

COUNCILLORS' ROLE

It is important that local councillors of whatever party are informed of incidents in their wards so that they can take the necessary political action. Transmission of news is often slow because the victims may not know what to do or whom to contact. Councillors can play a crucial role in this fight—through their constituency work, their speeches and public statements, and, most importantly, in their policy-making, in which they can continually challenge the mechanisms of a racist society.

The local authority can be very effective in improving the climate of race relations. Amongst the many courses open to it are:

* Adopting a firm anti-racist stand in all its activities and explaining the reasons for this position to the electorate.
* As a provider of services, intervening actively and sensitively both in particularly cases of harassment and in preventative work.
* As the financers of the Metropolitan Police, demanding that all its citizens are adequately protected by increased patrols at known trouble spots, by visits from the home-beat officers to harassed households and by generally increasing vigilance.

The message from the black communities to white anti-racists is that they are not prepared to wait for the end of Thatcherism to see an improvement. Are the white anti-racists prepared to grasp the nettle now or will they need horrors of the type experienced in Bologna, Munich and Paris to spur them into action?

NARANDRA MAKANJI
Wood Green CLP

UCW : Consulting 'the boys back home'?

D C SMITH
Wanstead and Woodford CLP
and London UCW Member

DOUBTLESS I was not the only member of the Union of Communication Workers in London to view Tom Jackson's speech at the Labour Party Conference, during the debate on the method by which the Labour Party Leader is to be elected, with some surprise.

Particularly interesting was the remark that he needed time to consult "the boys back home" over the Labour Party National Executive Committee's proposal for a leadership electoral college of 40% trade unions, 30% PLP and 30% constituency Labour Parties.

The innocent television viewer was given the impression that the NEC was launching proposals which had merely been the result of a small debate within the confines of the 29 members of the Labour Party NEC and that our General Secretary was leading the vanguard of democratic debate within the Labour Party.

THE FACTS

The facts are; however, somewhat different. An amendment from a UCW (at that time Union of Post Office Workers) branch to the 1978 UCW General Secretary's report, published in the agenda for the 1979 UCW Conference, records the branch's disquiet at the failure of the union's delegation to the 1978 Labour Party Conference to support calls for a re-vote on the composite calling for mandatory reselection after (Sir) Hugh Scanlon's voting error at the 1978 Labour Party Conference.

In 1980 three amendments to the 1979 General Secretary's report from three branches of the union appeared on the agenda of the 1980 UCW Conference, criticising the union delegation to the 1979 Labour Party Conference. It criticised the delegations' failure to vote for mandatory reselection, for the wider election of the leader and for the Labour Party NEC to enjoy final authority over future Labour Party general election manifestos, as well as for its failure to support the abolition of the "three-year rule". The three amendments also instructed the UCW delegates to vote for these proposals in future.

NOT EVEN DEBATED

These three amendments were not even debated at the UCW 1980 Conference.

Indeed, proposals for the wider election of the leader have been before the 1978. 1979, and 1980 Labour Party Conferences. Each time there has been no debate at the union's annual conference, and each time the UCW delegation has voted against this proposal as well as mandatory reselection and the NEC controlling Labour Party general election manifestoes.

Indeed, the UCW Political Officer spoke during the 1977 and 1979 Labour Party Conference debates on reselection. He specified the union's opposition to mandatory reselection, yet the UCW Annual Conference has never debated the proposal. During the 1979 debate he urged that "this lot" be referred to the Labour Party Commission of Inquiry.

As we know, the Inquiry debated mandatory reselection and the wider election of the leader as well as the NEC controlling general election manifestoes.

UNION EVIDENCE

However, the Commission of Inquiry report records that the Union of Post Office Workers (as it was then) sent in evidence to the Commission. I wonder how many UCW members actually took part in the formation of that evidence or even saw the union's evidence in its finality? Certainly the 1979 and 1980 UCW Conferences never debated the evidence that the union was to send to the Inquiry!

Indeed, I am willing to bet that despite the noble ideal of consulting "the boys back home" over what methods shall be used by the Labour Party to elect its leader, a forthcoming UCW Special Conference in Bournemouth on union structure (November 22-25) will not be given an opportunity to debate this important matter.

No doubt, once again, the UCW will be voting for proposals on the method of election of the leader at the January Labour Party Special Conference on the basis of a few people on a union committee deciding what the preferences are of 187,000 members of our union who pay the levy—this of course without caring to permit a debate at a conference of the union made up of elected branch delegates on the subject.

Which, in my own opinion, smacks of the sort of thing the NEC of the Labour Party were accused of doing on 2 October 1980: pulling policies out of a hat which nobody had been consulted about.

LETTER

Dear Briefing,

A short comment on the conference of Local Government in Crisis on Saturday 1 November 1980.

It is now very obvious that the trouble this country is in by the total failure of Thatcherism is at last begining to come through to the rank and file of our movement.

This has over the past few months been underlined by my contacts throughout the country, from Dorchester to Appleby in Cumbria. Even though at the end of Saturday's conference the new steering committee will have difficulty in sorting out the amendments against the Lambeth NALGO motions, it is no doubt a good launching pad for the fightback.

I sincerely hope that the communications we will put out will be in depth and hard hitting letting the people into things like that it will take at least a decade after this government is thrown out to recover from the damage that they are doing

Cllr ALAN WALL
Brent Council

TARGET 1982

Now is the time for the left in London to start discussing control of London Borough Councils in the 1982 elections.

Come to a meeting–

ON: Monday 8 December
AT: 7.30pm
IN: Room 133 C
AT: County Hall

Next editorial collective meeting: 28 November, 6.30pm, Ken Livingstone's room, County Hall. Deadline for articles, 4 January.

Published by London Labour Briefing, 158 Thorold Rd., Ilford, Essex. Typeset by Rye Express (TU), 8 Hatcham Pk. Rd., SE14.

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd. (T.U.) Forster Road N17