LONDON LABOUR 10p
BRIEFING
SPECIAL ISSUE

GLC ELECTIONS: 20th SEPTEMBER

KEEP LONDON LABOUR!

Keep LABOUR working for London

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Labour X GLC

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

KEN LIVINGSTONE INT



John Chapman

Fred Carpenter interviewed GLC leader, Ken Livingstone, on the campaign leading up the September 20th elections

Q. How do you see the campaign?

A. In one sense, we've won already, which is that the Tories, by announcing that they're not standing are basically admitting that they don't have the support for the abolition of the G.L.C. and they recognise that they'd badly lose this sort of election. So already we've won on the key issue, which is demonstrating that the Government doesn't have a mandate to abolish the G.L.C.

Secondly, the Alliance have announced they will be standing against us on the grounds of opposition to our policies, saying that whilst they support the G.L.C. they think that we've brought abolition on our own heads by the fares policy, by the statements on Ireland, by the general style and the way we've worked, our controversial grants policy, all those sorts of things. So the Alliance are clearly going to go into this election looking for Tory votes and running a broadly Tory campaign in order to get them. It's quite interesting that within an hour of the four of us resigning from the G.L.C., the Tories and the SDP/Liberal Alliance had formed a formal coalition under the Councils standing orders in an attempt to take immediate control of the G.L.C. They were thwarted from doing that by our convening a special group meeting to elect a new Leader of the Council, but it's clearly going to be the case that if they can get control of the GLC it will be the Alliance working with the Tories and throwing Labour out.

So what we're now facing is a campaign much more firmly based on our policies, and on the defence of jobs and services. If we can win we can demonstrate that Labour can win majority support in key marginal seats that are vital for the election of a Labour Government.

Q. Given the nature of this election, that it's really a referendum on abolition and given the relationship between the abolition of the G.L.C. and the other Metropolitan Authorities, do you see a role for them to play and has much interest been expressed by the other Labour Met. Authorities in having an imput into the campaign?

A. All the way through, the Met. Counties have run their own campaign because they are quite different from us in terms of their history and powers. We grew out of the old L.C.C. which has been there since 1888, whereas the Met. Counties were created by the Tory Government just ten years ago. The Labour movements spent a long time fighting the Met. counties whereas it always supported the idea of a strong County Hall in London, so there have been differences about the natures of the campaigns. And also the political compositions of the groups are different.

There was no way that West Midlands, South Yorkshire or Greater Manchester were going to initiate some of the things we've done and we've got on much better with and are politically much closer to West Yorkshire and Merseyside, so it would have been impossible to run a joint campaign. The Met counties have run their campaign, we've run ours. I would be delighted by a whole range of by-elections in the Met counties but I think they've debated that within their Parties and decided against that. They're much more inclined to the idea of by-elections next May when there would have been the normal G.L.C. elections anyway.

Q. One way of bringing the campaign together — publicly in London although it wouldn't be part of the election campaign as such, would be a major demonstration around late September on the question of saving the G.L.C. Do you think that would be a good initiative?

A. A major demonstration would be fine. We're planning demonstrations, marches, petitions, leaflets, lobbying, there isn't anything we're not committed to supporting. One of the things that I think has been most useful is that by setting up an 'Out-reach' team, which is a group of council officers free to go into the community, meet community groups, and involve them in the campaign, we've laid the foundation whereby you can have quite an effective mass demonstration because we are in touch with all the groups likely to take part in that. So, yes, we support marches, demonstrations. I've also given a firm committment of support for any industrial action taken by any unions in the G.L.C. or London Transport to defend jobs and services, and if the unions refuse to co-operate with the Government on abolition they'll have our total backing as well. There will be no action taken against Trade Unionists by our management if they refuse to provide the information the Government wants.

MINERS

Q. I think most people recognise now that the reason for the attack on the G.L.C. and the other Met. Authorities is the role that they've played in defending working people against the policies of this Government. Of course the other main group in the country defending working class interests at this time is the miners, through their struggle against pit closures and in defence of union organisation. Do you see a big relationship between the miners strike and this campaign and what steps will you be taking to bring the miners into the campaign?

A. The struggle that Thatcher has unleashed against the miners and the Met. counties is the same struggle. Thatcher having won her victory in the Falklands and turned that into an electoral victory sees the next struggle as against the enemy



within, and that militant trade unionism as with the miners and radical socialist Labour Parties taking over the local council and using that to defend local people as well. I think Thatcher is pursuing both of us for the same basic principle although perhaps there are short term tactical differences, and therefore if we get re-elected on Sept. 20th that will strengthen the miners, and if the miners can defeat the Government before the 20th that'll strengthen us.

We've done everything we can to try and link up with the miners. Whenever we've had a major rally or concert we've provided platforms for the miners to speak, to collect money, we've given over the use of County Hall for them when they've been based in London undertaking activities here, we've done everything we possibly

ERVIEW

can. We are not in the same happy position that some other Labour Councils are in that they have a strong local mining community. But I think the amount of money that's flowed out of London and the broad support they've got has been quite a surprise to the NUM. Certainly throughout the campaign I think you've got to say quite clearly that we support the miners in their struggle, and there can be no equivocation or avoiding of that issue.

Q. They will of course be present on platforms at public meetings as well?

A. I'd assume knowing Paddington they will be but the question of who speaks at public meetings is a matter for the officers of Paddington Labour Party, not me as a candidate. One of the things we've got to be careful about in this election is that it doesn't become leader orientated or County Hall orientated. It's a Labour Party campaign and the Labour Party's running it, not the G.L.C. bureaucracy.

IRELAND

Q. The other major question at the moment, particularly with the tragic events in Belfast (the RUC riot against the demonstration to mark the anniversary of internment, including the killing of Sean Downes) is the question of Ireland. Given the attacks made on the G.L.C. because of the stand they've taken to bring the Irish question into the political arena in this country and to break the silence, do you think that should be an important issue in this campaign?

A. It undoubtedly will be an issue because the Alliance candidates will attack us on the statments we've made on Ireland, on the visit to Belfast and so on. So even if some people want to avoid the issue, it can't be done and we've already seen that the Irish Post has come out with an editorial calling on all Irish people in these constituencies to vote Labour and for Irish groups to go into those constituencies and organise for a Labour victory. So we're not at this stage going to start equivocating on the issue of Ireland, particularly in the light of recent events.

Q. Obviously, everybody in the Labour movement will be working very hard for victory in this by election. After that, what plans do you and the Labour group have on the future strategies for defending the G.L.C. against ths government?

A. Well I'm completely in support of the line that emerged originally from London boroughs and then from the recalled Labour Local Government Conference in Sheffield. My view is that whether we win or lose on abolition; the rate capping powers pose much the bigger threat because they will force Labour Councils to carry out the Government's cuts. Therefore I support the broad front that's emerged from councils saying that they won't be prepared to make a rate if it involves going along with the Government's proposals for cuts. I want to see as many councils, including the G.L.C., standing firm on that position next year, refusing to make a cuts rate, standing by their existing budgets, carrying on with their present programmes and staffing levels, hoping that we get adequate support from the trade unions and linking that up with industrial action, so that we give a lead and build on the success that Liverpool's had this year.

Vote Labour

BUILD FOR A VICTORY

Jeremy Corbyn MP Chair of Campaign Committee
Narendra Makanji London Labour Party Regional Executive

The London Labour Party is fighting alongside the miners as a major obstacle to Thatcherism. Since the Labour victory in the GLC elections of 1981, Thatcher's Tories have tried to punish Londoners by refusing to fund the services needed so desperately in this city. Not only did the Tories use the courts to kill the popular 'Fares Fair' policy, but they have also slashed the Health Service and cut-back over £5 billion from the London local authorities. During the same period, the economic policies of the Tories have increased London unemployment from 120,000 to a staggering 380,000.

Wherever the Labour Party has wielded any power, it has sought to defend the interests of ordinary people. It is because of this that ten London Councils find themselves on the Government's rate-capping hit-list, the GLC is threatened with abolition and the financial contribution to the ILEA has been withdrawn. The Labour Party has popularised local government as the people of London have seen jobs created, transport fares reduced, houses built and services improved. But most of all, the oppressed sections of the community have — for the first time — found a political party that has considered their oppression seriously and attempted to fight and remove it.

SEPTEMBER 20th

The London Labour Campaign will be going to the people in GLC elections in four selected Constituencies over the next few weeks. The voters verdict will be delivered on September 20th. All the four seats are held by Tories at Westminster and the Labour majority on the GLC is four. So the Labour GLC is putting its majority on the line.

In calling these elections, the whole of the Labour Party in Labour has been committed to the battle and all constituencies have been asked to contribute at least £50, all members are asked to turn-out each Sunday at the campaign headquarters that they have been allocated. In addition, all members should attempt to spend at least one evening during the week to help with the canvassing, leafletting and all the other election work. A massive turnout on September 20th is also essential. Those who can help during the day are asked to contact the respective Agents directly on the telephone numbers given.

All party activists are urged to take part in phone-in programmes on LBC, Capital and Radio London, as well as writing letters to the editors of the London-wide papers and magazines. Financial contributions should be sent to the London Labour Party, 195 Walworth Road, SE17, please make all cheques payable to the London Labour Party (GLC election fund).

The opposition in these elections are the Government (who continue to show contempt for democracy) and a deeply-divided Alliance (who can only agree on defeating Labour and very little else). The London Party achieved outstanding results in the European Elections in June; on September 20th we can take an important step in helping to bring down the Government!

Borough by-elections — Important dates in September

September 13th: bye-elections in Ealing, Victoria branch (phone agent, J. Collisson at 992 5614) and Southwark Rotherhithe branch (phone agent, John Capman at 703 7351)

September 20th: bye-elections in Enfield, Edmonton branch (phone agent David Wilkinson at 363 0280), and Greenwich, Ferrier branch (agent, W. Bellamy at 856 2657)

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LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

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WHY BLACK PEOPLE MUST FIGHT!

Marc Wadsworth, Vice-chair of the Black Sections national steering committee and member of Vauxhall CLP.

Black Marxist CLR James, addressing the GLC's conference on racism last year, appealed for a more precise theme than 'challenging racism'. He argued that he wanted to 'wipe racism away, not challenge it. I want a more militant term . . . One does not challenge racism, one works to destroy it.'

James, a resident of Brixton, serves to underscore the credibility gulf which exists between the good work of the 'radical' administration at County Hall and the capital's dispossessed and demoralised black community. Yet, whatever the criticisms, London has been a better place for a million black Britons since Ken Livingstone took charge of the seat of London government. Equal opportunities initiatives have been launched by County Hall and copied by Labour boroughs, millions of pounds in grants have been doled out to black self-help groups (dubious though a small minority of them may be). Race has been prioritised on the political agenda for the first time at County Hall. There have been problems. Accusations of racism in employment among GLC staff, unrest over the three years it took to get the GLC's multi-million pound pension fund unlocked from investments in South Africa. But a crucial beginning in tackling racism head-on through funding and employment has been launched. Anti-racist initiatives in the education of black children have been set in train. And again, though they are flawed — for instance there are worrying criticisms that the wholly co-opted Equal Opportunities Committee (chaired by a white male) has marginalised race — an important issue is at last getting aired.

In housing, another area of prime concern to working class people and the doubly-disadvantaged black community, the GLC's vital power to help with transfers has already been destroyed by Thatcher.

But, provided the authority's importance is incontravertibly established by our campaign, then this too is something that can be urgently restored by a Labour government.

Paul Boateng's campaigning Police Committee broke new ground with their closely-argued report on that most evil manifestation of racism — race attacks. Even the uncaring apparatchiks of the Home Office were forced to acknowledge the cold reality that Asian families in places like Newh m and Tower Hamlets are daily being put under siege by racist thugs while the police fail to act.

Policing in the capital, despite the disinformation about the sham that is 'community policing', is at crisis point. Black unemployment, double that of white people, continues to climb. Without the GLC and its initiatives, faltering though their beginnings may have been, black people face a future in the inner city which is more bleak and more hopeless precisely because we have seen: there is no alternative.

Keep LABOUR working for London

20 September



Women and the GLC

By Heather Rabbatts

Ken Livingstone and three of his Labour colleagues have gone to the people to win a fresh vote of confidence in the GLC. A heavy vote in favour of the four, all of whom resigned their seats to face new elections, will provide further momentum to the campaign against the abolition of the GLC.

Victory at the polls will also provide a boost to the campaign against the broader Tory challenge to the freedoms of local government contained in the government's rate-capping proposals.

Rate-capping and the threatened abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan councils will mean:

*Cuts in public services in most Labour areas.

*The transfer of control over large areas of local services to Whitehall.

*A blow to efforts made in the last five years to build alternative ways of governing in some of Britain's largest cities.

That is why the campaign against these proposals is one of the most important issues facing the labour movement, indeed one of the great political issues of our times.

For women, rate-capping and abolition are particularly potent challenges to their rights and living standards.

*Women will be most affected as users of local services, as these figures from a typical Labour-controlled London borough show.

FACT: 73 per cent of those in old people's homes are women.

FACT: 92 per cent of single parents are women.

FACT: 80 per cent of people using home helps are women.

Large numbers of women are employed in services most threatened by cuts.

The effects of capping and abolition will ripple outwards across an ever-widening circle of deprived groups. Women usually assume responsibility for care of aged parents and children. So when a local service is dropped, women's freedom to stay in work and look for work goes as well.

Job cuts that will follow abolition and rate-capping will almost certainly produce redundancy for women or even further pressure on their generally inadequate wage-levels.

Progressive councils, most facing capping, have also been at the forefront of promoting women's rights and freedoms. Women's committees have been established for the first time, beginning a process in which council services and policies are being examined for racist and sexist practices. These committees have been able to identify and channel funds into areas, like women's training and women's health projects, that were never previously seen as priorities.

All these initiatives are now under threat

This is not to say existing services for women are perfect or even adequate. Far from it. In many cases they are wholly inadequate, frequently embodying racist attitudes.

Our campaign over the next 12 months is to block the government's plans. But it is also about redefining and extending services in terms of women's needs, not simply defending existing practices.

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