LONDON LABOUR 30p
BRIEFING
No 34 NOVEMBER 1983

INSIDE: NATIONAL SUPPLEMENT articles by Gerry Adams, Joan Maynard, Tony Benn, Mandy Moore, Tariq Ali, Andrea Campbell.

Save Our Hospitals!

Kevin Flack East Lewisham CLP



Lewisham & N. Southwark D.H.A. lobbied on September 26th.

Labour Party Conference saw much rhetoric in calling for the Party to 'turn outwards' and campaign in the community. Hither Green Branch in Lewisham has been taking this seriously, having gained over 50 new members this year.

Threats to close our local hospital caused the branch to call a public meeting and organise a lobby of the local District Health Authority (DHA). It is only because we responded immediately and realised that actions speak louder than resolutions, that we were able to mobilise in time.

We contacted members of the local DHA to speak, and went into local hospitals talking to shop stewards and putting up leaflets. We also leafletted every house in the branch and surrounding areas. We had a very successful public meeting with over 50 people, including a number of local health workers.

LOBBY OF THE DHA

This led to a lobby of the DHA, jointly with other campaigns against health cuts, of around 300 people, including a coach organised by our hospital trade unions. The Labour representatives who had equivocated about the cuts before, and argued that it was better for Labour to make the cuts than the Tories' commissioners, were clearly influenced by the size of the lobby. They voted to defer decisions on cuts and closures.

In the present climate, it is essential that we take the initiative in campaigns, to show the health unions that they have strong support in the community and to give them the confidence needed to stand up to the latest round of cuts. We have run the campaign jointly with local hospital workers and also sought to involve GPs and health pressure groups.

We have contacted the local Trades Council and leafletted the larger workplaces. We have mailed all the Trade Unions affiliated to the local Labour Party, and the local voluntary groups through Voluntary Action Lewisham. Our next

(CONTINUED OVER)

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

(Continued)

Fighting health cuts in Lewisham

public meeting has speakers from Brent DHA (whose lead we have used to put pressure on our own authority), Hackney Health Emergency and local health workers.

We have tried to keep our leaflets specifically related to what's going on locally, made them visually attractive, and with house-to-house and shopping centre leafletting and petitioning, have tried to raise as broad a campaign as possible. We have contacted sympathetic local journalists and received a good response. There have also been reports in the relevant union journals.

MAKE THEM TAKE A STAND

We have pushed the issue in the local Labour Party, Local Government Committee and Labour Group to try to build enough pressure on the Labour representatives on the DHA to make them take a stand against the Government. The recent National Executive statement supporting Brent's action should be used everywhere to force local authorities to realise that it is up to *us* to defend our jobs and services. We now hear that Sheffield and Northumberland have also refused to implement the cuts. We must get across that it is a myth that Tory cuts carried out by Labour representatives are somehow 'kinder'.

We have linked the issue of privatisation in to the fight for jobs and services, making people aware that the Tories are using it for their own ideological reasons and as another way of making cuts.

It is often hard to find out where the DHA meets (usually the middle of the afternoon), and how the representatives are selected. Our local Labour Group seems to appoint reps from its own members and associates. We also have to decide what the role of the DHA is — to provide a decent health service or just to administer the financial restrictions set by the government?

It would be useful if Briefing could carry articles from local campaigns on how to organise against the Tories — we all know *why* we should do it, what we need is to share our practical experience of *how* to do it. Lewisham Health Action Group can be contacted c/o 191, Hither Green Lane, Lewisham SE13.

Hands off our Health Service

We say NO
***No more cuts**
***No more wards to close**
***No more job losses**
Join the Lobby at the Florence Shepherd Room, Shepherd Building, Guys Hospital, St. Thomas St.
(Lewisham & North Southwark Health Authority)
Monday 31st October, 4.00
(note change of date)
For further details and petitions contact: Lewisham & North Southwark Health Action Group, 191, Hither Green Lane, Lewisham SE 13. (Tel: 852-5088).

CRUISE THREATENS PEACE AND BREAKS THE LAW

9th Nov '83

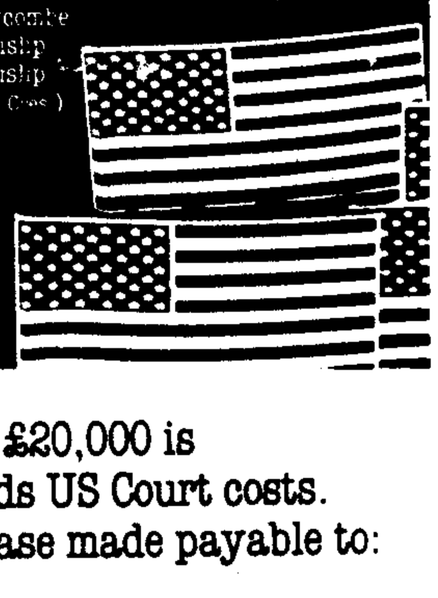
GREENHAM WOMEN AGAINST CRUISE

There are 102 US bases in Britain.

On 9th November '83 there will be 102 Peace Camps one each base.



1 Scatsta (Shetland)
2 Thurso. Forss
3 Thurso. W Murkle
4 Stornoway (Lewis)
5 Mormond Hill
6 Aberdeen
7 Inverbervie
8 Edzell
9 Kinnaber
10 Craigowl Hill
11 East Lomond
12 Glen Douglas
13 Grangemouth
14 Glasgow
15 Holy Loch
16 Greenock
17 Kirk O'Shotts
18 Sergeantlaw
19 Prestwick
20 Browncarrick Hill
21 Machrihanish
22 Spadeadam
23 Broughton Moor
24 Fylingdales
25 Leeming
26 Menwith Hill
27 Liverpool
28 Burtonwood
29 Finningley
30 Cranwell
31 Waddington
32 Sculthorpe
33 Coltishall
34 Marham
35 Watto
36 Witter
37 Feltwe
38 Lakenheath
39 Upwo
40 Moless
41 Chelveston
42 Alconbury
43 Mildenhall
44 Framlingham
45 Bentwaters
46 Woodbridge
47 Wattisham
48 Bedford
49 Daventry
50 Martlesham Heath
51 Felixstowe
52 Barford St John
53 Chicksands
54 Ridgewell
55 Great Bromley
56 Barkway
57 Croughton
58 Wethersfield
59 Upper Heyford
60 Christmas Common
61 Brawdy
62 Cheltenham
63 Benson
64 Bicester
65 Little Rissington
66 Caerwent
67 Abingdon
68 Bovingdon
69 Brize Norton
70 High Wycombe
71 West Ruislip
72 West Ruislip (Blenheim Gdns)
73 Northolt
74 Northwood
75 Eastcote
76 St John's Wood
77 Lancaster Gate
78 Grosvenor Square
79 Kemble
80 Fairford
81 Barry
82 Locking
83 Welford
84 Winkfield
85 Hillingdon
86 Botley Hill Farm
87 Coldblow Lane
88 Dunkirk
89 Swingate
90 Greenham Common
91 Bramley
92 Odiham
93 Golden Pot
94 Oakhanger
95 Boscombe Down
96 Wincombe
97 Marwenstow
98 Southampton
99 Marchwood
100 Hythe
101 Poole
102 St Mawgan



Contact your regional office:
Manchester 061 445 0998
Scotland 041 423 1485
041 632 0493
South East 0273 556744
East Anglia 0480 300907
Northern Ireland 0232 56392
Wales 0222 45381
South West 06267 79232
Lancaster 0524 751 361
London 01-639 8561
Sheffield 0742 25079
Leicester 0533 702 585
Leeds 0532 740197

An additional £20,000 is needed towards US Court costs.
Donations please made payable to:

Greenham Women Against Cruise,
344 South Lambeth Road,
London SW8.
Tel.01-720 1374

Please visit your local PEACE CAMP on the day

NALGO 'v' Haringey Council

The week long strike of over 2,500 Haringey NALGO members in September reached a victorious conclusion on September 23rd. when sacked worker Les Butler was reinstated pending an independent investigation into management's handling of his dismissal. The issue at the heart of the dispute was the failure of the management of PELAW (Participation Experiment in Local Authority Works) section of Public Works and the Chief Personnel Officer to abide by the Disciplinary Code of Practice for Probationary Employees, when they dismissed Les Butler. A walk out by PELAW workers on hearing of the dismissal was quickly followed by strike action in other Council Services.

The Council conceded that the Code had been ignored but despite this the Chair of Personnel Services refused the Union's request to suspend the dismissal notice. As the strike escalated the stance of the Council became harder, in particular on the part of those Councillors most involved, Bernie Grant, George Meehan and Ernie Large. At a meeting of the Labour Group during the strike, only two councillors took the side of the union unconditionally.

ANTI-UNION STANCE

The intractable stance by the Council has highlighted once again the question of the attitude of Labour Council's to their own employees as this is not the first time that a Labour Council has taken an intransigent anti-union stance. There is a commonly held view amongst Labour Councillors that they can automatically demand a special relationship with their workers and are affronted that any union should be in dispute with them. This is coupled with a disparaging attitude towards NALGO as a union. Deemed a 'management' union it is not to be taken seriously. Ironically in Haringey the Council chose to back the very management they so despise as opposed to the majority of NALGO members, most of whom are not managers or supervisors of any kind. Another argument used to justify their stance against NALGO is its non-affiliation to the Labour Party. Presumably, because without a voice in the Labour Party NALGO cannot bring to account those Labour Councillors who advocate in rhetoric Trade Union solidarity but in practice flout such a principle.

But the matter goes one step further because these arguments are used to drive a wedge between the 'real' unions i.e. the manual workers unions and the white collar unions. These were arguments that came up time and time again on the picket lines during the strike and the TGWU in particular were hostile to the strike. Undoubtedly hostility exists towards NALGO because of the past attitude of some NALGO members to the disputes and picket lines of the manual unions, when management attitudes have prevailed over Trade Union principles. But it is not up to our employer to dictate the relationships between Council unions especially when the practice they dictate is one of attacking another union. It is up to NALGO members to develop NALGO into a union where members have democratic control over it. The development of the shop stewards system goes a long way to doing this and without it the strike could not have been so well organised and solid. This must be followed up by the setting up of a Joint Shop Stewards cttee. for all Council Unions to develop trade union solidarity and confidence. In addition NALGO Labour Party members need to build Labour Party workplace branches in order to forge greater unity with the rank and file of the Labour Party who in turn need to organise support for workers in dispute and bring to account Councillors who choose to take on their employees.

LOOKING OVER THEIR SHOULDERS

Undoubtedly Labour Councils are rattled by the present and impending attacks on Local Authorities. With each step they take they are looking over their shoulders to the Tory Government and many Haringey NALGO members could be forgiven for thinking that Labour Councillors in Haringey, instead of gearing up to a fight against the Tories, are testing just how far they can take on their own employees. For all their alleged commitment to fighting the Tories they have put more effort into continuing to administer Tory cuts. Haringey Council is currently going ahead with plans to buy a 'package deal' scheme from Bovis to build a sports hall. Council workers in Architects and Borough Engineers were taken off the scheme in June. The carrot for the Council is a £25,000 grant from the Sports Council.

There will be more carrots in the future to persuade Councils to become involved in investing in the Private Sector. Labour Councillors have got to decide now whether they are going to face the Tories' attack on Public Services or whether they are going to co-operate piecemeal with its decimation. It is no good appealing to Council workers to join in that fight while in the same breath supporting the breaking of agreements made with Council Unions. NALGO members will support Labour Councils who chose to take on the Tories, not those who are prepared to sell out on agreements and sell out on their own employees.

Mary Corbishley (Housing Shop Steward Haringey NALGO).



Charlie Hislop

NALGO activists urge workers to defend their basic rights.



Charlie Hislop

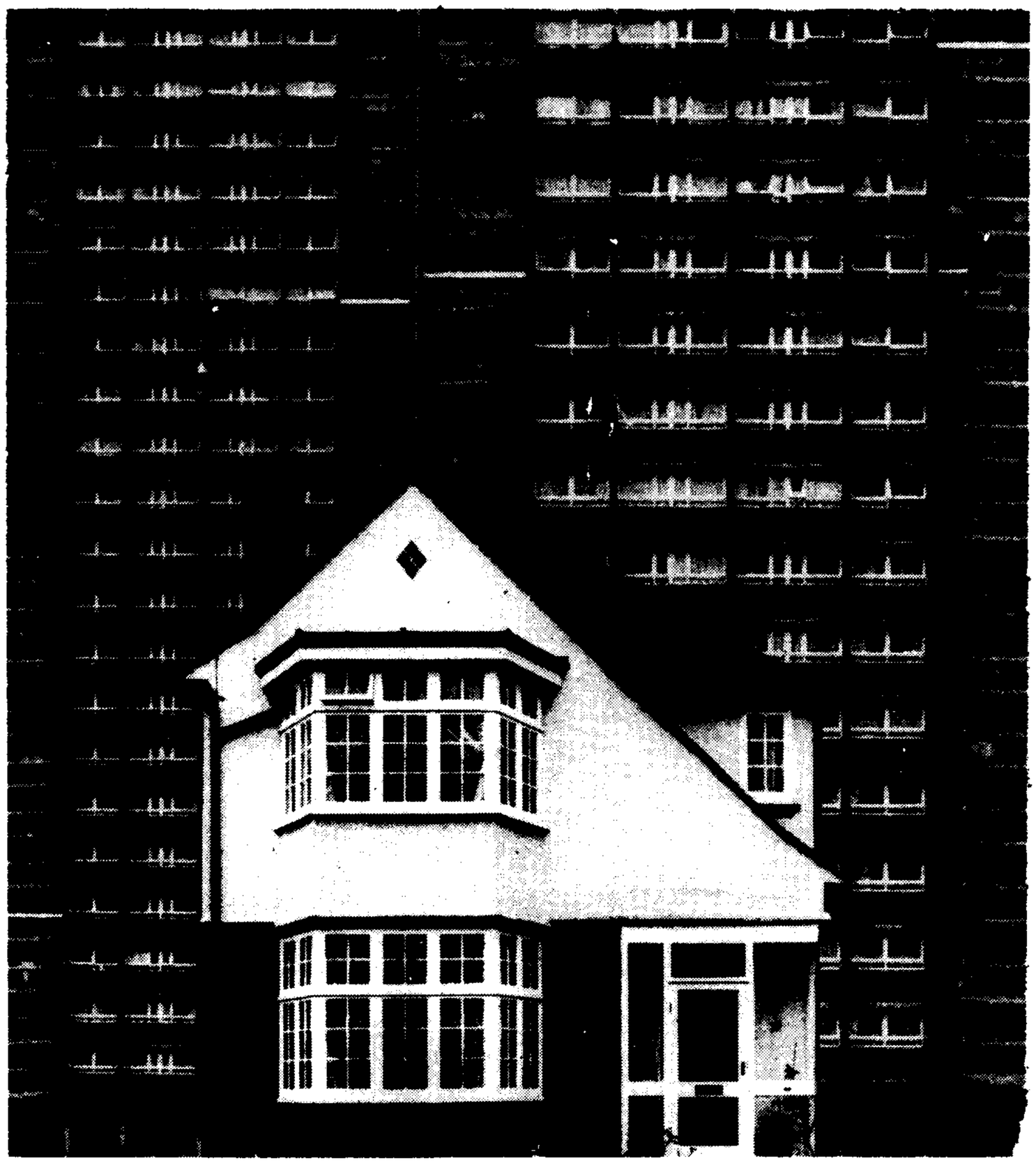
The strike had wide support throughout.

Labour's housing programme:

What a choice!

One of the issues discussed at this year's Labour Party Conference which *didn't* hit the news, and which probably wasn't mentioned by your constituency delegate in her or his report back, is that of housing. And it's not surprising, because it was pretty much a non-event. Yet according to Labour's election manifesto, 'Britain faces a major housing crisis'

Unfortunately that statement is absolutely correct, but unfortunately again, it is not an issue which the Left has in the past taken very seriously. Again at Conference this year, delegates were faced with two composite resolutions on housing to debate, both of which I consider were totally inadequate. What a choice! – they could either ditch our opposition to council house sales, or adopt Miltant style slogans to decrease rents, implement massive house-building programmes and nationalise everything in sight (not that I'm against the last three, but I don't think sloganising is enough). As it happened, neither were accepted, but that now leaves the Labour Party with a housing policy which I consider is no solution to a major housing crisis.



LABOUR'S UNTENABLE POSITION

Whilst in the areas of education and health, Labour is firmly opposed to private provision, on housing it is simultaneously 'in favour' of home ownership *and* council housing. I think that for socialists this policy is completely untenable. Whilst we make no attempt to tackle the whole financing and subsidising of housing, the system is inherently biased against tenants. And it's not just economically that home-owners are advantaged, they also have considerably more control over their choice of housing, mobility and maintenance. It's not a matter of choice between ownership or tenancy – if you can afford to, you buy, if not, and if you are lucky, you rent. In fact, council housing allocation systems make it impossible for you to choose, even if you want to. They are based firmly on a criterion called 'need', which in practice is no different from the Tory philosophy that council housing is a kind of charity for 'social inadequates'. Council tenants are stigmatised as second class and it is no wonder that many of them jump at the chance of becoming a home-owner.

EQUAL ACCESS FOR ALL

Surely we all *need* homes, and the minimum for a socialist housing policy should be to provide equal access for all to a comprehensive housing system. Labour's present policy comes nowhere near this, and easy slogans aren't much better either. We can call for a policy to 'end the misery of homelessness with a massive housebuilding programme', but unless we consider the *type* of housing people want we'll go on just substituting it for the misery of life on a council housing estate. The mistakes of the past and the appalling conditions in many inner city areas in particular, are directly the result of Labour's previous housing policies. As was discussed in Briefing's 'Streetlife Supplement' a few months ago, housing conditions, both in terms of quality and design, can make or break individual, family and community relationships.

I believe we must begin to discuss these issues urgently. I hope that my few comments here can begin such a discussion within the pages of Briefing. It would be nice if at next year's Annual Conference there was a third choice of resolution, which really did provide the basis for a socialist housing policy!

Jane Stockton
Holborn and St.Pancras CLP

SOCIALIST HOUSING PERSPECTIVE

A day conference will be held on Sunday, November 6th at Lewisham Labour Club, 9, Limes Grove SE13.

Creche facilities available.

Admission £1 waged, free unwaged.

The Conference has been arranged by the Lewisham Local Government Committee.

Programme:

10.30-12.30 Plenary – Chris Holmes (Labour Housing Group)
12.30-1.45 Lunch, bar & food available.
1.45-3.15 Workshops:
Co-ops, Women & Housing, Housing Finance; Homelessness.
3.30-4.30 Closing session.

Next London Briefing Editorial Board Meetings:
Monday 24th October at 6.30pm
Monday 21st November at 6.30pm
Both at County Hall. Deadline for articles: Monday 7th November.

VICTORY AT ARLINGTON HOUSE

Led by a brass band, the 27 Arlington House strikers marched proudly back to work on Tuesday October 4th, taking back their jobs at the hostel they had been picketing for over a year. As they turned the corner behind the band into Arlington Road the thin windows of the giant six storey hostel went up in their dozens as the residents looked down on the parade. It marked the end of the year-long struggle against the owners, Rowton Hotels plc, for the hostel to be taken into public ownership. It seems like a dream, extending the public sector under Thatcherism. Camden Council are the owners, pledged to ensure immediate improvements in standards. For the workers, who will now be employed by United Kingdom Housing Trust on behalf of the council, returning to work means dramatic improvements in working conditions: a minimum wage of £105 for 36 hours, compared with £26 for a 48 hour week a year ago. Following months of pressure and negotiations the Rowton shareholders voted in June to sell their four remaining hostels the three in the capital will be bought by councils, the fourth in Birmingham has been sold privately.

The origins of the struggle can be found, of course, in the living and working conditions inside the hostels. Arlington House in Camden has nearly 1,000 beds, and is the largest mens hostel in Europe. Tower House in Tower Hamlets has about 700 beds, the Vauxhall hostel in Lambeth about 400. Residents now pay £15.30 a week for a room of 35 square feet in poor condition.

The hostels are grossly understaffed. The minimum working week is usually 48 hours, often spread over 6 or 7 days, for which the basic rate may be as little as £28 nett. Management's attitude held that the staff were 'wayfarers', glad of a room and a job. One apparently said 'If you can get me a man for £5 a week, then pay him £5 a week'. Yet many of the staff have worked over 10 years in the hostels, showing far more stability than they are credited with.

So little has been spent on maintenance that an Environmental Health Inspectors report on Tower House, produced for Shelter, concluded that the premises were unfit for human habitation, were overcrowded and presented a serious fire risk to inhabitants. The inspector found cisterns that did not flush, fire doors wedged open and men drinking from a hosepipe. The high incidence of tuberculosis has caused a major scandal in this hostel.

The dwellings are tall and gaunt, red brick monuments to a byegone era. Each has the same basic plan, cubicles lining the sides of long corridors, shared washing and toilet facilities, large tiled communal rooms which once held prayer meetings on Sundays and which are now TV rooms, one for BBC the other for ITV. Yet with 'House Full' signs up on many nights of the year they have been a lucrative source of profit for the Rowton accounts, with cash flowing in from room charges, food sales, cigarette and coffee machines. Last year Rowton made perhaps £250,000 from Arlington House alone.

JOINING THE UNION

One of the many grievances held by residents was the violence of some of the staff. One incident in December 1981 brought matters to a head at Arlington House when a worker viciously assaulted a resident during an eviction. Other staff made protests but to no avail, and in January 1982 almost all the workers walked into the nearby offices of the TGWU in Camden and joined the Union.

This action was applauded by the local Arlington Action Group (AAG), a group of local housing activists who had been campaigning for years for Camden Council to force the owners either to improve the hostel or sell it to the council. Using its links with the local Labour Party, the AAG had persuaded the Council recently to seriously consider a management order or CPO, but Rowton's response to such pressure was to threaten to close the hostel, thereby facing the council with a huge rehousing responsibility. This threat proved to be an effective stalling tactic for Rowtons. The AAG worked for the establishment of a residents association inside the hostel.

Editor's note: Despite this undoubted victory for the Arlington House workers, the struggle for the residents is not quite over yet. Camden's Labour Group have already reversed a promise to freeze rents for a year at £12.20 per week and some residents are now being faced with rents of over £15 per week for a 7ft by 5ft cubicle. The Labour Group have also failed to confirm their longstanding commitment that Arlington House will not be closed until 1100 new replacement bedspaces have been made available.

But the organisation of the workers presented a potentially more powerful weapon against the company. Since all the staff lived in they too could face eviction but equally, had cause for complaint against living conditions in the hostel. Unionisation was a courageous first step for the workers to take. Rowtons rightly saw it as the first serious threat from the staff in all their hundred years of control.

FRUSTRATED THE AGREEMENT

Following an effective strike in April 1982, Rowtons agreed to recognise the TGWU, but then continually frustrated the agreement. Certainly it led to no real improvement in staff conditions over the next five months and finally in protest the workers walked out again in September 1982, demanding immediate talks on a wage claim. But these talks never took place. Instead the company went on the offensive, reverting to form by sacking all the 45 staff on strike.

The strike, with its 24-hour picket, attracted much adverse publicity against the company. Furthermore, in Tower House a residents association had been formed with the help of Labour Councillors and the local CHAR group, and they were displaying increasing militancy over a demand for a control order which they wanted the council to serve. In Lambeth, Labour regained control of the council and further inspections of the Vauxhall hostel took place, as a result of which some 30 rooms without windows were closed. And in September the women staff at Vauxhall also joined the TGWU.

In late September Rowtons suddenly announced their intention to sell their hostels. They were asking over £6 million for the four buildings. The GLC undertook to co-ordinate discussions between the London Labour authorities who agreed to buy the hostels, to seek Government backing for the negotiations and to carry out urgent improvements once the hostels were acquired. If successful, this strategy would meet the main objectives of workers and residents. Negotiations with Rowtons were initiated.

MASS EVICTIONS

Then in November Rowtons took the extraordinary step of evicting the strikers. They were faced with a massive picket supported by councillors and MPs and the event again brought them unfavourable publicity. After 6 months of haggling, Rowtons finally agreed on 29th June to sell the hostels for £2.93 million.

For the Councils, £3 million will buy them about 2,000 bedspaces of accommodation for single homeless men, serviced by about 150 staff at the present. The Councils plan to spend about £4 million on improving the hostels – enlarging the rooms, adding basic facilities, giving the hostels a thorough spring clean and redecoration. £2 million will be spent at Arlington House alone. Staffing levels will rise to about 250 in total, so that about 100 new jobs will be created by the Councils. And many other jobs will stem from the work involved in the improvement programme. Workers will be campaigning for this work to be done by Direct Labour or unionised labour.

Real and important improvements in working conditions have been negotiated by the union reps. Each of the hostels is now unionised (TGWU). At Arlington House a minimum wage of £105 for a 36 hour week has been negotiated with United Kingdom Housing Trust, which will manage the hostel for the Council. Similar wage rates are being negotiated with the other Councils: the GLC, which will buy Tower House in Tower Hamlets, and Lambeth Council which is buying the Vauxhall Hostel. Staff will have a reasonable holiday and sickness scheme, a proper grievance and discipline procedure, and full trade union negotiating rights.

Eventually, the size of each cubicle will double so that there may be a loss of 800 to 1,000 beds, but a commensurate improvement in quality. Clearly, the purchase and modernisation of the dwellings is only one part of a wider strategy to provide for the single homeless in London, which must also involve the building of more smaller units, first of all to replace the beds lost through improvements and then eventually to replace the giants themselves.

Through its combined efforts, the Labour Movement has finally slammed the door shut on the Rowton era, consigning its Victorian values and conditions to the museum of history.

STOP TORY BUTCHERY OF THE ARTS

To accompany its white paper setting out proposals to abolish the GLC and the Metropolitan Counties, the Tory Government has issued a 'consultative paper' on the arts. To have done so was to acknowledge the influence of the arts in the coming campaign, but the so-called 'consultative paper' is an insult to the intelligence. It is ridiculously brief, simplistic and utterly unacceptable.

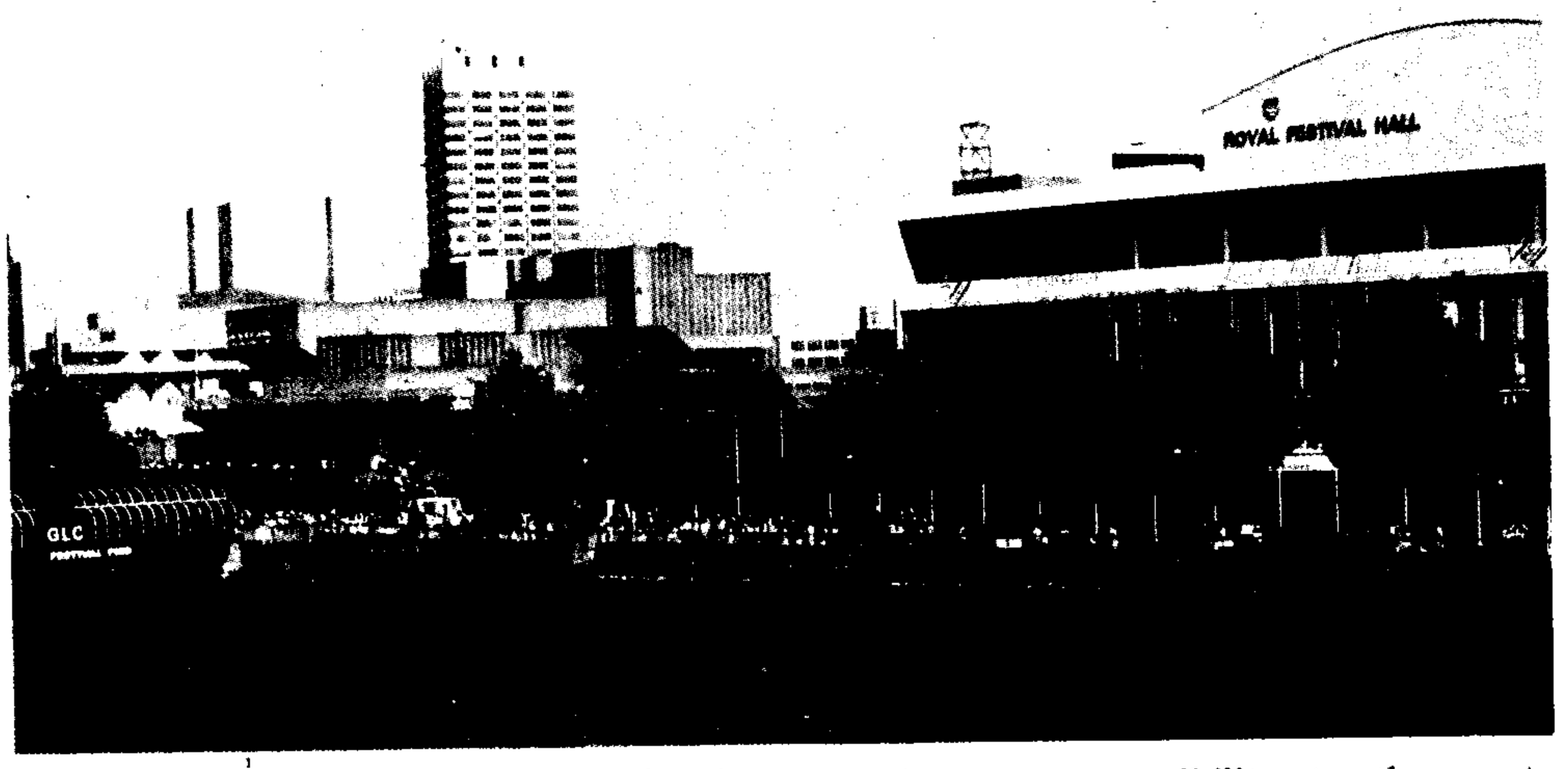
The Government's concern is entirely for the 'high culture' provided by the national centres which it undertakes to safeguard. For everything outside of such centres there is not a word of comfort except the absurdly unrealistic statement that the boroughs and district councils will assume nearly all the GLC's and MCC's responsibilities.

WHO WILL REPLACE GLC?

In London the Labour GLC has built up a pattern of arts funding that now helps to sustain, in addition to the national centres, 24 regional theatres, 40 community theatres, 6 major arts centres, 12 museums and art galleries, 14 film workshops and over 50 ethnic arts organisations.

Our arts budget has been doubled since 1981 and present plans envisage continued expansion. Who then will replace GLC funding?

Not Thatcher's Government which recently cut the national arts budget and looks in the 'consultative paper' to business sponsorship for relief. The London Boroughs themselves are already suffering the effects of savage reductions in grant support and if rate-capping is introduced, will be hard put to defend existing housing, education and social services, never mind the arts. To assume, as the Government does, that the Boroughs will replace GLC funding is bordering on the criminally insane.



If the GLC is abolished in 1985 the impact on the arts in London will be utterly devastating. Theatres, arts centres and workshops will close. Arts workers will lose their jobs and thousands of Londoners will lose access to arts activities just beginning to establish themselves. This Government of spivs and louts apparently cares nothing for the damage it will cause in its determination to give statutory effect to Thatcher's vendetta against Labour-controlled local authorities.

NO THREAT – JUST A PROMISE

If the campaign to stop the Government's plans goes badly, the GLC will be forced to re-examine next year's arts funding. We have a responsibility to those arts activities which the Government neither wishes to support nor the Boroughs are able to. The Tories have made clear their commitment to the national centres in London and thus the only course open to us will be to divert our funds away from those centres to the community-based arts which are central to GLC policy. To take such action unilaterally will be a matter of regret but the responsibility for the impending confrontation will be that of this Government and we are not going to stand idly by and watch our arts policy being butchered.

Tony Banks, Chair – GLC Arts and Recreation Committee

Defend the GLC (again!)

As a newcomer to life in London I obviously write this article with little knowledge except what I have read in previous copies of *Briefing*. However what is obvious to me is the stirling work that the Greater London Council is doing. People are naturally critical of some of the shortcomings of the GLC but personally I feel these criticisms are unfair.

Ken Livingstone and his colleagues have made life in London immeasurably better for many thousands of Londoners. As a student at South Bank Poly I know only too well what will happen if and when the GLC is abolished. My poly, which must make about two million pounds' worth of cuts, will axe jobs, courses and places resigning thousands of employees, students and potential students to the dole.

The GLC has made vital gains and important strides in the fields of peace, minority rights, and transport policy. It has scored important propaganda victories in areas such as police accountability and Irish policy.



As Valerie Wise states in the previous edition of *Briefing*:

'The ferocity of the Tory attack must be outdone by the passion and determination of the Labour defence'.

Briefing has a proud record as far as defending and supporting the GLC goes. It also has pointed out to certain comrades the errors of their ways.

What needs to be done now is for *Briefing* to become even more influential in these actions. Comrades must now defend the GLC with more vigour than ever before.

Democracy, as the events in Chile ten years back show, is the only weapon the working class have to fight back against the advances of a bold ruling class offensive. The London Labour Party and all sections of the *Briefing* movement must unite to smash the Tories and their anti-working class legislation. The first step is to ensure that the GLC and the ILEA (whatever their flaws) survive to perform their functions – and to enable us in London to put our socialist principles into practice.

Michael Calver
South Bank Poly Labour Club

Women and the London Executive

The number of women on the Greater London Labour Party Executive is still unacceptably low. Only one woman in the trade union section out of a possible 16, one from the co-operative party, four from women's sections through the CLP districts and five from the CLP areas direct.

At this year's conference, amendments were put to ensure women were more fairly represented in all sections of the executive.

Amendments to ensure that at least one of the four delegates from each of the four CLP districts and at least four of the 16 trade union representatives were women were lost.

But an amendment allowing eight women to be elected by the Greater London Labour Party Women's Conference was passed by 510,000 to 238,000.

NEEDS NEC APPROVAL

However, this constitutional amendment needs NEC approval. And as yet they have not commented. When the Scottish amendment was considered recently officers "forgot" to present the London amendment. The next NEC is supposed to be considering them. But judging by the anti-feminist attitudes displayed by the NEC at Brighton, they are unlikely to be in favour.

If they do oppose, it will be necessary for women's sections, women's councils and women's conference in London to make their voices heard. As once more, grass root democracy is being stifled.

The Greater London Labour Party Women's Conference itself is on 5 November and as yet nothing has been done by officers at Herbert Morrison House to enable women to be nominated for these 8 places.

NOT A NEW MANOEUVRE

It is, of course, not a new manoeuvre to ensure that any political gains for women are caught in a constitutional 'safety net' constructed by the right. The difficulty of becoming a women's delegate to Annual Conference is a recent example of the Right's bureaucratic second line of defence.

Women's Conference will need to take action to protect the gains it has won in Greater London and select 8 women representatives as, at least, a temporary measure to ensure that. Women are not disenfranchised for yet another year.

Can women delegates contact me if they want more information.

NADINE FINCH
CLP Rep for NE
London, GLLP.

Three Cheers for the Red... White & Blue?

The setting was the Lady Diana Suite in the Queen's Hotel, Brighton. A seemingly inappropriate place for the Briefing fringe meeting especially as the final speaker was "Red Ken" himself – he of the royal wedding invitation refusal and of alternative fun in Crystal Palace and Boulogne syndrome.

He wasn't on top form – a failure to achieve a synthesis of content and delivery? Suddenly a discordant note was struck as five dissidents held up colour postcards of the Royal newly-weds and broke into a chorus of "God Save the Queen". The audience was clearly bewildered.

Had five monarchists really paid 50 pence each to sit through two hours of exposition on sexual politics and the AES in order to pounce on "Red Ken" as the arch-enemy of monarchy? The platform showed smiles of recognition about the point of the demonstration. Even the municipal leader himself grinned and seemed to take it all in his lumbering stride. What had he done to warrant such a cacophony of sound and colour? They didn't even know all the words.

Puzzled by what they had witnessed, innocent by-standers at the scene questioned both demonstrators and the demonstrated against at the end of the meeting. So it came out that the GLC Labour Group had voted by 18-14 to invite the Royal Family to open the GLC's Thames Barrier – overturning previous policy that the ceremony should be with no fuss, conducted by the Chair of the Council and featuring the Barrier workers.

Ken had moved the change in Group, passionately supported by Tony Banks who painted the scenario of the elderly, disabled and children sailing down the Thames in 200 vessels to watch Royalty open the Barrier – and wouldn't the publicity be wonderful and wouldn't it all help save the GLC?

Come on comrades, you can't use the most undemocratic institution in the realm to save that which tries to be democratic. The "Save the GLC Campaign" has got to be principled not expedient otherwise those who have supported the Labour GLC's resolve and commitment will begin to wonder where the difference is.



Voting for the Royals	Voting against the Royals
Ken Livingstone	Barrie Stead
Illtyd Harrington	Mair Garside
John Wilson	Paul Moore
John Branagan	Bryn Davies
Tony Hart	Andy Harris
Norman Howard	Jenni Fletcher
Harry Kay	Ed Gouge
Valerie Wise	Alex MacKay
Gerry Ross	Michael Ward
Tony Banks	Tony McBrearty
George Nicholson	Deirdre Wood
Gladys Dimson	Frances Morrell
Peter Dawe	Lewis Herbert
Peter Pitt	John Ward
Alan Williams	
Paul Boateng	
John Carr	16 Members absent
Simon Turney	

Deirdre Wood
GLC/ILEA Member Greenwich
Lesley Hammond
GLC/ILEA Member Dulwich
Andy Harris
GLC/ILEA Member Putney

Islington goes Briefing!

Islington Labour Left which started to meet again immediately after the election has reconstituted itself as Islington Briefing. The impetus for the setting up of a local Briefing group came from the Labour Briefing's decision to 'go national'.

Most of those who have been involved with Islington Labour Left over the last two or three years have felt the need for a stronger left focus and greater co-ordination, especially for campaigning. With the scale of Labour's defeat and consequent demoralisation and polarising debate on whether to abandon the leadership or the policies, and with the rise of the nouveau liberal left personified in our new leader and his think-tank crew, unity in action of the whole of the radical left was seen to be vitally important. It was felt that Briefing provided the best forum and organising focus for such united action.

Islington Briefing produces a monthly news sheet and one of the first issues of concern has been the policies of the Council subsequent to the election — what will the Council's position be on the Government's rate-capping proposals? Will it fight on more ££££ from central government? Or will it be just on the Council's right to raise rates? Islington Briefing felt strongly that a campaign must be on the former basis and that the campaign, particularly in relation to the unions, had to start soon. Other questions being discussed are will the Council build mass action in defence of services or just issue leaflets? Is the Council beginning a new softly soft shoe shuffle approach? What should the two CLPs be *doing?* How can we win support for our policies amongst the community? What about housing repairs? The EEC? Ireland? The new lesbian and gay centre?

Contact Islington Briefing on 278-3854.

Sarah Roelofs
Islington South CLP

ISLINGTON NORTH LABOUR PARTY

Islington North Centre will soon be established at 129, Seven Sisters Rd., N7. The Centre will eventually include a Labour Club as well as providing accommodation for Jeremy Corbyn's advice bureau. Rooms and the Hall will be available for hire. We hope the Centre will be a central focus for the labour movement in Islington. But we do need money to make the project a success in the first year. Send donations to the above address.

Private Tenants Rights

Private tenants represent twenty per cent of Londoners and it has always been Labour's policy to combat private landlordism, and to champion the rights of private tenants against harassment, high rents, insecurity of tenure and appalling housing conditions. The policies are always contained in election manifestos but when are they heard of once the electioneering has died down?

Councillors in progressive local authorities are now waking up to the need to pursue positive policies for private tenants. The GLC has set up a private rented sector panel, consisting of Housing Committee members and voluntary sector representatives, to formulate a strategy for London's private tenants, and it is conducting a Londonwide survey of the effectiveness of the Rent Acts. The LB's of Brent, Camden and Hackney are all developing private rented sector strategies. Camden's strategy is the most advanced, with a Private Sector Sub-Committee with co-opted tenants' representatives.

Private landlordism, with its exploitative imperative, is a grossly unsatisfactory form of housing provision. It leads to the oppression and deprivation of tens of thousands of tenants and is in clear contradiction to the principles of a socialist society.

The Labour Party is the only major Party that has the policies to help private tenants. It is up to Party members throughout London to get this message through to tenants so that they see that the only hope of improving their housing situations lies in the return of a Labour Government.

There will be an unparalleled opportunity for concerned Party members to discuss strategies for the private rented sector at the first ever 'Rally for Private Tenants' Rights', to be held on 3rd December at the University of London Union. The Rally is being organised by leading tenants' rights groups, with cash support from LB Brent, LB Camden, Association of Housing Aid and Shelter.

The Rally will adopt a 'Private Tenants' Charter' and there will be workshops on the development of local political initiatives, officer initiatives, advice agency initiatives, tenants' involvement and campaigning at both local and national levels. The Parliamentary campaign is already underway, with Allan Roberts MP planning to introduce a Ten Minute Rule Bill in November on private tenants' rights.

The main aims of the Rally will be to develop strategies for local authorities to improve their performance in the private rented sector, to encourage tenant organisation and to mount a concerted campaign to keep the plight of private tenants on the political agenda in order to put through legislation that will remedy the abuses in the sector.

For more details about the Rally contact the Organisation of Private Tenants at 30 Camden Road, NW1 on 01-267 5328.

Terry Deane, for the Rally Steering Group

Don't miss the first ever **RALLY FOR PRIVATE TENANTS RIGHTS conference.** Discuss a Private Tenants Charter. Join workshops developing private sector strategies.

University of London Union, 3rd December. (£2 waged, unwaged free)

For more details and booking form contact Organisation of Private Tenants, 30 Camden Road, NW1. 01-267 5328.

BOOK REVIEW

Fighting Contractors in Wandsworth
By Dave Benlow (NUPE), Peter Ramage (NALGO), Mike French (GMBATU), Dave Simmonds (NALGO), Dexter Whitfield (SCAT and Public Service Action).

Reviewed by Andy Harris GLC/ILEA Member – Wandsworth, Putney

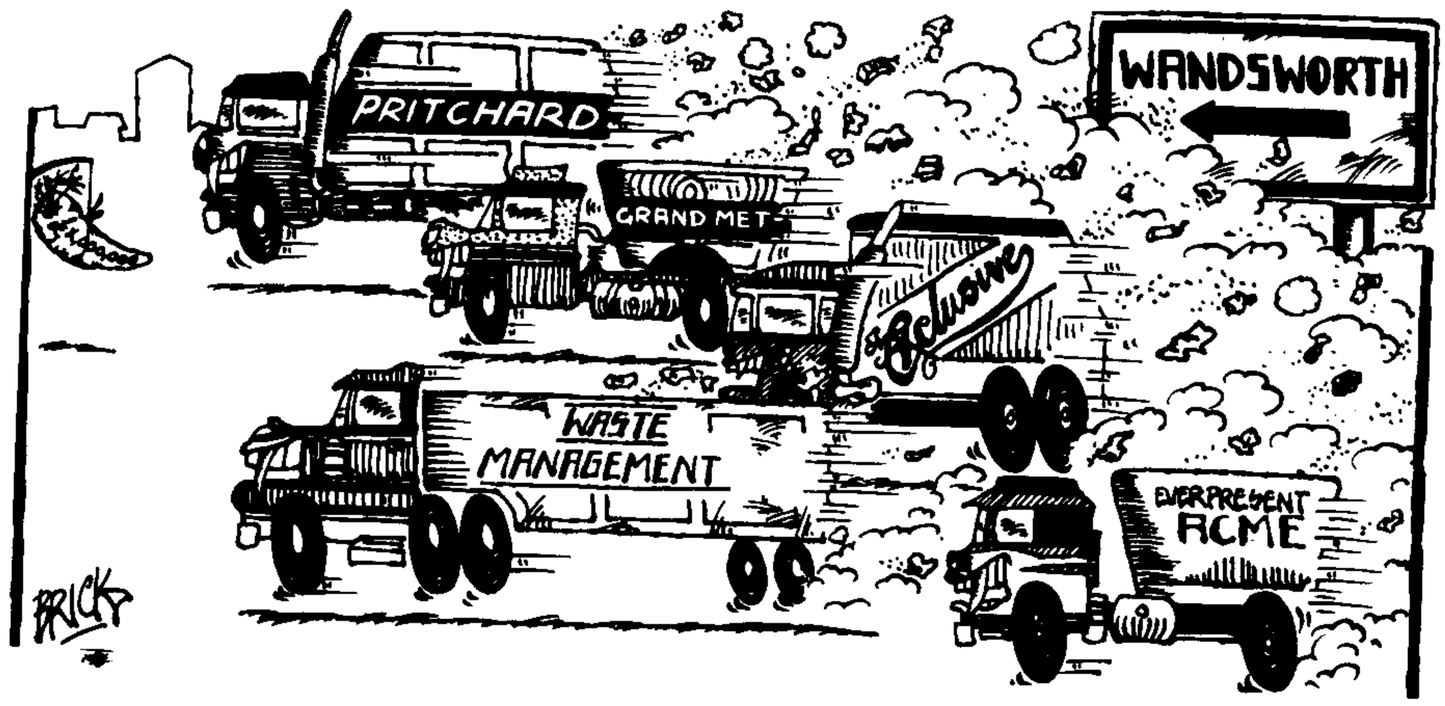
For the last month, tenants from the ex-GLC estates in Roehampton have kept up a picket outside their local housing district office. A few regulars are there but the majority have not engaged in direct action before, and there is a willingness of shoppers from the nearby Co-op to join in with the crowd and hold up placards.

The picket prevented Mr Peggey from Grand Metropolitan Hotels entering the office in order to carry out a feasibility study into the privatisation of housing management on their estates – the latest ploy of Wandsworth Council in their relentless privatisation quest.

The pamphlet describes the history of privatisation in the borough. The street cleaning, the dust and gardening service. It describes the failure of the Labour movement to stem the tide, the failure of the unions and Labour Party to agree a unified strategy against the gains of free enterprise.

Most clearly it demonstrated that this failure has arisen because the receivers of services had not reacted to save them, either because the Council service was inadequate and therefore they wanted to try something different, or because the anti-privatisation campaigns had never penetrated consciousness below the im-

In this way the pamphlet is a helpful exposition of the struggle. What is not brought out is that there is probably an



mediate workers affected and the politically active consumers.
inevitability in defeat in the first stages. This is because the public feel no loyalty to the organisation of the public services to be picked off or towards the workers involved. Their relationship has often been one of conflict and dissatisfaction.

The summer of 1983 saw privatisation fail in a big way in Wandsworth and elsewhere. ACAS told Wandsworth the dust workers were too low paid, the street cleaning company knocked up enormous penalties for poor service and the caretakers went on a successful three week strike against their private employers.

The greatest gain of all this has been to demonstrate to the working-class in the borough that privatisation fails for them and that they must fight now against housing management privatisation or risk an even greater fiasco in their own services. It has brought worker and tenant closer together.

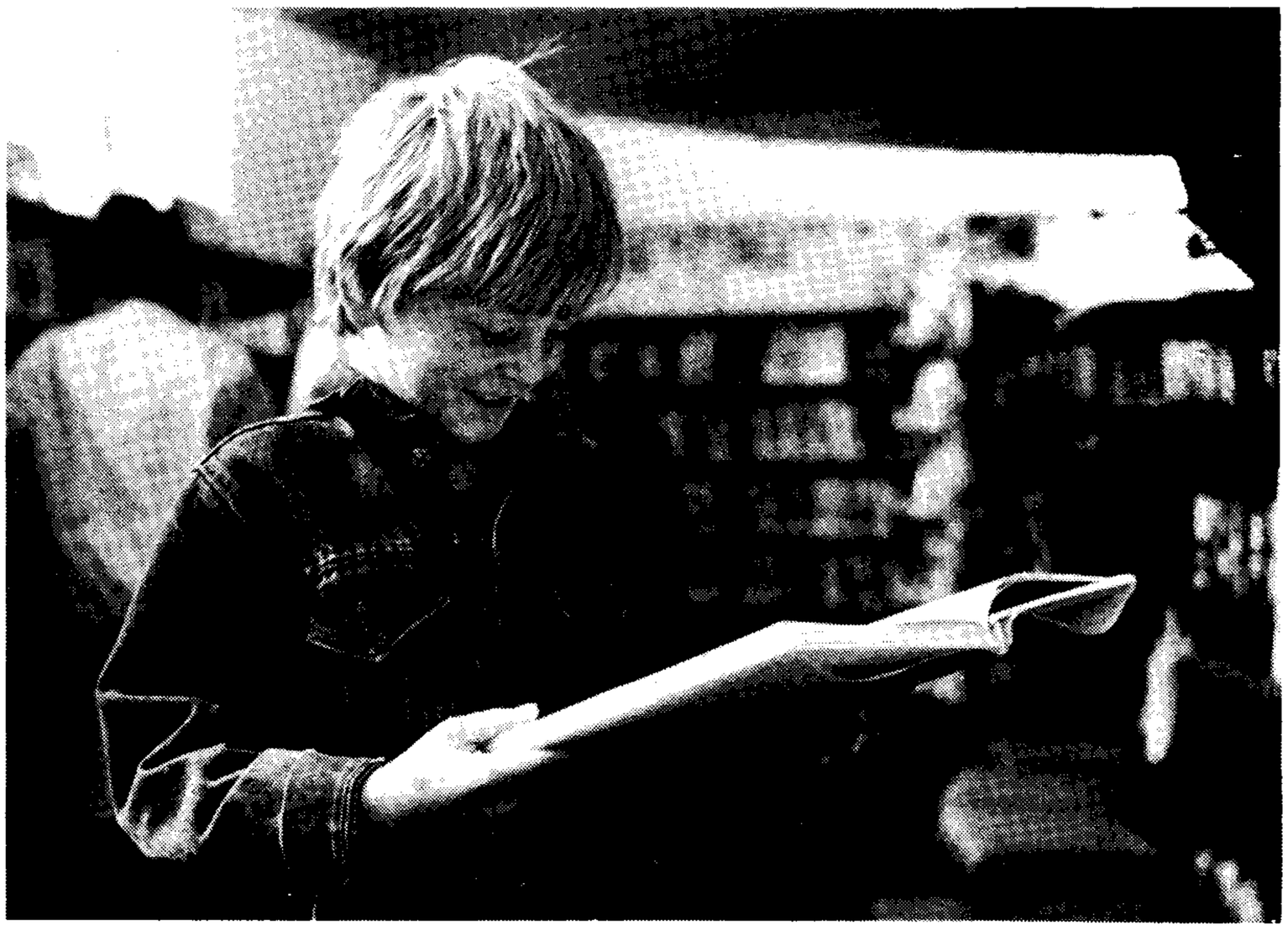
The pamphlet finished on an optimistic note of willingness to work on previous errors. The Roehampton tenant's and worker's success show that the historical lessons have to a large extent been learnt and that the prospects for beating back the vanguard of privatisation are good.

A FIGHT FOR LOCAL SERVICES

Since Thatcher came to power in 1979, local government has been under attack. Already over-stretched services have been cut, and rates and rents have dramatically increased. The pressure that has been applied to local authorities has generally given rise only to largely ineffectual and half-hearted publicity campaigns, such as that to "Save London From Heseltine".

Since the General Election in June we are faced with a worsened situation. In assessing spending levels for 1983/84 Councils are having to calculate the effect of penalties where expenditure is to exceed a Government approved level. In Hackney this means that to finance each pound of expenditure above the Government target, £1.62 has to be raised from the rates to compensate for the effects of Tory penalties. A socialist authority cannot either raise rates or rents to meet expenditure, nor trim services to meet Government targets. The crisis in local government will not wait until the White Paper on Rates limits the rate rises of selected authorities in 1985/86; the crisis is here now.

To defeat the Government, the Labour Movement must both mount a campaign of Councillors, workforce and the CLPs working together, and also gain the support of residents in the Borough. As the recent strategy conference of the Hackney Labour Parties recognised, both are difficult, some argue almost impossible to achieve, but both are essential. The urgency of the task must be stressed. We only have until next Spring to defeat the Government on 1983/4 spending and to defeat the White Paper on Rates. The Hackney Conference indicated important points for the campaign.



D. HOFFMAN.

First, we must be united. We will have divisions in the party over what position Councillors should take when rent and rate level decisions are taken next Spring. But these discussions must not prevent us leading a united campaign for locally controlled services and facilities, particularly for tenents, the elderly, unemployed and children.

Second, we must be honest. We must not pretend existing services and service delivery are ideal. We must contrast existing services to what the Government would allow. Glasgow's proposed closure of the main city park dramatically demonstrated this. At the same time we must radically improve high-profile areas of Council activity over the next six months, such as cleansing or street maintenance. We must also be honest about Council rents, and stop using them to subsidise rates.

Third, we must fulfil our manifestoes. In Hackney, as in many Boroughs, decentralisation was a key commitment. What more powerful demonstration of the alternatives to Whitehall centralisation than successful decentralisation. Some on-the-streets relocation of service delivery must take place for further community involvement in decentralisation to follow.

Finally, we must campaign. The lousy national campaign organisation is recognised throughout the Party as contributing to the loss of the General Election. We need to have a campaign that involves all party members and reaches out to others. Our actions must be co-ordinated both at local, regional and national levels. Labour authorities must produce attractive and effective publicity materials. The co-ordination structure is largely in place. We now need ward-level activity of all kinds (petitions, street theatre, meetings, lobbies, festivals, occupations etc) so that we start to have a popular involvement that demands co-ordination.

Over the next six months we are not just campaigning to overturn Government policy on 1983/4 rate and rent levels. We are fighting to preserve the principle of providing services on the basis of need, not of wealth. We must campaign with the intensity local parties did in the General Election, hoping that this time our representatives, both local and national, show equal commitment.

Jerry Hughes
Chair, Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

PLEASE SEND US A FIVER!

Last month we asked our subscribers to send us a fiver to clear off our outstanding debts at about £750. Well over £200 was raised, and we thank all those who donated, especially Bert Monks of Tonbridge who gave us £100.

We now ask our sellers and readers. Help us balance our books. Send us a fiver! All donations to London Labour Briefing, 23 Leghorn Road, London NW10.

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Dismantling the NHS

The health service is now facing the single biggest threat to its existence since it was established in 1948. However, long before the cuts from the secret Tory manifesto had been unveiled the Tories had already taken a calculated conscious decision to begin the dismantling of the NHS.

The first step was eagerly awaited, indeed advocated by extreme right wingers such as David Evans of Exclusive cleaning. He is well known for his fascist activity and has spearheaded the present Tory privatisation programme. Many of the prominent Tories who argue in favour of private contractors in the NHS have vested interests and are directors or shareholders in firms which are involved in private contract work.

Crothalls is the company with the biggest input into the NHS. Only about 4% of NHS work is contracted out at the moment but the Tories are eager to increase this. It is not because it would be cheaper.

In Essex, a return to direct labour for cleaning has saved the health authority approximately £80,000 annually. In Worthing direct labour saved about £30,000 a year. The list goes on and on.

The main reason for pushing the contracting out of ancillary jobs is to destroy the base of the health workers that had been the most vocal and militant sections of the health workers. Those workers who are always first to defend the NHS (arguably the only socialist institution ever secured by the working class in Britain). Ancillary workers have had a long tradition of fighting attempts to undermine the NHS. Most notably the fight against the Labour/IMF cuts in the late 70's and the fight for the preservation of the NHS.



The ability of the Tories to undermine the NHS is based on a number of past and present circumstances. 4 million unemployed, lack of leadership among trade union and labour party leaders, anti-trade union legislation. But another major factor is the lack of any kind of accountability in the running of the health service. The Labour Party failed to create a structure with any kind of worker/user control. They compromised in the beginning and have been compromising ever since. Under the Callaghan/Healey leadership Labour attempted to restrict and reverse resources and finance to the NHS and health workers still feel very bitter about their treatment at the hands of the Labour government during 1979s Winter of Discontent.

The Tories are capitalising on these events and are determined to contract at least a quarter of all health service functions in the near future.

Contracting out is done by tender. But, accountings submitted by private firms rarely use fair cost comparisons. They can afford to submit tenders because of the conditions which they expect people to work under. They provide no maternity leave, no holiday sick pay and expect workers to go at a speed which is impossible. For low paid workers private contractors are a return to slavery.

If private contractors win a contract they are under no obligation to take on the workers employed by the NHS. They can pick and choose and would certainly not choose to employ trade union activists.

Health authorities have now been told that they must put services out to tender. Even if they do not want to privatise they must get quotas. Many districts have not opposed this with authority members saying that they are against privatisation but it is only an exercise , so they have not committed themselves! This is a disgraceful position. All Labour party members and trade union members on DHA's should oppose any connection with tendering. It is the first step to contracting out.

Trade unions are putting out a lot of literature about privatising but there is no real leadership in fighting it and no clear instructions are given to health workers.

We must recognise that we can not fight in isolation on the issue of privatisation. We must concentrate on building links locally and nationally with other public sector workers facing privatisation, particularly British Telecom and the Gas showrooms. I know for example that many health workers are very impressed by the fight spearheaded by the London POEU branches against project Mercury. We must encourage close collaboration and inter-union action including joint meetings, joint leaflets, joint strike funds and joint industrial action.

The way to win the battle against Crothalls. Exlusive, Pritchards and their Tory owners is through broad community and trade union alliances. The welfare state is under threat. The fight for the NHS workers is linked to the fight for a comprehensive and cheap telephone service and cheap fuel. Build for a policy of socialist services with workers control.

Michael Walter (Hackney COHSE)

Privatisation in Merton

Determined action by teachers in Merton NUT in refusing to teach in dirty classrooms has led an embarassed Tory Council to sack the private firm, Academy Cleaners. Unfortunately, another private firm has been asked to take over — so NUT members must remain vigilant.

Merton Council — surely the most reactionary in London — has also run into problems with its privatised school meals. Sutcliffes are serving tiny portions in airline containers to many primary children and as a result school meal provision has fallen.

Now the authority has privatised its DLO with 100 job losses. A unified public service union campaign against the use of lump labour in schools and on building contracts will be necessary to destroy the discredited Tory plans.

MERTON NUT MEMBER

Problems with ELWAR

Jenny Fisher
Bow & Poplar Labour Party
Sue Carlyle
Tower Hamlets Councillor

Last month's London Labour Briefing carried an article by East London Workers Against Racism, on racist attacks in the East End. It said the ELWAR 'is organising defence for these and other victims ofracist attacks'. But there's another side to the story of fighting racism in East London.

The way ELWAR 'fight racism' can best be shown by looking at their way of running the campaign to stop the deportation of Afia Begum.

The campaign was organised at ELWAR's regular fortnightly meetings. It was the major topic of debate there, for a few weeks, and then the meetings turned to other subjects. Some of us, who thought we'd been going to 'Afia Campaign' meetings, had to bring her case up under 'any other business'.

Support in Name Only

ELWAR sought support from the Bangladesh Welfare Association. Some support was given; the BWA shared a platform with ELWAR, for example, but once the BWA's support had been given in name, ELWAR did not attempt to consult them about the campaign. For example, the BWA did not approve of ELWAR's tactic of whisking Afia into hiding as soon as the campaign got underway.

From the start, ELWAR stymied Labour Party involvement.

Moves to gain Labour Party support for Afia were made by local Labour Councillors and the Women's Section (who also organised a petition). Valerie Wise was told of the case, and it was brought up at the GLC Women's Committee (which gave support and publicity via the Women's Newsletter). It was raised at the Regional Women's Committee.

Labour Group gives support

Afia's case was raised at the Labour Group meeting, and Group members gave their support. They all put their names to a letter to the Home Office asking for Afia to be given leave to stay. Councillors joined pickets of the Home Office.

Afia's MP, who was trying to make representations on her behalf, found ELWAR were keeping him in the dark.

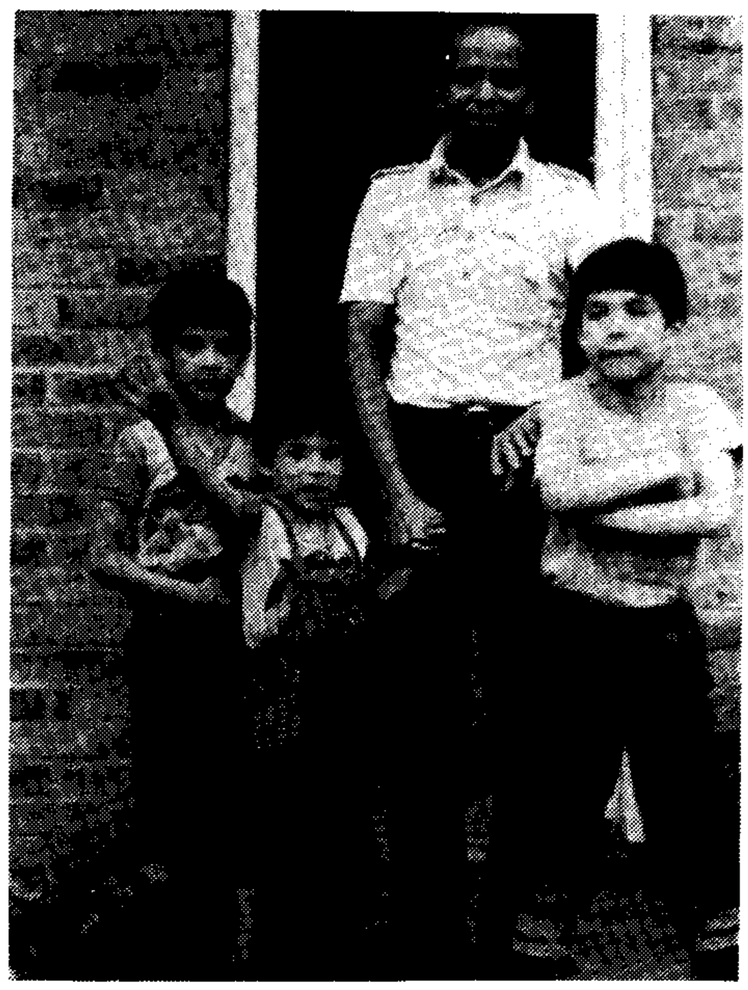
Demonstration

The Campaign held a demonstration, where roughly one third of the marchers were Labour Party members. Labour Party members were prevented from speaking at the rally; but a Workers Against Racism speaker told us how 'The Labour Party's done nothing for this demonstration'.

The support the Bangladeshi community gave to the March consisted of 2 speakers from th BWA, and one local Bangladeshi councillor. ELWAR's attitude throughout was that this was **their** campaign.

Indeed, at one point, a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (admittedly in a moment of anger) said to us 'You're trying to take over the Campaign. It's ours. Why should the Labour Party get the credit if she's not deported?'

Around the time of the demonstration, the Bangladeshi community was organising pickets of the Town Hall, protesting at a Social Services decision on a fostering case. Local Bangladeshi leaders came to Labour councillors for hlep on Afia's case.



Asian family protected by ELWAR

Another aspect ELWAR stressed in the Campaign was Tower Hamlets Council's 'refusal to house Afia'. Yet ELWAR refused to work with local councillors who had been working to get Afia's family rehoused after the fire which destroyed their house, to the extent of refusing to bring Afia out of hiding to be in terviewed by the Housing Officer.

The latest stage in the Campaign has been the 'Sari protest', where women have chained themselves to railings. The women do not come from Tower Hamlets; local Bangladeshi women activists have been trying to find out who they are. They come from other parts of London: but who they are remains a mystery to people in Tower Hamlets.

Up-to-date

ELWAR have been involved with other campaigns too:

*At a recent well-attended GLC public meeting (with 5 speakers from the GLC, including Livingstone and Boateng). ELWAR brought along a woman who'd been racially attacked, to make a complaint. Yet the woman was a Tower Hamlets tenant – not GLC. The Tower Hamlets Assistant Director of Housing - who is sympathetic to the problem of racist attacks – was present. Yet ELWAR kept him, and others, away from the woman, and prevented him from discussing her case with her.

*2 houses in a new row were allocated to Asian families. Racism reared its head; and eventually tenants wrecked a house. The Council publicly stated its policy of allocating to Asian families a certain percentage of new housing, and distributed leaflets to counter arguments of 'swamping' and 'queue jumping'. ELWAR called a meeting; but as it tried to bar white tenants from the meeting, the meeting broke up in disarray.

ELWAR were not behind what the Council were doing; their actions were provocative.

*On a neighbouring estate, Bengali tenants met informally to talk about thequestion of attacks on their estate. ELWAR were admitted only as observers; they had advocated the setting up of a separate black TA, but local Bengalis wanted to join in with a multi-racial TA, and to fight together with other tenants.

People are beginning to realise that some of ELWAR's actions are actually provocative. They are not building an anti-racist movement of anyone but themselves, which can only be unhealthy. What they are doing is, in some instances, to provide a 'servicing role' which should be undertaken by the labour movement. Until the labour movement does undertake this role, then isolated communities will look to organisations like ELWAR.

RACISM IN EALING LABOUR GROUP

The Tory Mayor of Ealing, Cllr. Hetherington, is in the fortunate positon for a man with a nominal two vote overall majority of knowing that six Labour Councillors prefer to take his word rather than that of their colleagues – Cllrs. Pathak and Dheer. Both these Councillors heard Cllr. Hetherington make racist remarks about the competence of Asian schoolteachers at a school governing body and when the Mayor was asked to explain himself at a full Council meeting on 12th July a vote was taken on the subject of the Mayor's version of the words spoken.

As each of the six Labour Councillors refused to vote with their group cheers went up from the Tories and the local press praised them at length later that week. Finally, on September 21st, the Labour Group came to discuss the matter.

After ten minutes 'Next Business' was moved and carried.

All the Asian Councillors stormed out of the meeting in disgust. Subsequently they returned and the matter was discussed but with the recommedation only that the LGC be informed.

Five of the six are senior front bench Labour Councillors and members of a Party which expects the Asian vote in Ealing to support Labour uncritically.

Labour can have no claim on Asian votes if it is ever soft on the issue of racism. Anti-Racist members of the local Labour Party are looking to the LGC for some sign that this Party is really serious and not just mouthing platitudes at election time.

The post-Brighton euphoria means nothing if it sees a continuation of the fine old Labour tradition of papering over the cracks and facing both ways on such fundamental issues as racism and disarmament. **Ealing/Southall member.**

Labour councillors visit Palestine

John Connelly and Peter Smith, both Labour Councillors in Hounslow, visited Israel and the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza between 3rd and 12th August this year.

Below is an account of John Connelly's impressions of the situation together with some suggestions on how future solidarity work for the Palestinian struggle might develop within the British Labour Movement in the near future.

As we crossed the Allenby Bridge from the Jordanian side, the 'Welcome to Israel' sign which greeted us demonstrated that, whatever the official position, the West Bank has now been absorbed into the Zionist state. The awesome military presence in the border areas served as a foretaste to us of the reality of martial law as experienced by Palestinians living under Israeli occupation.

During our visit in which we met many Palestinians of all walks of life, we were impressed by the overwhelming support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation and its Chairman, Yasser Arafat. To the Palestinians living in the front line of Israeli repression, the rebellion in the Beka'a valley led by Aby Mousa seemed yet another setback for the liberation struggle. Nevertheless, many felt that Arafat's response, in which he blamed the Syrians for the affair, was an over-reaction.

Support for the national struggle appears to be strong in every group within Palestinian society – workers, students, intellectuals and even wealthy businessmen. Although a number of younger militants argued that the class struggle within Palestinian society must accompany the national struggle and not be postponed until after independence, for the majority the prime task is to achieve a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza in the near future.

Mood of Defiance

Despite the suppression of local democracy by the Israeli military governor and the terrorist attacks by Israeli agents on the mayors of Nablus and Ramallah in 1981, the mood of the mayors and councillors we met was one of defiance and a continued commitment to represent their people. The threat of house or town arrest, imprisonment, deportation or death do not appear to have deterred their political will.

Within Israeli society, a greater degree of disharmony was apparent. Hyper-inflation, further military casualties in the Lebanon, and no obvious end in sight to the Zionist state's permanent war footing have sapped confidence and morale. Although only a small number of Israelis are as yet prepared to actively support the idea of a peaceful political settlement with the Palestinains, the far greater support for 'Peace Now' demonstrates the growing disenchantment with Israeli society. Jewish emigration from Israel has intensified the problem of finding settlers for the new towns being built on confiscated Palestinain land. Perhaps the best measure of disillusionment within Israel is the fact that most of the new settlers are either religious zealots or gun-totting thugs such as those from Kiryat Arba thought to be responsible for the Hebron market atrocity in July.

No Change

At the time of writing, reports of Yitzhak Shamir's first speech as Israeli Prime Minister indicate that no change can be expected in the settlement policy in the near future: – 'The holy work must continue'. At the same time, there is a financial crisis brought about by the huge defence budget, high costs of the settlements policy, and the growing charges on Israel's foreign debt now fast approaching 15 billion US Dollars in size. Despite the huge US military aid programme and the large private remittance from Zionists living outside Israel, even the IMF has lost confidence in the Shekel. A social upheaval in Israel seems inevitable even if a short term remedy can be found.

It would be incorrect however to interpret this crisis as an opportunity for the Palestinians. Although military occupation inthe West Bank and Gaza, as well as in the new 'North Bank' in Southern Lebanon will continue to stretch Israeli finances, the United States can be expected to prop up her client state in the Middle East for the foreseeable future.

The PLO is in imminent danger of being attacked by Syrian forces in the Tripoli area. The split within Fatah is as yet unresolved. The war in the Lebanon provides increased opportunities for greater imperialist intervention in the region as we have already seen. Palestinians living in the occupied territories therefore cannot rely upon significant outside help in their struggle at this state.

What role, then, can the British left play in promoting the Palestinian cause? Clearly, we can do much more than is presently being done. The poor support given to the Sabra-Chatilla commemoration demonstration in London on September 12th is evidence of this fact. Although the attempts by Poale Zion and their allies to reverse present TUC and Labour Party policies supporting Palestinian self-determination were defeated at this year's Conferences, we still have work to do to give real meaning to these decisions.

Friendship – Support Committee

Initially, we had hoped that our visit might produce a basis for a town twinning along the lines of that between Dundee and Nablus. However, there are no longer Palestinian towns to twin with. As an alternative, we intend to set up a friendship-support committee in Hounslow. We believe that if Labour Parties, Labour Councils and Trade Union Branches take up the cases of individual Palestinians suffering imprisonment, house arrest or town arrest, this will be much appreciated in the occupied territories and will also help to expose those Zionists in Britain who deny that systematic denial of human rights exists in the area.

We will be glad to provide names of prisoners and speakers for meetings on the Palestinian issue.

Tony Benn on "Briefing's" Conference bulletin

"There's such an awful lot of paper, and I've been attending fringe meetings and giving conference speeches, and so I take them all back and read them after conference. But I try and pick up as much as I can, and it's a very, very valuable document.

It is an excellent service. From the very beginning when people began using fringe literature, if I can call it that, to inform and educate and not simply propagandise, the conference has become much more meaningful. That sort of paper, an alternative broad paper, is very very valuable indeed.

The disabled: we are organising!

Since the defeat in the '83 General Election the right inside the Labur Party has attacked the policies contained within both Labour's Programme 1982 and the Election Manifesto. The first issue under attack was, of course, that relating to nuclear weapons. The right, however, wasn't only upset about this. The radicalism shown in Labour's Programme 1982 prompted Peter Shore in his leadership bid to insist on a return to the interests of the traditional Labour voter and away from the policies aimed at the 'minorities''. In other words, Shore does not like the image of a campaigning Party which takes up issues such as women's rights, equality of opportunities and single parents as major parts of the Party's programme.

One wonders, therefore, if Shore's ''traditional (working class) Labour voter'' happens to be a fairly young white single/married man? IF this is the impression we are left with, then it flies in the face if the recent developments inside the Labour Party which has seen an increase in awareness concerning sexism and racism. Clearly on both issues there's still a great deal of work to be done, but a basis is finally there.

It is due to this growing acknowledgement of discrimination against women and blacks which forces me to put pen to paper. Existing policy towards women and blacks highlights Labour's ignorance and backwardness concerning another oppressed group in society, the disabled. Returning briefly to our ''Labour voter'', it would appear obvious to suggest that 'he' was also whole in body and mind!

Disabled people have not as yet made an impact on society's thinking in the same way as women's liberationists or black struggles have. One reason for this lies in the fact that they have not formed *for themselves* a common identity. It is only fairly recently that groups such as the Liberation Network for people with disabilities were formed. A common feeling, even amongst many spokespeople for the disabled, is that they are too feeble to speak for themselves. It is this stereo-type image of a hapless cripple which dominates society's attitudes towards the disabled. I want to show how this applies to the thinking and also the policy of the Labour Party.



Labour Party Photo Library

Blind trainees receiving at Letchworth Skillcentre. This is the only course of its kind in the country.

THE PARTY CLOSES ITS EYES

The question of employment is one of our major concerns. Unemployment is well over three million and it is generally recognised that women, blacks and the disabled are more likely than most to appear in the dole queue. Labour's Programme 1982 states that disabled people face an unemployment rate 50 per cent above the average and are three times more likely to be part of the long term unemployed. Perhaps what is more remarkable is what the programme doesn't say. It is here where the Party closes its eyes.

The section on people with disabilities comes after those on women and blacks. The first striking feature is the sudden change in language and terminology. It would appear correct to speak of ''A woman's equal right to employment'' and ''Equal opportunities for black workers'', but the concept of ''equal opportunities for disabled workers'' workers doesn't apply. Instead, disabled workers are promised that ''The next Labour government will introduce measures to provide *fair* opportunities for disabled people.'' (my emphasis) Now the basic reason for saying 'fair' and not 'equal' is due to the fact that prospects for employment are *reduced* by the person's disability. This is the official view of those who ''deal with'' disabled people. Whilst a person's handicap does have an impact upon their opportunities, nevertheless, research has shown this to be less of a problem than is generally accepted. Likewise, both Tory and Labour governments have played down the importance of such studies. With such a narrow view of disabled people's capabilities one would rather not hazard a guess at what *fair* means!

So, if ''equality'' doesn't apply to disabled people, then neither does the idea of ''positive action''! Positive Action Initiatives were to be part of a Labour government's programme to reduce under-employment amongst women and blacks and caused through discrimination and prejudice. Labour does not offer the same approach or analysis towards disabled workers. Not only is positive action missing but there's no acknowledgement of discrimination and prejudice against us! This is the biggest problem we face: yet Labour turns its back! It is important to realise that disabled people need anti-discrimination laws for the same reasons — materially speaking — as do black people.

It is still legal to refuse a job because someone is disabled even when that person can prove themselves capable of doing the job. Even the Department of Education and Science does it! The problem is, of course, if one says that discrimination exists against disabled people, then one upsets the goodwill sought amongst employers. This is the foolish approach that Labour adopts. Perhaps if these leaders of ours swapped places for a few days, then they might wake up!

Deep down the idea is that disabled people need looking after and need ''help''. The ''help'' offered usually means the loss of the right to control our own lives. How often do disabled people have doctors, social workers and Disablement Resettlement Officers telling them what they can or can't do? Often it is considered wrong to say you disagree with the ''expert'' who is, after all, 'working in your interest''.

This attitude informed the backbone of the Employment (Disabled Persons) Act of 1944. Labour's programme is only a continuation of this. More D.R.O.s promise Labour. Apart from the bloody awful name, one is left wondering whether the role of the D.R.O.s is adequate or right for the 1980s. Personally speaking, I feel the whole system is outdated and increases the stigma attached to disabled workers. I'm not against disabled people having special information services and assistance, but this should be there if the disabled person wants it. Many disabled workers are *forced* into the ghetto provided by the D.R.O.

Labour's promise of capital grants for adapting premises and other ideas such as Job Introduction Schemes are good, but there's room for improvement. Information for employers is still weak. Not enough disabled people are employed in the field to offer personal experience.

CRUEL FARCE

This leads to the final policy statement. Labour's new legislation was to include a quota system. When will they learn? The existing quota system and Register have been seen to be nothing short of a cruel farce. The BBC, however, provides the best laugh on this subject. A reporter wanted to do a report on the misuse of the quota was immediately told not to. Why? Well, it wouldn't look right. Why not? We ignore it ourselves! No, quotas are not the answer, comrades!

It is time the Labour Party stopped pussy-footing around. Disabled people are oppressed and the Party only aids this situation by denying the facts. A new approach is needed where we are no longer treated in a patronised way and our views are heard. Stop talking for us and allow us to speak for ourselves. Support is urgently needed for anti-discrimination legislation. We must take up the question of rights for *all* disabled people and oppose the means testing and unfair systems which exist in the Welfare Benefit system. Issues such as mobility are far from satisfactory too.

Most of all we must stop using the throw-away catch phrase of Labour MPs who harp on about ''the sick, the old and the disabled''. We, the disabled, are not going to allow society or the Labour Party to treat us like an afterthought. We are organising.

R.B. Findlay
L.P.N.D.

Gay Rights in the NUT

Write about the campaign for gay rights in the NUT, he said. I didn't know where to start, till I remembered my old catch-phrase, 'the personal is political'. So . . .

For a start, it's still bloody hard to be openly gay in our society. The Bermondsey bye-election illustrates this truth bitterly. Peter Tatchell had been a gay activist for years yet he didn't stand as such, reportedly on the advice of his local party, advice in which he acquiesced. Can a labour movement that demanded such a silence of Peter Tatchell begin to understand what is involved in any gay rights campaign?

INTEGRATE THE STRANDS OF OUR LIFE

Before a lesbian or a gay man can take part in political activity we have first to come to terms with our oppressed sexuality – in a process measured in tears and years. We *then* have to try to integrate the various strands of our life. For instance, I'm committed to my teaching, to trade unionism and to gay liberation – all important to me. It is difficult to strike a balance, but I believe it is truer to try to do so than to deny one or more of my elements.

The battles don't end there . . . while I no longer think that if we all came out together capitalism would be brought to its knees, lesbians and gays who seek to come out in all spheres of our lives do make a radical challenge to our society, even to its left wing! With honourable exceptions (*Briefing* being one), the Labour Party, the trade union movement and other sections of the left pay only lip-service – if we're lucky – to the defence of gay rights.

That both Labour Party and trade unions in their indifference to and neglect of gay rights mirror attitudes in society at large is a cause for depression. Where is the boldness, the commitment to liberation, even to fighting censorship? Why for instance has the labour movement abandoned PIE to the jackals? Even if the argument is eventually resolved in a way PIE may not like, the issue raised is fundamental – the oppression of children (in which we as teachers play our part) – one of the last great wrongs.

It's in the light of all this that one should see the campaign for gay rights in the NUT. Because of prejudice, gay people in education seek a low profile. Few have managed to come out to any extent at school – to colleagues, let alone pupils. The result: extremely few gay activists willing to campaign in the NUT; and a correspondingly greater need for allies/supporters.

COMMITTED TRADE UNIONISTS TOO

Most of the activists in the Gay Teachers movement have been (and are) committed trade unionists too – and mainly in the NUT,working in or with organisations like Rank & File and Socialist Teachers Alliance.

From 1977 compaigning has focussed on getting NUT local associations to pass the Gay Teachers' Group model resolution, asking the Union locally and nationally (a) to defend gay teachers discriminated against, and (b) to work for curriculum changes for positive representation of homosexuality. This resolution has been passed by various local Associations, more each year. It is slow, frustrating but essential work

For the last five years gay rights has been raised at Annual Conference. Fringe meetings and interventions on the conference floor make more local Associations aware, so work here is useful. But Conference is controlled and dominated by the National Executive who with the Secretariat at National HQ constitute a bureaucracy tending to inertia and self-perpetuation, resisting and stifling change. Gay rights, like abortion and disarmament, are perceived as dangerous threats, not seen in terms of the needs of lesbian/gay teachers to be defended by our union from discrimination or helped by it to lead lives of openness at work, or of lesbian/gay pupils to a meaningful curriculum (and other pupils to a curriculum that dispels prejudice).

DOMINATED CONFERENCE

Bizarrely, gay rights dominated Conference this year, not originally thanks to our campaigning, but to the choice of venue: Jersey, where male homosexuality is still completely illegal. The Executive's pig-headed refusal to change or apologise led to the case for gay rights being put powerfully and extensively.

But if it is to be more than a passing storm, for the Executive and the left, if there is to be a genuine campaign for gay rights, several things are necessary: activism at local and national level around particular demands, coupled with creating conditions that make lesbian/gay liberation more attainable. The agenda may be clear, but the will to implement it has been lacking.

Write about the campaign for gay rights, he said. No. You join it.

Although it may be too late now to put a motion on gay rights to your GMC for the London Labour Party Conference, we urge our supporters to increase the chance of a debate on gay rights at that Conference by amending resolutions on other subjects to include gay perspectives. Some examples of suitable amendments are given below.

Social Security

Conference calls upon the next Labour government to introduce legislation to ensure that, for social security purposes, all individuals are treated equally and independently regardless of sex or marital status and that the concept of the liable relative is ended.

Media

Conference condemns the overwhelming bias of the media against lesbians and gay men, and calls upon the next Labour government to introduce legislation entitling gay organisations to the right of reply to attacks in the media.

Housing

Conference calls upon the next Labour government to end discrimination against single people and groups of people other than nuclear families in the allocation of council housing. Furthermore, we call for cohabitees of either the same or the opposite sex to be given the option of a joint tenancy, and that the right of succession to a tenancy on death should apply to any surviving cohabitee regardless of sex.

Women

Conference calls for an end to all discrimination against lesbians in employment, housing and social security. Conference recognises the rights of lesbians as parents and calls for an end to discrimination in cases of child custody.

Education

Conference recognises the responsibility of schools and colleges to cater for the needs of gay pupils, and to this end calls for:
(a) an end to all discrimination against gay students and teachers;
(b) the experience of lesbians and gays to be reflected in school syllabuses;
(c) sex education to include positive material on homosexuality.

Armed Forces

Conference calls upon the extension of existing acts to cover the armed forces and for further legislation to include this area.

Health

Conference demands that Gays and Lesbians receive equal treatment throughout the health service and condemns the Thatcher government for promoting the idea that the virus AIDS has anything to do with Gay life style and its callous decision to refuse to support research into AIDS.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights

Stop the Deportation of the Hasbudak family!

The Home Office has ordered the deportation of Mr and Mrs Hasbudak on 2 November to Turkey. They have lived here for eight years, and have two children Zeynep (7) and Fatih (5), both born here. They have only just received a council flat in Hackney after living in one room throughout all these years.

The 'Stop the Hasbudak Deportation Campaign' was formed in October. It already has the support of the local Labour Party and some trade unions. A picket was held on 20 October, including by many children and parents from Zeynep and Fatih's school, William Patten. A petition is circulating and further demonstrations are being planned. If you can help please write to the campaign c/o William Patten School, Stoke Newington Church St., London N16.

Halya Kowalsky
Hackney North CLP

Lesbians and Gays: We will not be invisible

No-one really expected the likes of Roy Hattersley to be enthusiastic and consistent in his support for 'exotic' issues like lesbian and gay rights but those of us who have been raising these issues in the Labour Movement for many years did have rather higher expectations of the kind of socialists who write for London Labour Briefing. It was a shock, therefore, to read three articles in LLB No 33 on local democracy in London, none which mentioned the hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay men who live here. Particularly disappointing was the fact that two of the articles were written by Valerie Veness of Islington Council and Valerie Wise of the GLC, two of the councils which had appeared recently to be genuinely supportive of lesbians and gay men. Most significant of all, however, was the fact that the Defend London Charter of the Association of London Authorities has a section on Equality of Opportunity which refers to sex, race, colour, belief and handicap but *not* to sexual orientation. This omission is a serious one which casts into doubt the credibility of the whole campaign.

Conventional forces tell us that 10% of the population is homosexual. But if that figure is correct, the percentage of lesbians and gay men living in the London area is much higher. For 300 years and particularly since the First World War large numbers of lesbians and gay men have migrated to London from all over Britain and Ireland. In part they sought the anonymity of the capital city to enable them to develop their own sexuality;but they also sought the companionship, both sexual and otherwise, of people like themselves.

Until the last decade or so even lesbians and gay men who were active in the Labour Movement tended, along with everyone else, to take the view that sexuality was a private matter. More recently, the self-confidence which lesbians and gay men have variously gained from both the Women's Movement and the Gay Movement has meant that the specific oppression which we experience has been made visible in the Labour Movement. We have made it clear that we need the cultural space to be open about ourselves and to develop our sexuality and our own relationships.

Nor, having come out, are we prepared to accept the oppression which society heaps on us. We need, like everyone else, jobs and job security. We need to be able to walk the streets free from harassment of both the police and privatised queerbashers. We need equality of treatment in public services eg education, health, arts. We also have made it clear that the greatest barrier to what we need is the prejudice, which is found inside the Labour Movement as well as outside of it, and which contrives both to abuse us and to make us invisible. Until an attempt has been made to tackle that prejudice it is impossible even to quantify the extent of the oppression suffered by lesbians and gay men.

With the election of the Labour GLC in 1981 and a number of other Labour Left councils eg Brent, Greenwich, Islington in 1982 it began to seem as if the voice of lesbians and gay men was at last to be heard in the Labour Movement. For the first time that I can recall, men on the gay male scene who were not political activists could be heard discussing a politician (Livingstone) in terms of his politics. It was an enormously hopeful period with enormous potential for the radicalisation of communities which had often been alienated from and even antagonistic to Labour politics. It may have been a brief period. The media has, of course, been virulent in its attacks on Labour for its support of lesbian and gay rights. The clearest example of their hate campaign was over Bermondsey and Peter Tatchell. Local papers such as the Islington Gazette and the Standard have vilified the GLC and Islington Council over these policies. The Daily Mail went a step further and used theses policies as a justification for scrapping the GLC. As a gay man, I am not in the least surprised by the quality of these attacks by the media. The prejudice that both inspires and is engendered by these attacks is, of course, one reason why so many lesbian and gay men find if difficult to come out. No-one with any degree of political awareness about lesbian and gay oppression should have expected otherwise. I would certainly have expected the leaders of Labour's Left to be aware of it and to be ready to resist it. But first we saw the unseemly haste with which the Bermondsey Labour Party looked around for a visibly married man to replace Peter Tatchell and now we see the ALA attempting to restore lesbians and gay men to their traditional invisibility.

I find it impossible to believe that the ALA, in all its collective socialist wisdom, just happened to overlook the lesbian and gay community. It seems far more likely that a decision was made to defer to prejudice and to drop all reference to a group of Londoners who are now seen as a political embarrassment.

The decision indicates a particularly shaky grasp of sexual politics. One of the most important parts of Thatcher's platform has been her sexual politics with its emphasis on the family in relation to the Welfare State, home-ownership, youth unemployment, the declining wage levels of women, the Falklands war and so on. The Thatcherite family unit rigidifies traditional gender roles and also makes it much more difficult for young lesbians and gay men to come out. In the current atmosphere of fear, many peoplewithdraw into what they believe will be the warmth of the nuclear family unit largely because they can see no alternative. Will the Labour Left offer them an alternative to Thatcherite sexual politics?An alternative in which all people will have the right and the opportunity to determine their own sexuality and their own non-destructive lifestyles? Or will the Left alternative simply be Happy Families in pink as opposed to Thatcher's Happy Families in blue?

If such a decision has indeed been made then it augurs very badly for the so-called campaign for local democracy. If one commitment can be dropped so easily, what will be the next concession? Surely all socialists know that if they allow their enemies to define the terms of reference of a campaign then the enemies have won before the campaign is even started. If the ALA and the whole of the Labour Left is serious about its campaign for local democracy, then it must resist the pressure to make the lesbian and gay communities invisible.

Bob Cant (a member of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and the Tottenham Labour Party.)

NO SOCIALISM WITHOUT GAY LIBERATION



Dear Comrade,

NUT LEADERSHIP BLOWS IT

'When teachers lobbied a Schools Sub-Committee meeting Labour members, including "radicals" like Andy Harris refused even to speak to them,' wrote a teacher at Scott Lidgett School in last month's Briefing. This is factually correct.

What however was not stated is that on two separate occasions Wandsworth teachers had lobbied their councillors outside school hours on redeployment, and having listened we were fully aware of their argument. On the third occasion the Schools Labour Group took a decision that it would be wrong to meet teachers taking unofficial strike action that we felt to be unreasonable and unjustified.

I stick to that decision.

When the left won control of the Inner London NUT earlier in the year many councillors looked forward to a close relationship based on a radical approach to education.

Quite honestly so far the new NUT leadership have blown it. They're all over the place, tacitly supporting many unofficial actions, pitching unmeetable demands on the ILEA and failing to get their proper negotiating act together.

All they've succeeded in doing is pissing off virtually the entire ILEA Labour Group and causing NUPE to move a successful motion at the Regional EC calling on the NUT members to drop their unofficial action and join in the defence of the ILEA.

The money ILEA has got to improve teacher conditions and thus education provision for the school students lays untouched as unofficial action is substituted for serious negotiation.

If the NUT members have so managed to alienate and harden the ILEA Labour Group isn't it about time they reflected on tactics and also recognised that their leadership's failure to bring home any of the ILEA goods on offer for their members may well be alienating many of the NUT members who voted them into office.

Yours fraternally,

Andy Harris
GLC/ILEA Member, Wandsworth, Putney.

Representation of ethnic minorities

Dear Comrades,

All committed socialists passionately fight racists and their fellow travellers. Discrimination by default is something else. Briefing comrades who feel that no stone should be left unturned will take note of the following resolution which is circulating widely within the movement:

'In view of the fact that 50% of people working on London Transport come from the New Commonwealth and 15% of its users are from the ethnic minorities, Finchley CLP expresses its amazement that **not one** of the 6 GLC nominees for the Board of London Transport is from the ethnic minorities.

Finchley CLP reaffirms its solidarity with comrades in the Party who fight to ensure adequate and genuine representation for ethnic minorities in British society."

Yours fraternally,

Colin Shindler
(member of Finchley CLP)

Hello Comrades,

I feel I must respond to some points Tom O'Malley raised in his article in October's LLB. While agreeing with his attacks on Capital(ist) Radio, I must part company when he makes assertions against the idea of setting up new stations in London. At present, the GLC is considering a document that recommends that the Council should campaign on behalf of community radio. Groups will be encouraged to seek to set up both London-wide and neighbourhood stations on the vacant frequencies available. Tom O'Malley rejects such a strategy, believing that they are commerical radio stations in disguise and preferring more public regulation over the existing services.

I believe this viewpoint contains many misconceptions. For instance he seems to think that the present number of stations is somehow fixed. With the advent of cable and satellite TV and the growing cheapness of pirate radio transmitters, pressure will build up to release the empty wavebands for the use of more stations. Therefore the question is not whether London will have more radio stations, but *when* and *of what type?* The real question is what does Tom O'Malley see as a desirable structure for a radio station. He is an old-fashioned pseudo-socialist in the Fabian or Stalinist mould, mistaking state monopoly for working class power. He calls for stations controlled by the state, free of advertising and private interests — but we already have a service of this type, its called the BBC!! Trapped in the false dichotomy of state versus private control, he fails to notice a third alternative. This is allowing any new station to be democratically run by the people who work at and use its facilities. The community radio movement merely wishes to apply the principles of workers' cooperatives and self-management to those production processes associated with the mass media. People who advocate this solution are fully aware of the difficulties such community stations are likely to face, both financially and politically. However, even in the capitalist jungle of America, such services have provided a real alternative source of news, views and entertainment. Tom O'Malley's suggestion of "programme-making units" seems a poor substitute, condemning any reformed radio services to go down the road of Channel 4. For if the programmes do not own the station, they will never be able to control it. From there, it is but a short step to the enforced consensus of the present set-up.

I think that the Labour Party and the GLC should reject the pessimistic conclusions of Tom O'Malley. Instead they should reaffirm their support for ideas to democratise the mass media, especially the plans for community radio now being considered by the GLC.

FREE THE AIR WAVES!

RICHARD BARBROOK,
(Hampstead and Highgate CLP)

For further information about the GLC Local Radio Forum, write to Room 190A, County Hall, LONDON S.E.1.
'How To Be a Radio Pirate' can be obtained from OUR RADIO, Box 103FM, LONDON WC1N 3XX, price 50p plus P&P.

APPRECIATION TO BRIEFING...

Dear Comrade,

The branch has recently passed a resolution expressing appreciation for the useful service played by 'London Labour Briefing' to the Socialist movment in London and has agreed a donation of £10 to assist in the present acute financial difficulties.

Keep up the good work please find cheque for £10 enclosed.

yours fraternally,

Saul T. Ackroyd (West Hampstead branch)

...And more appreciation

Dear Comrade,

It must be 1 year since I took my first subscription of 'Briefing' I therefore enclose a cheque for £20 to cover further subscription for 1 year, 'enrolment' as a briefing supporter and the balance as a donation.

May I say how much I appreciated the past 12 issues and the effort that must go into producing the paper. Briefing really is a beacon of light in these troubled times.

yours Steve Rand.

ETHNIC MINORITIES/LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE

The Labour Party's GLC Ethnic Minorities Working Party wants to know your views

SATURDAY 29th OCTOBER
11am to 5pm
Priory Community Centre, Petersfield Road, W.3

Morning: Plenary Session on 'Defend the GLC' with Paul Boateng, Richard Balfe, Vidya Anand and Bernie Grant.
Afternoon: Workshop sessions on: Confronting Racism, Black organisation in the Labour Movement, Employment, Education and Training, Housing and Health and Women's Rights.

'STREET LIFE' SUPPLEMENT

Children and Adoption:

IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE NUCLEAR FAMILY?

I work for a small voluntary adoption agency which specialises in finding homes for children who are 'difficult to place'. All the children we work with are 'in care' to a local authority with no prospect of ever returning to their parents.

Sometimes efforts have been made to find alternatives for them like a home with friends, relatives or a foster family, but these have failed. The children who are most difficult to find alternative families for are those who are physically or mentally handicapped, children over 11 and large groups of brothers and sisters who need to be placed together.

It is *so* difficult, that before this agency was set up children like these simply were not adopted. Social workers thought that no-one would *choose* to care for a handicapped child, for example, and so they remained in Homes and Institutions which doubly handicapped them by depriving them of their emotional needs as well. We believed that there were people who would like to care for such children but that they wouldn't come forward unless we publicised the need.

LYNNE

Lynne was born a spastic, quite unable to walk and very limited in what she can do for herself. Her parents looked after her at home and when their marriage broke up, all the children including Lynne remained with mum when she remarried. But mum died when Lynne was 9 and no-one else in the family or in the neighbourhood felt able to look after her. She was taken to a special home for handicapped children, miles away from everyone she knew so it was difficult for her to be visited. She was desperately upset about her mother's death – her whole world had collapsed – but she knew that she didn't want to stay in a Home for the rest of her life. What she wanted was another family. The local authority thought it was practically an impossible task. Two years went by and Lynne got to 11 before someone thought of us. Another year went by before she came to the top of our waiting list and she was 13 before we found her a family in the form of a single woman with unusual talents and gifts which dove-tailed with Lynne's needs. This story has a happy ending because she has now been adopted and, with all the security and love that this brings her, has finally settled in and developed a sense of belonging again.

Lynne knew what she wanted when she was given a choice, but if the choice isn't there what chance does a 9 year old have of influencing the system? Our service is to her but traditionally adoption has been a service to childless couples.

A married woman rang us up a few months ago in a very distressed state. She had just had her first child and decided that because the child was so handicapped she and her husband could not contemplate caring for her. She was very upset about this but her misery had been increased when she found out that her local authority did not try to find families for such children and she knew clearly that a family was what she wanted for her child. Through sheer persistance and determination she discovered us with our beliefs that all children have the right to a family and our record of achieving this speedily.

Perhaps if she had known other par-

(CONTINUED OVER)



EXCLUSIVE

A LETTER FROM CECIL



The Editor,
Streetlife Supplement,
Briefing.

Dear Sir,
I have decided to resign as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. Not because I am ashamed of my relationship with Sarah. On the contrary, I am resigning because I cannot be both a Cabinet Minister and care properly for my son. Yes, after three daughters I am now hoping for a son.

Mary, Emma and Joanna are all grown up now. I regret that I didn't spend enough time with them when they were babies. I was the dashing businessman and I left most of their upbringing to Ann, my wife.

Comment from my colleagues has been pretty predictable. Most of the MPs whose wives live in the country also have affairs. Being a father is something extra – proof positive that you're a bit of a lad. I also hear awful puns. I am reminded that I'm following in the old Victorian tradition of the Master having his way with the housemaid, then sacking the shameless hussy when she conceives.

Sarah knew she was pregnant before the election. I could hardly resign then. I originally believed I could give up the Chairmanship and take the post Margaret had lined up at the Board of Trade. I was then sure I would be satisfied with making financial provision for the boy's upbringing. You know, a nanny, prep school and all that. Then I realised I didn't want to pay someone to offload my responsibility. I mentioned that I missed my chance to be a proper parent when my daughters were young. I want another chance, while I am still pretty fit and active. To be honest, fighting the Falklands war and a general election is fun, but gallivanting to Japan and South Korea by jet to sell Maestros isn't.

Furthermore, babies do wake up in the middle of the night, and it wouldn't be fair that Sarah should always be the one to get up. You can't go to the Ministry in the morning if you've been up all night. Parliamentary duties aren't so onerous. With our majority only half of us have to turn up at any one time and we won't have too many all-nighters.

Besides, I could take the baby to the House – as soon as he's off the breast. If your women MPs can do it then why not me? We are the Party-of-the-Family after all. I've heard some of your lot complain that the changing facilities aren't too good. We'll soon change that. And why not a creche as well?

The Rt. Hon. Cecil Parkinson, M.P.,
House of Commons,
SW 1

You might wonder why I'm writing to your journal. I've always liked Briefing for the internal Labour Party gossip. I was hoping to read more of the same in your 'Streetlife Supplement'. By the way, why do you call it "Streetlife"? There isn't much life in my street in Potters Bar. I was hoping to find out who Neil Kinnock is having it away with or what else Ken Livingstone or Michael Meacher did at Labour Party Conference. We all know what goes on at conferences. Not a word! I presumed you didn't know what happens, as you are not usually inhibited in what you print. However, although your articles were by people no-one I knew had heard of (maybe they were pseudonyms?) they struck a chord. I too was trying to make two relationships work. Or, to be more precise, moving from one relationship to the other and back again. Who knows where it will end? I doubt if its all as easy as you suggest.

Its quite a step that I'm taking. No cabinet minister has ever resigned to look after a baby. I still half wish that I could take my baby to a Cabinet meeting. Plonk him in Norman's lap. But it wouldn't be fair. Perhaps my example will lead to childcare being taken more seriously. I've often suspected that we men could do the job better than many of the young girls anyway.

I would welcome your advice. Please write to me at the House.
Yours sincerely,
Cecil Parkinson

CHILDREN & ADOPTION (CONTINUED)

ents of handicapped children, together they could have demanded a service for themselves and their children locally.

ISOLATED IN NUCLEAR FAMILIES

But in our society we are isolated in individual nuclear families. If the family can't cope alone *we* are seen as inadequate and the social services descend to take the problem out of our hands. The result is that we are moving into a situation where the state is taking more and more control over our personal social services. The state in the form of social workers, probation officers, psychiatrists and doctors is developing a power over our lives which no isolated individual or nuclear family can fight.

We need to recognise that it is the nuclear family structure which is inadequate to meet our needs.

What we want is a society where the isolating and oppressing nuclear family is broken down. Then we can join forces with others whose needs are the same, to put real pressure on the agents we employ to be more responsive to our needs. To provide services of all kinds within a framework where the consumers are the only arbiters of what services are needed and through which all professionals are made totally accountable.

Central to my working life is the belief that the emotional quality which can be found in family life is better for children than Homes or institutions. I don't believe though that it is only the nuclear family that can provide it.

It is important that we don't throw out the good with the bad in our efforts to revitalise and radically alter the basic building block of society which is the family. We need to keep as central our understanding of the importance of commitment to each other. Whether adults or children we all need the security that this gives us. But we don't need the male favoured way that this works out in practice where women do all the nurturing. For true equality women need to break down their isolation and find solidarity with other women.

We need to break out of monogamy which keeps us isolated within the family and take the first steps towards fulfilling our needs and those of our children communally collectively.

HILARY ALTON

REVIEW:

SEX & LOVE

'Sex and Love. New thoughts on old contradictions.'
Edited by Sue Cartledge and Joanna Ryan.
Published by The Women's Press.

I had been looking forward to the publication of this book for some months now.

At a celebration of Sue's life after her death in February of this year, her co-editor read a passage from Sue's chapter in the book entitled 'Duty & Desire: Creating a Feminist Morality'.

'Obviously there is a limit to the amount which we, as individuals or collectively, can change in one generation. We cannot reconstruct ourselves overnight as beings free from possessiveness, jealousy, pain loss (and do we want to, anyway? As beings with only rational emotions, would we have lost something in the process?) What is desirable, even assuming we could all agree on that, is bound to be limited by what is practical.

However, a realistic appreciation of the limits to change imposed both by surrounding circumstances and the past in our own heads and hearts does not let us off the hook of responsibility. And I assume that as feminists we would not want to be let off. We have already taken responsibility for our own lives, by defining and rejecting our oppression and struggling to create new worlds and new ways of living. Our politics would have no meaning if we did not believe that there is scope for change and that we can make changes. And I believe that the creation of a feminist ethics is important on every level of politics. In the arena of our own lives and relationships it is important because this is the most immediate sphere of action. If we cannot maintain our personal search for better ways of living, then we are failing ourselves and those we love. But I also believe we shall be failing the human community generally. Our individual actions create ripples which extend beyond our own field of vision.'

This made a very great impression on me as it raised for me some of the issues I had been turning over in my own mind recently in attempting to practice my feminism in an alternative way in my everyday life.

Sexual love relationships

The editors say in their introduction that this book "is about sexual love relationships: what we bring to them; the strengths, the problems, the dilemmas we experience within them; our hopes of how to change them . . . The anthology as a whole is a particularly feminist fusion of emotion and intellect, theory and practice. The book is written by both lesbian, heterosexual and bi-sexual women. The themes cover a whole range of experience and feelings. Lucy Goodison



writes about falling in love, Angela Hamblin writes about long term relationships with men, Lesley Saunders writes about sex and childbirth and two women describe their relationship with each other and Tricia Bickerton writes about women living on their own and not being part of a couple. Lucy Bland writes about how women throughout history have had their sexuality proscribed for them by men and how we can begin to change that. The feelings of love, dependency, sexual jealousy and powerlessness weave their way throughout the book.

Politics and personal

During the late 60s and early 70s many in the women's movement and on the Left generally, began to question the ways in which we lived together and brought up our children. But the connections between our politics and personal lives have remained more or less totally separate. And this is the theme which the authors of Sex and Love are looking at: the ways in which our emotional, sexual and child care needs can be met in different ways outside of the nuclear family.

For most of us a discussion on our family and sexual relationships has more immediate relevance to our daily lives than traditionally defined 'politics'. We spend a lot of time thinking and talking about problems with our lovers, children, mothers and fathers. What connects all of us as human beings is that we have very similar needs for love, security, affection and stability and what the authors of this book try to do is to find other ways in which our needs can be met without being at the expense of oppressing others. For instance it describes how our love and sexuality is used against us and oppresses us within patriarchal structures. It's about the imbalance of power between people, generally by men over women and how that imbalance has up till now dictated and imposed upon us our whole emotional, psychological and physical environment. This book reflects some of the changes we are beginning to make in our lives to alter that. These changes which we started to make for ourselves, hopefully will benefit my/our daughters and other women's sons, so that whether my daughters define themselves as lesbian or heterosexual, they will be able to express their sexuality on their terms and be able to give and receive all the love, security and stability that they need from a wider group of friends.

Many of the problems that are dealt with in this book have been written about in the Streetlife Supplement and a meeting to organise a conference to discuss and develop feminist alternatives to the nuclear family is being held at Lewisham Labour Club, 9 Limes Grove, Lewisham SE13 on Tuesday 22nd November at 7.30. Anyone wishing to help plan the conference is welcome.

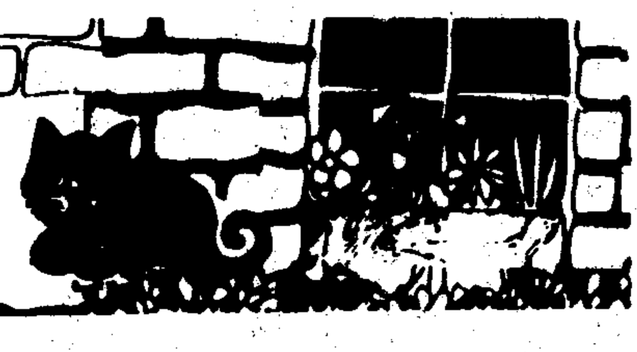
The conclusions the authors made is *not* that we're against falling in love, not against sexual relationships with men, only that we're against the structures in which these sort of intimate close relationships usually take place. It's not a matter of throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but of retaining the love, the intimacy, the sexual relationships, but finding new structures within which our needs can be met.

ANN BLISS

MEN AND CHILDCARE
A day workshop for women, young people and men.
At the Drill Hall, Chenies St., WC1.
(off Tottenham Court Road)
10am - 6pm Saturday, November 26th
Registration Fee: £1.50, £1 (UB40).
Creche Provided. Access for wheel chairs.
Help will be given, negotiating the stairs.
A few suggestions for discussion:
Domestic violence and male sexual abuse of girl children. The oppression of women in the family. The effects fathers have on our lives, and our sexual and social identity. The construction of gender and sexuality. The politics of childhood, children and adultism. Male sexuality. Changing the nuclear family.
Organised by the Men and Childcare Group
For further information contact Dick, 326 0240.



Streetlife Letters



BEING RESPONSIVE

Dear Streetlife,
Surely partners in a relationship should be responsive to each other. When they stop putting in time and energy then their relationship has ended. Women object when men give less than they take.

In "The Theory of Gossip" article (July) that Michael Knight commented on in his October letter I was expressing (amongst other things) my sorrow that my relationship was ending. Perhaps men ought not to feel sorrow at such loss or ought not express such feelings? What would be your reaction if your marriage ended, Mike? "Oh well, mustn't grumble. Mustn't take her time and energy."

Rather than endorse 'alternative lifestyles' my article was very sceptical about them. I now feel bitter that I suspended my cynicism that my ex-lover and her husband really would 'break out of their monogamous relationship.' Perhaps they were wise and saw the continually damaging turmoil in the lives of friends who have 'broken out'?

Yours,
Bernard Misrahi

WOMEN AND MENTAL HEALTH

Dear Streetlife,
I'm enclosing a notice about a Women and Mental Health group set up by women who have had dealings with the psychiatric facilities, mainly as patients, and are campaigning for a different approach to mental health, particularly as it affects women. The majority of people who spend time in mental hospitals are women, and more likely to be working-class or black women than middle-class white women. The treatment is still likely to be drugs and ECT with very little therapy, and mental hospitals are still ill-provided compared with general hospitals.

Do you think it would be useful to have a Street-Life Supplement on the issue of mental health, as it is still a ghettoised subject. Women who have had breakdowns often find it difficult to talk about, as other women and men look at them as though afraid they might be infectious or something. The police are entitled to put someone suspected of being mentally ill under a Section, which deprives them of all rights, and they can be removed to 'a place of safety' without the need to consult a doctor or social worker beforehand. This kind of power can easily be abused, and needs questioning.

Yours in comradeship,
Jan Wallcraft

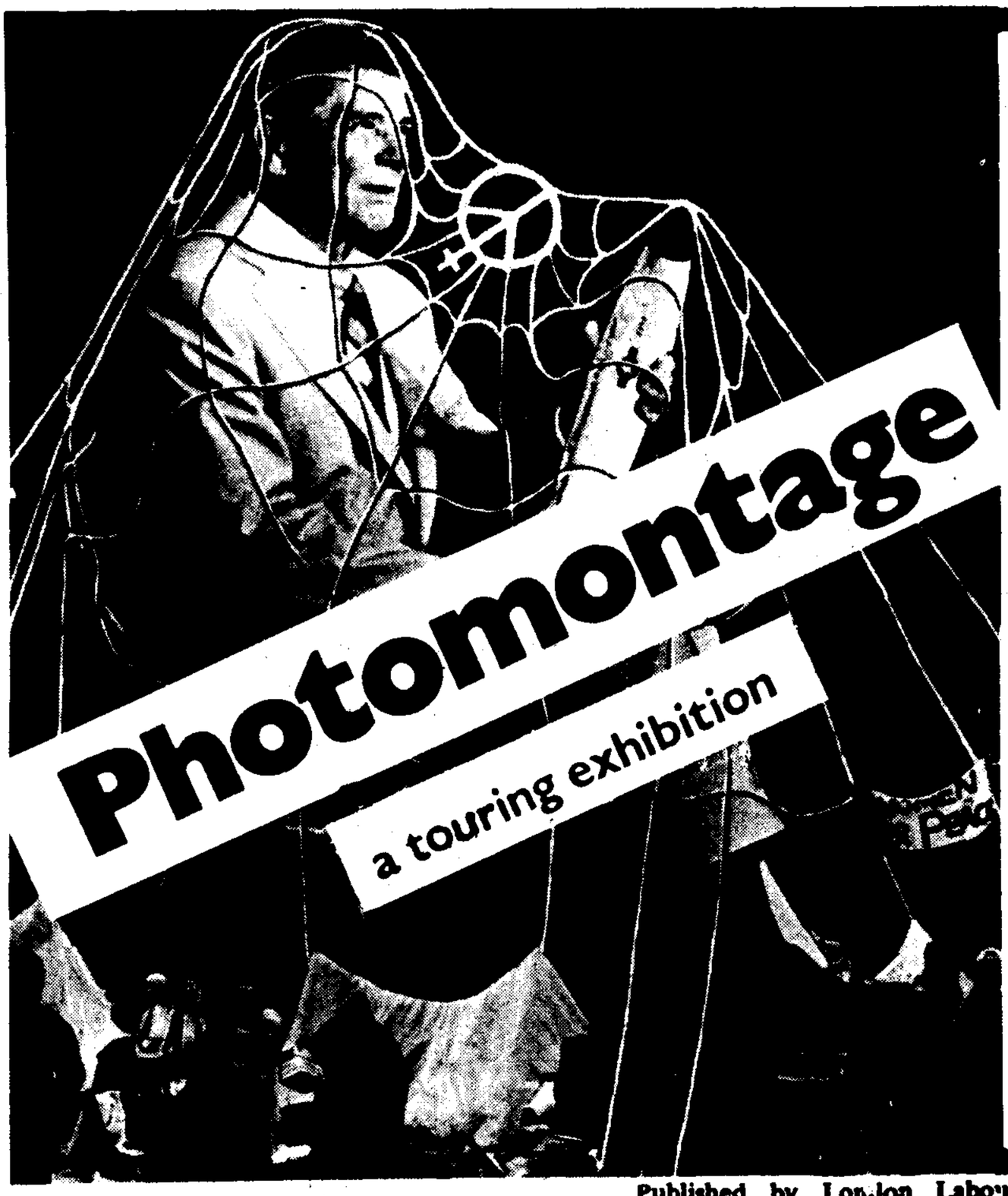
PS: Women and Mental Health group can be contacted c/o Box 21, Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, London N1.

We hope to take up Jan's suggestion of a supplement on mental health in two issues time.

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue of the Streetlife Supplement we will be continuing the theme of childcare to allow more time for people to submit their articles. The issue after that will be on mental health (see Letters). We welcome other suggestions for themes for future issues.

Articles, letters etc. for the next issue should be sent to Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1 by 7th November.



An exhibition in two parts: A section on DIY montage drawing on a wide variety of work to provide an analysis and description of the processes involved. Followed by a number of bodies of work utilising processes and themes through a variety of media, using photomontage for specific purposes and dealing with particular issues, all with the purpose of challenging accepted notions of the world represented through images.

Also; "Changing the Face of 1984" a course on photomontage with Cath Tate: from 12 Oct 6-9pm ten sessions. Details on 01 980 6256

CAMERAWORK

Oct 26 - Nov 26
121 Roman Road Bethnal Green London E2
01 980 6256
Tuesday 1-6
Wednesday to Saturday 11-6
Buses: 8 8a 106 253
Tube: Bethnal Green

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