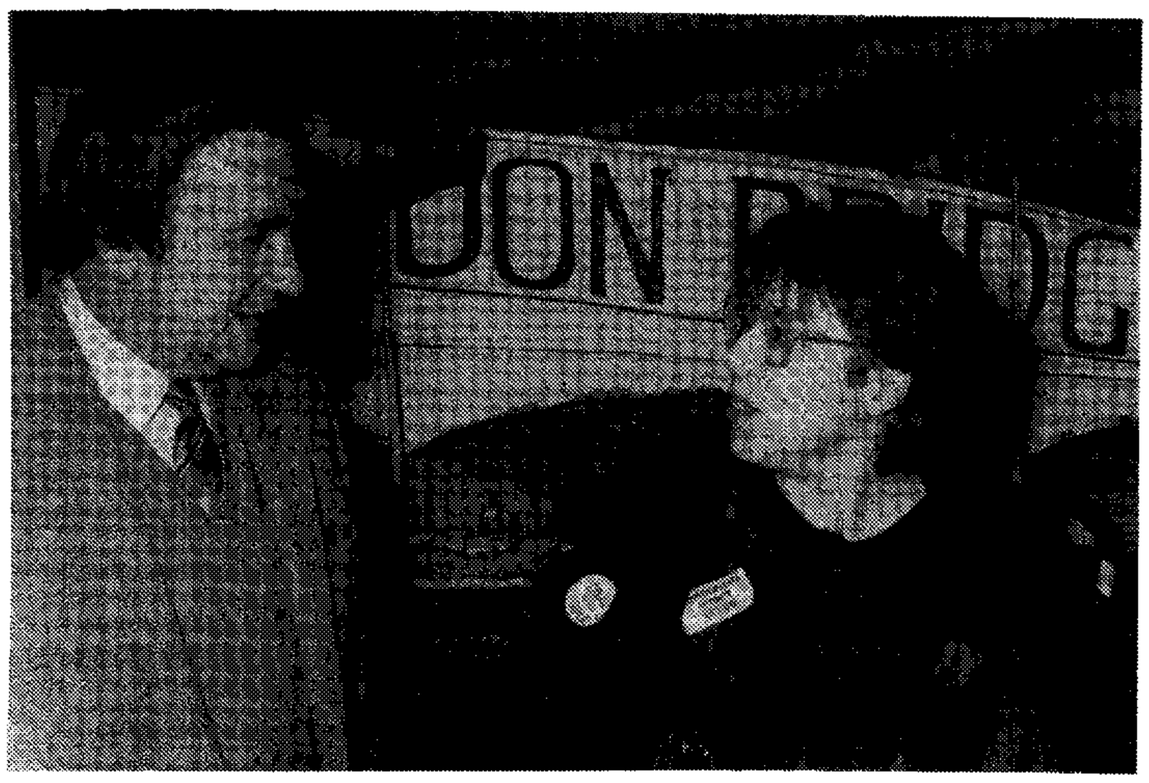
LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
40p
No 47
MARCH 1985

OPENING UP THE SECOND FRONT—
STRIKE TOGETHER ON MARCH 6th!

HILDA KEAN (Leader of Hackney Council)

On Wednesday February 12th Patrick Jenkin tried yet again to divide rate-capped authorities, when he announced that he was altering the maximum level of rate that 4 rate-capped authorities could levy, namely Lewisham, Leicester, Islington and Hackney. In Hackney's case he said that we could raise our local rates by 23% – yet even this figure would leave us with a shortfall of about £25 million on our projected budget to defend jobs and services.

The extra money raised by such a rate rise would not go into Hackney services. In fact, for the dubious privilege of paying an extra £1.34p a week in rates, Hackney residents would be putting an extra £6 million back into the government coffers. This crazy situation arises out of the government's own target and penalty system: it's encouraging us to spend more so that it can pay us less in grant!



Hilda Kean with Lambeth leader, Ted Knight John Chapman

LOST RATE SUPPORT GRANT

All along Hackney has consistently argued that the issue is not about raising rates or raising expenditure levels, but where the money for services comes from. Since 1979 the government has taken £70 million from the borough in the form of lost rate support grant. If that money was returned not only would we be able to defend jobs and services but we could make a rate reduction of 27%, that is a saving of £3 per week on average for a domestic rate payer.

For its part the government has argued that the Rates Act was designed to cut rates. Clearly that spurious line of argument has now been exposed in that it is telling Hackney to raise the rates higher than the *council* has in the past two years and more than any member of Labour Group has ever suggested!

There is nothing in the recent statements of Patrick Jenkin to suggest that councils will be able to introduce the budgets that local electorates want and need. Indeed, it is becoming clear that continued concerted trade union and community action is more vital than ever. How councillors vote on March 7th is an important step in the way working class communities are defended. However, it will not be the ultimate means of determining the outcome of our campaign against the government's draconian measures.

The determination the miners have shown in defending their own communities must be taken up by those of us in the inner city areas. Our action will not only defend our communities but will assist the miners in their fight. The miners will have been on strike for a year on the TUC day of action on March 6th. We have an opportunity to unite these struggles in action and not just words on that day and during future action to defend our communities.

Over the next few weeks the Conservative government and their friends in the media will do everything they can to try and divide those of us in this fight. They have not succeeded to date and we must ensure that they do not succeed in the future!

LABOUR—TAKE THE POWER!

BUILDING THE RESISTANCE IN GREENWICH

Claer Lloyd-Jones Chair of Greenwich Labour Group Chair of February 16 Steering Group

Around 500 people joined the resistance against rate-capping in Greenwich at the Borough Conference on February 16th. They came from all parts of the Borough and from all sections of the community, but the call was clear and united – total and unqualified support for the Council's defiance of the Rates Act.



B. Sugden

Each workshop group considered the effects of rate-capping and abolition on its areas of concern and came back to the conference with the same demand – there must be no cuts in jobs and services. The conference unanimously adopted a statement supporting defiance of the Rates Act and linking the struggle in local government with the miners' struggle. This theme was picked up by speaker after speaker, from the floor and from the platform. In particular Dennis Skinner received a standing ovation.

THE idea of a borough conference was born last September 22 when the joint GCs of Woolwich. Eltham and Greenwich Labour Parties met to decide policy and campaigning on rate-capping. A resolution to hold such a conference involving all parts of the community was unanimously carried. A small sub-group met and quickly formed the February 16 Steering Group which has organised the whole event. The steering ggroup was composed of representatives of the local Labour Parties, trade unions, Greenwich needs ILEA, Greenwich needs the GLC, tenants' organisations, voluntary organisations and myself from the Labour Group on the Council.

'Educate, agitate, organise'

The day was organised on the theme of "educate, agitate and organise", with the dual purpose of providing detailed information about the effects of rate-capping and abolition and of developing campaigning strategies across the whole range of groups affected.

After a short platform introduction from John Austin-Walker (leader of Greenwich), Deirdre Wood (GLC and ILEA) and Alistair MacCrae (NUPE), the morning continued with two sets of discussion groups. the first discussing the effects of rate-capping and abolition on education, the GLC, health, social services, housing, direct labour, voluntary organisations, employment, privatisation, community arts and transport. The second set of workshops entitled 'Building the Resistance', took place within the themes of building a tenants' federation, trade unions – building solidarity, pensioners, women, ethnic minorities, cooperatives, community groups, arts organisations, and lesbian and gay groups.

The day finished with an inspiring rally with Richard Balfe, Tony Banks, Margaret Beckett, John McDonnell, and Dennis Skinner.

The Conference has been entirely funded by sponsorship and voluntary contributions from individuals and organisations supporting the day.

As an initial advert for the day we took a full page in the local paper and printed the following statement:

""We the undersigned oppose the attempts to undermine local democracy in Greenwich by the rate-capping of the London Borough of Greenwich and the ILEA and the abolition of the GLC.

"Such measures will lead to increased hardship and job losses for residents in this Borough and will make the provision of local services less sensitive to local needs.

"We commit ourselves to campaigning against these measures and defending the rights of local elected government to determining expenditure to meet community needs."

There were more than 250 signatories to this statement including local Church people, community organisations, trade unions, the two Liberal councillors, MPs, Labour councillors and the Labour wards and sections.

After the success of the day and the level of support shown for the Council's stand against rate-capping, there can be no member of the Labour Group left in any doubt that on March 7, when we vote not to make a rate and to continue to defy the Rate Act, we do so not only in unity with other local authorities but with the support of the community in Greenwich.

The message of February 16th is clear and simple and in support of the Council's defiance. The conference recognised that the way ahead will not be easy, and agreed that a recall conference will be held to assess the campaign in the coming months. But as from now the resistance from all sections of the community has been joined.



Lambeth — Towards March 7th!

Lambeth's Labour Council is on-course for confrontation with the Government in the wake of public support picked up at a massive number of public meetings held throughout the borough in the lead-up to March 7th. By the evening of no-rate-making, more than 250 individual user-groups will have been consulted in meetings addressed by the relevent committee chairs and local councillors. Twenty ward public meetings will have been held, each addressed by the leader of the council and members of the administration, each spelling out the needs of the borough.

Organisations as diverse as the Streatham Ratepayers — a Conservative 'front' organisations with a long history of opposition to Labour spending on working class people — and individual tenants' associations will have been contacted, along with a series of discussions with the grant-aided bodies which will be hit if Lambeth is rate-capped.

'LAMBETH BRIDGE'

The 'Lambeth Bridge' body of joint trade unions — representing the GMBU, UCATT, AUEW, NUPE, TGWU, NUSMW and NALGO — has organised a comprehensive set of workplace meetings to ensure all union members throughout the council's 10,000 workforce hear the message that the Labour council will make no cuts and set no rate under the existing Tory legislation. In addition the joint unions are setting up their own contingency plans for emergency services and for the fight to defend jobs after March 7th.

The Labour Group — with a majority of just four — is united in its opposition to the Tory ratecapping laws and in its refusal to comply. Over the past six months five members of the Group have resigned to make way for comrades selected and elected on a ticket of non-compliance; in addition, on a dramatic pro-Labour swing, we picked up an additional councillor from the Liberals.

NO BETRAYAL

On March 7th there is no excuse for councillors ducking out of a fight we have been discussing throughout the parties, unions, community and council for a year. Any member not supporting the Labour line will be just as much a traitor to the movement as those who have never supported the miners' strike. In Lambeth we are confident there will not be any such betrayal.

Public support is strong; labour movement unity within Lambeth and linking up with other areas is at an unprecedented level. The backing for the no-rate position in Lambeth will be made clear on March 7th inside the council chamber and — more importantly — outside. It will thereafter be chiefly the work of the unions and the community to stop the Tories demolishing Lambeth's services and sacking 1,500 people. And they *will* be stopped.

Graham Norwood,
(Lambeth Labour councillor)



John Chapman

'There will be no dented shields in Lambeth': Lambeth leader, Ted Knight, responds to Neil Kinnock.

'War Cabinet' in Islington

by Nick Bairstow

ISLINGTON Council looks as if it is taking its pledge to fight rate-capping seriously.

The Council leadership has agreed to set up a "war cabinet" of six councillors to take over direct charge of council finances from senior officers if not making a rate on March 7 means the borough runs short of cash. Council leader Margaret Hodge has also repeatedly pledged that it is the council workers' wages – not the banks – that will get first call on the money left after April.

The first real sign of the determination to fight, though, is the Council's response to another attack – the government's swingeing cut in Islington Housing Investment Programme Allocation. The money LBI is allowed to borrow to finance major repair, rehabilitation and building projects has been cut to only £30 million for next year – though over £80 million is needed!

The Labour Group overturned their past approach, and the advice of senior officers and the Housing Chair to declare that they would carry on with their planned programme and keep demanding more government money and the right to raise money.

This will help ensure jobs are saved, for now, in the Building Works Department and that promised repair programmes will start. It will now be up to the government to try to stop them against strong local opposition – rather than Islington "carrying out orders".

Even the right-wing local press was forced to give a reasonably sympathetic account of this stand – because, for once, it is a clear-cut no-nonsense strategy that people can understand and support, rather than the usual back-room juggling with figures that has been the general approach of the Council.

Council trade unions have given their backing to this first act of defiance and it has helped spur their determination to wage a joint fight with the Council against rate-capping.

It has been union support and pressure for a fight by the Council that has ensured that Islington's Labour Group has remained united around the strategy to resist the government it has so far adopted.

The questions now are how to build on that first stand and organise mass opposition and action. Trade unionists and Party members must keep pressing for the Council to make the Tory-imposed crisis after March 7 hit the City and big business, not the workers – by halting debt repayments and payments to contractors while still running services and paying council workers. It might be illegal, but it would be hitting the Tories where it hurts – their backers' wallets.

NO BACKING DOWN ON BLACK SECTIONS

Last year's Greater London Labour Party annual meeting gave emphatic support to the setting up of Black Sections. Twelve months later, 19 of these exist in London constituencies ranging from Brent and Southall to Vauxhall, Bow and Poplar, Norwood and Westminster North. But, I'm sad to say, this mushrooming of Black activity among Labour members in seats with large Black populations has occurred despite, not because of, any initiative by the London Labour Party.

For, instead of helping to launch a major regional campaign on pressing race issues, based on the experiences and activities of comrades involved in the Black Sections struggle, London Party officials have engaged in an NEC-inspired offensive against CLPs who fully support their Black Sections. Threatening letters have so far been despatched to Vauxhall, Westminster North, Deptford, Lewisham East and Hornsey and Wood Green. Party officials – the hapless tools of the NEC 'antis' – have warned CLPs they must not allow formal recognition of Black Section representatives in their rules, nor must they allow Black Section delegates to attend selection conferences. If they do? Well, the sword of damocles will come crashing down on the heads of all concerned.

It makes you wonder whether the Labour leadership live in the real world. CLPs who've whole-heartedly accepted the right of their Black members to form a Black Section and send delegates – like other sections of the party – to the policy-making bodies cannot then kick us in the teeth just because Kinnock wants them to. Maybe the leadership can hold the regional party in a state of paralysis, whereby they give us a big vote of support at a conference, and then conveniently forget about us for a year. But that is not the way of London CLPs.

Sorry Neil, if Vauxhall are anything to go by, there'll be no kicks in the teeth for Black comrades and no backing down on an issue we hold is a fundamental matter of principle. Black under-representation is a Labour Party scandal. We in Vauxhall have seen our Black Section make significant headway tackling it. In electoral terms, this means that a local party which covers Brixton – heartland of Labour's large Afro-Caribbean support – are no longer prepared to treat Black people as mere 'voting fodder'. Southall – with their huge Asian vote – are, through their sizeable Black Section, delivering a similar message.

CONFERENCE DECISIONS

It is the worst brand of cynical politics for the leadership, who say they will tolerate Black party members meeting in 'Black Sections' provided they don't press for 'constitutional change', to preach to us about the sanctity of Conference decisions. They should be remined that the Labour Party is built on a long tradition of turning grassroots struggles into political change. They should recognise that the struggle by Black people in the party for constitutional change which will enshrine our right to fair representation is no different to the struggle of women, peace campaigners and lesbians and gay men – *irrepressible*. History is witness to the fact that women have had to struggle against repeated 'No' votes from a conference dominated by white, male union barons. That's point one.

Point two revolves around the hypocrisy of Kinnock and his kind. In just four months since Blackpool, they have trimmed and back-slid on a number of key Conference decisions. These include support for the Miners, Unilateral Disarmament, Northern Ireland and defiance of the Tory law in defence of jobs and services over 'Rate-Capping'. How does the leadership's record to date augur for the rest of the run-up to the next General Election? Like many Black People, I am horrified by the spectacle of Labour leaders throwing Socialism overboard in a vain attempt to appease the Social Democrats flying false colours in our party.

STAND BY OUR FIGHT

Comrades who care about the future of Socialism must stand by our fight for Black Sections at this crucial stage. Black Sections have already boldly demonstrated we are an important part of the 'left' vanguard fighting back against the forces of reaction in the party. Forget the craven cronies of the Shadow Cabinet who are currently telling the PLP that Labour's supporters should be 'unpoor and unblack'. Remember instead, we cannot win without the solid support of the million Black people who loyally voted for us at the last election while others were abandoning ship in their droves. But, if we are to stave off abstentions becoming the order of the day in the Black community, we must stop apologising for our Socialist policies and make them more relevant to Black people. The party must also concede the long-overdue constitutional guarantees of Black representation. We are not asking for anything other sections of the party haven't already got. No more paper promises. Black Sections Are Here To Stay!

Marc Wadsworth, Vauxhall CLP delegate to the GLLP AGM

Parliamentary selection East Lewisham

Ann Bliss



BRIEFING'S SLATE FOR THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE

CHAIR: ARTHUR LATHAM

CONSTITUENCY SECTION

AREA 1

MILDRED GORDON	**(Hendon S.)**
SHEILA HEALEY	**(Brent E.)**
NARENDRA MAKANJI	**(Hornsey and Wood Green)**
JOHN McDONNELL	**(Hayes and Harlington)**

AREA 2

VIDYA ANAND	**(Ilford S.)**
TERRY CONNELLY	**(Bow and Poplar)**
JEREMY CORBYN	**(Islington N.)**
KEITH LICHMAN	**(Hackney N.)**

AREA 3

DANNY HARRIS	**(Hammersmith)**
PAT HEALEY	**(Kensington)**
KEITH VAZ	**(Richmond)**
VALERIE WISE	**(Tooting)**

AREA 4

LOUISE CHRISTIAN	**(Streatham)**
KATE HAMLYN	**(Dulwich)**
SYLVIA INGERSON	**(Norwood)**
JOAN TWELVES	**(Vauxhall)**

TRADE UNION SECTION

Vote for

JON DAVIES	**(ACTT)**
CHRIS HUMPHREYS	**(NUPE)**
PAUL MOORE	**(POEU)**
LIZ PHILLIPSON	**(ASTMS)**
GEORGE WILLIAMSON	**(USDAW)**

Do *not* vote for JOHN SPELLAR (EETPU)

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

Vote for BELLE HARRIS and REG TAYLOR

London Labour Party Conference

BRIEFING FRINGE MEETING

"The miners' strike — opening up the second front!"

Speakers: Jeremy Corbyn M.P.
Kay Sutcliffe
Paul Whetton (Notts N.U.M.)
John McDonnell (Deputy Leader GLC)
Linda Bellos (Vauxhall Black Section)
Johanna Fawkes (London Bridge and sec. Camden Joint TU Campaign)

Chair: Ken Livingstone

SATURDAY MARCH 2ND AT 12.30 PM.
CAMDEN COUNCIL CHAMBER

and Black Sections: under threat!

East Lewisham Labour Party is facing a battle with Regional and Head Office over its determination to include its delegates from the Black Section in the parliamentary selection procedure.

East Lewisham will be selecting its parliamentary candidate on 10th May. Nominations have to be in by 15th April and the GC will approve/amend on 3rd May after the E.C. have shortlisted.

The secretary of the Party had met with Kath Butler, Regional Organiser, who instructed him not send nominations papers to the Black Section which had two delegates on the GC since last October. After an overwhelming vote of support by the GC, the Secretary sent nomination papers to the Black Section. Since then, two letters, one from National Agent and another from Kath Butler have been sent warning us that action will be taken against our Party — that we will not be allowed to take part in any delegate conferences of the party and will not be allowed to proceed with selection.

The issue of the Black Section having full voting rights was discussed before last year's Annual Conference (it was our resolution to Conference) and we were clear about the implications — that we would be challenged by Head Office. We will need, and are asking for the support of other CLPs, particularly with Black Sections, in confronting what amounts to Head Office's racism.

Hither Green branch have proposed a resolution which we want taken as an emergency at London Labour Party Conference on 2nd/3rd March which "instructs the London Labour Party Executive to fully defend East Lewisham Labour Party in any conflict with NEC over its decision to go ahead with the selection proceedure with a General Council which includes 2 delegates from its Black Section." Please ensure your delegates vote with us.

Ann Bliss (Hither Green branch, East Lewisham CLP)

Monkey Business at the London Conference

For the second year running, Hackney North C.L.P. has submitted motions critical of I.L.E.A.'s cuts to the London Labour Party Conference. For the second year running, the boys and girls at Herbert Morrison House have failed to notify Hackney North in time for its delegates to participate in the compositing meetings. This means, that for the second year running, Hackney North will have to plead with the Standing Orders Committee to get I.L.E.A.'s cuts back on the Agenda. What a co-incidence!

Support Hackney North at the London Conference. If you have any helpful information, contact Keith Lichman, 802 1709.

LONDON LABOUR BRIEFING
Political Editor: Graham Bash, 162 Millfields Road London E.5.
Treasurer: Jim Ring

March 6th – Day of Action Women against rate-capping

Deborah Knight,
Brent East CLP

March the 6th is crucial. It will be the time when local councils will refuse to budget for massive cuts in jobs and services. March the 6th is but one date in a month which will be critical in the rate-capping calendar. During that same week councils all over England and Scotland will be deciding on their budgets.

For women as providers and users of services these decisions will be crucial if we are not to find existing service levels and jobs provision further decimated. Find out when your council budget-making day will be, take part in any local lobbies that have been organised to ensure that your council is aware that women are not prepared to pay the price for cuts.

On March 6th itself, Boroughs and Metropolitan Councils, together with local people and trade unions, will be demonstrating their opposition to rate-capping and abolition.

A number of events will take place during the day, beginning with a march from Malet Street WC1 which assembles at 11.30am, with floats miners' bands and speakers on open top vehicles.

The march will move off 12.30 to 1pm heading for Jubilee Gardens, where there will be a TUC rally. A convoy of women's vehicles from all over the country will be converging on Jubilee Gardens at the same time. Local London women's buses from Lewisham, Hackney Lambeth, Greenwich and Camden are planning to tour their localities before forming a convoy to head for the South Bank, in time to greet the main march. So far 25 vehicles have been confirmed, with more to follow.

If you are involved with a group who relies on a vehicle for your activities and would like to be involved contact Heather in the Local Government Campaign Unit for more details. (387 9893). If you work for a council and would like one of your council vehicles to be rperesented in the convoy, then talk to your branch secretary, tell him/her what is happening on March the 6th and that you want to take part to draw attention to the women's dimension to rate-capping. General leaflets are now available from the LGCU and a special women's leaflet should be available by the time you read this.

Between 3 and 5.30pm there will be events in the Royal Festival Hall including a women's "auction" of jobs and services, speakers, music and children's entertainments. This will be followed by bands in the Queen Elizabeth Hall from 5.30 to 8.30pm.

So come along take part in the convoy/auction/march and lend your voice to the growing chorus of women who are demanding improvement of services.

MINERS STRIKE: THE IMPACT ON POLICING AWAY FROM THE COALFIELDS

Over the past twelve months the effects of the miners' dispute have become increasingly visible to Londoners in many ways. In connection with policing however, factual information has become even more scarce than it normally is. The mass media have consistently carried stories and pictures about incidents on the picket lines and in the mining communities, portraying the police operations as an exercise of the 'minimum force'. In reality of couse, the opposite has been the case. The courage, determination, and restraint of the strikers, in circumstances of the utmost provocation, has been extraordinary.

The information and misinformation relayed by the mass media on behalf of the Government, while largely recognised by the Labour Movement as the propaganda it is, has served to mask many of the indirect results of the dispute by focussing public attention solely on the events in the coalfields. The impact of the dispute on policing policies, practices and operations away from the coalfields have been extensive however, and should not be overlooked.

ALARMING CHANGES

The Metropolitan Police Force in particular have seized upon the dispute as a convenient cover for a number of alarming changes in their own area, as well as playing a major role in the activities of the National Reporting Centre. The most visible of these developments to be almost completely 'overlooked' by the mass media has been the return to the discredited practice of targeting certain specific geographical and/or demographical areas, and subjecting them to 'saturation policing'. This is the precise police tactic that finally sparked off the uprisings in Brixton in early 1981. The police are, at the time of writing, involved in an almost exactly identical operation to Swamp '81', once again in Brixton, and once again making very extensive use of the SPG (Special Patrol Group).

There are two clear implications of the massive police presence in the coalfields for Londoners. Firstly, there are significantly fewer uniformed officers available for duty to Divisional Commanders at any one time. In Lewisham we have been informed that the average proportion of uniformed officers away at the coalfields at any time (until October 1984) has been 5% of the *total uniformed strength on division*. The impact of this when one takes into account that the 'Met' operates a four-shift system (loosely speaking) and that all the police in the coalfields are 'on duty , is that the strength of each shift is reduced by much more than 5% – estimates vary between a 10% and a 25% reduction in strength.

INCREASE IN POLICE PRECEPT

Secondly it seems very likely that there will be an increase in the amount of the Police Precept (the Local Government contribution to the costs of policing, levied by the Borough Councils through the rates at an amount set unilaterally by central Government), which is already over *four million pounds per annum* in the London Borough of Lewisham. In October 1984, in response to a question asked by the Police Committee, the local Commander informed the London Borough of Lewisham that:

'I do not believe that any of the costs of policing the miners' dispute will be passed on to the ratepayers of Lewisham Borough.'

It is difficult to see what led the Commander to this conclusion. The precept is levied in advance. It seems to us that unless there is to be a substantial rebate to compensate for the substantial reduction in service, then these ratepayers have already paid!

Other oddments of information that will be of considerable interest to Londoners have also begun to emerge. Predominantly, these relate to the activities of Metropolitan Police serials (individual police units, of approximately forty officers) when away in the coalfields, and they include:

- Metropolitan officers caught shoplifting in mining villages – at least two officers have been sent home after being caught.
- Many incidents of Metropolitan officers being caught for petty theft from colleagues from other forces sharing the same accommodations.
- Numerous fights between Metropolitan officers and those of other forces.
- A 'bounty' of £100 being put on Arthur Scargill's cap at Orgreave, resulting in his getting chased and hit over the head with a police riot shield. We do not know if the money was ever claimed.
- Theft of Territorial Army vehicles by Metropolitan officers, followed by drunken and highly dangerous 'joy rides'.
- The Metropolitan Police are 'no longer welcome' to use the Derby Police HQ, and will not be sent to Derby again.

This is by no means a complete list of all the allegations that have been brought to our attention, and while we are not able to prove any of them, their source makes them highly reliable, and there is considerable circumstantial information that appears to confirm them. We will continue to pass on information that reaches us to *Briefing* – watch this space!

Jacob Veale
Lewisham Police Monitoring Group worker/E. Lewisham CLP

THE PRIVATISATION WAR ESCALATES

Health workers are now even more in the forefront of the fight against Government policies. Cuts, closures and privatisation are devasting the NHS. Since Geoff Martin reported in last month's Briefing, the full effect of privatisation is becoming clear:

Across London, the privatisation war is hitting jobs, workers' conditions and services to patients. In *Hounslow*, Reckitts have taken over a dometic services contract. The local COHSE branch reports an immediate drop in standards, and others report cleaners wandering around the hospital with no idea of where to go or what to clean.

In *Barking*, the fight against Crothalls goes on. The women there will have been on strike a whole year by mid-March, in one of the most determined trade union battles ever fought in London. The District Health Authority will decide in March whether or not to sack Crothalls for substandard work — once Crothalls have gone, the fight will be on to restore the services to the NHS, reversing the trend to privatisation. It is important that all those Labour Party members who have supported the strike organise support for the picket line over the next month, and for the lobby of the DHA, as Romford Labour Party amongst others did in February. Phone the Strike Line on 595-4252 for details.



In *Merton & Sutton*, a London Health Emergency mole joined the Mediclean workforce at the newly-privatised St Helier Hospital. In a devastating expose of private contractors, she reported:

- **An interview of just 5 minutes;**
- **No check on references;**
- **No health checks;**
- **Pay of just £2.10 an hour (25% less than before privatisation);**
- **No pest control;**
- **No explanation of colour-coding for rubbish;**
- **No training for domestics;**
- **Use of buckets from toilets to clean wards;**
- **Cross-infections a week after the contract started.**

The full story is in 'Diary of a Mediclean Mole' from London Health Emergency 335, Grays Inn Rd, WC1).

Labour Party members have immediate work to do in the fight against privatisation. There will be battles in every London Health District to either make the Health Authority stand firm in its refusal to privatise (as in Greenwich, Brent and Lewisham & North Southwark) or to fight against private contractors where services are likely to be lost (such as Wandsworth and Paddington). Labour Parties should ensure their representatives on Health Authorities oppose privatisation completely; recruitment drives should take place amongst hospital workers, encouraging affiliations from union branches and workplace branches to be set up; support should be given to health unions, particularly in getting the message of the dangers of privatisation across to the public.

In the coming ballots over the political levy and trade union affiliation to the Party, an active and campaigning local Labour Party which works on health issues could well make the difference when health workers decide how to vote. In particular, NUPE, COHSE, and ASTMS votes will be affected by how their health service members vote. Above all, it is essential that Labour Parties use their links to ensure that workers outside the NHS are aware of the damage that privatisation is causing.

Conference

For those who want to find out more, and get involved in the fightback, London Health Emergency is organising a Conference on cuts and privatisation on Saturday March 16th at County Hall, from 10.30 - 4.30. Details and delegates credentials (£2 waged, £1 unwaged) from LHE at 335 Grays Inn Rd, WC1. Affiliation to London Health Emergency is just £5 for Labour Parties (£10 to include affiliation to local campaign as well).

As the miners strike continues into its second year, it is vital that new fronts against the Tories are opened up. The Health Service could soon become a major battleground.

Kevin Flack (East Lewisham Labour Party)

Insensitive Chris Knight

Comrades in Brent resent Chris Knight's comments about our commitment to the Taylor's Lane picket.

His self-righteous attitude belies the fact that his appearance at Taylor's Lane can be counted on the fingers of one hand compared to many people in Brent who have been picketing there regularly for months (in addition to maintaining 6 weekly street collection points in Brent, regular work place collections, neighbourhood food collectionse etc etc.). Sorry Chris if we can not always provide you with a reception committee whenever you turn up.

The Brent Miners Support Campaign is like many other Support Groups. It consists of Labour Party activists, members of the Trades Council (C.P. dominated), S.W.P. and non-aligned comrades. If, as you have stated in private conversation, your criticisms were directed at the C.P. members of the Trades Council, then you should have the courage to be explicit.

Taylors Lane power station may be sited in Brent but as the only power station in London, it should be seen as the responsibility of the whole of London to maintain that picket line. In Brent we are doing our best to organise and encourage people to come.

Your propaganda work in the Mineworkers Defence Committee is welcomed, but your arrogant stance and insensitivity towards comrades in Brent is somewhat insulting.

Emma Tait
(On behalf of Brent Briefing Group)

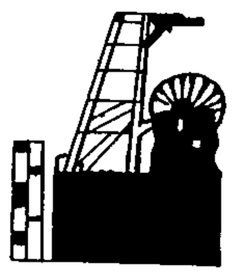
** Individuals or groups who can join the Taylor's Lane picket rota are asked to contact: Sheila 624-6809 (evenings) or Bob/John 459-2835 (day)*

** Contributions towards the legal costs for all those arrested at Taylor's Lane should be sent to: 'Brent Miners Defence Fund' c/o Alf Filer, 23 Balmoral Road, NW10*

** Taylor's Lane Power Station is off Brentfield Road, Neasden NW10 — picketing is generally 6.30am-7.30pm.*

Solidarity with the NUM!

NATIONAL UNION OF MINEWORKERS
DIG DEEP FOR THE Miners



PUBLIC RALLY

HENRY RICHARDSON
DENNIS SKINNER
KEITH VAZ
MARIE PRICE
ROY BUTLIN
ROZ CARTER

Monday 25 Feb
Sheen Lane Centre
SW14 8pm

Why we will resign in May

By Bryn Davies and Andy Harris

We will be resigning as members of the GLC and ILEA in May this year at the end of the four year term for which we were elected in May 1981. The provisions of the 1984 "Paving" Act would make us stay as Council Members for another year beyond our mandate, but we do not intend to with this Tory legislation.

We have valued our oppotunity to work as socialists on both the GLC and the ILEA. It has been an exciting and historic time for local government in London. Clear political gains have been made and we are sufficiently lacking in modesty to consider that we have played some role in achieving them. However, while we will still continue to work for socialism, we do not want to continue as GLC Members. Indeed we have no elected mandate to do so.

The only reason that our term of office is not going to end in May is that the Government could not face elections. We had made clear to our Constituency parties over a year ago that we did not want to stand for re-election at the normal GLC elections which would have taken place in May. The plans we had made for our lives after May did not include, and indeed did not permit, service as local authority members. We certainly do not want to change our plans to suit the ends of Patrick Jenkin.

Being a councillor can be a fulfilling experience. But it also, particularly for full timers, places severe limitations which mean that we are prevented from doing many of the things which the great majority of people regard as commonplace. It is unlikely that even if the abolition legislation is passed that the Government can wind up the GLC by April 1986 — a further unelected year's extension of office is a strong possibility.

WE WANT MORE SECURITY

One of the main reasons for no longer wishing to be a local authority member is that it is a very insecure basis to gain a living. It is not really the low level of income available to full timers which is the problem, it is rather the total lack of any security of income which makes us question how long we are prepared to continue. This touches on the whole question of how the Party can expect to get effective public representation when the conditions under which councillors receive an income are so inadequate.

In the longer terms both of us want to have jobs with reasonable security and level of income. This is not offered by being a councillor. As each year goes by we make it more difficult for ourselves to move back to a way of life with greater security.

As mentioned above we are not over modest about our respective contributions during our terms of office. We consider, however, that there is a necessity for public representatives not to outstay their welcome. The normal pattern has been for radical young white, male firebrands to be elected and all too rapidly become prematurely ageing, institutionalised bureaucrats clinging to office through compromise and reaction.



Andy Harris working for socialism on the G.L.C.

It is for others to judge the extent to which we have already been affected by such a transformation but we see the signs ourselves. County Hall is probably worse than most Town Halls and we are aware of becoming detached from the majority of rank and file members, developing ways of thinking which are more aware of the needs of the institution rather than the individuals whom we represent. Both of us would rather go too early than, as happens all too often, to stay too long. There is no shortage of people with the appropriate talents within the Party able to serve as councillors, particularly if we end the remaining biases against women and black comrades.

WE NEED TO BE ACTIVE IN SOCIALISM

The last few years have seen, at least in London, a much greater involvement of the left of the Labour Party in local government. This has resulted in better run accessible authorities, much more responsive to the needs of working people. At the same time, and not coincidentally, the present Government has mounted a massive attack on the whole structure of local government. Neither of these factors should blind us to the inherently limited role of local government in implementing (or even "prefiguring") socialism. We consider that the role of local government has now been over glamourised on the left and its pitfalls for active socialists have been ignored. All too often we end up defending or even justifying the inability of capitalism to deliver decent housing conditions or adequate social services through its local administrative bodies. Most working class people still perceive the local council as being part of the state apparatus. This view is not being greatly altered by there being "radical left councils". Working for socialism in other ways may not currently be so popular, or indeed so easy, but it needs to be given greater emphasis in Labour party activities.

Recognising the limitations of working for socialism within local government should not be taken as meaning that we think being a councillor is inevitably a mistake. But we now find that when taken with the Government's attacks on what local authorities in deprived areas in London can actually achieve, it does become a real issue as to whether it is the most effective use of socialists' energies.

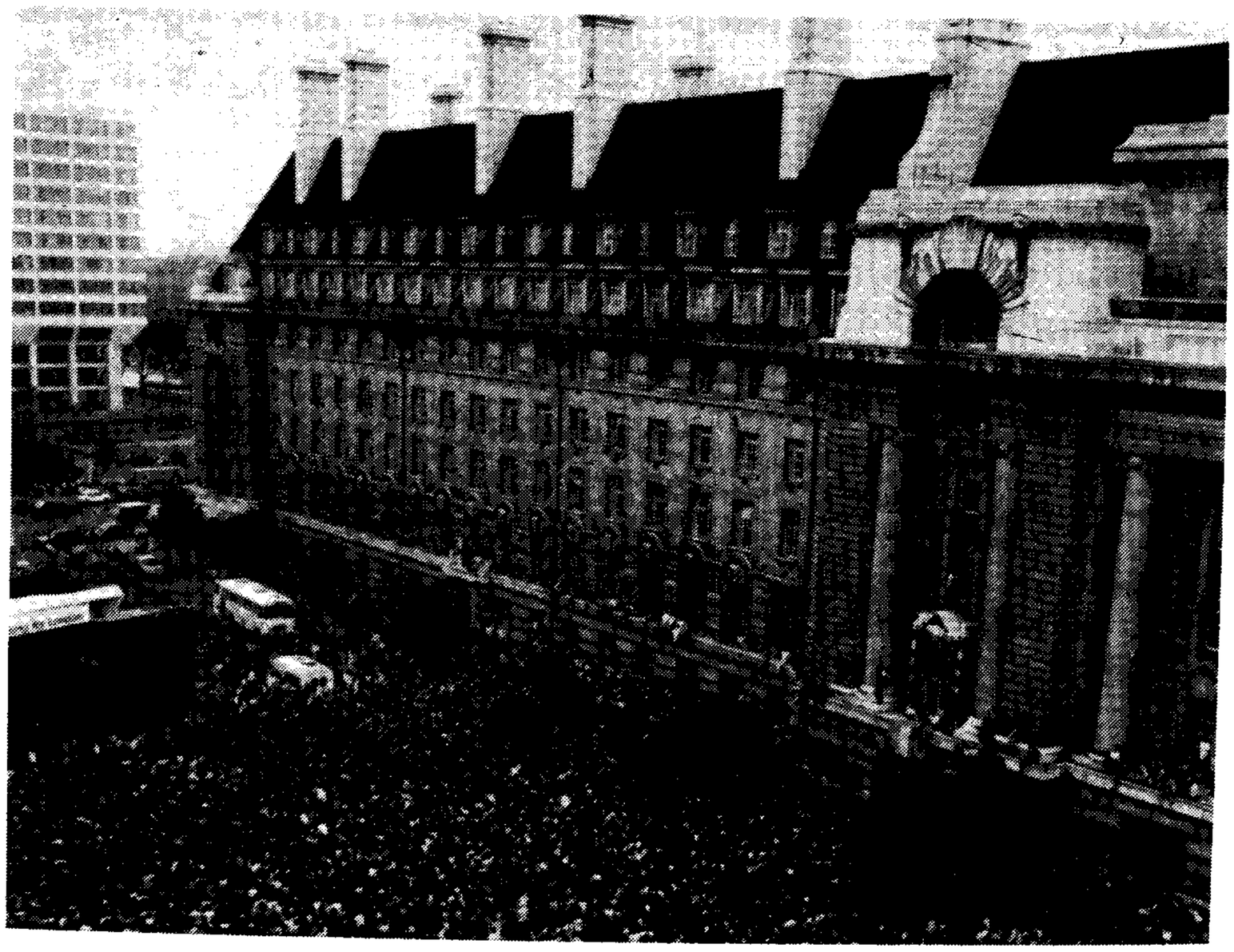
WE THINK IT RIGHT TO HAVE ELECTIONS

We are also aware that it was the policy of the Labour Party that the GLC elections should take place this year. While in the event the Party has decided, to comply with Government policy and not have elections in May 1985, brought about through mass resignations, there is still in our view a strong case for some elections to take place. There is certainly no case, whatsoever, for objecting to by-elections when the Party is on record stressing the importance of the people's right to choose their GLC representatives this year. One of the most effective weapons to stop the Government in the current crisis of local government, with rate-capping and abolition is through campaigns directed towards ballot boxes and the winning of seats. In addition the by-elections will give the opportunity to slightly reduce the overwhelming predominance of white males in the GLC Group.

Abolition of the GLC: reject ruling class deal!

MICHAEL WARD

As the Government runs into opposition on its plans to scrap the GLC, so the outline of a compromise begins to emerge. The compromise on offer from the Establishment is a elected assembly with no power: because the GLC concentrated in the early stages of the abolition campaign on arguments about the vote, it has a superficial attraction; and it needs to smashed, because it involves a wholesale repudiation of the policies hammered out in the 1981 election manifesto upon which the subsequent success of the GLC — and the Labour Party — in London has been based.



First signs of the ruling-class deal on London Government began to appear a year ago. In their comments on the Government White Paper 'Streamlining the Cities', the London Borough Chief Executives called for the replacement of the GLC by a new body with narrowly defined functions: planning, fire and waste disposal. They were followed by the GLC Tory Group — who called for an elected 'assembly' to 'act as a voice for London' — but to have no direct control over services. Their ideas have been taken up by the Tory Bow Group. Tory wets in the House of Commons came out in support of a 'Grand Committee' of London MPs to talk about London issues. And the idea has been backed by other senior local government officers, civil servants, and business respresentatives.

What all these groups have in common is that their proposals deal with one objection to GLC abolition — the lack of democracy — but no other. In place of an authority with extensive responsibilities to plan and control services, they propose a body with narrowly defined tasks. Indeed, the main Tory version is a pure 'talking shop', with the right to debate issues but not to do anything at all about them.

The question of elections can hardly be divorced from the matter of what the representatives, once elected, are to do: elections by themselves, without control over services, and the resources to provide those services, would leave London democracy even more toothless than the European Parliament: a sort of muncipal Bantustan.

Of course, it matters to Labour who runs London. But it matters because we care about the provision of public services, and because the way in which these services are provided is matter of acute political choice. The powerless assembly takes the argument even beyond ratecapping: not only would the resultant authority not have the money to provide services — it wouldn't even have the power.

Above all, the plan involves the explicit repudiation of all the policies upon which Labour won power in 1981. There is no place for the GLC's strategic housing function within any of the proposals. The loss of democratic control over London Transport would become a 'fait accompli'.

But the core of the attack is undoubtedly on the GLC's discretionary powers. The unholy coalition of borough officers, business interests and Tory MPs has never accepted the role foreshadowed for the GLC by the 1981 election manifesto and carried into practice since. The job creation programme, the establishment and work of the Enterprise Board, and the training programme would all have no place within the structure of the proposed assembly. The idea is designed to frustrate the work of the GLC with minority communities and with voluntary organisations. The commitment to womens rights, and the support for autonomous womens organisations, built up by the GLC Womens Committee would be destroyed. And the scope for monitoring the police, the NHS, and the social security would go.

For control over London-wide institutions of local government matters to the Labour Party, not because of having a 'voice for London', but because of the power we can exercise on behalf of people in bad housing, unemployed people, and everyone who suffers discrimination and disadvantage. The plain fact is that London is sharply divided into a rich centre, a poor inner city, and an affluent suburbia. The first and the last areas — with exceptions, but on the whole — contain those who have done best from Thatcherism: the inner city contains those who have done worst. It is a historic pattern of disadvantage that has endured in London a hundred years.

ABOLITION IS CLASS POLICY

And — short of a radical socialist government — the only way you can do anything at all about it is to use the redistributive taxation power of a London wide authority. The Tories know that very well. They know that abolition is primarily in the interests of the commercial ratepayers of the City of London and Westminster. Abolition is a class policy whose beneficiaries will be the international banks who now occupy more and more of the city's office blocks. And the Labour GLC has angered them because it has taxed them. Local authority rates are now the main form of taxation on multinational companies — because they are the only tax the companies can't avoid.

Every crisis in London local government has turned on this question of redistribution. The Poplar revolt was about compelling the richer areas of London to bear their share of the costs of outdoor relief — the equivalent of the dole. Herbert Morrison used the land and money of the LCC as a redistributive tool in housing policy. The fares fair case turned on precisely this issue — taxing the whole of London in order to improve public services. And the key characteristic that the powerless elected assembly would lack would be the power to levy redistributive taxation in order to improve services.

The 1981 GLC election manifesto was based on a complete re-examination of local government institutions, law and functions. From the time of the first of the Hampstead Town Hall conferences, in 1978, that led to the establishment of Briefing, there was a determination to see how Council powers could be used in order to develop the services our communities needed — not an acceptance that this could not be done. These policies have flowered since 1981.

ELECTED SUCCESSOR

If the House of Lords agrees to establish some kind of elected successor authority, it will be because the Labour Lords have voted for it. Many would regard it as a victory. Labour might then go on to win the subsequent elections.

But after the victory party one of two things would happen. Either an impotent Labour majority would watch government nominees demolish, piece by piece, the work we have done since 1981: the grants to community organisations, the Women's Committee, the Enterprise Board, the Police Committee, and so on, sacking workers and destroying services as they went. Or they would be face with the prospect of doing the demolition job themselves.

Speaking at that first 1978 conference, I said that the press attacked the Labour left in London local government, not, as they always said, because they were sure we were wrong — but because they were afraid we were right. Today that is clearer than ever: in the four years of the Labour GLC, we have had the chance to run London our way — an elected Council with a Labour majority able and willing to redistribute resources and act in support of the disadvantaged. And we have fullfilled our dream — no one doubts that Labour in London is far more popular at the end of these four years than we were at the start. To settle now for a handful of crumbs from the table of the House of Lords would be a tragic mistake.

The ILEA Direct Elections and the Opportunities for Equal Representation

That there are to be Direct Elections to the Inner London Education Authority in 1986 has to be recognised as a significant victory over the Thatcher Government's attack on London's democratic institutions. With the continued pressure being mounted against abolition, it is hopefully just the first climb down by the Tories. In the meantime, being faced with the prospect of elections for the ILEA next year, and consequently with selection of candidates this, it is important that every opportunity is taken to ensure that the new ILEA is representative of those sections of the community so patently underepresented on local authorities throughout London — that is Women and black people. With two candidates per constituency it has been made potentially easy for every party to be able to actually achieve equality or representation instead of merely espousing its virtues and then going on to select a white male to stand for election.

With the right organisation and guidance from either the Regional Executive (failing this from campaign groups like the Womens Action Committee or Target Labour Government) it should be possible to achieve an ILEA with at least 50% of its members being women, and with black representation which as a minimum reflects the proportion of blacks in London. At the recent fringe meeting held by Target Labour Government at the Greater London Labour Party Conference on Rate-Capping, Ken Livingstone touched on this subject and put forward a proposal for achieving this equality — or did he?

What Livingstone was suggesting was that half the seats be allocated to women and the other half allocated to men. By this way we could be assured that half the ILEA were women. It was also suggested that the selection processes for the two seats should be separated. While it is a basic principle that positive action has to be taken to ensure that women and black people are given a real chance of achieving equal opporunities, it is a very different argument to say that we should also set a quota beyond which we shall not go, and effectively reserve the remainder of opportunities for men. Livingstone's 'idea' seems to fall into this trap. Rather than establishing a 'target', of 50% representation for women, he proposed a quota — thus far and no further!

FAR FROM PERFECT

Ken's idea, which was later claimed by Valerie Wise as being based on a remark she'd made some weeks before, should be seen as a contribution to the process of developing such procedures. It is certainly far from perfect, and should not be allowed to become adopted as the 'correct' and 'pure' line on the issue merely because it has been publically espoused by Ken Livingstone. For what its worth this is my contribution to that debate, and I hope that other comrades will give the matter some thought and provide criticism or refinement so that we do come to an effective way of achieving the aim.

Shortlists should be drawn up from the branches and affiliated organisations in the normal way. The General Committees or ECs shall ensure that any shortlist has at least 50% women candidates, and that there is full representation of black comrades on the shortlist. The EC shall be required to add names of women and black candidates to any shortlist if it does not meet these requirements.

Selection conferences should take place in the normal way, and both candidates should be selected at the same conference. While mandation of delegates in respect of individual candidates may not be possible, it should be set down as a procedural guideline to all delegates that they must vote for two candidates, at least one of whom should be a woman.

If achieved as 'official procedure' to be adopted by CLPs, this scheme could ensure that the new ILEA becomes, at least on the Labour side the first local Government assembly to properly represent women. If it is not accepted on an official level, then it would have to be implemented on an ad hoc basis by Constituencies.

Again, though it is likely that with the right level of organisation and commitment by left comrades, and a little bit of self-sacrifice on behalf of the many would be white male ILEA candidates, the procedure could be made to operate in the majority of ILEA constituency Parties. Once the principle has been accepted, it is then only as small step for Parties to also consider a similar target for black candidates. For example it should not be beyond the realms of possibility of parties like my own for instance (Vauxhall) to decide to guide delegates at ILEA Selection conference to vote for two candidates, at least one of whom should be a woman and at least one of whom should be black. Unlike Ken's scheme there is nothing to prevent two women and/or two black candidates from being selected and elected under this procedure.

Of course the essential prerequisite to a truly representative ILEA will be the strength of numbers of women and black comrades coming forward for selection. If as a party we are seen to be serious in our commitment that women and black candidates *will* be selected, then it is inevitable that a wealth of candidates will emerge. Certainly this has been the experience of the Labour Party over the past few decades — it demonstrated its willingness to select the white middle-class products of the Universities and Inns of Court, and they just kept on coming, and still do! Its hard to deny that we have a plethora of such representatives of speak for us. Now is the time of a change. Black comrades have, I believe, rightly stressed that it is only black people who can claim to speak for the black community, and it is only when the Labour Party is serious about giving black people access to the Party's mouthpiece that black people will have sufficient faith and feel sufficiently relevant to the Labour Party to begin to join it and come forward as candidates. This argument clearly applies to women as well. Hence an insistence that women and black comrades get full representation on the new ILEA and indeed on all future Labour controlled Councils is the best way of ensuring that the black community and women see Labour as their Party, and so come forward to join it in the numbers required to ensure that it cannot again forget that it really is their party.

Terry Rich

(Vauxhall Labour Party — in a purely personal capacity)

Labour Against Racist Attacks

During the first six months of 1984 the Newham Monitoring Project (a community based group set up to monitor the activities of the police, particularly in relation to their responses to racist attacks) recorded a total of 127 cases of racial harassment just in Newham. It is estimated that there are over 25 *severe* cases of racist attack reported every week in East London. Recent reports by both the Home Office, and the Greater London Council confirm the very serious level of racist violence and attacks in London as a whole.

While the police are prepared to deploy thousands of officers to allow a handful of working miners to exercise their so-called "democratic right to go to work", they show no such concern for the plight of harassed and brutalised Black communities in inner-city London. The police frequently deny that racist attacks occur, and frequently conceal the severity of attacks by the way they apply their 'discretion' to the specifics of their response. When confronted by a case of racist attack the police often suggest the least serious charge possible — and tell victims that they must take out a private prosecution. (Legal Aid is *not available to people to bring private criminal prosecutions*.) They have consistently shown themselves determined to avoid understanding long-term and repeated harassment — they are *only* prepared to take each incident in isolation. When the police do act is it often against members of the same harassed Black community, who have finally in desperation done for themselves what the police refuse to do (i.e. stand up against racist thugs), as in the cases of the Bradford 12, or the Newham 8 and now the Newham 7 etc. Police prosecutions of racist attackers are so rare that they may as well not exist.

The aim of Labour Against Racist Attacks — L.A.R.A. — is two-fold:

1. To publicise the level of racist attacks, and to campaign for the Labour Party to defend the rights of the Black communities in Britain.
2. To mobilise Labour Party support for campaigns within the Black community such as the Newham 7.

L.A.R.A is a new campaign, and is anxious for wider support and participation. It asks Labour Party branches, Constituency Parties, Trade Union Branches, and Trades Councils to:

1. Invite a speaker from L.A.R.A to address their meeting.
2. Publicise L.A.R.A. widely in their area/workplace, and encourage both individuals and organisations to contact L.A.R.A. and become actively involved in the campaign.
3. To affiliate to L.A.R.A. (£1 for individuals, £5 for organisations).
4. To gather information on racist attacks locally, and to pass this information on to L.A.R.A.

Further information about L.A.R.A., and times, dates and venues of meetings etc can be obtained by contacting either JULIAN SCOLA on (01) 734 5831, or JACOB VEALE on (01) 690 6211.

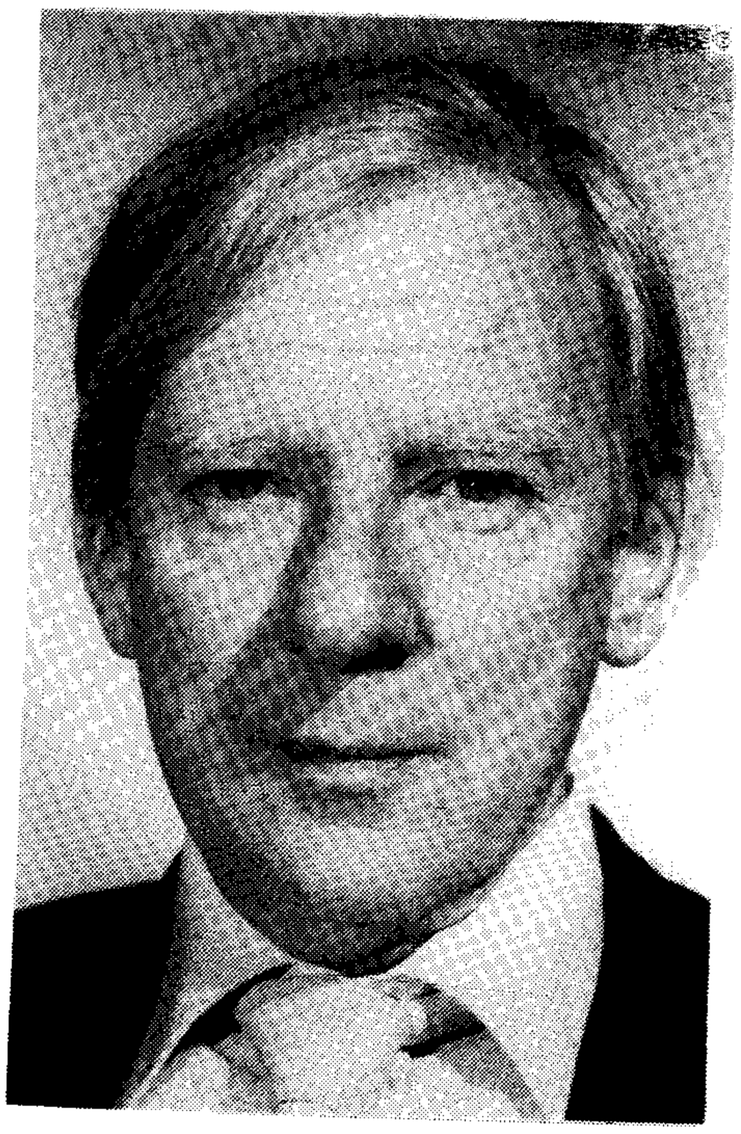
LEFT UNITY IN BETHNAL GREEN AND STEPNEY?

The left in Bethnal Green and Stepney face an uphill struggle to gain a representative and accountable candidate for the next election. The sitting MP Peter Shore is using the traditional weapons of the right — new affiliations and delegates are appearing from nowhere, in moves calculated to swing the balance in Shore's favour prior to delegates being frozen. The hand of union full-timers is obvious. So determined is Shore, that lapsed delegates have received telephone invites to resurrect their delegature. Some local branches have suddenly received dozens of applications from prospective members, mainly organised via the local business community. Indeed, that well known bastion of bourgeois values and Toryism — Toynbee Hall is used as the base for Shore's campaign. It is ironic that when the left seriously generate membership and open up the party, that they are accused of take-over, but when the right cynically manipulate new membership it is seen as legitimate and neither reported nor investigated.

The actual reality is that Peter Shore is a poor constituency MP failing to take on the major political issues of the constituency and failing to a large extent to adequately perform the basic constituency functions of an MP. Indeed like many local Councillors Shore has no interactive relationship with the CLP. Even in Neil Kinnock's conception of the Party Peter Shore is an anachronism. He has irritated his CLP in his avowed anti-unilateralism, his treacherous criticism of the N.U.M. and his assistant's (David Cowling) recent front bench report on the voting strengths of black people and women, all serve to widen the divide.

The local challenge to Shore is likely to come from a solid base of support, but will be seriously weakened by the attitude of maverick elements and the Fabian/LCC caucus. This peculiar combination is likely not to support a local alternative to Shore. The former critical of the possible alternative as not left enough and the latter convinced of the 'disaster of deselecting a national figure at this time'. The irony is that without Shore the CLP would be a stronger party. Unfortunately the short term strength of the CLP depends upon its ability to select an alternative to Shore and its ability in turn depends upon the viability of a broad left alliance in the reselection process. The chances of this occuring, not only depend on the Fabian/LCC caucus but also on supporters of Militant, who have taken a back seat both in politically challenging Shore and building the CLP, and have refused to join forces with Shore's critics. It is strange that Militant may be responsible for saving Shore's political hide *this time.*

Terry Connolly Secretary
Tower Hamlets Local Government Committee
(Personal Capacity)



Andrew Wiard

Peter Shore

OVERCOMING THE HAZE IN BOW AND POPLAR

Since the General Management Committee was frozen in November 1984 with the announcement from Ian Mikardo the sitting MP that he would not be seeking re-selection, the CLP has had to grapple with the NEC and the interpretation of the rules. The timetable has been approved with the closing date for nominations as April 19th 1985 and the date for the selection conference set for May 19th 1985. The CLP has built into the timetable two open meetings of members, one women only, with the objective of exposing the kind of candidate the GMC would be selecting from. However, the National Agent has ignored these meetings in the timetable and advised that "the position of any nominee who appears before such a members' meeting could be severly jeopardised".

Three names are being given serious consideraton locally, one of them as far back as last summer was presuming the nomination almost as of right. Euro MP Alf Lomas is expected to muscle his way into consideration.

Bow and Poplar is one of the crucial CLP's to be retained by the left if the next Labour Government is to be different from the treacherous ones of the past. It is no accident of history that Ian Mikardo has been excluded from power in Labour Governments. The crucial test for the CLP is to build on Mikardo's long fight within the Party and select a candidate who, faced with the pressures of the initial days of make or break for the next Labour Government, will stand on the correct side of the class line and not cave in, as we have seen in the past.

Black candidate

With the CLP comprising about 18% black population, a black candidate should be a serious proposition. However, many members consider a black candidate a vote loser. The fallacy of this view is exposed by the reality in the local Council chamber, where four black councillor hold seats. One a Liberal in a predominantly white ward, another an independant, and two Labour. Indeed few black people have joined the CLP and little serious attempt has been made to recruit them. Few activists have contact with the organised communities of black people in the Borough.

Much discussion is focused on the need to have a local candidate who knows the area. It is argued by some elements that an outside candidate would leave the constituency more vulnerable to the Liberals. The usual background to this view is devoid of political analysis and indeed rests on avoiding such an assessment. Some discussion has concentrated on the need to nominate women and the need for more women in Parliament. However, the impression this has conveyed, as reflected in wider forums, is that this has also been narrowly focused and has avoided the larger national and international questions of politics and practice facing all CLP's. As the nomination process gets under way the issues will open up as will a clearer conception of the qualities needed in a candidate.

The intrigues of the right in the CLP almost solely centre on creating a Bermondsey atmosphere. Indeed, such an atmosphere may suit some of the 'left'. The main organiser for the right (outside the LCC) is ex-Council Leader Paul Beasley, now working for the World Trade Centre advising on strategies for multi-national companies. He is aided by his long-time friend Terry McCarthy boss of the National Museum of Labour History in Limehouse. The object of their game is to use the local reactionary media to witchunt the more active members of the party and isolate the better and more credible candidates.

However, for the purposes of reselection, the right have no significant strength. In the end the party will select a candidate at least nominally of the left. The question is whether a haze of ignorance and prejudice can be overcome to select a candidate in the mould of Benn, Richardson, Skinner or Corbyn.

Terry Connolly
Treasurer, Bow and Poplar Labour Party (Personal Capacity)

London Letters

KEITH LICHMAN'S VENDETTA AGAINST THE ILEA

Dear Graham,

The attack on the ILEA by Keith Lichman in your February issue, at a time when we are increasing expenditure in real terms and employing an increasing number of teachers, is thinner than usual. What amazes me, however, is that he can be so reactionary on the subject of educational provision for 16-19 year olds.

The Labour administration knows that the ILEA's provision for the 16-19 age group is woefully inadequate. The existing system has failed; as is clearly demonstrated by the appallingly low level of take-up. Inner London's young people have demonstrated that they do not like what we currently offer, they do not understand what we offer and they think what we offer is irrelevant to their needs.

So that we can plan comprehensive education for this age group, that is more attractive, relevant and understandable, we have made all the schools and colleges within each division work together through the Tertiary Education Boards (TEB's). In addition we are carrying out a number of reviews of the institutional provision in particular areas of the Authority. In these reviews we now find there is strong pressure for a move to a system of Tertiary Colleges. The clear intent either way is to greatly expand the present inadequate provision for this age group.

The question of how we should provide education for the 16-19 age group is therefore of great importance. There are two motions on the subject to Regional Conference. It will be key issue in the nest elections to the ILEA. So what is Keith Lichman's response? That we should continue to back the existing system despite the clear evidence that it has been rejected by young people and now by very many teachers. It is obvious that he is prepared to use any argument, however reactionary, in order to purse his obsessive vendetta against the ILEA.

Yours sincerely,

Bryn Davies

Self-Confessed Kinnock Supporter Speaks out!

Dear comrades,

Your front page piece "time to challenge Kinnock" has driven me to my typewriter.

As a self-confessed Kinnock supporter, along with 70% or so of the Labour Party, according to the 1983 electoral college results, I am in no way uncritical. It was painful to hear Neil Kinnock on Weekend World on moment attacking Maggie for calling the miners "the enemy within" and then attempting to justify his own persecution of the "enemy within" known as the Militant Tendency. His treatment of the issue of women's representation within the party has also been cavalier and insulting.

Despite these serious reservations about Neil Kinnock's track record, I would like to ask comrades not to oppose Neil Kinnock in this year's leadership election and certainly not to make the electoral college into an annual trial of strength/popularity poll.

For one thing it could easily wreck our chances of winning the next general election. It *could even put us in a clear third place position behind the Liberal/SDP Alliance. An avowedly* "hard left" Labour party would drive away thousands of "soft left" Mirror and Guardian readers in droves. The Labour Party could become marginalised in an irreversable long term decline, such as has befallen the French Communist Party. In such circumstances the Ecology Party might even become the cutting edge of radical politics and the best hope would be proportional representation and a somewhat disparate alliance of relatively powerless minorities.

All I would say is think very hard before contemplating the breakup of the Labour coalition, which does at least have the potential for a progressive majority.

To get back to Neil Kinnock and the miners' strike, I would argue that his position of critical support has been about right. In other words he has broadly supported the miners' case against pit closures and NCB hit lists, which threaten jobs and communities, without giving a blank cheque of support for the way the strike has actually been run.

There are a number of obvious criticisms which can be made of the NUM leadership. A national ballot could have been called last April when it could have been won. Alternatively, the strike could have been run on a genuinely decentralised area by area basis with much more respect for local democratic procedures and local traditions. Where miners had voted not to strike, as in Nottinghamshire there could have been a genuine effort to persuade the working miners to join the strike, instead of just trying to "picket them out". Calling workers "scabs" for simply voting not to strike is not enough.

Another point, what on earth was Arthur Scargill doing sending the miner' hard earned funds to some bank in Luxembourg as a sitting target for the lawyers to sequestrate, instead of handing it out to the desperately hard up miners on strike? Is that not what unions funds are for or am I being naive?

It would not have been a bad thing either if Arthur Scargill had condemned the use of violence on all sides of the strike as unequivocally as Neil Kinnock has done. Arthur Scargill's line that *all* violence has been caused by the police frankly lacks conviction.

One last point, at no time has the NUM attempted to go beyond the "no pit closures" and "coal not dole" reflex anti-NCB position to argue for what the place for coal ought to be in a socialist energy policy. There has been nothing heard about the need to conserve North Sea oil and gas or the potential dangers of nuclear electricity generation. Nothing either has been heard from the NUM on the need to use the coal that is mined more efficiently and with less pollution.

What there has not been and what is now desperately needed is a miners' plan for coal to set against the NCB's and the Government's narrowly economistic perspective. Such a miners' plan is perhaps the one thing which could re-unite the miners in what has become a dangerously divided industry and union.

With best wishes,

John Bradbrook
(Islington South and Finsbury Constituency Labour Party)

DAGENHAM AND THE MINERS' STRIKE

Dear Comrade,

Hopefully by the time this is printed the miners' dispute will have reached a satisfactory conclusion but even if that dispute does end very shortly support for miners and their *families must continue for some time to come.*

Whatever some comrades might have thought about a National Ballot or about NUM strike tactics has long since been irrelevant. What is relevant is why the strike began, the issues involved and what help the NUM could have reasonably expected from the Labour Movement generally and the trade unions in particular. Certainly, if those who should have been in the forefront had responded as generously as the rank and file many of the problems faced by the strikers could have been overcome and almost certainly could have shortened the length of the dispute.

My Party, as an example, organised help soon after the dispute began. At my suggestion, we appointed a Co-ordinator and a small Committee. We were fortunate in obtaining the services of an active trade unionist and even more fortunate in obtaining the services of his girl friend, who now does most of the organising work. A representative in most of the Wards is responsible for collecting weekly sums. In addition, clothing and toys are also collected. Whilst I am certain that there are large numbers of CLPs doing an equal, or even better job, there must also be a lot doing little or nothing inactivity which shames the Labour Movement.

The lack of support that appeared to have been offered at the 1984 Congress is an appalling indictment of the TUC. If the unthinkable should happen it will be a tragedy for the whole trade union and Labour Movement. It must, therefore, be made clear in every speech and every statement that we expect, even at this stage, that trade unions and the Party give a total commitment to the fight that the miners are putting up.

Even when the strike ends, miners and their families will need financial and other help. My Party is pledged to continue our aid for as long as is necessary. I hope that other CLPs and union branches will do likewise.

Yours fraternally,

Harry Kay,
Chairman of Dagenham CLP
and GLC Member for Dagenham

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Next London Editorial Board: Monday 25th March at 6.30pm at County Hall.

Typeset by Bread 'n Roses [TU], and by Folrose Ltd [TU], 98 Gifford Street, London N1 and by Lithoprint, 329 Upper Street, London N1.

Printed by Wernham Printers Ltd [TU], Forster Road, London N17.

Published by London Labour Briefing, 162 Millfields Road London E.5.