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Member of Parliament for Peckham

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R E P O R T

FEBRUARY 1986

1. PENSIONERS

(a) I have been doing a lot of work on the "Exceptionally severe weather payments", which are supposed to help people on Supplementary Benefit or Supplementary Pension. The problem, basically, is that benefits in general and the pension in particular are too low and therefore any emergency - like really cold weather - means an extra claim has to be made. It's really a money problem, not a weather problem, and could best be solved by a decent basic rate of pension and benefit. The take-up rate of "exceptionally severe weather" payments" has been very low in Peckham.

In the Blenheim Grove DHSS office area there are 11,986 people on Supplementary Benefits. Yet the office estimate that last year only about 100 people claimed exceptional weather payments. They estimate that last year the average pay-out for the whole period of severe weather was a total of only £3!! In Bournemouth Road DHSS office area there are 9,952 people on Supplementary Benefit and there were only 361 claims. They were paid an average of £9.76.

For every £1 paid out in exceptional weather benefit it costs 60p in administration costs! So not only does the benefit not reach those who need it - but it is very wasteful to administer.

I've done numerous television and radio appearances, plugging the point about the basic pension.

Together with the Southwark Pensioners Action Group I went to meet the managers of the two local DHSS offices, to discuss arrangements for advertising the benefit and dealing with claims.

I have asked the Fuel Boards, LEB and SEGAS to include claim forms with quarterly bills and I will be going to meet them to discuss this, together with SPAG.

I have asked the Council to review their means of notifying people about this benefit.

(b) This month I have been to meet the Southwark Pensioners Action Group, Peckham Pensioners Action Group, Camberwell Pensioners Action Group, Ray Gunter House (Sheltered Accommodation), and the Friday Pensioners Club (Newington Ward).

2. STEWART'S LODGE OLD PEOPLE'S HOME

The Liberals and Tories who jointly control Fulham Council plan to sell off Stewarts Lodge Old People's Home, together with the old people in it. There are 29 people in the home - whose average age is 88 years. I am leading the Opposition in Parliament to the sale, and have tabled an Early Day Motion condemning the sale to Associated Nursing Services Ltd. Councils should provide care - not sell off elderly people in order to make cuts. The Council did not consult

the elderly people in the home or their relatives. The standards of the home cannot be guaranteed once it goes into the hands of a private business. I have challenged Simon Hughes MP on the sale, and he has said he is against it. So this shows there are deep splits in the Liberal Party on important issues relating to the elderly. It remains to be seen whether he will sign my Early Day Motion in Parliament (which is like a resolution) condemning the sale. I have also challenged David Owen MP, and David Steel MP, to sign the EDM.

### 3. LIBERAL HOOLIGANISM

I show below an Early Day Motion which was tabled in Parliament on the 5th March 1986 by Brian Sedgemore MP. It speaks for itself. Perhaps Wards can use this information and the information about Stewarts Lodge in their Newsletters. It shows the Liberals in practice!

#### **EXPULSION OF LIBERAL COUNCILLOR IN HACKNEY**

Mr Brian Sedgemore

Mr Ernie Roberts

Mr Ernie Ross

Mr William McKelvey

Mr Bob Clay

Mr Jeremy Corbyn

★ 6

That this House condemns the extraordinary assault by Liberal Councillor David Gamper on Hackney's Housing Chairperson Councillor Joannie Andrews; believes that the leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor Lobenstein, was right to condemn this kind of violence and vote with Labour members to expel Councillor Gamper from the council chamber; supports Councillor Charlie Cable in his expressed view that we must try to stamp out violent attacks by men on women; calls on Councillor Gamper to apologise unreservedly and then resign; and calls on Liberal leaders nationally to condemn this outrageous, loutish and possibly criminal behaviour.

### 4. FULHAM BY-ELECTION

I have been to Fulham to help the Campaign. The atmosphere amongst the electorate seems very good for Labour.

### 5. SURCHARGING AND DISQUALIFICATION OF LABOUR COUNCILLORS

Although not unexpected, it was horrific to see the courts act against Lambeth and Liverpool Labour Councillors. I was not happy at the response of our Environment Shadow Secretary of State, Jack Cunningham MP, on this issue. So I initiated, through the Tribune Group, an Early Day Motion, which speaks for itself -

### SURCHARGING OF COUNCILLORS

Mr Roland Boyes  
Mr Richard Caborn  
Mr Ian Mikardo  
Mr Chris Smith  
Ms Harriet Harman  
Mr John Fraser

Mr Jeremy Corbyn

Mr Alfred Dubs

Mr Laurie Pavitt

★ 17

That this House condemns the decision of the High Court in imposing a surcharge and potential disqualification on 80 democratically elected Labour councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool; recognises that the action of the district auditors in bringing the case to court against these councillors is part of a concerted attack on local democracy, jobs and services; notes that this draconian penalty is not applicable to any other class of elected public representative; demands that no further action be taken against all those other councillors and councils who similarly have sought to defend their communities; and calls for the immediate removal from the statute book of these powers of surcharge and disqualification.

Clearly there must be a strenuous effort to raise from the Trade Union and Labour Movements sufficient funds to protect the surcharged Councillors.

### 6. SOCIAL SECURITY BILL

The Social Security Bill is currently in its "Committee Stage" in the House of Commons. The measures in the Bill are largely the same as in the Green Paper on Social Security - I still have spare copies of the Campaign briefing which I prepared on this, so let me know if you want one.

One thing which particularly concerns me is the cuts in Housing Benefit. The Government want to cut housing benefits by £200 million nationally. This will hit Southwark very hard, as we have a very high number of people who cannot pay rates and are on full housing benefit. The Social Security Bill will change the law so that everyone will have to pay at least one-fifth of their rates and all their water rates. This will apply to people whose only income is a pension or benefits. Despite our opposition, it will probably become law later in the year.

I hope to engage in a campaign locally to draw attention to Labour's opposition to this measure and the hardship it will cause. It is also important for people to understand that it is a Government measure. No doubt the Government hope that tenants will blame the Council when the increased rates bills come in.

I set out below some information I obtained from the Council for use in my campaign on housing benefit cuts. Perhaps Wards would also like to use the information for local work.

<u>Ward</u>	<u>Number of people who pay no rates and who get full Housing Benefit</u>
Newington	1252
Brunswick	1032
Faraday	1411
St Giles	1002
Barset	442
Biddle	1964
Friary	1060
Consort	720
<u>Estate</u>	
North Peckham	630
Sumner	292
Gloucester	604
Friary	268
Tustin	115
Camden	326
Brandon	589
Aylesbury	771
Wyndham and Comber	396
Elmington	398
Ledbury	136

7. MAY ELECTION CAMPAIGN

So far I have visited Brunswick Ward, Newington Ward, St Giles Ward, Consort Ward, Friary Ward and Barset Ward, to discuss the May election campaign. I am due to attend the next Faraday Ward meeting. I have also been trying to help raise money for the election campaign

8. RATE-CAPPING

I attach a copy of the speech I made in the House of Commons on Southwark's rate-capping.

11th MARCH 1986

HARRIET HARMAN MP

**Sir Ian Percival (Southport):** Once upon a time there was a direct relationship between rates and the ballot box because most people who paid rates voted. If they found the rates too high, they voted the controlling party out of office. A great deal has happened to change that and to strike at the hypothesis on which the case of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) was based.

In Liverpool 51 per cent. of the residents do not personally pay their rates. I do not complain about that, but one cannot ignore the fact that that means that 51 per cent. of voters have no interest in keeping rates down. Their only interest is in maintaining services, and I understand that. It is idle to ignore that such changes have taken place.

A further change is that at present 60 per cent. of the rates are paid by people who do not have a vote.

**Ms. Harman:** Yes, they do.

**Sir Ian Percival:** The hon. Lady will have a chance to speak. Many of my constituents have businesses in Liverpool, so they are directly interested in the rates there. As they do not live there, they do not have a vote. Nevertheless, they conduct businesses and, I am happy to say, provide jobs for some of the constituents of the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing).

Between them, the business men pay 60 per cent. of the total rate but not one of them has a vote. So the relationship between rates and the ballot box has largely gone.

**Mr. Dobson:** Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the people he is concerned about could do something immediately to stop their disfranchisement by living in Liverpool?

**Sir Ian Percival:** That is a very silly intervention. I am sure that the hon. Member for West Derby is happy that some of my constituents pay rates in his constituency without being a burden upon it. They also provide jobs for his constituents.

**Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham):** This is one of the most absurd debates that I have heard in the House because we have no business going through the circumstances of local authorities about which we know nothing.

I freely admit that I know nothing about local authority expenditure and the need for services in Southport but, by the same token, the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) knows nothing about circumstances in Southwark, and it is not his business to vote in favour of an order that sets the rate in Southwark. The Government are asking hon. Members to vote on Southwark's rates when they have hardly been mentioned and when hon. Members know nothing about them and care even less. That is a disgrace.

For people in Peckham, the most important considerations are what sort of job they can get, how much they are likely to get paid for it, what sort of home they have and whether they can afford it, what the area in which they live is like—whether it is clean and safe to go out at night—and what services they get, especially services for the elderly and children. Local authority expenditure in those respects is critical.

Private sector jobs will not be attracted to an area which is run down, choked with traffic and in which the infrastructure is poor. The local authority must increase spending to maintain existing services and bring new jobs into the area. Private risk capital will not convert derelict sites in blighted areas.

**Mr. Gerald Bowden rose—**

**Ms. Harman:** Public investment can, and does, provide the lead to private investment. The council should be encouraged, not deterred from taking that lead. It also has an important role as an employer. Most of the people in Peckham who have jobs work directly or indirectly for the public services. They work in the Health Service and the education service. Many work in the House in canteens, lifts and restaurants.

**Mr. Gerald Bowden rose—**

**Ms. Harman:** If the Government would only allow it to, the council should take on many more staff as caretakers in estates where people feel unsafe at night, doing building works and repairs to private homes. They could be employed as home helps to allow elderly people to remain independent in their own homes, in day nurseries so that working parents could go out to work secure in the knowledge that their children were being well looked after and in day centres for the elderly or the handicapped so that the community can be sure that its most vulnerable members are being looked after. There is plenty that needs to be done in Peckham and plenty of people need jobs. One has only to walk around to see that.

If we have a fair system of finance for local authorities and if the Government recognise the urgent need to use public money to narrow the gap between richer and poorer areas, Southwark will be able to employ more people to do those vital jobs. That will mean that a young person, instead of leaving school and going on the dole or into a no-hope training scheme, could train as a bricklayer to build homes or train as a nursery nurse to look after small children. When one meets a school leaver in Peckham one must be careful about asking the usual question "What will you do when you leave school?" More often than not they say "I suppose I will go on the dole".

**Mr. Gerald Bowden rose—**

**Ms. Harman:** That is not because they lack motivation or initiative, it is just a recognition of the harsh realities in my constituency where in four of the eight wards, Brunswick, Liddle, Friary and Consort, more than 30 per cent. of them are unable to find work.

**Mr. Gerald Bowden rose—**

**Ms. Harman:** In the Liddle ward unemployment has risen over 90 per cent. between 1981 and 1985. By reducing the amount that Southwark can spend the Government are directly responsible for preventing the public and the private investment that could create jobs. I should like to see more Government funding in Southwark so that we can also increase the wages of those who have work.

**Mr. Gerald Bowden rose—**

**Ms. Harman:** The men and women who are working hard to provide vital services such as caretaking and home helps are already so low paid that, as well as working five days a week or more, many of them still have to claim benefit. For that not only do they earn very little but they earn the derision of Conservative Members. I think that that is a disgrace.

**Mr. Gerald Bowden rose—**

**Ms. Harman:** Housing is of critical importance. Southwark has the largest percentage of council housing stock in London and it is of critical importance in

Peckham. The overwhelming majority of people are in council homes because they cannot possibly afford to buy their own. Peckham has one of the lowest average incomes in London and the council housing position is critical. There are 10,000 families on Southwark's waiting list, and there are 10,000 families wanting a transfer.

**Mr. Gerald Bowden** *rose*—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Lady is not giving way.

**Ms. Harman:** There is empty land upon which the council could build new homes. It is unable to carry out the massive task in which it should be engaging of redesigning and refurbishing the deck access estates, which are not only unpopular, but are unhealthy and unsafe. For example Gloucester grove estate was recently described by the national press as a "no-go" area when the postal workers stopped deliveries in protest at attacks on them. It is not difficult to understand the problems of the estate or to see how they could be remedied. Gloucester grove could be transformed into a desirable place to live if it was broken down into smaller units. It is too massive with over 1,000 flats. It could be transformed if the access to the flats was altered—at the moment tenants have to go up blind towers to reach the flats—if the refuse system was changed so that it efficiently coped with rubbish instead of efficiently breeding flies and constituting a fire hazard, if it had better transport which means more frequent bus services, if more people on the estate had jobs and if there were better leisure facilities in the area. Most of those factors are vital just to make it a decent place to live either as a pensioner or to bring up a young family. None of that is possible if there is a vice-like grip on council spending.

When Conservative or Liberal Members mention examples of expenditure which they think are wasteful, none of those figures, by any stretch of the imagination, are anything like the sum that needs to be spent to rehabilitate badly designed estates and to build new ones. Decent people have to continue to live in depressing and degrading housing. I have already mentioned the Gloucester grove estate, but the same applies to countless other estates in Peckham such as the Willowbrook estate, Aylesbury estate, Camden estate, north Peckham estate, and the Brandon estate. I mention that so that hon. Members can understand the size of the problem that needs to be faced.

Services are also very important in Peckham. I would like to mention social services where Southwark has a good record. For example, it provides 11 home helps per thousand of the elderly population. In Tory areas such as Kingston, Surrey and Barnet there are fewer than four home helps per thousand of the population, which is 70 per cent. below the Government's guidelines. The Liberal Isle of Wight provides fewer than three home helps per thousand of the population. The Government are calling those councils responsible and calling Southwark council an irresponsible over-spender. I believe that Southwark is a responsible council for trying to meet the needs of the people in the area. The Tory areas and the Liberal Isle of Wight are simply turning their backs on the needs of people in their areas. I should be interested to know whether the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) supports the Isle of Wight in its appalling record for home help provision.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will not respond to that. We shall confine ourselves to the areas mentioned in the order.

**Ms. Harman:** Another indicator of the responsibility of Southwark council is that it tries to provide a decent number of day nursery places. Out of 108 local authorities Southwark is the eleventh highest in the provision of day nursery places. However, it still has only four day nursery places for every 100 children. Over and over again parents come into my surgery desperate for a day nursery place. Those are services that people want and that the council wants to provide but central Government dictatorship prevents the Council providing what people want.

The "irresponsibility" that the Government say they are trying to stamp out is what we call care. The Government are really stamping out jobs, services and the hopes of thousands of people in Peckham. The Department of the Environment is no longer worthy of that name. It has simply become a sub-division of the Treasury. It has abandoned its role in favour of simply being an arm of the Government's brutal economic policies.



R E P O R T

MAY 1986

SPECIAL COUNCIL ELECTION REPORT

I thought members might be interested to see the details of the tremendous victory that Peckham Wards had in the Council elections on May 8th. The average turn-out in Peckham was 35 percent. And I set out below figures showing the percentage of our share of the vote for each of the Peckham Wards; the increase in our share of the vote from the last Council election in 1982 (bearing in mind that 1982 was already supposed to be a good year for Labour); and the percentage change in the Alliance vote between 1982 and 1986.

Basically, the figures show a substantial collapse of the Conservative vote, a serious loss of Alliance votes - but with a more varied pattern between Wards.

	<u>Labour share of vote 1986</u>	<u>Increase in Labour share of vote between 1982 &amp; 1986</u>	<u>Percentage change in Alliance vote 1982 to 1986</u>
LIDDLE	83%	up 23%	down 40%
FRIARY	74%	up 31%	down 43%
FARADAY	70%	up 15%	down 34%
CONSORT	68%	up 9%	up 9%
NEWINGTON	68%	up 36%	down 19%
BRUNSWICK	61%	up 26%	down 4%
BARSET	60%	up 17%	down 10%
ST GILES	59%	up 8%	up 28%

The fall in the Alliance vote (everywhere except St Giles and Consort) was particularly encouraging. The rise in the Labour vote and the fall in the Alliance vote in Peckham was way above the London average, and is in part, I am sure, due to the extremely hard work of the members of the Party. We all owe an enormous debt to Roy Kennedy, who was the Peckham Election Agent. The material which was produced locally was first-class, and Roy worked day and night to keep things running smoothly.

I undertook a concentrated programme of work in each Ward, and I am very grateful to the Party members who organised this for me. I didn't manage to get to Liddle Ward - but I had worked there for a number of weeks last December in the By-Election.



### BERMONDSEY

The results in Bermondsey present a much less rosy picture. In some Wards the Alliance vote went up by 150 percent. Labour's vote went down in six out of the eight Wards. And Councillor John Bryant who has been selected as prospective parliamentary candidate for Bermondsey lost his Council seat in Bricklayers Ward by 322 votes. The only two ILEA representatives the Alliance have are from Bermondsey. Significantly, Ann Sofer, who was the main spokesperson for the Alliance in London on ILEA, lost her seat in Camden and came third.

### PECKHAM ILEA ELECTIONS

Our two ILEA Labour candidates romped home with 65.6 percent of the vote. The Alliance polled 19.9 percent, and the Conservatives 14.5 percent. Congratulations to John and Jim.

HARRIET HARMAN

21st MAY 1986





R E P O R T

MAY 1986

1. MAUDSLEY HOSPITAL

The Maudsley Hospital not only provides a vital service for those who live in Southwark. It also provides unique psychiatric and neuro-surgical services on a nationwide basis. Recently the demand for those services has grown. Between 1979 and 1985 the waiting list for neuro-surgery went up by 250%. Yet the Government has told the Maudsley Special Health Authority that it is "overspending" by £400,000 per year. In fact, the Maudsley is under-funded - and that is where the problem lies.

Together with the Joint Staff Side (the Trade Union representatives of Maudsley workers), the junior hospital doctors and local voluntary organisations, including MIND and MENCAP, I have been opposing the planned cuts. The campaign was extremely well supported and vigorous and was partially successful. I attended numerous meetings at the Maudsley, culminating in a march and lobby of the Special Health Authority. The Health Authority refused to let me speak at their meeting.

As a result of the campaign, the Health Authority agreed to press the Government for more money - but they still made cuts. The campaign will be continuing to prevent the Authority making more cuts and trying to get more money from the Government.

2. HILDA LEWIS HOUSE

Hilda Lewis House is a unit attended by a number of children who live in Southwark. It is at Bethlem Royal Hospital and caters for the most disturbed and "difficult" children with severe and uncontrollable behavioural problems.

The London Ambulance Service - which is under pressure from the Government to cut spending - announced that it was not going to deliver the children to Hilda Lewis House from 2nd June. It was suggested that their parents could bring them instead in a taxi. It is not fair on taxi drivers, parents or the children to take an uncontrollable child with an untrained driver, half-way across London. Some of the parents said they just would not be able to manage it and would have to put their children into residential institutions.

I took up the case with the Government Minister, Ambulance Service and publicised it on the media. The authorities have agreed to continue the service until alternative satisfactory arrangements can be made (e.g. Social Services ambulance or ILEA transport).

3. CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS

I spent two days visiting the facilities for children under 5 in my constituency. I visited Social Services nurseries, ILEA nurseries, playgroups and special schemes for children with disabilities.

Basically, the services are good - but there are not enough of them for all the children whose parents want some form of day care. This is despite the fact that Southwark has far more nursery places and playgroups than most other boroughs in the country.

I will be attending the pre-school playgroups annual event in Peckham Rye and the Council's under 5's carnival on 11th June.

4. FAMINE IN AFRICA

I spoke at the Southwark United Nations Association recently and also the Southwark World Development Movement meeting.

5. SURGERIES

The new Council has provided me with an incentive to improve the teamwork between myself and Councillors at my surgeries. The overwhelming majority of people who come to the surgeries have problems with the Council - rather than directly with the Government. Most of them are complaining about housing. Obviously, it's a good idea for Councillors to take up cases in the first instance and for us to work as a team. As Councillors are part of the Labour group and on Council Committees, they are in a better position than me to pursue Council problems.

6. MINERS

I have arranged a meeting with the Women Against Pit Closures - the NUM group which arose during the strike. I have invited them to the House of Commons to meet and discuss their plans with a few Labour women M.Ps.

7. CYPRriot COMMUNITY

I have arranged to meet leaders of the Greek Cypriot Community in Southwark - including the bishop at the local Greek Orthodox Church. I hope to make similar arrangements to meet the leaders of the Turkish Cypriot Community in Southwark.

8. Girl guides from the St. Mary's Kennington troupe came to be enrolled at the House of Commons. Portland Street Tenants' Association will shortly be visiting me at the House of Commons.

HARRIET HARMAN

3rd June, 1986



R E P O R T  
JUNE 1986

Our ref:

1. SOCIAL SECURITY

In a recent report I mentioned the Government's plans to cut Housing Benefit and make everyone pay at least 1/5th of their rates and all their water rates. This proposal was in the Social Security Bill and would apply even to people whose only income is a pension or supplementary benefit. The House of Lords have now voted to delete this proposal from the Bill. But, in an unprecedented move, Margaret Thatcher has announced that she intends to re-introduce the cut when the Bill returns to the House of Commons.

I have written again to the Tenants Associations on estates which would be worst hit by this measure and asked them to write to Norman Fowler - the Social Services Minister - and urge him not re-introduce the cut into the Bill.

2. PRINT DISPUTE - NEWS INTERNATIONAL

- (a) I have written an open letter for the 'Southwark Sparrow' explaining the justice of the printers case and urging everyone to assist the sacked employees by joining the boycott of the 'Sun' and 'Times'.
- (b) I will be attending the public meeting on the 8 July called by the Southwark printworkers Support Group at the London College of Printing.

3. KILLING OF ISABEL SCHWARZ

In my capacity as Shadow Social Services Minister, I have been urging the Government to set up an enquiry into Bexley Social Services following the killing of Isabel Schwarz - a Bexley Social Worker - by one of her clients.

4. SCHOOLS

- (a) It seems that often when I go to a school in Peckham, the staff and parents say 'but do Labour really care about education - after all, you don't even fill your places for Labour Governors.'

It is a travesty when the governing bodies of schools of schools in Peckham have Tory Chairs - simply because the Labour governorships are vacant.

This is not a new problem. For some time there has been a high level of vacancies for Labour School Governors. But it is particularly worrying at a time when Education

is taking such a hammering from the government and when the Government is seeking to change the structure of governing bodies to reduce the number of 'political' governors.

The current list of vacancies is as follows:-

<u>SCHOOL</u>	<u>VACANCIES</u>
Hollydale	3
Pilgrims Way	4
Nell Gwynn Nursery	2
Camelot	4
Summer Nursery	3
Keyworth	1
Comber Grove	2
Crawford	1
Lyndhurst	2
The Grove Nursery	1
Brunswick Park	1
St Francis RC	2
St Joseph's RC	2
Camberwell Consolidated Charities	4

At present the standing orders of ILEA confine governorships to Labour Party members. Labour Party members are usually already overworked and you are therefore trying to get governors from a group of people who are already overcommitted.

Another problem is that most Labour Party members are white and therefore, even in an area like Peckham with a high percentage of black children in the schools - nearly all the governors we nominate are white.

I am strongly supporting the moves in the ILEA Labour Group to re-consider our policy of nominations for governors to ensure that we fill all our places and have a fair representation of black governors. I am liaising with our two ILEA Councillors on this. In the meantime, I hope anyone who thinks they would be prepared to be a governor will let me know or contact John Maurice, 158 Lomond Grove, SE5 School Governors Co-ordinator.

- (b) I will be attending the leaving ceremony for pupils from Florence Keyworth School on 10 July.

#### 5. WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES

I had an extremely useful meeting with Women Against Pit Closures. Following the meeting, I have pressed Neil Kinnock to agree to a meeting with them.

They will be holding a fringe meeting at Labour Party Conference and I have arranged for them to hold a meeting for women in the Trade Union and Labour movement in London. The meeting will be at the House of Commons on 28 October. Please put the date in your diary now.

6. SOUTH AFRICA

The tide of public opinion in this country appears to be moving firmly against Thatcher on this and towards the freedom struggle in South Africa. I joined a group of women led by Glenys Kinnock delivering a letter to Downing Astreet about apartheid and I spoke at a meeting organised by Southwark Muslim Women's Association as part of the Council's anti-apartheid activities.

7. MY CONTEMPT OF COURT CASE

In 1982, I was found guilty of contempt for showing a journalist Home Office documents which had already been read out in Court. I took my case to the European Commission who ruled in my favour and against the Government. The Tories will now have to introduce a Bill which says that what I did was not contempt and they will have to pay all my legal costs.

8. ANOTHER BABY!

I am expecting my third child in January. I will be taking maternity leave from my Front Bench role as Shadow Social Services Minister in a few weeks time - but will of course be maintaining my constituency duties.

HARRIET HARMAN

1 July 1986



R E P O R T

JULY - 1986

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Our ref:

1. SOCIAL SECURITY

The Social Security Bill has now become law. It will have a very harsh effect on the many people in Peckham who claim benefits. Although the House of Lords amended the Bill to mitigate the worst effects - Thatcher insisted that when it came back to the House of Commons the original and most punitive measures were put back in. In particular single payments will be replaced by a discretionary and cash-limited "social fund". And the Government has power under the Act to order that everyone - even those on Supplementary Benefit or the basic pension - has to pay 20 percent of their rates. It is very important that all tenants understand that this is a government measure and is not the responsibility of the Council. The Government is clearly hoping that tenants will blame the Council who have responsibility for administering housing benefits. I will be liaising with the Southwark Group of Tenants' Associations and Tenants Associations about this.

2. DAY NURSERIES

There is a large demand for day nursery places. But whether you can get a nursery place for your child depends on where you live in the country - rather than your needs. I published the "Under Fives" League Table showing how many nursery places each council in England provides. Southwark comes out very well. We are 11th out of 108 authorities. But even the councils at the top of the League Table are barely scratching the surface of need. The Isle of Wight - the Liberal Party's flagship - has not one single day nursery place for the 6,000 children on the Island. They are therefore bottom of the League Table. Please contact my office if you would like to have a full copy of the League Table. The publication of the League Table caused great criticism in the local press in Tory and Liberal council areas. It also highlighted the important services that rate-capped councils are providing.

3. NEWS INTERNATIONAL - WAPPING

The courts have yet again laid down further restrictions on the right of sacked workers peacefully to picket and demonstrate outside the Wapping plant. But, despite that, ways are being found to continue and to step up the demonstrations. I attended the special women's march at Wapping on August 2nd, and spoke at the rally.

4. CUTS IN AMBULANCE SERVICE

I am continuing to receive complaints about the effect of cuts in the ambulance service. An answer to a Parliamentary Question I asked has shown that the District Health Authorities in our area have been ordered to cut their use of "non emergency" ambulances by 40 percent. This shows that the cuts we are feeling at present are only half the story - and there are further severe cuts in the pipeline.



### 5. BY-ELECTION IN BERMONDSEY

Bermondsey Labour Party have won a great victory in the By-election in Dockyard Ward in July. The Liberals won the seat in the May council elections. A Liberal Councillor resigned and Labour's Pat Sullivan won back the seat in July.

	<u>July By-Election</u>	<u>May Election</u>
Labour	50.2%	45%
Liberal	44%	49.5%
Conservative	3%	4.6%
National Front	2%	


### 6. RATE-CAPPING

Once again Southwark Council has been rate-capped. I am liaising more closely with the Council to highlight in Parliament the Council's achievements and Government inflicted problems. I spoke in the debate on the new Rates Bill and the announcement of the rate-capping. Don't believe any reports in the papers of a pre-election bonus in Rate Support Grant for councils. The small amount of "extra money"

- \* is far less than the amount that has already been withdrawn in reduced Rate Support Grant
- \* is clawed back through rate penalties
- \* sometimes the Government threaten to reduce the amount they have already allocated. (They are doing this to Southwark)

+1 = 06+6 = 07+3  
 EACHER LOV9S  
 eps putting kisses again

July 1986



### 7. PREROGATIVE OF MERCY

I took up the case of a woman prisoner who was sent to prison when she was 8½ months pregnant. She went into labour in Holloway Prison and when she was finally taken to hospital the baby died a few minutes after its birth. I applied for the "prerogative of mercy" for her. It was granted and she was released from prison. Her sentence was due to run until Christmas 1986.

### 8. SURGERIES

The number of people coming to my surgeries continues to increase. I have recently gone through all my constituency cases, chasing up the all too frequent cases where the Council fails to reply to my letters! The Walworth Town Hall surgeries are working particularly well with a regular team of three Councillors and one Party member attending the surgery.

### 9. HOLIDAYS

I will be away from 15th August until September 8th. Please direct any queries to my office - 219 3000 - who will be able to arrange for another MP to cover any immigration problems which my constituents encounter.

6th August 1986

HARRIET HARMAN



Our ref:

REPORT

SEPTEMBER 1986

1. 'NO PLACE LIKE HOME'

While local authority spending on social services has been severely squeezed, the Government have been pouring public money into private old folks' homes. Since 1979 the amount of public funds going, through DHSS Regulation 9 payments, to private homes has gone up by 3,000%. In an extraordinary exercise of privatisation by stealth, the Government are now keeping over 50,000 old people in private homes. The standards in some private homes are good. But in many, old people are subjected to a nightmare of abuse, neglect, ill-treatment and fraud.

To draw attention to this undercover privatisation programme, and highlight the plight of the elderly in private homes, I have produced a report called 'NO PLACE LIKE HOME'. It is a summary of all the cases which came before the Registered Homes Tribunal - which was set up in August 1985 to hear appeals from private home owners when councils closed them down. The report details evidence of bullying, force-feeding, residents being tied to chairs, misuse of drugs and fraud.

**PLEASE CONTACT MY OFFICE IF YOU WOULD LIKE A COPY OF THE REPORT.** It was printed for me by the Public Services Group of the Transport and General Workers Union.

2. WORKSHOP FOR THE BLIND - WATERLOO ROAD

The Royal School for the Blind runs a workshop for about 60 people in Waterloo Road. The National League for the Blind and Disabled (a TUC and Labour Party Affiliated Union) alerted me to the fact that the RSB planned to close the workshop. Working with the NLBD, I have taken up the case against closure with the RSB and the Charity Commissioners.

3. SOUTHWARK CHILDMINDING SUPPORT SCHEME

This was set up 3 years ago using DHSS "Under 5's Initiative" money. It is a pioneering project, run jointly by Southwark childminders and the National Child-Minding Association. It provides minders with an





invaluable support service including; drop-ins, toy library; outings; help for children with language problems; emergency cover, etc. It is of great benefit to parents, children and minders in Southwark. But the DHSS money has now run out (it was only due to last for 3 years) and the project is being told by the Government to get funds from Southwark!

I have asked the Government to at least pay half the project's funds (jointly with Southwark Council) for the next 2 years. If the DHSS refuse, I am urging Southwark to ensure that the project stays open and fully funded because of its great importance to under 5's in Southwark and women employed in an underpaid, undervalued, neglected service.

4. VICARAGE GROVE/BRUNSWICK PARK

I attended a large meeting of the Brunswick Park Residents' Association on 30th July. Following a petition from some of the tenants in Vicarage Grove, I have arranged for the Chair of Housing, Alan Crane, and the three Brunswick Ward Councillors to visit the homes of those who petitioned about lack of repair and general délapidation. This will take place on 13th October.

5. UNDER 5's LEAGUE TABLE

I have published a table of council day nursery provision which shows the patchiness of services in different parts of the country. Southwark is well up the league table (12th out of 108 councils). The Isle of Wight - the Liberals' flagship - shares bottom place in the league table with a number of Tory authorities, as they have not one single day nursery place. Please contact my office if you would like a copy of the league table.

6. WALWORTH FESTIVAL

The Chair of the Peckham Labour Party, Vicky Naish, and I attended the Walworth Festival in Burgess Park on the wettest September Saturday afternoon in recorded history.

7. SURGERIES

My three monthly surgeries continue to be packed - and last for hours. Labour Councillors are working with me in the surgeries, both to shorten the time people





House of Commons,  
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Tel: 01- 219 3000  
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Our ref:

REPORT

NOVEMBER 1986

1. DHSS Offices

Blenheim Grove DHSS office has now been closed since August. Since that time there has been no counter service for the large number of people in this area who are dependent on benefits. The emergency procedures have not been working properly and immense hardship has resulted. I had been warning the Social Services Minister for over 2 years that a crisis was developing and that the premises and staffing levels are wholly inadequate to provide a decent service to the growing number of claimants in the area. These warnings have been ignored. I have been in close touch with SCPS and CPSA locally (the unions representing the benefit office staff) and fully sympathise with their frustration at not being able to provide a decent service to claimants and their fear of attack by claimants because of mounting anger. I have once again urged the Minister to open temporarily a full service in Marshalsea Rd. - until the situation at Blenheim Grove is fully resolved. But the Minister is making matters worse by proposing "outstationing" of benefit claims. This means that there will either be no counter service, or a skeleton service at Camberwell and all the claims will be taken in a van down to Kent to be dealt with. This is an outrageous proposal which will worsen conditions still further for claimants. I am urging the Council (and local community organisations) to write to the Minister to object before outstationing starts - it is planned to begin in the next few weeks.

2. Councillor David Payne

I was appalled when Dave Payne was given a 6 month prison sentence for an offence at Wapping during action against News International. It is very rare indeed for the courts to impose a sentence of 6 months for a first offence - and clearly the Judge was swayed by the fact that the conviction arose in connection with an industrial dispute. No doubt if the same incident had taken place outside a pub, there would merely have been a fine! But Judges are paranoid about industrial action. The injustice was further compounded when Dave was refused bail while he awaited his appeal. I gave evidence for him at his trial as a witness to his "good character" and pressed The Lord Chancellor and court authorities for an early appeal date. I was very pleased when he was released on appeal. First and foremost for the sake of Dave and his family - but also because it means he can carry on his work as a Councillor and Faraday Ward will not have to have a by-election.



### 3. Health Service

- (a) Hospital waiting lists continue to rise. I publicised the fact that the waiting list for urgent cases in the Camberwell District Health Authority has gone up by 73% in one year. This got wide publicity - including BBC T.V. "London Plus".
- (b) After a long and hard fought struggle the unions in the Camberwell District Health Authority have beaten off the threat to privatise catering and cleaning.
- (c) I spoke at the rally on 10th November against cuts at the Maudsley and attended the march.

### 4. Council workers - Threat of privatisation

The Government are about to introduce a Bill to force all local councils to put out to tender contracts for park maintenance, refuse collection, transport, housing repairs and many other vital public services. Where Tory councils have already opted for "competition" in local services the result has been a lowering of standards, fewer jobs and worse pay and conditions. A recent survey has shown that even where the "in-house" tender (i.e. council employees) won the contract, the effect of the tendering process was to reduce terms and conditions of those employees.

The Council is one of the major employers in the borough and provides many services and therefore this Bill is a particular threat to Southwark. The Council, together with the Town Hall Unions, has launched a campaign against the new law. I will be working closely with the campaign - which I hope will be as broadly-based as possible and will involve those who use the services as well as council employees. The Labour Party in Parliament will be opposing the Bill at every stage.

### 5. Education

- (a) I am continuing the programme of visits to the House of Commons from local primary schools.
- (b) I gave the prizes at St. Thomas the Apostle prize-giving. Will School Governors please note that I am always keen to be invited to prize givings, etc. as they are a useful way of keeping contact with pupils and parents.
- (c) Following a constituent's query I have taken up the question of competitive sport in Southwark Schools. ILEA's policy is to encourage competitive sport - both team and individual sport. But Kenneth Baker's misrepresentation of the policy has caused a lot of concern among children and parents. It is true, however, that the teachers' dispute has affected sports outside school hours. Perhaps this is something that school governors should make clear at their next meeting. As well as dealing with the case of the



constituent whose son wanted to take part in a national swimming competition, I am writing an open letter clarifying the situation jointly with our two ILEA Councillors John Mann and Jim Mthethwa and Kate Hoey (Dulwich Prospective Parliamentary Candidate who works in sport.) I hope to get it published in The Southwark Sparrow.

5. Nye Bevan Lodge

At the request of the Enquiry Panel, I will be giving evidence on the 3rd December. My evidence will be about standards and conditions in private residential care homes, which was the subject of my recent report "No place like home".

Our baby is due mid January and I have made arrangements for Peckham Labour Councillors and party members to look after my January surgeries. On average my surgeries now attract about 30 cases - usually about 60 people!

My office will be working normally during the time I am having the baby (which will be at Guy's - as usual!). So please phone my office 219.3000 and leave a message if you get put through to the answering service because they are on the phone. Or you can write to me at the House of Commons, S.W.1.

I have planned to arrange sufficient "cover" so that constituency work will be dealt with as normal - even over the period when the baby is born.

Harriet Harman  
1st December 1986