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HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Harriet Harman MP

January 1990 Report

1) Health

* The NHS and Community Care Bill will be finished in Committee towards the end of February, and will probably complete its passage through the House of Commons by the end of May. From the Labour side, we have been proposing amendments to the Bill which would ensure:

- that local people have a say before their local hospital can be opted out.

- that despite contracts, people will still have a choice over where to go for treatment, and will still have access to local services.

- that GP drugs budgets will not be cash limited.

The Tory rejection of these amendments shows that their assurances about the future of the NHS are worthless.

The Labour strategy on the NHS Bill is to highlight the disastrous consequences of the Government's proposed changes for health care in this country. But we have also been pointing out the effects of the changes in the constituencies of the individual Tory members of the NHS Committee. We have been working closely with local community and health groups in the Tory constituencies and with the local press to achieve this.

* I had a meeting on January 29th with representatives of the Camberwell, and Lewisham and North Southwark CHCs. I shall be visiting Guys Hospital on 7th February for the announcement of the result of their local ballot on opting-out.

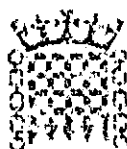
2) Ambulance Dispute

* The costs of paying the police and army are now more than twice the costs of settling on the ambulance workers' 11.4% pay claim, yet the Government is still unwilling to negotiate.

* Robin Cook and I have taken every opportunity to raise the issue in Parliament, and I enclose a copy of my speech made in the Commons on January 11th.

* I took part in the Parliamentary Labour Party's demonstration on January 30th, and I have visited several local ambulance stations, including Brixton.

* I have met representatives of the staff side several times to discuss how best Labour can help the unions.



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3) Private Residential Homes

* On 2nd January, I published a bill to provide safeguards for people living in private care homes. I shall be putting these safeguards forward as amendments to the NHS and Community Care Bill.

* I was extremely concerned to discover recently that Southwark Council still does not have in post a Registration Officer for private homes, despite its legal responsibilities as a Registration Authority. I have written to the Chief Executive asking her to ensure that an officer is appointed with this responsibility as soon as possible. I have warned the Council that if it fails to do so, I shall have to make a report to the Department of Health. I take this issue so seriously because it involves the protection of elderly and vulnerable people.

4) Housing Action Trusts

* Just before Christmas I met Michael Howard, then Government Housing Minister, to discuss the plans for HATs on the North Peckham and Gloucester Grove Estates. The meeting was prompted by my recent report which showed that the Government has given no concrete guarantees to tenants about their rights under a HAT. Michael Howard gave me nothing more concrete in our meeting; he has now gone as housing minister - replaced by Michael Spicer - and with him went all those smooth assurances about the HATs.

* I recently met local authority leaders from HAT areas and we shall be asking ministers to agree to a Statutory Instrument which would enshrine certain guarantees in law, particularly on the composition of any HAT board. The proposition is a third of board members elected directly by tenants, a third appointed by the local authority, and a third appointed by the Government. This would ensure tenants' control. If the Government refuses to do a statutory instrument, then they will have shown that their assurances are worthless. I have been discussing these HAT issues during visits to the North Peckham Estate Christmas party and at a meeting with North Peckham TA representatives.

5) Local Visits

* I visited the Nelson Estate TA AGM on 25th January, and I am taking up several of the issues which were raised there, including the lack of an estate officer, and the problems caused by the unlicensed flower market in Blackwood Street.

* I have invited all TAs to Westminster for guided tours of the Houses of Parliament. Such visits proved successful with local schools last year.

* I visited the Love Walk Hostel on 22nd January.

* I visited Walworth School on 17th January, and spoke to the pupils and staff at their assembly about environmental policies.

* On January 27th, I took part in the tree-planting ceremony at

Warwick Gardens organised by PEARL as a protest against the plans for Channel Tunnel rail link.

* I visited Bishops House Nursery on February 5th; the nursery has thankfully been reprieved from the threat of closure.

* I am visiting the Tustin Estate TA on 13th February.

6) General

* Immediately after the Cecil Parkinson statement on the future of transport in London, I issued a press release against the Government's plans for road building in South London. In the statement (enclosed), I argued that the road building plans would cause massive environmental damage and increased traffic congestion, and that the way to solve traffic problems is through improved public transport. Comments on the Government's transport consultation paper must be sent to the Department of the Environment by 28th February. I shall be submitting a formal objection, and I would urge all party members to do the same.

* I took part in the launch of the Labour Party's campaign document "London Pride" on 29th January. This sets out Labour's policies for the capital, including the return of a strategic authority, and will be used in the build-up to the May Council elections.

* I am producing a paper with David Blunkett, the Shadow Environment Minister, on the effect of the Poll Tax on Social Services spending. People who rely on these services are going to be victims twice over. Not only will they have to pay the Poll Tax, but they will also be hurt because of the reduction in social services spending which the Poll Tax will cause.

* I have issued press statements on the following local issues:

a) the millions spent by British Rail on property purchases in Peckham when the Channel Tunnel Rail Link route is in doubt.

b) a call for stiffer sentences on reckless drivers, prompted by the tragic case of teenage girl from Peckham who was hit by a BMW driver doing at least 50mph. The driver, who had a history of motoring offences, was only fined £200 and lost his licence for six months, while the girl was in a coma for three months and is now confined to a wheelchair.

c) urging the new inner-cities Minister for London, Colin Moynihan, to take urgent action to deal with a whole range of problems in our city, including the underfunding of the NHS, the housing crisis, growing crime rates, traffic congestion, poverty and the teacher shortage.

d) highlighting some of the recent immigration cases I have won, and assuring the Commission for Racial Equality that I will fight any further changes in immigration guidelines.

Harriet Harman
6th February 1990

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

In the meantime, local authorities have taken action in the west midlands. The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) talked about making the ambulance service local. It was perfectly OK when it was run by the local authorities. People got a decent 999 service from the local authorities before and that is the way forward, not a privatised local service.

Everybody knows that there has to be a solution, and the sooner it is, the better for all concerned. There will have to be give and take and above all the solution will have to include a negotiating mechanism that will guarantee that this vital group of workers will never again have to take such action. The Government cannot escape their responsibility in achieving that.

9.30 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): We are in the 18th week of a dispute of great seriousness, yet today the Secretary of State has told us nothing new, nothing positive, nothing to suggest that he has any clear idea of the way forward from here.

The Secretary of State's speech will fill the public with deep dismay. People are concerned that a vital emergency service has been suspended and that ambulance crews have been subjected by the Government to a campaign aimed at belittling and undermining them, and people are concerned about the huge sums of public money that the Government have squandered in their conduct of the dispute.

It is costing £23,000 every day for the police to provide cover in the west midlands; £26,000 every day for police cover in south Yorkshire; £10,000 every day for police cover in west Yorkshire, and £60,000 every day for police cover in London. The bill for that and for other police and Army work will be sent to hard-pressed district health authorities that are already closing beds and wards in an attempt to meet their budget deadline by the end of the year without going into deficit.

The money spent on continuing the dispute would easily have met the ambulance men's pay claim in full. The Secretary of State uses public money to prolong the dispute, but says that he cannot use public money to do what the public really want, and that is to settle the dispute.

The reason why there is a dispute at all is that the Government offered ambulance crews a wage increase below the level of inflation—in effect, a wage cut. That would have been unwelcome to any group of workers, but it is particularly unwelcome to ambulance workers, who have seen a comparative decline in their pay over recent years.

In 1986 ambulance crews' earnings were 6 per cent. below average male earnings. That gap has now widened, so that their earnings are 16 per cent. below. In 1986 ambulance crews had parity of earnings with fire fighters. Now they have fallen behind by £60 a week. Ambulance workers' pay is now so low that many have to claim housing benefit and family credit to make ends meet. Yet it is that group of public employees who have been asked to see their standard of living cut.

It is not that a decent pay award to the ambulance crews would set some sort of dangerous precedent, as the Secretary of State would have us believe. Other groups of

public workers have won increases above the rate of inflation. For example, the police have won more than 9 per cent., fire fighters 8.8 per cent. and, as has been mentioned, senior civil servants and Members of Parliament nearly 11 per cent. Now the newspapers are full of stories that the Secretary of State's front man in this sorry affair, the NHS chief executive, Duncan Nichol, is about to receive a pay rise that is worth more than 50 per cent. of what an ambulance worker earns in an entire year.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): Has my hon. Friend noticed the newspaper coverage of the fact that Conservative councillors in some areas have supported the ambulance workers? Has she heard today of the strange events in Stirling, where Mr. Alan Hogarth, personal assistant to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), and Mr. Peter Finnie, the Conservative party agent in that area, were caught red-handed secretly tape recording the district council's discussions on the dispute?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but I emphasise that her remarks must be relevant to the debate.

Mrs. Fyfe: Can my hon. Friend imagine what was the intention of the Stirling Securitate behind that bizarre behaviour?

Ms. Harman: Whatever may have been the intention, the public will not be browbeaten into withdrawing their support. The Secretary of State has also tried to browbeat ambulance crews into accepting an inadequate pay offer by delivering a series of smears and insults, while refusing to meet ambulance staff representatives face to face for discussions or negotiations.

Despite the Secretary of State's intransigence, ambulance staff took the softest possible industrial action available to them. They withdrew from performing routine duties, but they continued to provide accident, emergency and other vital services. Clearly, that was not the outcome that the Secretary of State wanted, so he quickly escalated the dispute by suspending crews and then calling in the police and Army. Although those services gave of their best, it soon became apparent that they were inadequate for the task. The Secretary of State chooses to ignore that aspect and the views shared by those whose opinions ought to carry some weight with him.

Dr. David Williams, president of the Casualty Surgeons Association, told ITN that the emergency system is confused, which leads to delays, and that police and Army personnel have neither the training nor the equipment to deal with all casualties. That sentiment was echoed by Dr. Pamela Nash, head of accident and emergency services at Hillingdon hospital, who commented that the dispute was having a serious effect on patients. For all those reasons, the public continue to call on ambulance crews to provide emergency services, even though they have been suspended without pay.

Despite being provoked, accident crews are responding with dignity, restraint and an overriding sense of responsibility. The Government's response, by contrast, has been disgraceful. In Coventry, 'phone lines to the voluntary ambulance stations were cut, and those to the crews' social club were also disconnected, so that, no matter what the emergency, members of the public were

unable to call on the speedy and expert assistance of trained ambulance men and women rather than contact the police or Army.

In London, police officers refused to divulge the telephone number of volunteer ambulance crews to people seeking urgent assistance for a man who had fallen from a ladder and broken his spine, arm, leg, rib and pelvis. The police officer said that instructions had been received on the highest authority not to disclose that telephone number. As a consequence, the injured man lay on the ground without receiving assistance for more than two hours.

In Birmingham, a private company, Racal, provided Motorola phones and other equipment to allow volunteer emergency crews to provide the city with adequate coverage. Almost immediately, letters were sent to Birmingham ambulance crews informing them that their vehicles were no longer taxed or insured and that crews and their passengers—that is patients—risked committing the criminal offence of using a vehicle without its owner's consent.

This week, within hours of ambulance crews working without pay to provide essential services after the M25 crash, ambulances in London were immobilised by management, to ensure that crews would be unable to provide vital services again. I do not say that those and similar actions by management were undertaken on the direct orders of the Government, but no one can fail to detect that a guiding hand is at work.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does my hon. Friend recall that when miners who took part in industrial action during the 1984-85 strike were alleged to have engaged in actions of the type that she has just described, they were put in gaol?

Ms. Harman: The Government have systematically sought to escalate the dispute in the cynical hope that if and when disaster strikes ambulance workers will finally forfeit public support and be forced to give up. As we know, the public have not been deceived. The petition in support of the ambulance workers is the largest ever presented and, as a result, the Government's handling of the dispute will find its way into "The Guinness Book of Records". The signatures and the money given so freely in collections all over the country are more than mere tokens of support. They are the public expression of the shame that is felt by the British people at the shoddy treatment meted out to the heroes of Lockerbie and King's Cross.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): The hon. Lady is trying to mislead the House into believing that the dispute is entirely the responsibility of the Government. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is."] In fact, the ambulance crews are responsible in very large measure, for the denial of facilities to patients in need. They are just as much to blame, if not more so. In Staffordshire, crews were offering to work only 50 per cent. of the time. Is the hon. Lady suggesting that management should rely on a 50 per cent. service?

Ms. Harman: The question for the House tonight is not who caused the dispute but whether the Government have the political will to solve it. People have been genuinely distressed to hear Ministers declare and imply that the ambulance service is not really an emergency service. It appears to be the only non-emergency service equipped

with blue flashing lights and sirens. People were sickened and embarrassed to hear the Secretary of State describe ambulance crews in the following terms:

"They are professional drivers, a worthwhile job—but not an exceptional one."

Does the Secretary of State wish us to believe that skills such as emergency resuscitation, assisting emergency childbirth, dealing with haemorrhages and immobilising fractures are learnt from the highway code? Does he think that he will be able to persuade his colleague, Sir Leon Brittan, who congratulated and thanked the ambulance crews after the Brighton bombing, or his right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), the former Secretary of State for Transport, who congratulated ambulance workers after the British Midland air crash? The right hon. and learned Gentleman's handling of the dispute has failed to persuade a number of his own Back-Bench colleagues, from whom we have heard tonight.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: What is the hon. Lady's motive for inventing insults that not one ever made? Is it to inflame reluctant ambulance men into joining industrial action that they do not wish to take?

Ms. Harman: Our overwhelming concern tonight is that the Secretary of State should show that he will take the initiative to solve the dispute. He has failed to persuade many of his own Back Benchers. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) expressed concern. The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) expressed concern. The hon. Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), for Langbaugh (Mr. Holt), for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) and even for Fylde (Mr. Jack) have all expressed concern tonight.

The Secretary of State has not even been able to get support for his handling of the dispute from the sections of the press that the Tory party has usually been able to count on. *The Sun* says:

"Settle 999 row. How much longer, says the Sun, are the Government going to let the whole sorry business drag on?" *The Daily Mail* says:

"It is time for Mr. Clarke to pay Santa not Scrooge and to do what most men and women down every high street in the land are cheerfully doing—put his percentage into the ambulance men's bucket."

The Daily Express says:

"It should not be beyond the wit of Ministers to make concessions that would end the dispute without triggering claims elsewhere."

The Secretary of State cannot even claim that the unions have forced him into the stance that he has taken. The unions have said that they are willing to negotiate on local pay flexibility and on their 11.4 per cent. claim. They have said that they are willing to negotiate on a formula. They are not insisting on the fire service formula. But what they rightly insist is that there should be a pay mechanism for the future, so that a dispute such as this can never happen again.

The Government's plan to browbeat the ambulance crews back to work has backfired, and has served only to increase public support for the ambulance men. It seems that the Government have no strategy and they have descended into a shambles. Last Friday, the Secretary of State briefed the Sunday papers that more money might be available. By Sunday he was denying it. Last Tuesday, the

[Ms. Harman]

Prime Minister said that no more money was available, and at the No. 10 briefing on Wednesday, they said that there might be.

The public's rejection of the Government's approach has left the Government bewildered. It is clear from listening to the Secretary of State in the debate that he has not decided whether to tough it out, or whether, as he no doubt sees it, he should cut his losses.

When the Government lose their way, it becomes the responsibility of the House to point them in the right direction. Tonight's vote offers that opportunity to hon. Members on both sides of the House. It offers the opportunity to bring this unfortunate dispute to a speedy and satisfactory conclusion.

9.45 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): Beginning with the Secretary of State, all hon. Members have paid fulsome tribute to the important work undertaken by ambulance men and women in Britain. We share a pride in their work, and we want them to return to normal working at the earliest opportunity.

I shall not respond in kind to the remarks of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman). Perhaps it is hard for her to recall that, when the Opposition were in power, the pay of most National Health Service workers dropped in value. Since the Government have been in power there are more workers in the Health Service than ever before, their pay has risen and they are treating more patients. The Secretary of State spoke of his passionate commitment to the National Health Service. All of us, when we see the record sums being spent, and the record number of patients being treated, know that his commitment is working out in practice—they are not just idle words.

I stress our appreciation for ambulance men and women, for the police, for the Army and for the voluntary services who are maintaining the emergency services, often in difficult circumstances.

This dispute is a tragedy partly because it is needless. All hon. Members agree that ambulance men and women perform an important function within the National Health Service but they are NHS workers not local authority workers, like fire fighters, or Home Office workers, like the police. They work for the NHS, along with millions of other employees, and we have to consider their financial rewards alongside those of the other people who work in the service.

We want ambulance crews to be well-qualified and well-trained and to provide the service that we all look to them to perform. This offer, which was originally 6.5 per cent. was recommended by trade union leaders, and 84 per cent. of NHS employees have accepted something in that region. I am pleased to say that 97 per cent. of NHS employees have accepted agreements without resorting to industrial action, which sacrifices and jeopardises patients, and is no friend of the Health Service.

Few hon. Members can look at the increasing threat, and the disruption and the difficulties caused to the provision of emergency services, with anything but profound concern. Hon. Members have mentioned the importance of emergency services. Ambulance men and women perform valuable work on the emergency side, but nine out of 10 miles travelled are for non-emergencies.

That is equally valuable work, and it is important to the frail, vulnerable people throughout Britain who are unable currently to receive the care that they need because of the industrial action, which jeopardises them.

There has been a great deal of misinformation about the final offer, which is for salary increases of between 9 and 16 per cent. over the next 18 months, depending on the location and extent of paramedical training. Those higher salaries include an extra payment of £500 a year for staff with full paramedical training. The back pay involved by the end of December was between £680 and £1,450. In London the new rates would result in increases of between 10.9 and 16.3 per cent., and increases of up to 22 per cent. in overtime rates.

An undertaking has also been given to agree a national framework for staff with intermediate paramedical skills, with payments backdated to April last year. It is important to spell out precisely what the offer means, because of the problem of misrepresentation. Equally important, however, is the joint review of the 1986 salary structure, to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred. That improved the status and recognised the professional nature of the ambulance workers' job. There is a wide agenda, which should include flexible local arrangements to deal with problems of recruitment and retention, overtime and improved productivity.

We reject the concept of comparability. The Labour party rejected it when it was in power, Clegg rejected it and this Government certainly reject it—[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I say this to the whole House. I am not taking one side or the other, but may we have a halt to these private conversations?

Mrs. Bottomley: Let me deal with some of the points that have been made. Many hon. Members talked about the importance of training, including my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). The hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) also mentioned the importance of paramedical staff who are not nationally trained and are not covered by the management's offer.

The fourth paragraph of the management's final offer, to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred, makes an explicit commitment to set up a review so that staff trained either locally to standards other than those of the NHS training authority, or partially to those standards, can be considered. It suggests that the review should be completed by the end of February.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister has moved away from what is, in her words, the "final offer". Will she make it clear that the Government seek the total surrender of the ambulance workers, and that in no circumstances will they be prepared to shift one iota from their present position? Is that how the debate will be left?

Mrs. Bottomley: Let me make it clear that the Government have already offered substantially more than they did originally. Another £6 million must be found this year—the equivalent of cataract operations, coronary artery bypass operations and hip replacement operations. It is not, as Opposition Members imagine, a question of thinking of a figure and doubling it; the money must be found from limited resources, and it is patient care that stands to suffer. When people who work for the National Health Service hear language such as that used by the hon.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Harriet Harman MP

March 1990 Report

1) Embryology Bill

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill has its second reading in the House of Commons on Monday 2nd April. I shall be summing up the debate for the Opposition and will then be sitting on the Committee which will examine the Bill in detail. There is a free vote on the Bill and I shall be supporting the clause which will allow research on embryos up to 14 days old. If such research is banned, then work on improving in vitro fertilisation and on reducing the incidence of congenital abnormalities and severe handicaps will be prevented. I have received a large number of letters from constituents about this issue and I shall be writing to all of them setting out my position. I am working closely on the Bill with Jo Richardson MP, the front-bench spokesperson on women, and with Progress, the pressure group which supports embryo research.

On 1st April, I published a report on infertility services on the NHS. This report - based on a survey of 121 District Health Authorities - shows that the availability of treatment for infertile couples varies greatly from region to region. It is called "Trying for a Baby". Please contact my office if you want a copy.

2) Health

* The NHS and Community Care Bill completed its passage in the House of Commons on 15th March, after a stormy three days on the Report Stage. From the Labour side, we forced one all-night sitting which only finished at 2pm the following day with the adjournment of the House - the first time this has happened in 39 years. We also inflicted the first Commons defeat on the Government in this Parliament, on the principle of covering the costs of private residential care. Throughout the campaign on the NHS Bill we have stressed that the Government has broken six vital promises about their NHS reforms. These are:

- a) GP's drug budgets will be cash-limited
- b) Local people will have no say in whether their local hospital opts out of the local health service.
- c) Patients and their GPs will have no choice about which hospital they go to for treatment.
- d) Patients will have no guaranteed access to local health care.
- e) Elderly and disabled people will find that they are forced to go into private residential care, and have no choice of local authority care.
- f) Councils will not have enough resources to provide high quality "care in the community".

The Labour Party will continue to press these points as the Bill goes through the House of Lords.

* On 5th March I published the results of a survey of Directors of Local Authority Social Services about residential care. This survey showed that one in five private residential homes avoids registration altogether because they have less than four residents. 98% of the Directors said that they want the law changed so that such homes are covered by the registration law. Furthermore, 80% of directors said that they have insufficient resources to monitor effectively the private homes in their area.

I have also written an article on this issue for next month's edition of Community Care magazine.

* I have been very concerned with the cuts that have been proposed at the Maudsley Hospital. The special health authority is being forced to make savings of £652,000 and this will badly effect clinical services. I have been working closely with local doctors and trade unions to try to prevent the cuts. I had a meeting with Virginia Bottomley, the Health Minister, on 21st March to request more funding but she refused to make any promises.

* I wrote last week to Kenneth Clarke warning that GPs have been forced to start appealing to their patients for funding to "top-up" their practices because of the new cash limits due to be imposed by the Government. I cited the example of Dr Graeme Jenner from Surrey who is trying to raise £75,000 from his patients.

* I issued a report on 26th February calling for a major overhaul of the compensation system for people who suffer illness or disability as a result of poor NHS treatment. The Government rejected my attempt to include in the NHS Bill an automatic right to compensation for victims of medical accidents.

* I met representatives of Community Health Councils from the South-East shires on 26th February to discuss community care. The collapse of land sales in the South East, on which community care developments were to depend, means that countless community care developments have been axed.

* I took part in the announcement of the ballot of staff at Guys Hospital on 8th February, in which 90% of staff voted against opting-out. I also met representatives of the Guys Hands-Off Our Hospital campaign at their lobby of Parliament on 1st March.

3) Transport

* I issued a report on 22nd February against the Government's plans for road-building in south London. Please contact my office if you want a copy. In the report I said that the only way

to solve the traffic problems of the area is through improvements to public transport. The Government seems to have got this message after a huge public campaign against the road plans. I spoke in the House of Commons, welcoming Cecil Parkinson's change of policy.

* I spoke at the Camberwell Society AGM on 15th March against the Channel Tunnel rail link plans.

* I met the new British Rail Channel Tunnel Director, John Palmer, and John Fletcher of Trafalgar House on 26th March to discuss the latest developments on the Channel Tunnel rail link. Unfortunately a date is still to be fixed for the announcement of the final route of the link, so the uncertainty which has blighted the constituency will continue.

* I took part in a tour along the route of the rail link in South London on 22nd March with John Prescott and Joan Ruddock, Labour's front-bench transport team.

4) Women's Meeting

I hosted a highly successful meeting of women members of Peckham CLP in the Jubilee Room of the House of Commons on 19th March. The main aim of the meeting was to help relaunch the Peckham Women's Section and more than 70 women attended. Jo Richardson MP came along and gave a rousing speech. My thanks to Angela Eagle and Maria Exall for their help in organising this event.

5) Deptford Skills Centre

I have written to the Head of the National Audit Office, asking him to investigate the sale of the Deptford Skills Centre to a private management buy-out team called ASTRA. I fear that, given the value of the Centre and the potential for development on the site, the public may have been ripped off, as happened with Rover and with the Royal Ordnance factories. Meanwhile the de-skilling of South East London continues as the Government abandons their responsibility for training.

6) Electoral Registration

I have been concerned for some time that Southwark is in danger of losing one of its three Parliamentary seats in the next Boundary Commission Review, starting in February 1991, if the number of electors on the register does not increase. Following discussion with Larry Whitty, the Labour Party General Secretary, it does appear that the position is in the balance. If Southwark were to lose a seat, Peckham would be the one to go.

As a result of my concern I had a meeting on 27th March with Council Leader Anne Matthews, Clive Grace, the newly-appointed head of Electoral Registration in Southwark, Vicky Naish, Peckham

CLP Chair, Alan Watson, Peckham CLP Treasurer, and David Gardener, the Labour Party expert on the Boundaries Commission. At the meeting it was confirmed that Southwark will be taking a series of measures to ensure that the electoral register reaches a level at which three seats will be retained (175,000 electors, 3000 more than at present). These measures include a thorough canvass of all properties, comparing the register with other records, and ensuring all party agents have registration forms.

7) Housing

* I have made recent visits to the Peckham and to the Walworth District Housing Offices. I am becoming increasingly concerned at the length of time the Council takes to respond to the enquiries I make on behalf of tenants. I am raising this problem with the Chief Executive.

* I attended an angry meeting of tenants from the Tustin Estate on 13th February. The tenants felt that the Council had neglected their estate, allowing it to decline rapidly. The Council has now set up a special working party with tenants to draw up a strategy for improving the estate.

* I took the Goschen TA on a tour of the House of Commons on 8th March.

* I have continued to attend meetings of the HAT Working Group for the North Peckham and Gloucester Grove Estates. The Council has now appointed a firm of solicitors to look at using a Statutory Instrument to give tenants guarantees about their future under a HAT. However, I still remain convinced that tenants should vote 'no' to a HAT.

8) Poll Tax

* I am extremely concerned at the effect that the Poll Tax will have on local authority services, and I have recently issued two press statements about its consequences for education and social services in particular. I have pointed out in these statements that if Southwark Council were to meet the Government's Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs) it would mean the equivalent of losing 1019 home helps, or 2719 day centre places, or 619 primary and 782 secondary school teachers.

* I have also been anxious about the effect of the new Unified Business Rate (UBR) or Non-Domestic Rate (NDR) on Peckham and last week I met representatives of the Peckham Trading Association and the Association of Independent Businesses to discuss the problem. It appears that shops, rather than industrial premises, will be the losers I shall now be conducting a survey of shops in the Peckham area to find the extent of this.

9) Local Visits

During the last month my local visits have included the following:

- * Southwark College, for the opening of their new Peckham Site.
- * Geoffrey Chaucer School
- * Sheltered Housing Unit at Barset Road
- * John Ruskin School
- * Brunswick School, for the opening for their new playground
- * Hollydale School
- * St James Playgroup, Elm Grove

10) Office

As part of the continued effort to keep my office in the House of Commons working efficiently, I have now installed a fax machine (no. 219 4877). I would like to thank Alan Lewis (St.Giles Ward) most warmly for all the help he has given in my office over the last four months.

11) Dulwich

I am delighted that Dulwich CLP has selected Tessa Jowell to stand against Gerald Bowden. She will make an excellent MP.

12) Council Elections

I shall be taking part in the local Council election campaign both nationally - at the request of the Labour Party national office attending key marginals - and locally, working with wards in Peckham.

Harriet Harman

2 April 1990



REPORT: MAY 1990

SOUTHWARK ELECTION RESULTS: A CHALLENGE TO LABOUR

There was a strong sense of disappointment at the London local election results. That disappointment was felt not only by Londoners but also by those outside London who want to see Labour in London contributing fully to the Party's national recovery in popularity.

The results in Southwark were poor. It was a bonus to replace Independent Labour in Friary Ward and to gain in Dulwich but this was overshadowed by the dramatic loss of Labour Councillors in Bermondsey. And despite an overall swing TO Labour in the country as a whole (11%) and a swing TO Labour in London as a whole (6%) there was a swing AWAY from Labour in Southwark (-2%). We cannot even be complacent about the swing to Labour in Dulwich. This is a key marginal and yet the swing to Labour at 5% was less than the swing in the country as a whole.

We need to carefully analyse and endeavour to build on our strengths and deal with our weaknesses. Party members in Bermondsey will have strong views about what happened there. I confine my comments to Peckham. Below are the results in Peckham, together with a comparison to the 1986 results

	1986	1990	swing
Barset Ward			
Total votes cast	3748	2953	18%
Total Labour	2264	2299	to
Percentage to Labour	60%	78	Labour
Brunswick			
Total vote cast	7618	6403	14%
Total Labour	4621	4789	to
Percentage to Labour	61%	75%	Labour
Consort			
Total votes cast	3095	3337	7%
Total Labour	2096	2507	to
Percentage to Labour	68%	75%	Labour
Faraday			
Total votes cast	7403	7833	11%
Total Labour	5764	4502	against
Percentage to Labour	69%	58%	Labour
Friary			
Total votes cast	5872	6205	24%
Total Labour	4320	3107	against
Percentage to Labour	74%	50%	Labour

Liddle

Total votes cast	5677	3826	10%
Total Labour	4456	3353	to
Percentage to Labour	78%	88%	Labour

Newington

Total votes cast	8489	9190	4%
Total Labour	5825	5988	against
Percentage to Labour	69%	65%	Labour

St Giles

Total votes cast	9542	7913	6%
Total Labour	5548	5091	to
Percentage	58%	64%	Labour

The voting in the other two Southwark constituencies, in terms of percentage to Labour, was:

	1986	1990	swing
BERMONDSEY			
Cathedral	47%	31%	-16%
Chaucer	51%	46%	-5%
Abbey	46%	40%	-6%
Burgess	47%	38%	-9%
Bricklayers	42%	31%	-11%
Browning	49%	37%	-12%
Riverside	38%	41%	+3%
Rotherhite	41%	26%	-15%
Dockyard	46%	33%	-13%
DULWICH			
Alley	48%	52%	+4%
College	30%	36%	+6%
Bellenden	58%	66%	+8%
Ruskin	28%	39%	+11%
Rye	41%	45%	+4%
Lyndhurst	56%	55%	-1%
The Lane	52%	61%	+9%
Waverley	60%	52%	-8%

The overall figures for Southwark are:

Party	1986 votes	1986 percentage	1990 votes	1990 percentage
Communist	186	0%	99	0%
Conservative	29,417	18%	33,231	20%
Green	1,336	1%	3,252	2%
Lib.Dems	48,683	29%	42,802	26%
Nat.Front	153	0%	(BNP) 180	0%
Labour	87,020	52%	81,241	50%
Ind.Labour	-	-	2,080	1%

There appear to be a number of factors at work in the Peckham results:

- * degree of organisation in the local ward party
- * reputation and local record of ward councillors
- * nearness to Bermondsey
- * whether the Liberals challenged
- * whether the Greens challenged
- * dissatisfaction with Council services
- * image of the party locally

THE IMPERATIVE OF IMPROVING COUNCIL SERVICES

I believe that dissatisfaction with Council services remains the paramount issue to be acknowledged by, and dealt with by, the new Labour Council. Complaints at my surgeries, local meetings and phone calls and letters testify to a deep feeling that Council services, particularly housing are:

- * inefficient
- * badly managed
- * uncaring

NO SEARCH FOR EASY EXCUSES

There must not be a search for false scapegoats. Other Councils have faced the same problems of Government cuts, "loony left" labelling and the need to increase rates and rents. All London boroughs have had to go through the process of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and taking on the responsibility for education services without adequate resources. Yet Islington was able to show a swing of 8.4% to Labour and Lewisham showed a swing of 8.9%. Both these boroughs have made great efforts to improve the delivery of their services, whilst Southwark - where the same improvement in services has not been seen - experienced a swing of 2% against Labour.

I hope that there will be a single-minded recognition that what happens in Peckham affects not just this constituency but Bermondsey, Dulwich, London and the country as a whole. Nothing must be done by anyone in the party that diverts the Council from its central task of improving services in the borough. The coherence of the Labour Group will be critical in the task of improving services. Labour Councillors must, once Group policy is decided, support it. No-one will be able to get anything done otherwise.

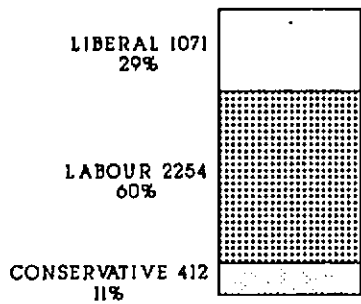
I will continue with my programme of constituency visits to schools, tenants associations and community groups. My surgeries remain packed and I write to everyone who comes to them within a week. I hope to meet the new group of Peckham Councillors soon.

The electorate of Southwark has given the Council and the Labour Party a warning. We must heed it.

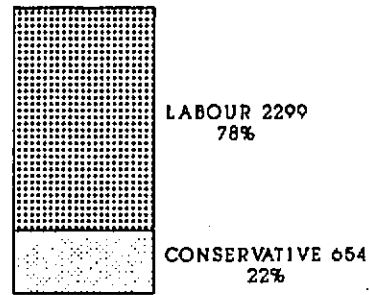
Harriet Harman

17th May 1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
2 LABOUR HELD

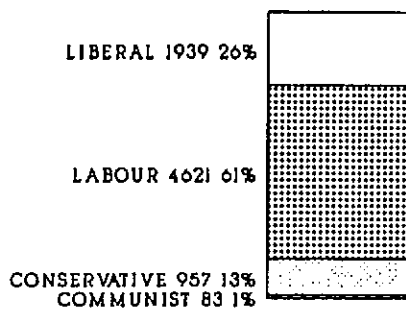


BARSET
1986

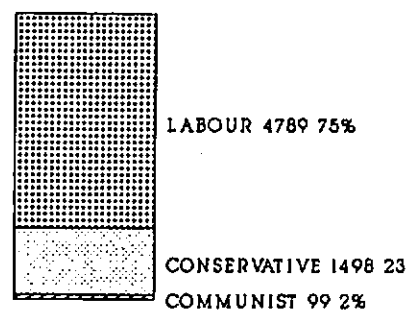


BARSET
1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
3 LABOUR HELD

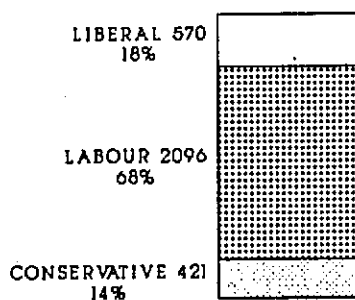


BRUNSWICK
1986

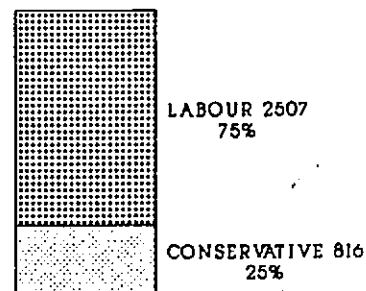


BRUNSWICK
1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
2 LABOUR HELD

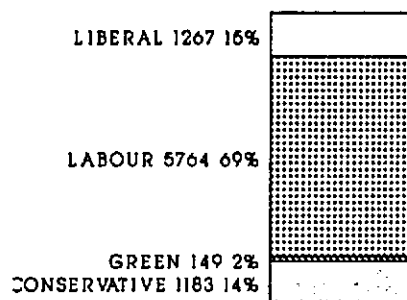


CONSORT
1986

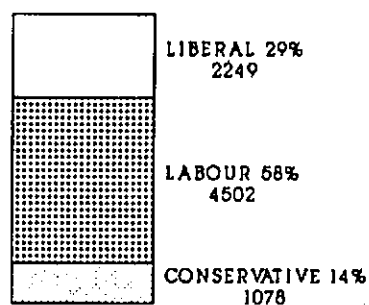


CONSORT
1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
3 LABOUR HELD

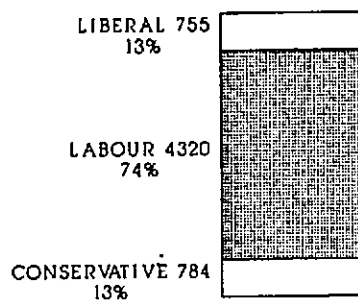


FARADAY
1986

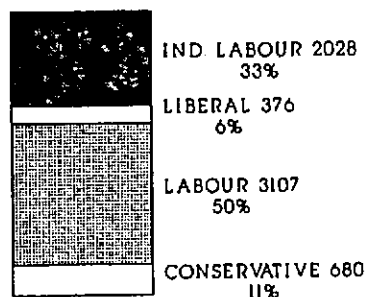


FARADAY
1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
3 LABOUR HELD (WAS IND. LAB)

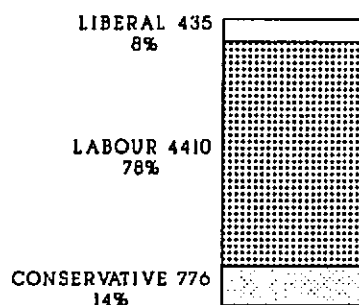


FRIARY
1986

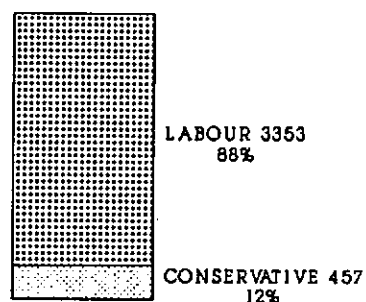


FRIARY
1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
3 LABOUR HELD

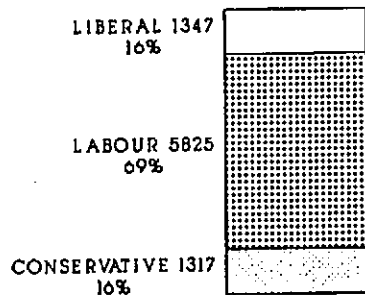


LITTLE
1986

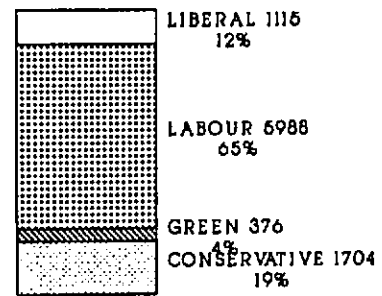


LITTLE
1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
3 LABOUR HELD

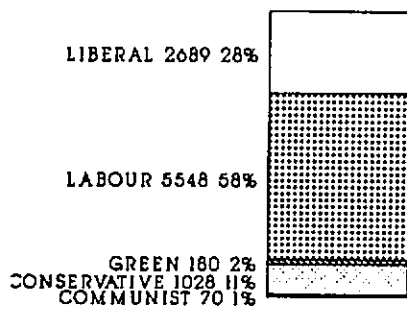


NEWINGTON
1986

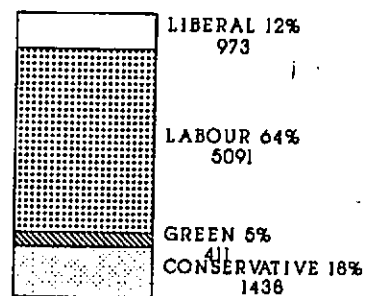


NEWINGTON
1990

Results Comparison by Ward.
3 LABOUR HELD



St. GILES
1986



St. GILES
1990



House of Commons,
London, SW1A 0AA
Tel: 071- 219 3000
071- 219 5137

HARRIET HARMAN MP

REPORT

JUNE 1990

1. Guy's Hospital Opting Out Campaign

I am devoting most of this report to my proposals for a major Peckham Labour Party Campaign against Guy's Hospital being designated a NHS Self governing Trust by the Secretary of State for Health.

The NHS and Community Care Act has just become law allowing the Secretary of State to designate some hospitals self-governing trusts.

If Guy's Management wants to go ahead with an opt out, they will submit an application to the Department of Health by the end of July. Then the Secretary of State will announce the beginning of the consultation period. During this time, local opinion will be sought by the Regional Health Authority about whether there is local support for opting out.

Why a Peckham Labour Party Campaign is so important.

* If Guy's opts out, people living locally will lose out. Guy's links with the Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority will be severed. The opted out Guy's would be able to increase its income by treating private patients before local people; dropping services such as geriatrics, psychiatry and other services for the long term ill; agreeing deals which give preference to patients from other Health Authorities in order to win a large contract. The Chairman of the NHS Trust Board and all the Directors would either be direct or indirect appointees of the Secretary of State.

* a major opt out campaign could ensure that an overwhelming tide of local opposition is expressed.

* this would force the Secretary of State to drop the opt out plans. If he decided to go ahead with the opt out despite the local opposition, he would be shown to be over-riding public opinion and making a mockery of the consultation.

* Labour represents the majority of people when speaking out on this matter. We are absolutely in tune with public opinion on the health service.

* If Guy's opts out, it would make it much harder for Kings to resist opt out plans.



-2-

* Guys is in Bermondsey and serves people who live in Bermondsey. But it also is the local hospital for many people who live in the Peckham constituency.

* Peckham CLP must be part of the Hands Off Guys Campaign, but we must also have our own distinctive voice on this matter. Labour must be the political party which is seen to be fighting hardest locally to stop the hospital being opted out.

What the Campaign should include.

The consultation period is three months. During that time Peckham Labour Party could undertake the following action.

* Placing an ad in the South London Press drawing attention to the opt out consultation period and urging people to make representations. A high profile kick-off for the campaign is vital. The Secretary of State will want consultations to be as low key as possible.

* Making, and publishing our own reasoned objections to opt out.

* Contacting our union affiliates, informing them of the situation and involving them in the campaign.

* Contacting all the local branches of patients organisations in the constituency and urging them to make representations.

* A constituency wide leaflet explaining the opt out and how to make representations against it.

* A lunch-time public meeting (possibly at Walworth Town Hall). I have found that lunch-time meetings have far greater attendance than evening public meetings.

* Demonstration outside the Department of Health HQ at Richmond Terrace.

* a constituency wide petition, with Saturday stalls at East lane and Rye Lane.

* A series of initiatives at weekly intervals, such as

- Bus workers against the opt out (supplying them with leaflets and photo call outside the bus garage)

- School kids against the opt out. (stickers, and a poster competition)

- Mums against the opt out. (photo call with plenty of pregnant women)



-3-

- pensioners against the opt out (work with pensioners action groups. Jack Jones would, I'm sure, help on this. We could approach Bill Owen, the actor)
- GP's against the opt out. We have GP's in the Peckham labour party membership
- nurses against the opt out and doctors against the opt out etc.

I'm sure we could think of many more, But the objective would be to have a stream of initiatives to keep it in the public eye and raise the political temperature.

* We should have a launch of the campaign at a press conference in the House of Commons aiming to get London TV, radio and papers. There will be a lot of interest as Guy's is supposed to be the flagship. We shall have to challenge Kenneth Clark to say what level of opposition would make him cancel the opt out.

Our success in this campaign will matter not just for local people, but also nationally. If we can knock the Guy's opt out off course, it will be a tremendous set-back for the government not only on opting out but on all their NHS reforms. As one of the first opt out campaigns, we will be watched throughout the country.

2. Other Health Issues

In my capacity as Shadow Health Minister, I have been involved in the following work over the last month :

* Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. The passage of this bill has been a success for supporters of abortion rights and embryo research. Though the time limit for abortion has been lowered from 28 to 24 weeks, there is now much greater discretion for doctors to grant an abortion beyond that time limit. Our task now is to press for improved family planning services and better sex education so that there is less need for abortions. I put down an Early Day Motion to this effect during the passage of the Bill which won wide support across all parties.

* I introduced my 'Safeguards for Residential Homes' Bill on 15th June. This would have ensured that all private homes of less than four residents would have to be registered by the local authority. The Government, whilst admitting that there is a loophole in the present legislation, blocked my Bill and I am now pressing them to either accept my bill or come forward with their own proposals.

* I have produced a detailed report on staff shortages in NHS laboratories, called 'Under the Microscope', whose findings were based on a survey I conducted of District Health Authorities in England and Wales. Please let me know if you want a copy



-4-

* I addressed a fringe meeting on community care at the NALGO Annual Conference in Bournemouth on 14th June.

* I visited Doncaster Royal Infirmary, which is threatened with opt out, and addressed a public meeting there on the NHS reforms on 26th June.

* I attended the opening of a new day surgery centre at Kings College Hospital.

* I addressed NHS Management Trainees at the Kings Fund Centre in Notting Hill on 13th June.

* I started off the charity and campaigning walk organised by 'Hospitals Come First'.

3. Family and Women's Issues

* I have been involved in looking at the development of Labour's policy of the family. The Tories are obviously going to make this a big election issue and we need to have our own policy with which to respond. I have written several newspaper articles and given interviews on this issue. I am also giving the Hugh Jolly Memorial Lecture at the AGM of Exploring Parenthood on 7th July.

* I attended the Labour Women's Annual Conference in Skegness on 9th June.

* I attended the Peckham Labour Party Women's Section on 2nd July.

* I participated in the Channel Four programme "Who's Holding the Baby", which took the form of a Select Committee discussing childcare policy.

4. Surgeries and Casework

I continue to receive a huge amount of correspondence from constituents, and my surgeries remain packed; there have been more than 75 people at the last two surgeries. I still take up problems as quickly as possible.

The vast majority of cases are immigration, DSS and Council housing problems. I have become increasingly frustrated at the failure of the Southwark Housing Department to respond to my enquiries on behalf of constituents and I have raised this issue many times with both members and Council officers. However, I am now optimistic that the new Labour Group and the new Director of Housing, John Broomfield, whom I met last week, will start to pull the Department around.



5. Press Statements

I have recently issued press statements on the following:

- * the shambles of the Government's position on the Rail Link, arising from its refusal to invest any public funds in the project. Whilst it is welcome that the immediate threat of a junction at Warwick Gardens and a viaduct at Walworth is lifted, the uncertainty for Peckham constituents remains.

- * a call for the Planning Committee to reject Sainsbury's application to build a new superstore at the old Surrey Fields site in East Dulwich.

- * a call on the Government and the Housing Corporation to increase funding for the Peabody Trust, which needs to modernise its properties in Camberwell.

- * two statements on the dangers of King's College Hospital opting-out.

6. Local Visits

My recent local visits have included the following:

- * I have met Sally Keeble, the new Leader of Southwark Council, and will meet her every month.

- * Southwark Age Concern

- * Mayor's Carnival in Peckham Rye

- * Southwark Childminders

- * Kingsdale School in Dulwich

- * Crawford Primary School, where the teacher shortages are causing increasing anger and anxiety amongst parents. My concern over teacher shortages has been increased by the situation at Crawford Primary, and I spoke in the House of Commons debate on this issue. I gave my backing to the parents' protests and also issued a press statement.

- * The opening of a new Peckham centre for the South London Children's Scrap Scheme. I have asked the House of Commons administrators if it would be possible for Parliament to provide recyclable material for this excellent scheme.

- * Alleyn Community Playgroup

- * AGM of the Southwark Disablement Association

- * Annual Civic Service in Southwark Cathedral

- * Lettsom TA

- * Elmington TA

- * Nelson TA

- * Carefree at St Giles Youth Centre, which helps learning disabled young people



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

HARRIET HARMAN MP

SEPTEMBER 1990 REPORT

1) HOUSING ACTION TRUSTS

You may be aware of the overwhelming vote of Gloucester Grove and North Peckham tenants against plans to hand over control of their estates to Government-appointed Housing Action Trusts. The details of the result are:

	Yes	No	Turnout
North Peckham	276 (33%)	569 (67%)	65%
Gloucester Grove	220 (27%)	595 (73%)	71%

I am extremely pleased at this result, which is a big slap in the face of the Government. I have strongly opposed the plans for HATs in Southwark because the Government refused to give any guarantees to tenants about their rents and security of tenure under a HAT. Despite the money they claimed would be available under the HAT for improvements, the Tory Government is not interested in helping the present tenants of the North Peckham and Gloucester Grove estates. Rather, they wanted to develop luxury housing for those working in the City and West End, as they did in the Docklands Experiment. I am glad that the tenants have not been taken in by the Government's bribery. Instead of sulking about the result, the Government must now make money available to estates to carry out improvements.

Southwark Council must not regard the result as a vote of confidence in their running of the estate. They have now been given a last chance to get their estate management right. Major changes are needed in the way estates are run. We in the Labour Party must help to provide the political will to the Council to make those changes.

2) FAMILY POLICY

On September 26th I helped to launch a major paper on family policy, called "The Family Way". It has been published by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), and the authors were Anna Coote, Patricia Hewitt and myself. Our aim was to examine the changing patterns of family life and to look at the development of new policies which meet those changes and work in the best interests of children.

06. Sept '90

12/9



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

HARRIET HARMAN MP

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The main points of our report were:

- * changes in family life are happening not just in this country, but across Europe. No Government can turn back the clock.
- * to claim that one kind of family is right and others are wrong does considerable damage to those children who live in "non-traditional" family settings.
- * public policy cannot alter private choices, but it can lessen the painful effects of changes.

The main goals of a new family policy should be:

- * to enable women, who are the mainstay of most families, to be self-reliant. This means giving the women the chance to earn a decent living and to combine paid employment and parenthood. It would involve the provision of proper childcare, parental leave, equal pay and job opportunities, more flexible working arrangements and special measures to help single mothers return to work.
- * to enable men to develop a new sense of responsibility for their families. Fathers need to be able to develop strong relationships with their children, rather than just "bringing home the bacon." This means that employers should be encouraged to provide flexible working arrangements, and paternity leave.

The launch of the document received widespread press coverage and its main points were adopted by Neil Kinnock in his recent speech on the family.

3) GROVE PARK CHILDREN'S HOME

I was extremely concerned about further allegations concerning the running of a children's home in Grove Park by Southwark Social Services. I have written to Virginia Bottomley, the health minister, asking her to send in the Social Services Inspectorate to carry out a wide ranging enquiry into Southwark's children's homes.

I have called on the Inspectorate to look at:

- * the profile of children now in Southwark's residential care.
- * whether the regimes in these homes are appropriate for such children.
- * whether there are other practical alternatives to residential care which would be better for some children.
- * whether there are enough staff in the homes and whether they have adequate and appropriate training.
- * the level of management support and back-up for staff in residential care.
- * the co-ordination between Southwark social services and other Council departments.
- * the level of funding of Southwark social services.

4) HEALTH

* Opting-Out: Robin Cook and I have been campaigning for the Labour Party around the country against plans by local hospitals to form self-governing trusts. During September, as part of this campaign, I made visits to Liverpool, Stevenage and Brighton.

On 4th September, I held a consultation to listen to the views of staff, doctors, and interests groups about the opting-out of Guys Hospital. I also attended a public meeting on the Guys opt-out, organised by Brunswick Ward, on 25th September. The consultation process organised by the South-East Thames Regional Health Authority has been a sham, and I would urge all party members to make their objections to the opt-out by writing to:

Adrian Pollit
South West Thames Regional Health Authority
Thrift House
Collington Avenue
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex TN39 3NQ

The consultation period ends on 12th November so all objections must be made by then.

* On 10th September, I was part of a delegation of south-east London MPs which had a meeting with Stephen Dorrell, the Health Minister, to protest about the large cuts being made at King's.

* I spoke at the meeting of the Camberwell Community Health Council on 18th September about the cuts and other local health issues.

* Paul Boateng MP, Bob Hughes MP, Garth Crooks (the Charlton Athletic Footballer), Bill Morris of the TGWU and myself met to discuss setting up an All-Party Parliamentary Group on sickle cell anaemia. The main aims of the Group would be to raise awareness of the disease and to encourage new funding arrangements for research and treatment of it. The Camberwell CHC is holding a public meeting on 29th October to discuss the cuts to the Sickle Cell ward at Kings.

* I spoke at the Labour Group meeting of the Conference of the ADSS (Association of Directors of Social Services) on 19th September about Labour's plans for community care.

* On 4th September I visited the Kidney Unit at Dulwich Hospital.

* I have met the new Director of the NHS Training Authority to discuss Labour's policies on this issue.

* I took part in an excellent edition of the ITV morning show "The Time, The Place", hosted by John Stapleton which looked at the growing problem of hospital waiting lists. The horror stories from members of the audience about long waits for operations show how badly under-funded the NHS is under the Tories.

* I helped launch the fundraising cycle ride "To the Lighthouse" on 9th September, my first experience on a bicycle for several years. The money raised was for AIDS charities.

5) LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

I attended most of Labour Party Conference in Blackpool last week.

I spoke at the fringe meetings of the Social Health Association, the National Association of One-Parent Families, the Social Care Association and Labour's Parliamentary Health team.

6) LOCAL VISITS

* I attended a meeting with Southwark Planning Officers and local MPs on 29th August about the extension of the East London Line to Peckham. As a result we issued a strong statement of support for the proposal and I have now asked for a meeting with the Transport Minister, Roger Freeman, to look at the implementation of the plan.

* I attended the AGM of the Crawford Estate TA on 24th September.

* I also attended the AGM of the D'Eynesford TA.

* I attended the Southwark Under Fives Festival in Burgess Park on 12th September.

* I visited CAMPAG on 27th September.

* I have had meetings with the Leader of the Council and with the Director of Social Services.

* Nomination and reselection meetings are taking up many of my evenings at present.

Harriet Harman MP

8th October 1990



HARRIET HARMAN, M.P.
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HARRIET HARMAN MP

OCTOBER REPORT

1. COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL INJURIES

I have introduced a new bill in Parliament to provide compensation for victims of medical accidents. The bill is called the Compensation for Medical Injuries Bill and was given its first reading in the House of Commons on 25th October. The Bill will then be available for any MP who comes high up in the Ballot for Private Members Bills which will be drawn on 15th November 1990.

The aim of my bill is to establish a much fairer system of making awards to victims of medical accidents. Under the current compensation scheme, the victim has to go to court to prove that their accident was the result of a doctor's negligence. This can be extremely difficult and the fight in the courts can take years. Furthermore you can only go to court if you are poor enough to qualify for legal aid or rich enough to pay large legal fees. Under the present system, a few people win large sums in compensation but most people end up with nothing.

My bill would set up a "no-fault" compensation scheme for medical accidents, such as they have in New Zealand and Sweden. Compensation would be paid without having to prove negligence. This would not only be fairer on the victims but would also reduce the present high costs of medical litigation.

2. BY-ELECTIONS

During the month, I have made visits to Bradford North to support the by-election campaign of Terry Rooney, and to Bootle for the campaign of Joe Denton. These by-elections were caused by the deaths of Pat Wall and Mike Carr, who had only been elected MP for Bootle a few weeks previously.

3. CHANGING THE HOURS OF PARLIAMENT

I have launched a campaign, along with several other MPs, to bring the hours of Parliament in line with those of other organisations and businesses. It is quite wrong that so many MPs have other jobs apart from their Parliamentary work, such as solicitors, business consultants, and barristers. We need a full-time professional Parliament. The present hours also deter women from becoming MPs because of the difficulty of combining being an MP with family life.

I will be raising the issue in Business Questions on 22nd November, looking for a full debate in the House of Commons. The campaign has already attracted support from all the political parties, including from Sir Bernard Braine, the longest-serving MP (known as "the Father of the House"). There is also considerable media and press interest in this issue. I shall be

presenting evidence to the Parliamentary Labour Party Review Committee, which is currently examining working conditions and hours of the House of Commons. I will report any further developments in the campaign to the GC.

4. QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRE

As I reported to the last GC, I was extremely concerned about reports of staff reductions at the Queens Road Centre for People with learning disabilities. I have met Hilary Road, the Chair of Southwark Mencap, to discuss the future of the Centre and the development of local policies for people with learning disabilities. I have also discussed the issue with the Leader of the Council. I wrote to the Chair and all members of the Social Services Committee offering to organise consultation with Brian Rix and national MENCAP to look at local services. The suggestion was not taken up. In all my correspondence and meetings I have stressed the need for Southwark Council to consult users of services about any proposed changes. I am meeting Les Alden, Chair of Social Services, on 9th November to look at this again.

5. HOUSING

Following the tenants' rejection of the Government's HAT proposals for the North Peckham and Gloucester Grove estates, I wrote to the housing minister, Michael Spicer, asking for an assurance that the Government will not now abandon the estates but will provide the funding which is necessary for any improvements. I pointed out in my letter to the Minister that even the Government's own consultants, PIC services, say at least 69m needs to be spent on the North Peckham and 44m on the Gloucester Grove. This is money the Council simply does not have. I have asked for a meeting with the minister to discuss this.

I attended the meeting of the North Peckham TA on 23rd October at which I raised these points. I also stressed that the rejection of a HAT does not indicate tenants' support for the current Council management of the estate.

I attended the meeting of the Kennington House TA on 16th October, at which they launched plans to establish the TA as a Management Co-Op. I was impressed with the tenants commitment to the Co-op proposal, and I believe that co-ops could be the best way of improving the management and tenant participation in several of the estates in Peckham. I have now written to the Nelson TA, encouraging them to discuss with Southwark Council officers the idea of forming a Co-op on their estate.

6. GUY'S OPT-OUT

On 24th October, I took part in the press launch of the Guys staff response to the hospital's opt-out proposal. I am also preparing my own response with Joan Ruddock MP, which I will be circulating to wards, to local health groups and trade unions. I would like to thank Alan Watson for his advice on the financial side of this document. I would again urge GC members to make

their objections to the opt-out proposal before the closing date of 12th November. The address is:

Adrian Pollit
South West Thames Regional Health Authority
Thrift House
Collington Avenue
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex TN3 3NQ

7. TEACHER SHORTAGES

Following the publication of my report during the summer on teacher shortages in Peckham, and the Thames TV programme made by the parents from Crawford Primary School, I attended a meeting of London Labour MPs with Tim Eggar, the new Education Minister, to discuss teacher shortages. Again, the Government refused to offer any solutions to the problem, saying that local authorities are solely responsible for teacher recruitment and retention. Before this meeting I conducted a telephone survey of some headteachers in Peckham. This survey had three principal findings:

- * Southwark Council had done well in filling vacancies.
- * There is concern over the experience and training of some of the teachers recruited.
- * The administrative workload created by the Baker reforms is putting an intolerable burden on teachers which is leading to a high turnover.

8. EAST LONDON LINE

On 11th October I had a meeting with the Transport Minister, Roger Freeman, to discuss extending the East London line to Peckham. The meeting was also attended by Cllrs Sally Keeble and Jeremy Frazer and Southwark Planning officers. Roger Freeman did not give any guarantees about the funding of the project or the introduction of a bill in Parliament, but was supportive of the proposal and said that the extension was the "logical, sensible thing to do." He promised to come to a seminar in Southwark for local businesses in December to discuss the development of the scheme.

9. SHADOW CABINET

The only change resulting from this year's Shadow Cabinet elections has been the replacement of Joan Lestor by Ann Taylor, who remains Labour's environmental protection spokesperson. I was pleased with my personal vote, which was an increase on last year's at a time when most candidates votes fell. I was the second runner-up in the election.

10. SICKLE CELL ANAEMIA

In my last report I mentioned that Paul Boateng MP, Bob Hughes MP, Garth Crooks of Charlton Athletic, Bill Morris of the TGWU and myself are planning to form a Parliamentary Group on Sickle Cell Anaemia to raise political awareness of the issue. I

announced the launch of the Group at a well-attended public meeting on SCA on 29th October, organised by the Camberwell Community Health Council. I issued several press statements in support of the meeting, which received good media coverage.

11. LOCAL VISITS AND OTHER MEETINGS

Apart from the meetings and visits mentioned above, my other visits and meetings have included:

- * opening of Crampton School's new playground
- * launch of Jobs in the City on 10th October
- * tour of Parliament for Haberdasher Aske's Girls School
- * visit to Brunel University Labour Club on 11th October
- * UCW Council meeting on 16th October
- * Time To Know Picket of the Headquarters of MI5, organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties, on 18th October.
- * Cabinet Management Seminar in Hampshire on 31st October.
- * Annual General Meeting of the South London Family Service Unit in Camberwell on 1st November.

12. STOP PRESS

I understand that the Greater London Labour Party has just appointed Carl Milner as the new Agent/Organiser for Peckham. He will be starting on 3rd December and will initially be based at the GLLP offices at Herbert Morrison House, Walworth Road.

Harriet Harman MP

8th November 1990



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HARRIET HARMAN MP

NOVEMBER REPORT

1. RESELECTION

I would like to thank the party for reselecting me to stand as Peckham's Labour candidate at the next General Election. It is a great privilege to be able to carry on serving the party and the people of Peckham.

2. A NEW PRIME MINISTER

Since my last Report we have had a change of Prime Minister. The ditching of Margaret Thatcher was nothing more than a response by Tory MPs to their fall and our rise in the opinion polls. The change in the Tory leadership is a tribute to the success of our campaignss against the Tories. Our policies have attracted support. But it is important with a new Prime Minister using new tactics, if not new policies, that we refocus our opposition. That process is under way in the NEC and the Parliamentary Labour Party.

4. NEW PARTY AGENT

The new Labour Party agent for Peckham, Carl Milner, has started work this month. Initially he will be based at Herbert Morrison House. I will be meeting him to discuss our strategy in the run-up to the next General Election on Monday 10th December.

5. CHANNEL TUNNEL

I had a meeting with representatives of PEARL on Monday 12th November, at which we discussed the next stages on the rail link. As a result of this discussion, I have now set up a meeting with the British Rail's Director of the Channel Tunnel Rail Project, John Palmer on 10th December. The points I will be raising with BR are the management of properties in my constituency, the timetable for future events, particularly the announcement of the route, and the petition on the Rail Link Bill in the House of Lords.

I have also persuaded the Transport Minister, Roger Freeman, to visit the Peckham constituency to look at the effects of the possible route on the area. This ministerial visit will be held on 24th January 1991.

6. HEALTH

* Opting-Out. Following my joint report with Joan Ruddock MP on the effect of Guys Hospital opting-out, which was issued in October, I have produced two further reports on this matter.

The first deals with the concerns of health service staff and unions. In this report, I stress that NHS unions and professional associations have consistently opposed opting-out and that every ballot of hospital staff has shown overwhelming opposition to opt-out moves. The analysis in the report raises questions about the future balance between qualified and unqualified staff, terms and conditions of employment, pay, and rights to union recognition.

The second report looks at the consultation process over the formation of NHS trusts and comes to the conclusion that the consultation has been a sham. The report examines a series of complaints about the process:

- that the consultation period was only three months
- that the consultation was low key with the clear intention that few people would hear about it.
- that some regions did not even carry out the consultation themselves, but merely delegated it to the promoters of opting-out.
- that Regional Health Authorities made no attempt to ensure that they sought the views of a broad range of those who had a legitimate interest.
- that the consultation exercise did not involve people being given fair and adequate information.

Guys Hospital was one of the 56 hospitals on the list of those agreed for opting-out, announced by the Secretary of State on Tuesday 4th December.

* No Fault Compensation: I have reported previously on my bill to establish a system of compensation for the victims of medical accidents. Rosie Barnes MP, who came high in the Private Members' Ballot, will now taking up my bill.

* Clerical Staff in the NHS: I will be issuing a report next week on the shortages of administrative and clerical staff in the NHS, similar to my previous reports on shortages of nurses and of laboratory technicians.

* I visited the Accident and Emergency Unit and Kings Hospital on Tuesday 4th December and was shocked at how long patients were having to wait before being attended. This is now a major scandal and the local Community Health Council has established a regular "Casualty Watch" to monitor the position. I raised this issue at a meeting with the Chairman of the Camberwell Health Authority, Sir Derek Boorman, on 13th November and I shall also be taking it up with the Minister.

* I delivered a lecture on the NHS Reforms and Labour's health policy at the Wolfson Lecture Theatre, Kings, to the hospital's management unit.

* I took part today in the launch of Labour's major new policy document, "A Fresh Start for the NHS", which received widespread media coverage. Please let my office know if you want copies.

7. NATIONAL CAMPAIGNING

Over the last month, I have taken part in a series of national campaign visits. These have included to Paisley for the by-election campaigns of Eileen Adams and John McMaster, to Stockport to see local health centres and to meet Graham Pink, the nurse who has been dismissed for complaining about chronic underfunding in his hospital, to Mitcham and Morden to see the local hospitals under the threat of opting-out, to the North-Middlesex hospital, also under threat of opting-out, and to Bootle for the by-election campaign of Joe Benton.

8. CHANGING THE HOURS OF PARLIAMENT

Last month I reported that I had launched an all party campaign to change the working hours of parliament. This has gained a lot of support and there have been reports that John Major promised to look at the issue in return for votes in the leadership election. I have put down a Parliamentary Question asking him to look at changing the sitting times and the date of the summer recess. This question is due for answer on Monday 10th December.

Other initiatives include:

* The launch of a report entitled "Time Gentlemen, Please" on Monday 10th December. This sets out the case for changing the sitting hours and has been submitted to the Parliamentary Labour Party's Review Committee which is currently considering the issue.

* Encouraging support for Early Day Motion Number 161 "Parliamentary Hours", calling for more sensible hours and conditions for the House of Commons.

* In Business Questions today, 6th December, asking for a debate to be held on the floor of the house and for the hours to be reviewed.

* Making written representations to the Leader of the House, John MacGregor.

* A questionnaire to be sent to all MPs seeking their views.

9. POLICE

I attended a useful meeting with the Southwark Police on 8th November, before which I had written to many local community groups, trade unions and tenants associations, asking for their views on policing in the constituency. As a result of this consultation, I was able to make representations on the attitudes of local people towards their police.

The main point to emerge from the meeting was that the Police are planning to centralise the charging of suspects and the use of cells in the main Southwark station. I told the Police that this would be acceptable

- if it is accompanied by the development of satellite stations,
- if suspects released in the middle of the night are provided with transport home,
- if the satellite stations have effective communication with the central station,
- if the rights of suspects are respected,
- if resources are allocated properly.
- if high priority is given to the race dimension to policing in Peckham, and to developing a multi-racial police force.

10. OTHER VISITS

Apart from those mentioned above, my other visits over the last month have included:

- * Speaking at the AGM of the Greater London Association for Pre-Retirement on 8th November.
- * Opening of the new London Bus route T8 from Camberwell to Brixton.
- * Newington Ward Disco on 10th November.
- * Southwark Homeworkers Group.
- * Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme on 14th November
- * Meetings with the Leader, the Chief Executive and the Chair of Social Services of the Council during the month.
- * Attending Anglia TV's "Any Answers" on 23rd November in Colchester.
- * Haberdashers Aske's Girls Schools on 29th November
- * Ailsham Centre in Rye Lane for World Aids Day

Harriet Harman

6th December 1990



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HARRIET HARMAN MP

DECEMBER REPORT

1. THE GULF CRISIS

As we meet this month, we are fast approaching the United Nations deadline for Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait. It is my strong belief that economic sanctions have not yet been given long enough to take effect. With the continuation of an absolute blockade on Iraq, together with the now long-overdue moves to settle the Palestinian question, Saddam Hussein could be forced to withdraw his occupying forces. A premature use of force would certainly involve the death of thousands of British and other soldiers, thousands of civilians, lead to a terrorist offensive by Iraq in the UK and the USA, and may well only serve to destabilize the Middle East still further in the long term. It is vital that we do everything possible to bring about a lasting peace in the Middle East.

2. THE NEW PRIME MINISTER

It now appears as if John Major's honeymoon period may already be drawing to a close, with Labour now being put ahead again in the polls by MORI. There has clearly been a change in the style and presentation of the Government's policies, but there is no real change in substance. John Major was, after all, one of the main architects of the Thatcherite economic policy. In spite of the well-publicized out of court settlement with haemophiliacs who had been infected with HIV, there has been no extra money to remedy the disgraceful waiting-lists and building maintenance back-log in the NHS. There is more "caring talk" about homelessness but still no more money for councils to build and improve homes for rent.

3. PARLIAMENTARY HOURS

I am continuing to press forward with my campaign to reform the hours worked in Parliament. I believe it is vital that a more modern and sensible solution is worked out instead of debating into the small hours of the morning. This will enable more women to become MP's. It is now apparent that the Leader of the House, John McGregor, is seriously considering the prospect of reform, and I am also expecting the House of Commons Procedure Committee to announce shortly that they will be looking into the issue. I am also conscious of the need to remind some of my fellow Labour MP's that this is official Party policy, as I have received some criticism from Northern Members, who are concerned about what they will be able to do in the evenings !

4. GLOUCESTER GROVE

I have recently visited the Estate with Ali Balli of the Tenants Association following the tragic death of Raymond Assohoun. I am extremely concerned about what has happened there and am taking action on three fronts.

- * Pressing the council quickly to wash down and repaint the fire burnt corridors in Wickway Court. Tenants are still living there, yet the place is thick with soot. The council still haven't repainted from the fire in Almondsbury Court which happened almost a year ago.

- * Ensuring an open and thorough enquiry about why the warnings of fire hazard which had been made to the Housing Department over the last twelve months by the Tenants Association and the Fire Authorities had not been acted on.

- * Pressing, together with the Tenants Association and the Council, the Department of the Environment to make money available to the Council to carry out the estate improvements and install entryphones throughout the estate. With such improvements, the problems of burglaries, graffiti, and rubbish dumping would be improved, as well as reducing the risk of fire.

5. HEALTH

- * The pre-Christmas period saw a dramatic worsening of the situation at Kings College Hospital, with the Accident and Emergency department being put on "red alert" for several days. I made several visits to the hospital over this period and was shocked by the terrible scenes in the admission area. On the worst morning fifteen seriously ill patients were still waiting for admission for treatment, having been forced to sleep on trolleys in the corridor overnight. I have written to the Minister, Steven Dorrell, about the vital need for extra funding, and also asked a priority parliamentary question before the Christmas recess. I was informed that a new facility would soon be opened to improve the admission process, and now understand that a ten bed ward will be opened very soon. This is only a step in the right direction, however, and I will continue to press the Minister on the vital issue of funding.

- * I published an analysis of government statistics which show that how long you live and how healthy you are depends on your social class. The health divide has widened in the last 10 years. So much for John Major's classless society.

- * I published a report on the crumbling state of London's Hospitals due to 10 years of underfunding.

* I published a report on the growth in private old peoples' homes throughout the country and the reduction in council old peoples homes. What the Government have done is use Social Security payments and cuts in council spending to carry out privatisation by stealth.

6. SOCIAL SERVICES

I have received a number of complaints from constituents and trade unions about the cuts in the Social Services budget being implemented in Southwark, particularly in the provision of home helps for the elderly and disabled and day centres. I am very much aware of the difficulties and worries these crisis measures are causing to the most vulnerable people in our community, and will continue to do all I can to press the Government to provide the finance necessary for these desperately needed services. On the local level I believe that we need to have effective consultation about decision-making on what the priorities should be for a reduced budget.

7. CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK

At my invitation, Roger Freeman, Transport Minister is visiting Southwark on 24th January. I am liaising with the Peckham and Nunhead and Walworth groups against the Rail Link on what we want to get out of the visit and the route the Minister should take. I also met with John Palmer, British Rail's Director of the Channel Tunnel Rail Project, on December 10th and following this meeting BR are reconsidering their refusal to let Southwark groups present evidence when the Kings Cross terminal Bill goes into the House of Lords. They are also offering the houses they have bought in Southwark to teachers for letting and notices have gone round the schools and education department. The "final" announcement on the route is expected in June this year.

8. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

I have met with the Leader of the Council to discuss this very important issue, and am assured that sufficient people will be on the register to ensure that Southwark retains three constituencies after the next Boundary Commission report. The situation will, however have to be monitored. A real problem in the past have been canvassing difficulties because of a wildly inaccurate register. Hopefully the register will be more complete and more accurate.

9. SWIMMING POOLS

I have received a number of letters expressing concern over the threatened closure of pools. I have taken the matter up with the Director of Leisure and asked for a report on the level of pool use by local people. At a time of cut backs caused by the government it is vital to make the best use of facilities and determine priorities after proper consultation.

10. TICKETS FOR QUESTION TIME IN PARLIAMENT

I have a small number of gallery tickets available for question times during the next session, which I would be very happy to pass to members. The dates concerned are : Jan 16, Jan 31, Feb 18, March 5, March 20. I get two at a time. If you are interested in coming, please let me know which date you would like. It starts at 2.30pm and you can stay as long as you like.

11. LOCAL VISITS

Apart from those already mentioned, my other visits over the last month have included to:

- * Southwark Turkish Community Centre
- * Caroline Gardens Day Centre
- * St Mary's Church Hall playgroup
- * Keyworth School
- * Trinity Centre for the Elderly
- * Southwark Childminding Project
- * Hummingbird Nursery
- * Maudesley and Guys Hospitals with Joan Ruddock to discuss the issue of hospital schools
- * Several Christmas parties including the Womens Centre and the excellent constituency party on December 19th. Many thanks to Kevn Gould, Althea Smith, Alan Watson and all those whose help made it such a success.
- * St Johns Church, Meeting House Lane
- * Attending the ceremony of the making of the Free citizens of the Borough. Congratulations particularly to Mike Geater and Jessie Cannon.

Harriet Harman
8th January 1991

ANNUAL REPORT 1990

A General Election Year ?

The major task for party members in Peckham in the year ahead will be work leading up to, and in, the forthcoming General Election.

We must be ready for June.

The task of winning a resounding vote for Labour will need both political and organisational work. The appointment of the Peckham and Bermondsey Organiser will assist us in this.

People in Peckham desperately need a Labour Government. Peckham has suffered from the health service cuts, council cuts, benefit cuts, job losses, public transport cuts and the poll tax. If any area needs a Labour Government, it is Peckham. And it is hard to see any light at the end of the tunnel if the Tories remain in power.

To form a Labour Government we need to win Bermondsey and Dulwich and well as Peckham.

The strong support for Labour in Peckham can be increased, and turned into votes, by local action and campaigning. We should never take it for granted. It is wrong in principle for a party to think it is "entitled" to people's votes. And complacency often goes hand in hand with political adventurism. That not only undermines our vote, but also makes it much harder to win Bermondsey and Dulwich.

Party Members are vital

The Peckham Labour Party still needs to grow bigger and more active following its prolonged suspension. An important way to keep building the party is to ensure that we value and welcome ALL party members even if their only involvement is to pay subs once a year.

Not everyone has the same amount of time available. Not everyone is in perfect good health. People's lives change over the years and their involvement in the party is bound to fluctuate over time.

It puts people off involvement in the party if they are viewed as second class members, because they cannot come to all ward meetings. Even if they can just deliver leaflets to their block and put posters up in their window, that is still a great help to the party.

As well as a large group of very active members we need a huge network of people who will help out as and when needed.

It also puts people off coming to ward meetings if the air is thick with jargon. It is boring and bewildering to sit in a meeting if you do not understand and no-one explains what the GC, LGC, standing orders, reference backs etc are.

A difficult year for Council services

Government spending limits mean that people in Southwark have to wait even longer to be rehoused, or to get a home help than used to be the case. And some who rely on services such as home helps are losing them.

It is vital, as the Council makes difficult decisions about how to re-organise services, and which ones to cut, that they consult with those who use the services. Service cuts are even more painful if people have the feeling that they are being ignored. And those who use the services are a vital sounding board to judge changes.

At a time of diminishing resources, it becomes even more important for the Council carefully to manage the money that they do have.

Thank you to the officers.

I know that all party members will wish me to thank the officers of the party for the work that they have done over the past year. We could not manage without the constituency and ward officers! It is a hard and unglamorous slog being a party officer.

Many thanks are also due to those party members who have helped at my surgeries. It helps avoid the constituents having to wait too long, and shows that in the party locally, we work as a team.

And thanks, too, are due to my House of Commons office team who work tirelessly to make sure that my constituents get a prompt response to their many problems.

Harriet Harman MP