



HARRIET HARMAN MP

JANUARY 1991

1. THE GULF WAR

The Gulf War has already costs thousands of lives, and caused terrible environmental damage. Those who were not prepared to give sanctions more time to work promised that the war would be quick. But thousands of lives have already been lost without even the land battle starting. It remains important for the Labour voice in British politics to highlight the need to stay within the remit of the UN authority and not to expand the war aims to include deposing Saddam Hussein. We must constantly emphasise the injustice in the Region of the Israeli occupation of territories in breach of international law and UN resolutions, and the injustice suffered by the Palestinians. We must focus attention on the need to secure peace, as soon as possible, and justice after the war. I have written to party members outlining my position on the Gulf War. I plan to keep members informed of my views in order to have a dialogue about the developing situation.

2. MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE WAR

I have supported an Early Day Motion, tabled by Mark Fisher MP criticising the way in which the war is being covered by the media. It is always important that war reporting should not put the lives of troops at risk. But the Government has imposed excessively wide restrictions on the media. It is vital that the public is provided with as full and honest an account of events as possible, and we are not getting that.

3. THE CHANNEL TUNNEL

At my invitation the Minister for Transport, Roger Freeman, visited Nunhead, Camberwell and Walworth on January 24th. The aim was to enable him to see the areas blighted by the BR Channel Tunnel Rail Link and to meet Peckham and Nunhead and Walworth groups against the Rail Link.

4. SHELTERED HOUSING IN SOUTHWARK

I have received many complaints from constituents about the proposed withdrawal of warden support for residents in sheltered housing units. I recognize that the Council have had to make cuts as a result of the Government's financial cap on spending, but am very concerned about these proposed changes. On January 21st, I met with the Chairs and Directors of Housing and Social Services to discuss this issue. I expressed my concern that the Council had failed to consult those who live in the sheltered housing units. Consulting with employees is not a substitute for consulting with those who depend upon the services. The Council had failed to investigate whether similar changes in sheltered housing have been tried in other boroughs and whether these had been successful or had failed. I made it clear that I would not support any changes in sheltered housing, at least until those who live in sheltered housing had been consulted and investigations carried out as to whether the scheme had been tried elsewhere.

5. HEALTH

* I have just published a report detailing the growing number of operations that are being cancelled, because of the squeeze on NHS finances. Budget cuts mean that more and more people, who need surgical treatment, are being sent standard letters, saying that their operation has been cancelled. In the London in 1989/90, nearly 48,000 operations were cancelled. Please let me know if you want a copy.

* My Compensation for Medical Injury Bill was proposed in the Commons on February 1st by Rosie Barnes, who came second in the Private Members' Bill ballot. Its aim was to establish a fairer and more efficient scheme for compensation for medical accidents. As happens in New Zealand and Sweden, victims would not have to prove negligence in the Courts before receiving compensation, and groups such as those haemophiliacs who were infected with the HIV virus would receive automatic compensation. This Bill was opposed by Secretary of State, William Waldegrave and was defeated.

* I have received confirmation from Steven Dorrell, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, that the new Kings Hospital Day Surgery block which is under construction at present will be used exclusively for NHS patients. I won this promise in a written parliamentary answer, and will do all I can to make sure that he keeps it !

* I have also published figures this month which show the acute shortage of clerical and administrative staff throughout the NHS. Shortage of A and C staff means patients waiting while notes are found, GP's waiting to hear from consultants after patients have been examined and further damage to patient care. As well as improvements in pay, the NHS needs to recognise that women A and C employees should be offered flexible work time, and other terms and conditions which make work easier to combine with family responsibilities. Please let me know if you want a copy of this report.

* On February 4th I helped present the ALA's press launch of its survey into the London Health Service. This shows that 13 of the 28 District Health Authorities in the capital are having to make cuts in excess of 1 million this year. These cuts are hitting elective surgery and orthopaedics especially hard, and bed reductions have caused major problems in the accident and emergency services too.

6. GLOUCESTER GROVE

I am continuing to investigate the background to the fire at Wickway Court in the Estate, that led to the death of Raymond Assahoun. I am very concerned that earlier warnings about the danger of fire on this Estate may not have been properly heeded and I have written to the Fire Brigade, the London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, and Southwark Council to ask for confirmation of these warnings. Since the fatal fire, I have visited the Estate twice with Ali Balli, the Chair of the Tenants' Association. I am continuing to press the District Housing Manager for repairs to be done as soon as possible in the block, as conditions for the tenants there remain quite unacceptable. I have also written to Michael Heseltine calling for a speedy decision on Southwark's bid for Estate Action Programme funds for this Estate, and have invited him down to see for himself the extent of the work that needs doing.

7. MARY DATCHELOR HOUSE SWIMMING POOL

I am shortly to meet with representatives of the campaign opposing the closure of the Mary Datchelor swimming pool. They are very concerned that the special features that they enjoy at this pool will be lost, when Southark are forced to cut the Leisure and Recreation budget.

8. CARTER STREET POLICE

I met with Chief Superintendent Griffiths and Superintendent Ingham at Carter Street Police Station on January 28th. I expressed concern about the continuing bad reputation of the Carter Street Station in comparison with other local stations, particularly amongst the black community. I urged greater cooperation too between the Police and Council on the problem of squatting and the links with drug dealing on local Estates.

9. TICKETS FOR QUESTION TIME IN PARLIAMENT

I have a 2 gallery tickets available for Question times in the House of Commons on the following dates : Tuesday 5 March and Wednesday 20 March. **It starts at 2.30pm and you can stay as long as you want.** If you would like to come please let me know.

10. LOCAL VISITS

In addition to those already mentioned, my local visits over the last month have included :

- * St John's Church to meet with Malcolm Johnson's parishioners
- * Guy's Hospital to meet with doctors to discuss cancelled operations.
- * St Peter's School with Councillor Cherrill
- * Comber Grove School
- * Consort Ward Labour Party AGM
- * Newington Ward Labour Party AGM
- * Barset Ward (in the pub as I was too late for the meeting!)
- * meeting the Leader of the Council

Harriet Harman
5th February 1991



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APRIL 1991

1. THE KURDISH CRISIS

I have been supporting the stand taken by Ann Clwyd, Labour Shadow Minister for Overseas Development who visited the Kurdish refugees on the Iranian border.

It is clear that Saddam Hussein would have been quite prepared to carry out genocide against the Kurds, leave them to starve on exposed mountains or flee altogether out of Iraq's borders.

The response of the UK Government was far too slow, and was only put into action following public and media outcry as the TV pictures started to appear.

It is to be hoped that the promises of autonomy for the Kurds within Iraq will materialise.

The military involvement of allied forces must only be used to protect the provision of aid and shelter.

2. PECKHAM'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE GENERAL ELECTION

Kevin Gould is co-ordinating the preparation of General Election campaign plans.

* I have taken part in a Faraday ward Sunday morning leafletting campaign.

* On Saturday 27th April I took part in a Baset Ward advice surgery.

* I attended Brunswick, St Giles and Friary ward meetings.

3. NATIONAL CAMPAIGNING

I went to the Ribble Valley and Neath by-elections, and I will also be going to the Monmouth campaign.

My involvement in the local election campaign has consisted of

- * visits to target marginal councils, (outside London)
- * taking part in the launches of - Opportunity Britain
 - The Patients Charter
 - Family prosperity

I spoke at the Northern Womens' TUC in Newcastle and the National Labour Womens' Conference in Wolverhampton.

4. EDUCATION IN SOUTHWARK

I visited the Southwark College and the Southwark Adult Education Institute in St Mary's Road. I was very concerned at the level of cuts and have made representations to the Secretary of State for Education. I was also concerned about the way in which the cuts were being handled. I made representations to the Council that there must be full consultation about how the cuts are implemented. In particular, at the Southwark Adult Education Institute the services for those with a mental disability, those with adult literacy problems and those learning English must be protected.

5. EDUCATION OF CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL IN LONDON

Joan Ruddock and I were invited to visit the hospital schools at Guys, Kings and the Maudsley because both Lewisham and Southwark councils, faced with education cuts, had decided to reduce their commitment to children in hospital, many of whom come from outside the Borough or outside London. Following discussions with the education authorities, ALA, other London MP's and Southwark Council, I introduced the Hospital Schools in London Bill into Parliament. The Bill would save hospital education in London by introducing a new financing scheme which would involve the Department of Education acting as the "banker". It would provide funds for those local education authorities, where there are hospital schools, and then recoup the cost of this from the authorities where the children actually live. The Government has blocked the Bill, but I am still using it as a campaigning peg to press the Government to recognise the problem and take action.

6. KINGS COLLEGE HOSPITAL

* On April 17th John Major launched an appeal for funds for essential building work at King's Hospital. I issued a press statement saying that because the work needs to be done I support the appeal. But it should not be necessary for an NHS hospital to look for such large scale charity hand-outs. It is disgraceful hypocrisy for the Prime Minister to tell us how worthwhile this appeal is, when it is his Government's penny-pinching policy

towards the NHS that has made the appeal necessary. As a result of this attitude I did not get invited to the ceremony launching the appeal.

* I visited the hospital to discuss with the Staff side the campaign against King's Opt out. I have since written an open letter to all staff and to the consultants stressing my opposition to opt out, and that the next Labour Government will bring all opted out hospitals back into the local District Health Authorities and end the internal market in the NHS.

7 GUYS HOSPITAL TRUST

Guy's Hospital became an "opt-out", self-governing trust on April 1st. On March 27th Joan Ruddock and I met with the new Chariman Sir Philip Harris and the Chief Executive, Peter Griffiths. We were told that they were planning to reduce the revenue budget by 5 to 10% At the end of this month we have now heard that 600 jobs are to go from Guy's and Lewisham's Hospitals run by this new Trust. These cuts will be catastrophic and I immediately called on William Waldegrave in Parliament to scrap the NHS trust and the NHS reforms. At a press conference I revealed a leaked document which showed that Guys managers knew that the job cuts would lead to service cuts.

9. THE NHS INTERNAL MARKET.

The NHS internal market came into operation on April 1st. This means that patients can now only go to hospitals where NHS managers send them. Those patients who want to go to hospitals with which their health authorities do not have contracts, will often not be able to do so because not enough money has been set aside for "extra-contractual" referrals. I have published a survey of district health authorities which shows that the proportion of the health care budget set aside for these referrals is very low throughout the country.

10. LONDON'S AMBULANCES

I have published a report showing that ambulances in London are falling further and further behind the Government's (Orcon) standard for reaching emergencies. In the first 9 months of 1990/91 only 76% of ambulances reached the scene within 14 minutes, (well short of the standard of 95%) and only 12% within 7 minutes, (even further short of the 50% standard).

11. NHS ACTIVITY LEVELS.

I have published figures, showing that the number of patients that the NHS treats is actually falling, in spite of the growing

need for treatment. In a parliamentary debate on this issue I argued that the NHS appears to be cutting admissions from the waiting list and developing more and more into an emergency service only. In the Camberwell Authority area for instance, there was a 5.1% fall in activity levels from 1989/90 to 1990/91.

12. GLOUCESTER GROVE

On the 26th of March I attended the inquest into the death of Raymond Assahoun, who died in the fire at Wickway Court on the Gloucester Grove Estate on January 2nd. I submitted a full dossier of all the correspondence I have had on this issue to the Coroner, Sir Montague Levine, and also asked a number of questions during the hearing.

The Coroner concluded an open verdict but made three very important recommendations.

- * he stressed the urgent need for a reappraisal of fire safety on this Estate, because of the number of fires that have occurred there.

- * He also recommended that every tenant on the Estate should be notified by post of the guidelines on what to do in event of fire.

- * Lastly he emphasized the importance of modernizing the Estate in line with the improvements already undertaken in phases one and two, particularly installing entry-phones and secure doors.

(I have raised the point with the Director of Housing that when I recently visited the Gloucester none of the new entryphone doors were working. They could all be pushed open. I have asked him to report to me on this)

I will continue to press the Secretary of State, Michael Heseltine, to support Southwark Council's bid for further funds to improve the Estate.

13 SOUTHWARK MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

I recently met with representatives of the Southwark Group of Tenants' Organisations together with Simon Hughes and Gerald Bowden to discuss the low level of Management and Maintenance allowance granted to the Council by the Department of the Environment. The Management and Maintenance Allowance determines the amount the council have to spend on such vital matters as pest control, lift repair, window replacement and lighting improvement. I have asked for a meeting with the Housing Minister, Sir George Young, and am asking a number of parliamentary questions to expose the problem.

14. RESIDENTIAL CARE

I have published a report showing a massive increase in the number of private nursing homes in the country. As the Community Care programme has been postponed, there is no assessment of people's needs before they enter homes, and more and more elderly people are going into nursing homes rather than old people's homes. This is not because they need higher levels of care but because the gap between income support and charges is wider in old people's homes than it is in nursing homes. This is not only a disaster for those in homes but also for the public purse.

I recently met Virginia Bottomley, the Health Minister, to express my grave concerns about the standards of old people's homes. This was following a survey I conducted, which highlighted the problems that the new inspection units for homes are already running into - only 29% of those local authorities responding had all the required inspectors in place by March 1st.

15 NEW MEMBERS' MEETING

I am inviting new members of the Peckham CLP to Parliament on June 4th. I have written to all those people on the party list, but please contact me if you know of any new member who has not received the letter of invitation.

16. TICKETS FOR QUESTION TIME

I have two Gallery tickets available for Question time in the House of Commons on Wednesday, May 8th and Thursday May 23rd. It starts at 2.30 pm and you can stay as long as you want. If you would like to come, please let me know.

17. LOCAL VISITS

In addition to those already mentioned, my local visits have included :

- * attending the opening of Peckham Fire Station
- * the AGM of the Southwark Pensioners Action Group
- * visiting the following primary schools ; St George's, St Francis, Hollydale, St Mary Magdalene, Peckham Park and Gloucester Schools
- * attending the presentations to pupils at Archbishop Michael Ramsey School
- * visiting the new site of the Camberwell After School Project
- * The Pitt Street Settlement to open new creche facilities

- * Bird in Bush Community Centres to visit the playgroup.
 - * The Sumner Tenants Association AGM
 - * The Nelson Estate Tenants' Association AGM.
 - * I have met with the Director of Housing, John Broomfield.
 - * Meeting organised with the Camberwell CHC to discuss promoting the charter for sickle cell patients.
-
- * Meeting with the leader of the council, Sally Keeble.
 - * visiting Grosvenor Park Sheltered Housing.

HARRIET HARMAN MP
29th April 1991

HARRIET HARMAN

REPORT - MAY 1991

1. MONMOUTH BY-ELECTION

It was a tremendous victory at Monmouth. That we turned the second safest Tory seat in Wales into a comfortable Labour majority has helped further demoralise the Tories and push us further ahead in the polls. Health was the key campaign issue in the election. Robin Cook and I both visited Monmouth and helped in the campaign.

2. COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Anyone watching the BBC results programme might have thought that May 2 was a victory for the Liberal Democrats. Our analysis of the results showed that if the voting was repeated at the General Election Labour would have a majority in the House of Commons. I helped with the campaign by visiting target marginals, and commented on the results on TV the following day. What was particularly heartening was the results in the new towns around London, such as Thurrock, Watford, Luton, Basildon etc. These used to be Labour, but in the last years had moved to the Tories. Now they appear to be moving back to Labour which would give us substantial gains in the South East in a General Election.

3. LONDON

The campaign team for London, set up after the NEC inquiry into Labour's organisation in London, is hard at work. The latest activity was the publication of two documents. The first analysed the mounting problems in London : unemployment, traffic, crime, deteriorating health, education and housing. The second launched Labour's programme for London. A strategic authority, the Greater London Authority, based at County Hall, would be directly elected and would co-ordinate transport, planning, police and other cross-borough issues. I participated in the launch of both these documents.

4. SPECIAL EDUCATION IN SOUTHWARK

Southwark Council is reviewing special education. I have met with groups of parents and visited Highshore School, Woodstock School Elfrida Rathbone and Tuke School. There appears to be great

concern about the review and in response to representations to me from both parents and teachers I have asked the council to give the parents the following guarantees :

- * If the overwhelming majority of parents of children in schools for moderate learning difficulties are opposed to one of the options spelt out in the review, then it should not be proceeded with.

- * There should be a guarantee of better future practice on referring children who are having learning difficulties, from mainstream to special schools.

- * There should be a guarantee to parents that children in special schools will not be pressurised into going back into the mainstream if the parents do not want them to.

- * Children of those children already in one of the MLD schools should be assured that their children will not face unnecessary disruption to their education.

5. SPECIAL SURGERY

In addition to my regular surgeries, from time to time I hold special surgeries on a particular estate. This month I held, at the request of the Tenants Association, a surgery on the Ledbury Estate, together with Councillor Ian Wingfield. It was well attended.

6. KINGS HOSPITAL

- * The situation at Kings remains very bad. There just are not enough beds. People have to wait far too long on waiting lists, and patients coming in as emergencies still have to wait many hours in Accident and Emergency until a bed can be found. Kings have introduced "24 hour bed management". This means that some patients have been asked if they will go home, because there is someone downstairs waiting to get into their bed !

- * I attended a meeting of TGWU members at Kings College Hospital together with Bill Morris. I spoke in support of Bill's campaign to be General Secretary of the TGWU and against Kings being opted out of the NHS.

- * I am very pleased with how well the Peckham Labour Party's anti-opt out campaign is going. Already a leaflet has been produced and is being distributed. It will be followed by an advert in the South London Press and letters to all community organisations urging them to protest to the Government about opt out. The consultation period runs from May 21 to August 21. The address to

write to is : Adrian Pollitt, Assistant Regional General Manager, South East Thames Regional Health Authority, Thrift House, Collington Avenue, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex TN39 3NQ. Please send me a copy of any representations that you make. I am making detailed representations, jointly with Tessa Jowell, Labour's candidate in Dulwich. Please contact my office if you want a copy.

7. GUYS REPORT

In my last report I mentioned the meeting Joan Ruddock and I had with the Chair and the Chief Executive of the Guys Trust. They warned us of cuts of between 5-10% this year. We then saw the announcement of cuts of up to 600 staff. I responded in the House of Commons, on radio and TV and spoke at a mass meeting of staff. Now it looks as though the cuts will be about 400 jobs. This is still a serious blow when we have so many patients on waiting lists, and so many people who do not get the care they need at home from the community services.

8. PECKHAM MAY DAY SOCIAL

Thanks to all those who made the Peckham May Day Social such a success. It really was a most enjoyable evening.

9. LOCAL CAMPAIGNING

In addition to the activities mentioned above my local campaigning has included:

- * I spoke at the Annual General Meeting of the Southwark Chamber of Commerce. Appropriately, it was held in the private London Bridge Hospital ! There was, however, a mood of hostility to the Government and deep concern about the recession. Only 3 of the members present (numbering about 40) thought the recession had even begun to "bottom out". All were concerned about transport, training and interest rates.

- * It was a great pleasure to attend a service at the Walworth Methodist Church, where the minister is Vic Watson, a long-standing member of Faraday Ward.

- * I attended the Annual Service at Southwark Cathedral for Southwark Council.

- * I met with - Sally Keeble, Southwark Council leader.
- Camberwell Community Health Council.

- * I attended Barseet Ward, and Liddle Ward.

- * I spoke at - Brandon TA AGM
- Southwark Co-operative Society.

10. QUESTION TIME

I have two Gallery tickets available for Question Time in the House of Commons for : Wednesday 19 June, Thursday 4 July, and Monday 22 July. It starts at 2.30 pm and you can stay as long as you want. If you would like to come, please let me know.

11. NATIONAL HEALTH CAMPAIGN

Health has been a key political issue over the last month. I have been involved, together with Robin Cook, in regular press conferences, press statements, campaign initiatives, debates in the House of Commons and meetings . I wrote an article for the Guardian to which William Waldegrave wrote a reply. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

12. SOCIAL SERVICES

The Social Services Inspectorate has reported on Grove Park Children's Home, and Staffordshire Council's enquiry into the "pin down" regime in their children's homes has reported. I had called for the Social Services Inspectorate to look into the situation in Southwark and urged Southwark to act on its findings.

I responded to the Government's statement in the House of Commons on the Staffordshire report by saying:

- * we must have better monitoring of children's homes. Including service sampling, the requirement for senior managers and directors of social services to stay the night in childrens homes from time to time so that they know what's going on.

- * legal rights, access to legal advice and a proper complaints procedure for children in homes.

- * improved pay, status and training for staff in childrens homes.

13. CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK

I have been tabling Parliamentary Questions about the scandalous delay in the decision about where the rail link will go. We are still campaigning for the Stratford Route. Meanwhile, Government indecision is blighting a large part of Camberwell, Peckham and Nunhead.

14. HOURS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

It looks as though the campaign to change the House of Commons hours, so that they start in the morning instead of 2.30pm, is progressing well. The aim is not to work fewer hours, but to change the hours so that we avoid night sittings. The main reason for not starting voting till 7pm is the tradition of many MP's having other jobs which they do during the day. We should have full time MP's, and the hours should be changed to reflect this. Changing the hours would make the House of Commons more efficient. The debates in the small hours are a farce. And women are deterred from being in Parliament because of the mad hours.

Harriet Harman

4th June 1991

HARRIET HARMAN MP

REPORT

JUNE 1991

1. KINGS COLLEGE HOSPITAL

The consultation period for King's application for trust status is now well under way.

* Tessa Jowell (PPC for Dulwich) and I held an open day at the Town Hall on Friday 21st June to consult local people on their views on opting out. The day was very well attended and has given us a great deal of material to include in our representations against opt-out.

* I am making a written submission against Kings opt-out jointly with Tessa Jowell, John Fraser MP, Kate Hoey MP and Richard Balfe. The aim is to have a co-ordinated approach accross South London. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

* Robin Cook and I will be among the speakers at an Kings anti-opt-out meeting on Wednesday July 17th at 7.30 pm in Dulwich Baths. I do hope that everyone will be able to attend.

There is still an enormous problem of people having to wait hours in accident and emergency before being admitted because of the bed shortage. I have referred one case to the NHS Ombudsman. I have met the chair of the District Health Authority to express my concern.

2. CHANNEL TUNNEL RAIL LINK

British Rail have still not made public their preferred route for the Rail link. The Government have not been prepared to publish the options that they are considering and therefore a large part of Peckham remains blighted. I spoke at a lobby of Parliament on July 1st, called to protest at this unacceptable delay. I attended a public meeting of the Peckham Against the Rail Link at St Giles Church and I have been making representations to Malcom Rifkind, Secretary of State for Transport.

3. SOUTHWARK HOUSING

Together with Southwark Group of Tenants Associations I met Tim Yeo, the Housing Minister to complain that Southwark does not get enough grant for housing maintenance and repairs. The Minister agreed to look further at Southwark's position and to visit Southwark. But he said that the Government felt less inclined to contribute to Southwark because of Southwark's continued failure to collect rents and let empty properties. He emphasised that Southwark planned to make improvements, but it does remain difficult to defend a situation in housing which has been so bad for so long. I hope that the new neighbourhood office system will yield results.

4. SCHOOL CLEANERS

I attended a meeting with the council and unions about the contract for school cleaners. I remain very concerned about the situation and have asked for further information about how Southwark compares with other Labour Boroughs in South London. Clearly Southwark's ability to deal with the situation is limited by Government spending cuts and compulsory competitive tendering. But it is important that the council acts as fairly as possible within those constraints.

5. CHILD PROTECTION REGISTER

I have conducted a London wide survey about the number of children on at risk registers who remain without an allocated social worker. Unfortunately Southwark has the highest number on the at risk register without a social worker. The report of my survey focusses on the lack of Government resources for spending on social work in London. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

6. HOSPITAL SOCIAL WORKERS

Following a meeting with hospital social workers at Kings, I have organised a meeting for hospital social workers from all the large hospitals in London. It will be at the House of Commons on July 15th.

There are a number of problems.

- * lack of social services means that people are being discharged home without proper care.
- * some people are spending longer in hospital than they should be because support for them at home cannot be organised.

* Councils are cutting back on hospital social work departments because they deal with many people from outside the borough in which the hospital is situated.

7. WALTON BY-ELECTION

I spent a day campaigning in Walton. The focus was on the health service and I visited a Health Centre and a nursery.

8 . WORKING HOURS

The leader of the House of Commons, John McGregor, has set up a select committee to look at the procedures of the House including working hours. I am trying to get on the committee.

9. DENTAL HEALTH

I prepared Labour's new policy on dental health. Please let me know if you would like a copy. It is based on three principles.
* there should be a strong emphasis on prevention, particularly flouridation and food policy.

* treatment should be availble in the NHS.

* dental services should be "user frindly" and there should be a proper complaints system against dentists.

10. QUEUE JUMPING IN THE NHS SURVEY

I conducted a survey of the major hospitals in England asking about queue jumping under the new NHS internal market. It is clear the GP budget holders are pressing for queue jumping deals for their patients and that therefore everyone else will have to wait longer. Some hospitals have made "no queue-jumping" declarations and I am pressing Kings and Guys to do the same. Please let me know if you would like a copy of the survey.

11. CHILDCARE

I spoke at Nursery Matters, a national conference on childcare.

I opened the new Camberwell After School Project, which is a really excellent service.

I have visited St John's playgroup in Walworth and St Mary's playgroup in Nunhead.

Having supported the Childminders Project in Southwark I was very sorry to attend the AGM because they will have no workers this year due to council cuts.

12. SOUTHWARK FOSTERING

I have been defending Southwark against unjustified attacks by the tabloid newspapers over its decision to foster a gay 15 year old boy with a gay couple. Having looked into the case it seems to me that the tabloids are just doing a knee-jerk anti-gay and anti-council response. The best interests of the young man lie with a stable and caring environment and one where he feels that his sexuality is understood. The tabloid attention will simply make things more difficult for him and the couple that are caring for him.

13. OLD PEOPLES HOMES.

I am co-author of a report called No Place Like Home, together with Liz Winn. It draws attention to abuse and neglect in private old people's homes. Please let me know if you would like a copy.

14. GC

I had to miss the July GC because I was speaking from the front bench in a parliamentary debate on hospital waiting lists.

15. BRUNSWICK BY-ELECTION

We were all saddened by the death of Cllr John Maurice. John had worked with me at my surgeries and had always proved himself reliable at taking on individual casework. We also often used to work together in his capacity as governor of a number of local schools.

The by-election will be on July 25th and I hope everyone will help out in the campaign. If you are able to help out with Bernard White's campaign, please contact Kevin Gould at the TGWU office at 74 Camberwell Church Street - telephone 703-4228. There will be clerical work and leafletting every day until the election.

16. OTHER LOCAL ACTIVITIES.

- * I met the Chief Superintendent at Peckham Police station to discuss changes in policing.
- * I attended the inauguration of the new vicar at St Lukes Church in North Peckham.
- * I visited Helena Day Nursery and Lympstone Nursery.
- * I spoke at the ALA conference, "London : A Healthy City ?"

17. TICKETS

I have two Gallery tickets available for Question Time in the House of Commons for Monday 22 July. It starts at 2.30pm and you can stay as long as you want. If you would like to come, please let me know.

Harriet Harman
2 July 1991



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REPORT

SEPTEMBER 1991

1. General Election Campaign

Although the date of the General Election is still not yet known, my activity, as part of Labour's national campaign team, has been geared to the possibility that there may be an election in November.

As Shadow Health Minister I have taken part in numerous press conferences and regional campaign visits.

Together with Robin Cook, I have campaigned against the second wave of opt outs, and we launched details of what Labour will do in the first 100 days of Government to save the NHS.

The task in Peckham is to continue to put ourselves on an election footing, and to try and turn the local political agenda away from issues concerning the council on to national issues such as the NHS, and job losses. We know that there is deep dissatisfaction with the Council and that is part of the reason the Liberals are gaining ground. But there is still good support for getting rid of the Tories and returning a Labour Government committed to the NHS and ending the recession.

2. Local Health issues.

Together with Tessa Jowell, Kate Hoey, Richard Balfe and John Fraser I submitted our arguments against Kings Opt out. The report, called Don't Trust the Trust, was widely circulated to local community and voluntary organisations.

I went to meet the manual staff at Kings, attended a CHC meeting on cuts in the community services and attended a Camberwell District Health Authority meeting.

3. Housing

* The overwhelming majority of complaints in my surgeries are still about housing. At my last surgery at Peckham Town Hall over 50 people came to see me. I am getting a much quicker

response from the neighbourhood housing offices than I used to. But tenants still complain bitterly about failing to get replies to their letters to the housing department and failing to get through to the right person on the phone. The misery of overcrowding is made worse when the family who are desperate to move, see a flat remaining empty which they would like to move into.

* Tenants who are struggling to pay their rent on a low income, but still manage to keep up to date, complain constantly to me about the tenants who do not pay and who they have to subsidise. Rent arrears therefore remains a major problem in the public mind.

* In my last report I referred to the meeting I, and Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations, had with the Housing Minister, Timm Yeo, to ask for more money for Southwark housing. At that meeting we invited him to come and see Southwark for himself, and see the improvements that are being made. I met him on his visit on 18th September. He would what impression he had gained from his visit or what effect it would have on his next grant aid decision for Southwark.

* I have joined with a group of organisations to support the case for saving St Georges Church in Wells Way. It is a listed building but it is rapidly deteriorating and if nothing is done it will be beyond repair. It is also a danger to local children who are playing in the catacombs among the skeletons. I had a meeting at the Church with Southwark Environment Trust, The Housing Corporation and the Camberwell Society to discuss plans to rebuild the church and turn it into housing for homeless people in special need. Since then I have made representations to the Housing Minister, the Council and have contacted Gloucester Grove TA and the local councillors about the future of the Church. The problem is, that so many agencies are involved, The Department of the Environment, the Council, the Church Commissioners, the Housing Association, there is a danger that nothing will get done. If action is not taken we will lose an important building and the opportunity for some more much needed housing.

* I spoke at the launch of new figures about the problem of homelessness in South East London. As well as talking about the local situation I gave details of Labour's programme for emergency help for the homeless in our new publication "A Welcome Home " . Consortium, a group of organisations involved in housing in South London have done research to show the true number of homeless in South London. Their findings show that Government figures are clearly an underestimate and that in Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark there are at least 5,500 single



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

homeless people, with 1,500 forced into sleeping in squats, nightshelters, friend's floors or outdoors. There is a growing number of young black homeless.

4. Miscellaneous

* I attended the Women's Fun Run which started from Southwark Park on 8th September. I am afraid I didn't go on the run, my activities were confined to dropping the starting flag !

* I attended the anniversary party of "Meeting Point", an advice agency in Glengall Road.

* I attended a conference on manufacturing in the South East jointly organised by TGWU and MSF.

* I will be at Labour Party Conference in Brighton and am speaking at a number of fringe meetings.

* I will be running for the Shadow Cabinet again this year. I did not get elected last year, but I came second to the runner up, Joan Lestor.

October 1991



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



HARRIET HARMAN

REPORT

OCTOBER 1991

1. WINTER WATCH OVER OUR HOSPITALS

Together with Tessa Jowell, PPC for Dulwich, I have initiated a Winter Watch over Our Hospitals Campaign. The aim is to monitor closely the situation at Kings and Guys as it develops this winter.

Kings has serious problems of bed shortages and long waits in A and E. If there is a cold spell, flu epidemic or further bed closures the situation will quickly become very much worse.

Since becoming a Trust, Guys has developed significant financial problems and we need to see whether they will seek to solve them by cutting down the number of patients they are treating.

The aim of the Watch is to react very quickly to problems getting worse. As well as asking local community organisations, such as the CHC and Age Concern to work with us on this, we are monitoring the figures on: daily available beds, red alerts, cancelled operations, waiting lists, waiting time in A and E, and will publish the figures on a fortnightly basis. Please let me know if you have any case for concern on these issues or know of individual cases where there are problems.

I am also writing personally to some constituents to tell them about the Winter Watch, asking them to keep me informed and at the same time telling them when my surgeries are. Many thanks to George and Lil Smith for helping to get the letters out.

2. SPECIAL EDUCATION

Together with parents from all the special schools in Southwark, I, Gerald Bowden, Simon Hughes and Richard Balfe went to see Michael Fallon, the Education Minister about Southwark's review of Special Education. I raised concerns about:

- * the length of time it takes for a child to get statemented, anything up to two years.
- * the concern of parents that there will be no choice of school for their children if the present 5-16 year schools are divided into one for 5-11 years and another 11-16 years.

* that parents felt that the consultation had been a sham because Southwark had already made up its mind on what it was going to do and was determined to press ahead despite opposition from parents, teachers and Governors.

We have yet to hear from the Secretary of State for Education whether he will approve or block, Southwark's plans. I also had a discussion about this, and other issues with the Director of Education, Gordon Mott.

3. LANGBAURGH AND REGIONAL VISITS

Labour achieved a historic result in Langbaugh with the first non-white candidate elected in a Tory seat with no large ethnic minority community. This was accomplished despite a dirty tricks campaign by the Tories in the last few days before polling. I visited the constituency twice during the campaigning. Public concerns over the future of the NHS played a vital part in our victory.

I visited Wales on 2nd November to speak at a Labour Party rally. I again attacked the Government for its creeping privatisation of the health service. I also spoke recently at a party rally in Birmingham.

4. NHS

i) Privatisation

I have been very active in the party's campaign about the Tory threat to the NHS. In addition to numerous speaking engagements, TV and radio broadcasts, and an article in the Guardian, I have published a document called "The Three Fold Tory Threat to the NHS", which details our concerns about underfunding, privatisation and commercialisation. Please let me know if you would like a copy of that report or of the Guardian article.

ii) Cancelled Operations

On the morning of the speech to Tory Party Conference by William Waldegrave, Secretary of State for Health, I published figures showing that nearly 300,000 NHS operations had been cancelled last year. The Secretary of State tried to rubbish the figures and I pursued the matter with Parliamentary Questions. The Government has now been forced to admit that my figures, far from being exaggerated, slightly understated the problem. They also admitted that they themselves have used the same method of calculating cancelled operations when they answered a PQ in February this year.

iii) Local Health Issues

On the day the Government announced its Commission of Inquiry into the future of the health service in London, I issued a statement calling on William Waldegrave to halt the opt-out of London health services. However, the Government has only delayed the legal start of the opt-outs rather than scrapping them altogether.

I took part in the Candelit Vigil outside King's College Hospital on 14th October, which was organised by the NHS Support Federation.

I visited the Aylesbury Health Centre on 18th October when they held an open day to raise the profile of the centre within the local community. The Aylesbury Centre is part of Lewisham and North Southwark community health services which is to become The Optimum Trust in the second wave of opt-outs. I issued a statement opposing the opt-out of these important community services.

I have submitted a response to the consultation document proposing the merger of 3 health authorities, Lewisham and North Southwark, Camberwell and West Lambeth. I have said that the merger should only go ahead if there are safeguards relating to the 3 CHC's, local accessibility of services and local accountability. Please let me know if you would like a copy of my response.

5. RACE AND IMMIGRATION

I am very concerned about the effect of the Government's Asylum Bill for two reasons. Firstly, individuals fleeing persecution in their country will find it more difficult to enter this country. Secondly, the Bill will encourage and legitimise racism within Britain.

I spoke against the Bill at a seminar on immigration and policing, organised by Southwark Council on 30th October, and I also issued a press statement which warned of its consequences. This statement highlighted two of the most worrying features of the bill - the proposal to fingerprint applicants, and the denial of legal aid to them.

I take up a large number of immigration cases, sometimes with success. For instance, two children came to stay with their aunt in Peckham after their mother had a nervous breakdown and lost her job in the US. They were about to be deported but I persuaded the Home Office to allow the children to stay in this country until Christmas.

6. WICKWAY COURT FIRE - GLOUCESTER GROVE

I have received a copy of the initial report from the London Underground Scientific officers, who have been investigating the causes of the tragic fire which occurred earlier this year. It is a worrying document, describing the paint on the walls of the block as "a severe fire hazard" and describing the dangers from the paint coatings as "the worst ever seen on a site."

I have written to the Director of Housing, urging him to ensure that the Council removes this danger as soon as possible to end the anxiety of Gloucester Grove tenants.

7. OTHER CASEWORK

I have received a large number of complaints from students from Peckham who say that Southwark Council has not paid their grants and sometimes their tuition fees as well. Some of the calls have been from young people suffering extreme hardship because of these delays. I have been in touch with the Student Unions of Thames Polytechnic, Southbank Polytechnic and Goldsmiths College to check on the position. They have all said that the position facing Southwark students is particularly bad. I have had a meeting to discuss this with the Director of Education and he assures me that the Council is taking measures to end this problem.

I have also taken up the tragic case of a family from Peckham, whose brother was killed in a car crash in Turkey when he was there on holiday. The man was travelling in a cab run by the state-owned company, and the driver is now being prosecuted for drunken and reckless driving. The family had to wait nearly two hours by the roadside before they were taken to hospital and then had to pay £3000 to get the body back to Britain. I am trying to help them bring a private prosecution in Turkey to win compensation for their material loss and their suffering. I have written to the Foreign Office and to the two travel agents involved.

8. ELECTION CAMPAIGNING

Since the last GC, Jeremy Fraser, my agent, has been active in preparing and arranging for the printing and distribution of a leaflet. I would like to thank wards for the help they have already given and ask for more help, not only in distributing but also in thinking of ways to raise funds to pay for this leaflet and further campaign material. With the election no more than six months away, we need to keep in constant touch with the voters.

As Christmas approaches, I would be grateful if you could let me know of any seasonal events which are occurring in community groups, nurseries, schools, or tenants associations in your ward. I have given also given Jeremy a series of dates from my diary which I am keeping clear for ward visits so please liase with him if there is any local group you feel I should attend in the next two months.

9. CHANNEL TUNNEL

There was widespread relief after the speech by the Transport Secretary Malcolm Rifkind at Tory Party Conference, in which he announced that the route of the rail link would not go through Peckham and south-east London. But that relief has been blunted by the blight which the original route brought to the area and the fact that freight trains from the coast will still be running through south London. I will be meeting Gil Howarth, the property director of BR, next week to discuss this blight. I

have also written to every constituent who contacted me about the Channel Tunnel, setting out my views of the latest Government proposals.

9. OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Apart from the above, I have performed the following engagements since I last reported to you:

- BBC Radio Any Questions
- Attending the opening of the Council's new information service at the Brandon Library
- Southwark Police Consultative Group
- Southwark Remembrance Day Service
- AGM of the Southwark Pensioners Centre
- Opening of new Neighbourhood Housing office at Rosemary Gardens
- Visit to the Crossways Centre for people with learning disabilities in Peckham Rye
- AGM of the Southwark Children's Foundation
- Visit to Hackney Hospital (for a Hackney council By-election)
- Opening of Southwark Age Concern's new hostel in D'Eynesford Road.

Harriet Harman MP



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HARRIET HARMAN

NOVEMBER REPORT 1991

I am sorry that I will not be able to attend the GC because I am on BBC TV Question Time in Bristol. Below I set out my report on my constituency and Parliamentary activities over the last month.

1. HEALTH MATTERS

A large number of letters have gone out to constituents, local doctors, tenants associations and community groups about the Winter Watch campaign launched by Tessa Jowell and myself last month. The two Community Health Councils are lending their support and already we are starting to receive reports about problems at Kings and Guys. The South London Press has carried a feature on the campaign.

On 3rd December at the House of Commons, I attended the press launch of Southwark Council's campaign to advise parents on how to avoid cot deaths. Clare Rayner also spoke at the launch. The Council is one of the first local authorities in the country to be issuing guidance leaflets to local residents on how to minimise the risks of cot death.

On 2nd December, I went to the opening ceremony for the new Operating Theatre Complex at Kings College Hospital, performed by Virginia Bottomley, the Health Minister.

Last month, I spoke at a one-day conference on "Women and Health", organised by the Southwark Council for Community Relations at the Thomas Carlton Community Centre in Peckham. My speech focused on the impact of the NHS reforms on health care provision for women.

On 27th November, I went to the University of St Andrews in Scotland to speak at a major conference organised by the Fife Regional Council on equal opportunities for women social workers. During this trip to Scotland, I also visited Dunfermline Maternity Hospital and spoke about the "Tory threat to the NHS" at a public meeting in Kealty.

My press releases about health in the last month have included an attack on Welsh hospital opt-outs, issued to coincide with my attendance at Labour Rally in Neath on 15th November, and a statement dismissing Guys new "Patients' Charter" as a public relations gimmick designed to meet the Government's political objectives for its flagship opt-out hospital. In that statement, I pointed out that Guys has severe financial problems, is facing a crisis over its building programme, has seen an 8% increase in waiting lists, and has made huge job cuts.

2. ST GEORGE'S CAMPAIGN

In September, I reported on the launch of the campaign to Save St George's Church in Camberwell. This listed building has fallen into disrepair since it ceased to be used in 1970 but plans have been drawn up to restore the exterior and convert the interior into flats for social housing, run by the Co-Operative Dwelling Society. Some funding has been promised by English Heritage, but the Housing Corporation has initially turned down a grant for the housing scheme. As a result, I have written to the Housing Minister, Tim Yeo, asking that the Government support the scheme. I have also put down a motion in the House of Commons, seeking the support of MPs for the campaign.

3. NORTHFIELD HOUSE, FRIARY ESTATE

I have had a meeting with the Northfield House tenants leaders to discuss their bid for Estate Action funding from the Government.

Northfield House is an ex-GLC block which was used as short-life accommodation for students from the Polytechnic of Central London. It was transferred to Southwark Council in 1985 but has missed out on the Friary Estate improvement programme. Consequently, the flats are in urgent need of repair and modernisation. Many of the properties still have baths in the kitchens. I have written to Sir George Young, the Minister for Housing, in support of the bid and I have sent copies of my letter to all the tenants on the block.

4. CHANNEL TUNNEL

I had a meeting this month with Gil Howarth, the Property Director of BR, to discuss the release of the properties in the Warwick Gardens area from BR ownership. My main concerns were that BR might want to transfer all the properties to a single owner or to sell them off quickly. This would have both distorted the local property market and have prevented the rebuilding of the community after it has suffered so much blight.

BR has given an assurance that they are not looking at any single solution but will sell the properties over a four year period to a variety of owners.

I also attended a meeting between BR and PEARL recently at which I produced photographs of some of the blighted BR properties in my constituency. BR promised to take immediate action to clear them up and they said that they looking at short-term solutions to ensure that no properties are left vacant and unmaintained in the area.

I have called on BR to introduce a charter for the residents of the Warwick Gardens area. This charter would include:

- * a commitment by BR to be open and responsive.
- * a commitment by BR to look at a variety of proposals and to rule out any single solution.
- * a commitment to set up a forum with PEARL and other local

representative community groups in order to monitor the situation and to discuss the proposals.

- * a commitment by BR to phase the release of properties over a long-period in order to lessen the distortion of the local housing market.

- * a commitment by BR never to look again at the original south-London route for the link.

BR has told me that they are able to accept most of this and they will be responding formally soon. I have written to all residents in Shenley and Crofton Roads and Lyndhurst Way, setting out my charter proposals.

5. COSSALL ESTATE

I recently visited the Cossall Estate, meeting the Chair and Secretary of the TA, and some of the tenants. The main problems on the estate are:

- * pathways and roads being used by cars as a rat-run.
- * poor and defective lighting in the open spaces
- * cockroaches in many flats, despite an extensive deinfestation programme
- * frequent breakdowns in the heating system.

I am taking up all these points with the Council.

6. EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

I visited the South Thames Training and Enterprise Council and met the Chief Executive, Mike Hanson. It is obvious that Michael Howard's promises about guarantees on youth training have proved hollow; the TEC is unable to meet the training needs of south-east London and has been hit hard by the recession. I have promised to take up this issue in the New Year with a series of Parliamentary Questions and through conducting an informal survey of the training needs of the constituents who contact me at my surgeries.

I also issued a press statement on the latest unemployment figures for Peckham, which show that unemployment in the constituency has increased by 56% in the last twelve months. I said in my statement, which was also sent to the local trade unions, that "the economic miracle of the eighties has proved hollow, leaving families in real hardship, many without money and without a home."

7. OTHER VISITS AND ENGAGEMENTS

I visited the North Peckham Estate on 26th November and met Alan Goddard, the Neighbourhood Manager, Sandy Cameron, now the Community Worker, and Maria Williams from the TA. I was impressed at how much difference Phase 1 of the Improvement Programme has made to the estate, especially in cleaning up some of the walkways. All the entryphones I tried actually worked. I hope Phase 2 is equally successful.

Last month, I met the Director of London Electricity southern region, David Willocks, and his Director of Engineering, Ron

Barnes. One of my main concerns is the number of disconnections by the LEB. Because of the recession, many of my constituents have difficulty paying their bills but it seems that the widespread introduction of budget meters has prevented a large increase in the number of disconnections.

I spoke at the AGM of the Tustin Tenants Association on 18th November. The introduction of the concierge scheme at Grasmere Point and the establishment of an Estate Management Board has greatly improved the running of the estate.

Last week I gave tours of the House of Commons to politics students from the Southwark Sixth Form Centre, and to members of the Southwark Chamber of Commerce, who held their annual Christmas reception in one of the Parliamentary dining rooms.

I visited the factory of Kaymet Engineering on the Old Kent Road on 14th November and saw a graphic illustration of the effect of the recession on businesses in the south-east. Kaymet, which makes high-quality trays and trolleys, is on a three-day week at present because of a shortage of orders.

8. OTHER CASEWORK

As reported last month, I have started holding my third surgery of the month in the Thurlow Lodge TA hall because of the closure of Walworth Town Hall. There were over 60 separate cases at the first of these surgeries. I am currently dealing with well over 100 cases a week, most of them relating to housing problems. I have recently had some success in other areas, including the prevention of the deportation of a Nigerian woman who has lived in London for several years and whose children are all settled in Peckham schools, and the award of over £800 in back payments from the DSS to a Camberwell pensioner.

Amongst other local issues I have taken up recently are:

- * Tenants Incentive Scheme: It appears that the Housing Department stopped the scheme whilst it was still being publicised in the local papers and whilst several tenants were half-way through a purchase.

- * Reduction in rail services to Nunhead station

- * Cleaning up of Burgess Park

- * Complaints from tenants in Dunstall House about the problems in their block, including lack of cleaning, racist graffiti, and quality of repairs.

- * the need for a bottle bank in Lucas Gardens.

Harriet Harman MP

10th December 1991

UPDATE

Harriet Harman
Member Of Parliament

Keeping you in touch

House of Commons
Westminster
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HEALTH MATTERS

Winter Watch over our hospitals

I have initiated a Winter Watch Campaign with the aim of monitoring the situation at Kings and Guy's over the winter months. Kings has serious bed shortages and long waits in Accident & Emergency, whilst at Guy's significant financial problems may lead to the cutting down of the number of patients treated.

Along with your Community Health Council and Age Concern we are monitoring the daily availability of beds, waiting times for casualty and cancelled operations. Figures will be published every two weeks.

My major concern is that a cold spell or a flu epidemic may lead to the situation in our hospitals getting very much worse. If you know of any cause for concern please let me know.

Opt-out delayed not scrapped

I have challenged William Waldergrave, the Health Minister to halt the opt-out of the London health services. However, the Government have only delayed the start of the London's opt-outs until after the General Election, it is clear that this is simply an

electoral tactic and that the NHS is far from safe whilst the Conservatives stay in power.

Local Health - a priority

I have continued to support local campaigns to save the NHS. I took part in a candle-lit vigil outside Kings on 14th October organised by the NHS Support Federation, and on 18th October I visited the Aylesbury Health Centre.



Labour 

STUDENT GRANTS

Financial support must be delivered quicker

I have acted on the behalf of a large number of students who have written to me complaining about the late payment of grants from the Council. Together with the Student Unions of Southbank and Thames Poly's and Goldsmiths College I have raised the matter with the Director of Education. Tuition Fees and Grants have been received late or not at all, causing hardship and suffering for many young people. Hopefully my meeting with the Director will ensure steps will be taken to end this problem.

TRAGIC HOLIDAY ACCIDENT

Family should be compensated by Turkish Government

I have taken up the case of a Peckham family whose brother was killed in a car crash whilst on Holiday in Turkey. The man was travelling in a cab whose driver has now been charged with drunken and reckless driving. The family had to wait two hours by the roadside before they received medical attention and then they had to pay 3,000 to get their brothers body back to Britain.

It is my intention to help bring a private prosecution in Turkey to win compensation for their material loss and their suffering. I have involved the Foreign Office the two Travel Agencies used by the family.

CHANNEL TUNNEL

The freight may still come through our area.

There was widespread relief in Peckham, Camberwell, Nunhead and especially Walworth at the news that the High speed rail link will not be routed through our constituency. But that relief was blunted by the fact that freight will still be routed through South London.

I have met the property director of BR to discuss how BR will transfer the ownership of the properties they bought when they were planning to build the link through Peckham I have asked Br to publish a Charter which will show their long term commitment to the area and to rebuilding the local community. Such a charter must include a commitment by BR to be open and responsive, and to rule out any single proposal for the transfer of properties.

I have written to all those constituents who contacted me about the Channel Tunnel Link thanking them for their comments and setting out my views on the Governments proposals.



Harriet Harman with local ambulance driver

SCHOOLS

Special Education, my concerns

Together with angry parents from the special schools in Southwark I went to see Michael Fallon the Education Minister, to express our concerns about:

- ☐ The length of time it takes to get a child a place in the special schools (up to two years in some cases).
- ☐ The lack of choice available to children and parents if the present schools are to be amalgimated and split by age.
- ☐ Southwark Council's closed mind on these issues, as they are determined to press on despite opposition from Parents, teachers and Governors.

Whilst the Minister continues to consider Southwark's plans I have been expressing parents grievances with the Director of Education in Southwark.

THE ASYLUM BILL

Problems in store

I am concerned about the effect of this bill for two reasons:

1. People fleeing persecution in their country will find it more difficult to enter this country and gain the protection of British law.

2. The bill will legitimise racism within Britain.

Two of the most worrying features of the bill are the proposal to fingerprint all applicants, and not to grant them any legal aid.

I take up a large number of immigration cases, sometimes with success. One example of such a case are two children from the USA who came to stay with their aunt in Peckham after their mother had a nervous breakdown leading to her loosing her job. They were about to be deported by the Home Office, but I was able to persuade the Department to allow the children to stay with their aunt for a little while to allow their mother time to recuperate.

HOUSING

The Gloucester Grove Fire

The initial report concerning the tragic Gloucester Grove fire earlier this year describes the paint used on the walls of Wickway Court as "a severe fire hazard". The report continues to say that from coating walls in such inflammable paint the dangers on the site were "the worst ever seen..."

I have written to the Director of Housing, urging him to ensure that the Council removes this danger as soon as possible to end the anxiety of Gloucester Grove tenants.

Northfield House

Tenants of the Northfield House, Peckham Park Road have asked me to back their

plans to apply for an Estate Action Grant from the Government.

The Housing Block was run by the GLC and has remained un-modernised since the 1930's, partly because for a period it was used as a student residence.

I fully support the efforts of the tenants in trying to improve the building's security and environment.

SAVE ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

Save Camberwell's historic Building

A campaign has been launched to save Camberwell's beautiful and historic 19th Century church of St. George's which has sadly fallen into disrepair in recent years. The plan is to restore the exterior and convert the interior into much needed housing association flats.

English Heritage are backing the scheme and I am pressing the Government to allow the Housing Corporation to provide the necessary grant for the scheme to proceed.

If you would like to be involved in the campaign please contact:

Lawrence Hansen
Southwark Environmental Trust
48 Willowbrook Road
LONDON SE15 6BW

NEW SERVICES

Southwark Council Information Service

David Blunkett MP and I opened this new service which allows you to phone any Council Department **FREE** from the following sites:

- ☐ Camberwell Library, 17-19 Camberwell Church Street
- ☐ Newington Library, 155-157 Walworth Road SE17
- ☐ Peckham Library, 167 Peckham Hill Street, SE15
- ☐ Rotherhithe Library, Albion Street, SE16
- ☐ Spa Reception Centre, 19 Spa Road, SE19

These sites also offer **FREE** letter delivery to council officers.

New Housing Office

I opened the Rosemary Gardens Housing Office 156 Sumner Way carrying on the Councils decentralisation programme, to improve the quality of service they give to you.

Southwark Pensioners Centre

Providing services for the older amongst us, the centre offers access to office equipment (photocopying, duplicator and computer), a film club, a library, a minibus and a meeting hall.

Address:

Southwark Pensioners Centre
305-307 Camberwell Road
LONDON SE5 0HQ

Tel: 071-708 4556

LOCAL EVENTS OF INTEREST

4th December, 10.15am Meeting of the Lewisham, Lambeth and Southwark Women's Health strategy group at the Thomas Calton Centre, Alpha Street, Peckham SE15. The meeting is to discuss recent changes in the NHS.

11th December, 10am Open Day at Blackfriars Resource Centre, 151-152 Blackfriars Road, SE1. The centre provides services for those who are mentally challenged or have drug dependency problems.

Harriet Harman M.P. Here to Help You

Come along to one of her surgeries...

2nd Friday of every month from 2.00pm until 3.30pm at Camden Tenants Hall, Camden Square, SE5.

3rd Thursday of every month from 5.30pm until 7.30pm at Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Road, SE5.

4th Thursday of every month from 5.30pm until 7.30pm at Thurlow Lodge TA Hall, Thurlow Street, SE17.

No Appointment is needed.

Once you have read this addition please would you place this copy on public display either on a notice board or in a waiting room, so as many people as possible may be informed of the work of their Parliamentary Representative.



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HARRIET HARMAN

DECEMBER REPORT 1991

1. HEALTH MATTERS

Over the Christmas period I took up several issues relating to health policy and the NHS.

On 18th December, I called on the Chief Executive of the Guys and Lewisham Trust to investigate maternity services at Guys Hospital, following complaints by the Lewisham and North Southwark Health Authority and a local GP. These complaints were:

- * that shortages of midwives mean that women are left to fend for themselves
- * that standards of hygiene are falling. It is alleged that women have been advised by midwives to bring in their own cleaning materials to clean the bath before they use it to avoid the possibility of infection.

On 23rd December, I issued a press statement attacking both Guy's Trust and the Government for refusing to provide vital information about the performance of the hospital. I had asked some basic questions to compare what was happening before Guys became a trust with what has happened since. I have not yet been given answers. I feel that the public is entitled to know the financial situation of their local hospital.

I issued a major health policy statement on 30th December, setting out Labour's new plan for maternity services. Entitled "A Fresh Start for Babies", this report explained that Labour's maternity policy would be guided by the following principles:

- * a public health approach; the biggest improvement in the health of new babies will come by ending the ill-health of mothers caused by poverty and poor housing.
- * a freedom of information strategy; mothers will be given the right to hold their own records.
- * a consultative approach; giving women the right to draw up a maternity agreement about how she wants her pregnancy and delivery to be dealt with.
- * maximum choice for women about where and how to have their baby.

If you would like a copy of the report, please contact my office at the House of Commons.

Finally, on 6th January, I issued a report showing that Government spending on private residential care has risen by 12,000% in the last 12 years. The privatisation of long term nursing now means that many people have no choice but to go into homes which are run as businesses.

2. ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

The draft electoral register which was published at the end of November showed a fall of nearly 5000 in the number of voters in Southwark compared to last year's register. Though much of this fall will be made up by additional claims submitted to the Council's electoral services section since the draft register was printed, the party and the Council have much work to do to ensure that there is not a serious decline in the numbers on the register over the new few years.

Over Christmas, I have held discussions with Sally Keeble, Jeremy Fraser, Karl Milner, the Chief Executive of Southwark, the Borough Solicitor, and with local and national Labour officers about the steps which must be taken to increase the electoral register. These include:

- * a comparison with the Poll Tax register
- * visiting schools and writing to all those born before January 1976 who will soon qualify for the vote.
- * writing to all the gaps on the register
- * contacting ethnic minority groups and community associations to encourage them to put their members on the register. Such organisations often have their own mailing lists.
- * putting advertisements in the Southwark Sparrow and the South London Press

The party can help by:

- * writing to all the gaps and following up with personal visits
- * canvassing student hostels
- * leafletting wards, particularly those roads with obvious gaps.

Any member wishing to help now with registration work should contact Jeremy Fraser or Karl Milner.

3. HOUSING

I reported last month that I had written to the Housing Minister Sir George Young, in support of the estate action bid from Northfield House. Unfortunately the Government has not approved the bid. Indeed, Southwark has been treated very badly over its Housing Investment Programme bid, which will create major problems for improvement works on estates. An examination of the HIP allocations for London shows that Labour boroughs have generally done much worse than Conservative ones.

I am speaking at a meeting on housing policy called by the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation on 8th January. There are delegates from around Britain attending and I am setting out Labour's plans for tackling the present housing crisis.

Over the last year, I have been taking up the numerous complaints I receive about cockroach infestation on estates. This is a terrible problem for the tenants who have to live with such infestation, and I have made many representations about it, and liaised with TAs. I have recently received a reply from the Director of Housing which says that "the only effective solution for pharoah ants and cockroaches is to organise a series of treatments in every flat in the blocks affected." The Director

sets out the latest programme of treatment across the estates in the borough to be carried out by a range of contractors. I hope that this large programme will finally eradicate the infestation but I will continue to take up the issue.

I am holding a social evening for representatives of Peckham Tenants Associations in the House of Commons on 22nd January.

4. CITY CHALLENGE

I held a meeting just before Christmas with the Leader and the Chief Executive to discuss the outline of Southwark's City Challenge bid. As you may be aware, the Government is phasing out the Urban Programme and replacing it with City Challenge, under which authorities compete with each other to win a limited number of grants for urban regeneration.

This is not a fair or sensible way to allocate inner-city funding, because it is not based on need and does not encourage partnership between authorities. Labour is pledged to replace it with a grant allocation system related to need. But whilst City Challenge exists, Southwark has no alternative but to respond to the invitation to submit a bid and to fight hard for it to succeed.

The Southwark City Challenge bid is focused on the Old Kent Road, Burgess Park and the Peckham Task force area. I fully support the bid and welcome its plans to complete Burgess Park, to upgrade the Old Kent Road, and to improve the housing stock.

6. SPECIAL SCHOOLS REVIEW

I reported in November that the Southwark MPs and parents of children in special schools led a delegation to the Education Minister to oppose the Council's plans to reorganise special schools in the borough. However, on 23rd December, the Secretary of State announced that he had approved the plans.

7. GENERAL ELECTION

The Government has to call the General Election by July and so there will now be several months of tough campaigning. The election address for Peckham and other materials are currently being drafted by Jeremy Fraser in advance of actual election campaign. Anyone wanting to assist with this work should contact Jeremy.

On 17th December I addressed a meeting of all Labour candidates in London to give them ideas about election campaigning on the health service.

8. OTHER VISITS AND ENGAGEMENTS

Apart from the above, other visits and engagements have included:

- Christmas Party at the North Peckham Civic Centre
- People Care Association/Southwark Street Traders Christmas party on Christmas Day at the Dulwich Baths
- Opening of the new Lister Health Centre, Camden Square

9. CASEWORK

I am pleased to say that my House of Commons office was open throughout the Christmas period, apart from public holidays, and thus Peckham constituents who contacted me could still get their problems taken up. Two of the cases dealt with at this time were urgent immigration problems.

Apart from the usual large number of individual cases taken up, I have raised the following local issues:

- the London Reading Test and Standard Assessment results for Southwark schools
- the lack of a proper incontinent laundry service in Southwark
- the Post Office's removal of the post box outside the Love Walk Hostel for people with disabilities. I am pleased to say that the post box has now been reinstated.
- Southwark's involvement in National Spring Clean Week in April.
- the catchment area of Bacons CTC. I had received several complaints from parents at Crampton School that Bacons were not even interviewing their children, though before Bacons became a CTC it used to take several pupils from Crampton

10.

WOMEN'S EVENING

I am holding a social for all women in the Peckham CLP on Wednesday 15th January at 7.30pm in the Jubilee Room of the House of Commons. I have invited Clare Short MP as the guest speaker. I held a similar women's social in March 1990 which was very successful, attended by more than 70 women. I hope that women party members will be able to come along.

Harriet Harman MP

7th January 1992